

BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS THE INDIAN

STATES, 1905-1939

by

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ABSTRACT

Prior to 1947 approximately one-third of the Indian sub-continent was broken up into 635 Indian States which were ruled by princes of varying rank. In the process of consolidating their empire in India the British had, during the first half of the nineteenth century, deprived the princes of the power to conduct external relations with each other or with foreign powers. Internally the princes were theoretically independent but their sovereignty in this respect was in practice restricted by the paramountcy of the Imperial power. Many of the princes resented the manner in which the British used this paramountcy to justify intervening in their domestic affairs. During the nineteenth century the British had maintained the princes basically as an administrative convenience and as a source of revenue. By the opening of the twentieth century, however, the British had come to regard the princes as potential political allies against the growth of nationalism in India. In order that the princes would willingly serve as allies the British adopted a policy of non-interference in their domestic affairs. In practice such intervention was reduced to an absolute minimum and would only be contemplated in cases of gross misgovernment.

This thesis is concerned with how well the princes performed as Imperial allies. Two major themes are investigated. First, the position of the princes within an All-India constitutional framework. Here the

scheme for an All-India Federation is examined in relation to its origins and ultimate demise in 1939 (Chapters 4, 5 and 6). The second theme concerns the policy of non-interference. While it operated, administrative standards in the states deteriorated rapidly. By the late 1930's many of them had become obvious targets for nationalist attack. The British belatedly realised that the non-interference policy had failed to make worthwhile allies of the princes. On the contrary, they had become a serious liability because of it. In vain the British attempted to reverse the trends of the previous thirty years but their efforts were interrupted by the second world war and could not be resumed once it was over (Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 6).

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S.R. Ashton.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AGG	- Agent to the Governor-General
AISPC	- All India States' People's Conference
<u>Chamber of Princes</u>	- <u>Proceedings of the Meetings of the Chamber of Princes (Narendra Mahal).</u>
Coll.	- Collection.
<u>Conference of Ruling Princes</u>	- <u>Proceedings of the Conference of Ruling Princes and Chiefs held at Delhi on the 30th October 1916, 5th November 1917, 20th January 1919 and 3rd November 1919.</u>
FPD	- Foreign and Political Department
GGC	- Governor-General in Council.
GOI	- Government of India.
ICS	- Indian Civil Service
IOL	- India Office Library, London.
<u>Montford Report</u>	- <u>Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms, 1918. Cmd. 9109, 1918.</u>
PCI	- Political Correspondence with India.
PIC	- Political (Internal) Collections.
PIF	- Political (Internal) Files.
PSCI	- Political and Secret Correspondence with India.
PSSF	- Political and Secret Subject Files.
PY	- Abbreviation used by the Political Department of the India Office, denoting Political (Internal).
S/S	- Secretary of State.
telg.	- telegram.

CHAPTER 1.

INTRODUCTION

(1) The Indian States - Political Geography.

Prior to 1947, two-fifths of the Indian sub-continent was not British territory and two-ninths of its inhabitants were not British subjects. This territory was broken up into a large number of individual states which displayed an extraordinary diversity in terms of size, population and resources. The states were governed by hereditary princes who owed allegiance to the British Crown as suzerain. The princes were not permitted to enter external relations with foreign powers. In their internal affairs they exercised varying degrees of authority but their sovereignty in this respect was in all cases limited by the control exercised by the Paramount Power.

Excluding those of the North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan, the states were thus classified by the Indian States Committee in 1929:¹

1. Report of the Indian States Committee, 1928-1929,
Cmd. 3302, 1929, para. 11.

Class of State, Estate etc.	No.	Area in Square Miles	Population	Revenue in crores of rupees
1. States the rulers of which are members of the Chamber of Princes in their own right.	108	514,886	59,847,186	42.16
2. States the rulers of which are represented in the Chamber of Princes by 12 members of their Order selected by themselves.	127	76,846	8,004,114	2.89
3. Estates, Jagirs and others.	327	6,406	801,674	.74

The total area covered by this classification was 598,138 square miles with a population of 68,652,974. At one end of the scale stood Hyderabad with an area of 82,698 square miles, as large as England and Scotland, and with a population of over 14 million. At the other end was the tiny Kathiawar estate of Veja-no-ness with an area of .29 of a square mile and with a population of 184.² The whole range of the scale was covered between these two extremes but in general, statistics indicate the insignificance of the overwhelming majority of the states. There were only twenty-eight with a population of over 500,000,

1. PIC. 1931-50, Coll. 11 File 4, No.4, Descriptive note on the Indian States, 1931.

with the first eight of these accounting for half the total population, area and revenue of all twenty-eight. Hyderabad alone accounted for one-sixth of these totals.³

Equally remarkable was the irregular geographical distribution of the states. In one region, for example, Rajputana, the states were few and of comparatively large size, while in others, such as Central and Western India, they were petty and very numerous. The explanation of these irregularities lies partly in the policies pursued by the British at various times and partly in the course of events over which they had no control. In some parts of India a stronger power had made a clean sweep of upstarts and petty ancient dynasties before the British advanced. During the second half of the eighteenth century the ground had been cleared in the south of India by the Nizam of Hyderabad, the Nawab of the Carnatic and the Muslim usurper of Mysore. When therefore the Carnatic fell under British control and Tipu Sultan was finally overthrown in 1799, large united territories had to be disposed of either by annexation or, as in the case of Mysore, by restitution to a former dynasty. Here the work of consolidation had been accomplished by others before the British became involved. The situation was different in Central and Western India. This was Maratha country but the authority of their nominal head, the Peshwa, had been steadily weakened during the early

3. PIC. 1931-50, Coll.11 File 5, No.912/1931, Appendix B of documents issued by the Nawab of Bhopal concerning questions relating to the Indian States which emerged from the First Round Table Conference.

years of the nineteenth century with the result that territories were constantly changing rulers right up until the moment when the Marathas were finally defeated by Mountstuart Elphinstone at the battle of Kirki in 1817. During these early years British policy had of necessity been one of non-intervention in the affairs of the states⁴ but the subsequent ravages caused by the campaigns of marauding Pindaris obliged the Governor-General, Lord Hastings, to abandon this policy for one of political settlement. In the interests of peace and stability, and also because these regions contained little arable land capable of yielding taxable crops, the disturbed areas of Central and Western India were not brought under direct British control. Instead Hastings acknowledged the status quo as it then existed. There was no general enquiry into titles, nor was pause given for the consolidation of states by the will of the strongest: existing acquisitions were recognized once and for all. The consequent plethora of numerous petty states in Central and Western India stood in marked contrast to the situation in Rajputana where, despite Maratha and Pindari intrusions, seventeen proud states with an ancient lineage had preserved their separate political existence. The chief of these were Udaipur [Mewar], Jodhpur [Marwar], Jaipur and Bikaner.⁵

4. See below p. 18.

5. The Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol. iv, Oxford, 1907, p. 62.

The national characteristics of the states displayed the same diversity. Much of Rajputana was desert while in the deep south Travancore enjoyed a tropical luxuriance. Hyderabad and Mysore were rich in mineral resources contrasting in their wealth with the poverty of the hill states of the Punjab and the humble resources of the agriculturalists in Kathiawar.⁶ Equally diverse were the varieties of population and religion. The primitive and mostly animistic tribes of the Assam states and Manipur on the Burmese frontier contrasted with the wealthy Muslim nobles of Hyderabad and the proud chieftains of Rajputana. In Kashmir there was a Hindu prince ruling over a large Muslim population, in Hyderabad and Junagadh the reverse.⁷

Many of the states exhibited feudal conditions. The essential features of Mughal administration remained in force in Hyderabad until the state was integrated into the Indian Union in 1948. Land was divided into two categories: Khalsa and non-khalsa. In the khalsa areas the land revenue and various administrative departments were centrally administered. The non-khalsa areas consisted of numerous estates or jagirs, the incumbents of which were known as jagirdars, who exercised considerable authority in judicial and police administration. Some thirty-two jagirs had their own police forces and enjoyed judicial powers. The most important jagirdars were the Paigah Amirs. The Paigah jagirs comprised twenty-three

6. PIC. 1931-50, Coll.11 File 4, No.4. Descriptive note on the Indian States, 1931.

7. ibid.

talukas or districts covering an area of 41,134 square miles with a population of over one million. They were created by Asaf Jah, the former Mughal subahdar, or governor of the Deccan who founded the Osmania dynasty in Hyderabad in 1713. After a bitter succession dispute in 1877 the original Paigah jagirs were divided between three principal claimants who subsequently enjoyed separate titles and became the most important families in Hyderabad after the ruling dynasty. In Mughal times jagirdars had been military commanders. They were not the proprietors of the soil but were assigned the right to collect the state revenues from a specified area in lieu of a salary from the royal treasury. Asaf Jah had constituted the Paigahs in this manner during his struggle with the Marathas. However, the last Nizam of Hyderabad encountered frequent difficulties in getting the jagirdars to accept this position. On more than one occasion he had to issue a Firman, or government mandate, declaring that the jagirdars were not entitled to occupancy rights over the lands within their jagirs, except in cases where they could prove that by their own initiative they had brought waste land under cultivation and were cultivating it themselves or through their servants.⁸

Feudal concepts were widespread in the states of Central India and Rajputana. In Central India numerous minor Rajput chiefs, known as thakurs, existed

8. GOI, FPD. No.58 - Political (Secret) 1944, Nos.1-7, Enclosure to No.6, Settlement Operations in Jagir Areas in the Hyderabad State.

as feudatories of the great Maratha princes, Scindia in Gwalior and Holkar in Indore. The thakurs were often descendants of nobles who ruled the territory before it was conquered by the invading Marathas and their relations with their new overlords - insubordination on the one hand and undue repression on the other - were frequently a bitter source of discontent.⁹ A different situation obtained in Rajputana. Here the states were traditionally regarded as the property of a territorial nobility, not the individual prince who was only "primus inter pares". In certain states the powers of the nobility were considerable. In Udaipur twenty-eight principal nobles commanded the subsidiary allegiance of nearly one-third of the population and their estates comprised just over half the area of the entire state.¹⁰

In a few states embryonic representative institutions had emerged during the early years of the twentieth century. In Mysore and Travancore, the two premier states in south India, and also in Baroda in western India, legislative councils had been established. Their functions were limited to the technical duties of discussing, suggesting amendments to and recommending for the ruler's adoption bills introduced by his government.¹¹ Mysore and Travancore also possessed representative assemblies, the object of which in Travancore was described as being

9. For an account of this conflict between Maratha overlords and Rajput feudatories in Central India, see Sir Michael O'Dwyer, India as I knew it: 1885-1925, London, 1925, pp. 151-55.

10. GOI, FPD. Secret-Internal, May 1922, Nos.1-35, Enclosure to No.3, Wilkinson to Holland, 18 May 1921.

11. PIC. 1931-50, Coll.13, File 14, pt.1. No.8182/1929, representative institutions of government in Indian States.

"to allow duly elected representatives to bring before the Darbar the needs and requirements of the country."¹² Elsewhere the prevailing system of government was autocracy modified only by the varying degrees of authority exercised by feudatories and nobles in certain states. Laws were a conglomeration of local customs, enactments based on British Indian models and personal decrees of the princes. They could be modified or withdrawn at the discretion of the prince. There were no independent judicial systems and the princes permitted no appeals to an authority higher than themselves. No security of tenure existed for state officials; administrators, judges and ministers were appointed and dismissed according to the whim of the prince.

(2) The Indian States - Paramountcy.

For the purposes of political control and the conduct of their relations with the paramount power, the states were divided into two categories: those that had direct relations with the Crown through the Government of India and those whose relations were, in the first instance, with provincial governments.¹³ Relations with the first

12. ibid.

13. The first category was enlarged at the expense of the second in consequence of the Government of India Act of 1919 which inaugurated the experiment of dyarchy in the provinces. The process continued as provincial governments became more autonomous, see below, Chapter 3.

category were conducted through officers of the political branch of the Foreign and Political Department. The department had originated in September 1783 as the 'Secret and Political Department', a Mr. Edward Hay being appointed Secretary. From 1784 to 1842 it was divided into three branches: secret, political and foreign. In May 1843 the title of the department was changed to that of 'Foreign department'. In January 1914 it was again divided, this time into two, and renamed the 'Foreign and Political Department'. A separate Political Secretary was created to deal with the states as the work of supervising foreign affairs, frontier matters and the states had become too much for a single secretary. There was, however, only one pool of officers, some one hundred and eighty in number, for both branches. Recruitment to the political branch was by selection, seventy per cent being recruited from the Indian Army and thirty per cent from the Indian Civil Service. Indian Civil Service officers were taken after four years service while in the case of military officers, candidates with university commissions or those who displayed evidence of exceptional linguistic ability were favoured.¹⁴ The second category of states conducted relations with the provincial governments of Assam, Bengal,

14. For details about the organisation of the Political Department, see an undated note by Harcourt Butler, Foreign Secretary to the Government of India between 1908 and 1910, "Reorganisation of the Foreign Office and Political Department", Butler Collection, No.67; Sir Arthur Lothian's "Note on the Foreign and Political Department of the Government of India", 1962, Lothian Collection No.6, and T.C. Coen, The Indian Political Service: A Study in Indirect Rule, London, 1971, esp. chapter 8.

Bihar and Orissa, Bombay, Burma, the Central Provinces, Madras, the Punjab and the United Provinces.¹⁵

One of the most controversial issues concerning the Indian States was the extent to which the paramountcy exercised over them by the British Government was capable of precise definition. The British persistently maintained that this was impossible. They argued that the treaties, engagements and sanads they had concluded with the Indian States could never be regarded as definitive simply because no such agreement could survive indefinitely in its original form. For the British paramountcy was not a static function performing well defined rights and observing mutually agreed obligations, but a concept of growth that had developed according to the changing needs and circumstances of the time. Sir William Lee-Warner, a leading authority on paramountcy at the turn of the century, wrote:

"Even if the whole body of Indian treaties, engagements and sanads were carefully compiled, with a view to extracting from them a complete catalogue of the obligations or duties that might be held to be common to all, the list would be incomplete."¹⁶

In order to accommodate changing needs and circumstances a body of political practice or usage was steadily built up. There can be little doubt that such usage as existed was employed primarily to promote Imperial interests and to supply Imperial needs. Whenever a fresh law was introduced into British India which required

15. For the allocation of political officers to particular states, see below Chapter 3.

16. Sir William Lee-Warner, The Native States of India, revised 2nd edition, London, 1910, p.201.

co-operative action by a state embedded in British territory, some addition had necessarily to be made to the rules of conduct which regulated the relations of that state with the British Government. The legitimacy of this procedure could not be denied if the addition was made only with the state concerned but it was often the case that the new principles established in the relations with the one state were subsequently taken to apply to them all:

"Whenever a general principle called for the conclusion of a fresh agreement with a single state whose attitude compelled the British authority to reduce its relations to writing, the occasion was taken not to revise the whole body of treaties but to declare the principle and its reasons in a single treaty."¹⁷

This procedure was particularly in evidence during the second half of the nineteenth century when the economic consolidation of India made necessary the co-operation of the states in such vital questions as the construction of railways, roads and canals and the development of customs, currency, salt and opium policy.

Thus for the British the terms of the original treaties and engagements were not the final arbiter, nor even a dependable guide in most cases to the operative political relation existing between themselves and the Indian States. Usage, in a constant state of development and interpreted ultimately by the Political Department which supervised the states, regulated that relation. In effect this meant that "the full extent of British

17. ibid., p. 38.

interference in the Home Departments of the states has never been and never can be defined."¹⁸

In consequence of their paramountcy one major right claimed by the British was that of intervening in the affairs of a state if they thought its ruler guilty of misgovernment. This right was rarely exercised during the first treaty period between Britain and the states which extended from 1730, the date of the earliest known treaty,¹⁹ to 1813 when the power of the French in India was broken. During this period British policy was referred to as one of "Ring-Fence." The East India Company was barely struggling for existence and therefore adopted a policy of non-intervention in the internal affairs of the states and recoiled from the expense and danger of extending its treaties beyond the ring-fence of its own territorial acquisitions.²⁰

It was towards the end of the second treaty period, from 1814 to 1857, when larger schemes of empire began to dominate British policy, that the right to intervene to correct misgovernment was more frequently exercised. The Charter Act of 1833 abolished the Company's trading activities and the latter assumed the functions of the Government of India with a Governor-General at its head. In 1841 the Court of Directors authorized the then Governor-General, Lord Ellenborough,

18. ibid, p. 312.

19. Treaty with Sawantwadi, a small state in the Bombay Presidency.

20. Lee-Warner, op.cit., p. 58.

"to persevere in the one clear and direct course of abandoning no just and honourable accession of territory or revenue."²¹ To achieve this objective the Company could no longer pursue the policy of "tolerating for a period what we deem misrule,"²² which Sir John Malcolm²³ had advocated as recently as 1830. Consequently the penalty for continued misrule was now drastic: a ruler could find himself at war with the British, the invariable result of which was the annexation of his state to British India. The state of Coorg was annexed in 1834 on the plea of maladministration and, after a short campaign, Sind suffered a similar fate in 1843.²⁴ With a similar objective in mind Lord Dalhousie²⁵ took advantage of the "Doctrine of Lapse"²⁶ to annex Satara, Nagpur, Jhansi, Jambalpur and Bhagat. The climax of this expansionist policy came in 1856 when the state of Oudh was annexed on the grounds of misrule. The following year witnessed the outbreak of the Indian Mutiny. One of the underlying causes of this episode was the discontent among the disbanded elements of the armies of those states which had been annexed; it being estimated that in Oudh alone these totalled 40,000 men.²⁷

21. V.P. Menon, The Story of the Integration of the Indian States, Calcutta, 1956, p.8.

22. Lee-Warner, op.cit., p. 14.

23. Governor of Bombay 1827-1831.

24. Menon, op.cit., p.8.

25. Governor-General, 1848-1856.

26. Annexation of the states upon the failure of direct heirs.

27. Menon, op.cit., p.9.

In the aftermath of the mutiny the policy of wholesale annexations was seen by the British as a rather costly error and summarily dispensed with. Moreover it was apparent that most of the princes had remained loyal during the revolt and had in some cases offered active assistance in its suppression. The potential of the Indian States as a political force in support of British rule was immediately seized upon by the home authorities. The Secretary of State, Lord Stanely, urged the new Governor-General, Lord Canning, to spare no effort in rewarding "those native allies who have really stood by us."²⁸ The latter needed no prompting and remarked in an official letter to Sir Charles Wood, who had succeeded Stanely at the India Office in June 1859, that the "safety of our rule is increased not diminished by the maintenance of Native Chiefs well affected to us."²⁹ During the revolt, patches of native government like Gwalior, Hyderabad, Rampur, Rewa and Patiala had, according to Canning, "served as breakwaters to the storm which would otherwise have swept over us."³⁰ He believed that "should the day come when India shall be threatened by an external enemy, or when the interests of England elsewhere may require that her Eastern Empire shall incur more than ordinary risks, one of our best mainstays will be found in these Native States."³¹

28. Stanely to Canning, 2 August 1858, cited in T.R. Metcalf, The Aftermath of Revolt: India 1857-1870, Princeton, 1965, p.222.

29. PCI, 1792-1874, Vol.85, Foreign Department, Letter No.43A to S/S, 30 April 1860.

30. ibid.

31. ibid.

In order to perpetuate the dynasties of the states, Canning dispensed with the Doctrine of Lapse and bestowed "Adoption Sanads"³² upon all rulers above the rank of jagirdar who guaranteed to abide by the sentiments of loyalty and fidelity expressed in their treaties. The sanads recognized the prerogative of these rulers to adopt successors according to the family custom on the failure of natural heirs to their thrones.³³ Lavish territorial and monetary rewards were also bestowed upon those rulers who had proved their loyalty. The Maharaja Scindia of Gwalior received land worth an annual income of three lakhs of rupees, Ranpur land worth one lakh while Patiala and Jind received jagirs worth over two lakhs each. In 1861 a special order of knighthood was instituted known as the 'Star of India' and the rulers of Baroda, Bhopal, Gwalior, Indore, Patiala and Rampur all became its honoured recipients.³⁴

Consequent upon the recognition of the right of adoption however, Canning's letter contained another principle of yet deeper significance:

32. A title deed or Charter. In the context of the relationship between the British Government and the Indian States a sanad has been defined as a "document of title embodying a clear and distinct statement of a formal expression of the terms of an agreement." Menon, op.cit., p. 502.

33. The terms of the Adoption Sanad granted to the Gaekwar of Baroda in 1862 can be found in C.H. Philips (ed), The Evolution of India and Pakistan, 1858-1947: Select Documents, London, 1962, p.416.

34. Metcalf, op.cit., pp. 223-4.

"The proposed measure will not debar the Government of India from stepping in to set right such serious abuses in a native Government as may threaten any part of the country with anarchy or disturbance, nor from assuming temporary charge of a Native State when there shall be sufficient reason to do so."³⁵

Thus it is clear that while the mutiny had come as a profound shock to the British, it was a shock to their complacency rather than to their self-confidence. They were convinced that it was specific mistakes rather than inherent weakness in their rule which had caused the revolt. As far as the states were concerned the mistake had been to annex them but the reasons for this course of action in the cases of Coorg, Sind and Oudh could still be justified. The shock of the mutiny had not therefore altered British resolve to intervene in a state to check misrule. Indeed as Canning also emphasised that the rulers must improve their administrations and that the Government of India had an obligation to the subjects of the states as well as their rulers, it became more clear after the mutiny that "intervention in Native States to cure their administrations would now become, more so than in the past, a moral imperative of British Imperial policy in India."³⁶

At first British remonstrances to erring states were extremely mild. Petty interference would be irritating to the rulers and therefore, where possible, it was

35. PCI. 1792-1874, Vol.85, Foreign Department Letter No.43A to S/S, 30 April 1860.

36. For an analysis of Canning's policy towards the states, see B. Qanungo, "A Study of British Relations with the Native States of India, 1858-1862", Journal of Asian Studies, xxvi, 2 (February 1967) pp. 251-65.

considered better "to guide and influence and lead him when necessary, and not to drive him ..."³⁷ This tolerance did not survive long. Viceroys began to assume a more dictatorial tone and lecture the rulers on social reform, the ideals of good government and the meaning of their relationship with the British Government. Lord Mayo, Viceroy between 1869 and 1872 told them:

"We estimate you, not by the splendour of your offerings to us, nor by the pomp of your retinue, but by your conduct to your people at home ... If we support you in your power we expect in return good government."³⁸

Moreover, in place of the annexation of a state the punishment for misgovernment was now deposition of the ruler. The most striking case was that of the Gaekwar of Baroda in 1875. A commission was appointed to investigate complaints brought against the Baroda administration and to suggest reforms. The Gaekwar protested that such a procedure was unwarranted by the relations subsisting between the British Government and the Baroda state. In reply he was informed that the government never had any intention of interfering in the state and that he was responsible for the administration and the welfare of his subjects. If, however, he should fail in his responsibilities:

"if gross misgovernment be permitted, if substantial justice be not done to the subjects of the Baroda state, if life and property be not protected, or if the general welfare of

37. Lawrence to Northcote, 3 December 1867, cited in C.H. Philips (ed.), op.cit., p.417.

38. Raghbir Sinh, Indian States and the new Regime, Bombay, 1938, pp. 36-7.

the country and people be persistently neglected, the British Government will assuredly intervene in the manner which in its judgement may be best calculated to remove these evils and secure good government." ³⁹

A state which was deprived of its ruler was said to be under "minority" administration. The Government of India either appointed a Council of Regency to administer the state or placed it under the direct charge of a British official. A similar situation obtained if, on the premature death of a ruler, his lineal or adopted successor was too young to assume the full reins of government. Minority periods were the signal for a marked increase in British influence within the state concerned and were used during the second half of the nineteenth century as

"a matter of deliberate policy, to level up the administration of states in their own 'interests', no doubt, but without particular regard for their 'traditions', and sometimes perhaps with not enough regard for what might strictly be held to be their rights." ⁴⁰

In 1879, when Lord Lytton was Viceroy, the Government of India proposed the transfer of Mysore from British back to native rule. The administration of the state had been entrusted to British officials in 1831 when the Maharaja, Krishnaraj Wadiar, had been found guilty of misgovernment. After the mutiny the Maharaja petitioned

39. Report of the Indian States Committee, 1928-1929, Cmd.3302, 1929, para.25. The rulers of Tonk [1867], Alirajpur [1869], Khairgarh [1874], Jhalawar [1896], Sukot [1878], Sakti [1873], Porbandar [1886], Akalkot [1891], Panna [1902] and Bharatpur [1889] were all deposed by the British Government, see U. Phadnis, Towards the Integration of the Indian States, 1919-1947, London 1968, p.11.

40. PSSF. 1902-31, File 2811/1917, No. 23228/1916, undated note by Sir Arthur Hirtzel, Assistant Under Secretary of State at the India Office.

Canning for the restitution of his powers but in reply the Viceroy informed him that the removal of the British officials would be "disastrous".⁴¹ A further appeal by the Maharaja to Canning's successor, Lord Lawrence, produced a similar response:

"Pardon me for saying that, if in the flower of your manhood, after experience of some 20 years' rule, your Highness failed to govern your country wisely and well, what hope can there now be that you could do so?"⁴²

In view of the fact that by 1879 it was no longer a question of reinstating Krishnaraj Wadiar, but his successor, Chama Rajendra Wadiar, the Government of India felt obliged to effect the transfer. The Lytton administration, however, considered that the only way to avoid a repetition of misgovernment in Mysore was to adopt a general policy whereby at the end of minority periods "some reasonable limitations" would be placed "upon the personal power of the ruler, or of the Minister, to whom the administration may be entrusted."⁴³ In preparing a draft Instrument of Transfer, the Government of India therefore included detailed restrictions upon the powers of the restored prince and expressed the wish that they might serve as a precedent to be adopted towards all states emerging from minority periods. The new Maharaja of Mysore would be required to conform to

41. Parliamentary Papers, Vol.LII, No.112, 1866, Papers relating to Mysore, Canning to Maharaja of Mysore, 11 March 1862.

42. ibid., Lawrence to Maharaja of Mysore, 5 May 1865.

43. PSCI. 1875-1911, Vol.22, GOI, FPD. Secret Letter No. 124 to S/S, 22 May 1879.

~~to~~ the advice of the Governor-General in Council on such matters as the management of his finances, the settlement and collections of his revenues, the imposition of taxes, the administration of justice, the extension of commerce, the encouragement of trade, agriculture and industry, and any other matters concerned with the welfare of his subjects and his relations with the British Government.⁴⁴ Viscount Cranbrook, the Secretary of State, disallowed a general application of these principles because they might have been interpreted as an unwarranted revision of the treaties with the states.⁴⁵ However, he did not wish to discourage the Viceroy from using "such legitimate opportunities as may occur for organizing the administration of particular Native States according to the principles you have laid down" and felt that the only protection for the princes against intervention lay in "the gradual and judicious extension ... of the general system of Government which is applied in British India."⁴⁶

of

The policy/intervening in the internal affairs of the states reached its zenith during the viceroyalty of Lord Curzon between 1899 and 1905. With his dogmatic belief in efficiency Curzon attempted not only to implement higher administrative standards in British India but also to cajole the states into adopting comparable standards.

44. Lee-Warner, op.cit., p. 178. These restrictions came into force in Mysore when the state was restored to princely rule in 1881.

45. PSCI. 1875-1911, Vol. 324, Political Despatch No. 102 to GGC, 25 September 1879.

46. ibid.

Many of the princes exasperated Curzon, particularly those who indulged in outrageous behaviour during their travels abroad. The exploits in this respect of princes such as the young Maharaja of Puddokotai led the Viceroy to exclaim of the princes in general:

"For what are they, for the most part, but a set of unruly and ignorant and rather indisciplined schoolboys?"⁴⁷

One of the few princes who gained his admiration was the Maharaja Scindia of Gwalior; "much the most remarkable and promising of all the native chiefs."⁴⁸ The reason for this esteem was that in Scindia, Curzon detected a resemblance to himself. The Maharaja's rare ability to achieve a high degree of efficiency by personally supervizing every department of his administration led the Viceroy to remark: "In his remorseless propensity for looking into everything and probing it to the bottom, he rather reminds me of your humble servant."⁴⁹

Curzon's policy towards the states was based upon the contention that:

"Their duty is one, not of passive acceptance of an established place in the Imperial system, but of active and vigorous co-operation in the discharge of its onerous responsibilities."⁵⁰

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47. Curzon to Hamilton, 29 August 1900, Curzon Collection, No. 159.
48. Curzon to Hamilton, 26 November 1899, Curzon Collection, No. 158.
49. ibid.
50. Lovat Fraser, India Under Curzon and After, London, 1911, p. 212.

He thus devised schemes intended to make the princes realize that the Government expected more of them than that they should concern themselves with the luxuries of palace life or extravagant sojourns in the European capitals. His most significant proposal was one, first suggested during the campaigns of the Boer War, which subsequently enabled princes to obtain commissions in the Indian Army. A beginning was made in May 1905 when the heir to the Maharaja of Jaipur and the Maharaja of Bhavnagar were granted commissions having served a three year probationary period as cadets.⁵¹ For Curzon the primary objective of the scheme was to give to the princes "an occupation in fact which will save them from the bejewelled and frivolous idleness in which they may otherwise be tempted to surrender their lives."⁵² Yet as Curzon himself realized it would take many years to educate the princes in their responsibilities. In perhaps his most profound utterance on the states the Viceroy declared:

"There is not a day in my life in which I do not say to myself, 'What is going to happen in this country 20 years, or 50 years hence?' And I say with the proudest conviction that any Viceroy or any Government that adopted the attitude of letting all these Princes and Chiefs run to their own ruin, would be heaping up immeasurable disaster in the future."⁵³

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51. For details of the scheme, see I.A. Butt, "Lord Curzon and the Indian States, 1899-1905" unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of London, 1963, Chapter 2.
52. Memorandum by His Excellency the Viceroy upon Commissions for Native Officers, 4 June 1900, Curzon Collection, No.253.
53. Curzon to Hamilton, 29 August 1900, Curzon Collection, No. 159.

In view of Curzon's attitude it is necessary finally to consider whether the princes had any positive attributes for the British Raj as the nineteenth century drew to a close. In fact three such attributes can be identified. First, they gave military support when it was requested either in the form of contingents of troops, paid for out of their own revenues, or annual cash tributes.⁵⁴ Secondly, it was felt that because the princes were native rulers they had a certain legitimacy in the eyes of their subjects which the British as aliens could not claim. This was one of the lessons the British had learned from the conflagration of 1857:

"By governing a large part of India through hereditary rulers whose rank gives them a claim on the general regard of the people and strikes their imagination, and whose measures are generally understood by their subjects, instead of by a British official, whose tendency is consciously or unconsciously, to press upon the people Western ideas which are foreign to them and to their habits of thought, we have attained to a system, which allows local institutions to evolve themselves indigenously under the protecting and restraining influence of the wider principles of which the Supreme Government is the guardian."⁵⁵

The third attribute was one of administrative convenience:

"...the relief to the Government of India of being able to hand over the direct administration of more than 70 millions of people or approximately one-fourth of the entire population ... is great and overwhelming, and will be more and more realized as time passes and the strain upon the centre grows."⁵⁶

54. Mysore paid the largest cash tribute, Rs. $24\frac{1}{2}$ lakhs per annum.

55. PSCI, 1875-1911, Vol.163, No.694/1904, undated Foreign Office Note on Sir William Lee-Warner's chapter on Native States for the new Imperial Gazetteer of India.

56. ibid.

It was in this latter sense, and not with any idea of using the states as counterweights to the growth of nationalism in British India, that Curzon declared himself to be "one of those who consider that the maintenance of the Native States and of the Chiefs is essential to the durability of British rule in this country."⁵⁷ Yet at the same time the Viceroy was convinced that the princes themselves were "killing the system" and that the time would come "unless some higher standard is introduced, when their subjects will turn round, and implore to be relieved from the extravagance and oppression of their rulers."⁵⁸ Thus for Curzon, unless higher standards of government were adopted in the states, the second and third attributes of the princes would be rendered meaningless. However the Viceroy's subsequent reflections on the effect that the adoption of these standards would have upon the status of the princes was just one of the reasons why they were never enforced.

57. Curzon to the Queen, 12 September 1900, Curzon Collection, No.135.

58. ibid.

CHAPTER 2.

REMOVING THE ISOLATION: 1904-1920.

The first decade of the twentieth century is a landmark in the relationship between the Paramount Power and the Indian States. It witnessed the emergence of various factors which began gradually to reduce the subservience of the states and assign to them a much more modern and politically orientated role within the context of the Indian Empire.

Curzon's ideas were partly responsible for the new direction in policy towards the states. In 1902 Sir William Lee-Warner had been appointed to the India Council in London. In view of the fact that he was an expert on paramountcy with practical experience of the states¹ he became a member of the Secretary of State's Political Committee. In February 1903, Lee-Warner wrote a draft chapter for inclusion in the Imperial Gazetteer in which he made frequent use of the terms "sovereign" and "sovereignty", when describing the states.² Curzon objected because he considered that both these expressions belonged to a by-gone age. In a minute written in February 1904 the Viceroy recorded his opinion

"that of the total attributes or functions of sovereignty not only the great majority, but also many of the most vital are no longer

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1. Lee-Warner had served as a political officer in Mysore and Kolhapur.
 2. PSCI. 1875-1911, Vol. 163, No. 694/1904, "The Native States", draft of a chapter for the Imperial Gazetteer by W. Lee-Warner, 28 February 1903.

enjoyed by the Native States and that to speak of them as sovereignties, or of their rulers as sovereigns, without any qualification, is therefore to employ language in excess of that which is justified by the facts."³

One of Lee-Warner's colleagues on the Political Committee, Sir Denis Fitzpatrick, had to admit that terms like sovereign, when used out of context, could give rise to some misunderstanding.⁴ Sir Arthur Godley, the Under-Secretary of State, agreed and revised the draft in order to give less prominence to the expression and its derivations.⁵

However the matter did not rest there. Curzon had taken the opportunity in his minute to express his ideas on how future developments would affect the status of the princes. According to the Viceroy, the present trend of British policy would eventually lead to the extinction of the princes in their existing form. His views caused such consternation in the India Office that they merit extensive quotation here:

"For many years, therefore, it has been the practice of the Government of India to desist from the use of phrases implying a recognition of the sovereignty or sovereign rights of the Indian chiefs. In so acting the Government

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3. ibid., Curzon's minute, 29 February 1904. Curzon was not only irritated by the activities of some of the princes when they travelled abroad but also by the spectacle of what he described as English ladies "of the highest rank" curtseying before them and treating them as if they were royalty. While he was Viceroy he attempted to put an end to this by curbing the amount of time some of the princes spent away from their states.
 4. ibid., Fitzpatrick's minute, 28 May 1904.
 5. ibid., Godley's revised draft.

has not only been urging desistence from a practice that is now historically obsolete and inapplicable, but it has been, perhaps not always with full consciousness, lending its ratification to a change of status that has been proceeding silently but uninterruptedly throughout the past half century, and which, in my judgement, will some day insensibly transform the Indian Ruling Chiefs into an aristocracy of rank and prestige, differing only from the hereditary nobility of ancient countries in the West, in the superiority of its prerogatives, dignities and wealth. If the Indian Chiefs are to be maintained as sovereigns, I doubt their capacity for permanent survival; for the exercise of the rights commonly associated with sovereignty will be found, as time passes, to be increasingly incompatible with the future development of the Indian Empire. If, on the other hand, they are preserved as Ruling Chiefs, secure in their privileges and rights, and gradually more and more associated with the Government of the Empire, they will lose nothing in public estimation or in personal prestige, while adding to the stability of the Imperial fabric. No change or departure of policy is required. It is merely essential that we should continue to go forward not back."⁶

Curzon had not completely abandoned the reasons for maintaining the states. It was not a question of abolishing them, nor was it a question of substituting native for British rule. The states would still be governed by hereditary rulers enjoying loyalty and respect from their subjects and they would still relieve the British of some of the burden of administration. However, Curzon's conception of the "future development of the Indian Empire" was one in which Britain would hold India perpetually in trust. He saw his principal task as maintaining the "rule of justice, bringing peace and

6. ibid., Curzon's minute, 29 February 1904.

order and good government."⁷ He expected those who ruled the states to do the same but his experience as Viceroy had convinced him that the majority of the princes were quite unfitted for the task. He therefore considered that unless the princes were deprived of their absolute or sovereign status, they would be incapable either of commanding the loyalty of their subjects or of assisting in the government of the country in the desired manner.

This reasoning did not appeal to Fitzpatrick in London. He thought Curzon's sentiments "so revolutionary and so fraught with dangerous consequences" that it would be "quite impossible for the Secretary of State to pass them over without remark."⁸ He envisaged some "gradual and insensible process" whereby the princes would actually become "British subjects in the proper sense." He recognized that the extension of railways, telegraphs, canals and commerce had encroached upon the autonomy of the princes and also that the government was under a moral obligation, if it guaranteed the existence of a state, to protect the subjects of that state from gross abuses of power by its prince. He also appreciated that as "Civilization and enlightenment extend over the whole country" the government felt more obliged to promote the administration of the states, not only by giving advice to princes but also, when a minority occurred, "by doing our best to train the young Chief and get things in better order for him by the time he attains his majority". However,

7. Curzon's speech, 20 July 1904, cited in G. Bennet (ed.), The Concept of Empire from Burke to Attlee, 1774-1947, London, 1953, pp. 345-348.

8. PSCI, 1875-1911, Vol.163, No.694/1904, Fitzpatrick's minute, 28 May 1904.

according to Fitzpatrick this was as far as it could go:

"... we have in the course of the last forty years pretty nearly reached the limit to which, if Native rule is to be maintained at all, our interference can be properly pushed."⁹

Fitzpatrick predicted dire consequences if Curzon's ideas were allowed to stand. What, he asked, would happen if there was only one sovereign in India in the form of the British Crown and the princes were reduced to nobles or aristocrats exercising some sort of hereditary office under the government -

"... where would our responsibility for all they might do end. We should be inundated with applications to interfere in the administration of the States; we should constantly find that the Chief was doing something which, though it might not call for our interference if it was done by a ruler acting in the exercise of his own sovereign rights, could not be tolerated in a functionary acting in the name of and under the authority of His Majesty; and the ultimate result would be that we should have to put in a minister of our own choosing who would conduct the administration under the control of our political officer, the Native Chief being, for all practical purposes, placed on the shelf."¹⁰

Instead of easing the burden of administration, Fitzpatrick therefore believed that Curzon's ideas would witness an enormous increase in the government's own responsibilities. He suggested that the government should accept the inevitability, and indeed take advantage of the fact that "an administration conducted by hereditary rulers of the class here in question must in most cases fall very far short in various respects of our ideas and standards."

9. ibid.

10. ibid.

Of even more concern to Fitzpatrick was his prediction of the likely political impact of Curzon's ideas. He considered that it was not a question of maintaining the loyalty of the subjects of the states to their princes but rather a question of maintaining the loyalty of the princes to the British. He could hardly agree with Curzon that no policy change would be involved and believed that it would be impossible to disguise the change from the princes:

"The Chiefs and their advisers are quick to scent anything of the kind, and, even if they were not, there are persons by no means friendly to us who would be only too eager to draw their attention to it."¹¹

In this respect Fitzpatrick paralleled the likely implications of Curzon's ideas with the actual consequences of those put into effect by Dalhousie. The contrast was poignant. Curzon justified his views on the grounds that it was essential to go forward not back, yet for Fitzpatrick these same views might put the clock back fifty years and result in another revolt.

Fitzpatrick's views were endorsed by the Political Committee but never officially communicated to Curzon.¹² In the past the India Office had endured many painful confrontations with the formidable incumbent of Government House and Sir Arthur Godley informed St. John Brodrick, the Secretary of State, that it "might cause some unnecessary friction, and it is a good general principle not to send

11. ibid.

12. ibid., Political Committee Resolution, 7 June 1904.

to India the comments of individuals upon papers on their way through this office, unless for some special reason."¹³ In view of the gravity of the situation expressed by Fitzpatrick it would be difficult to imagine a more special reason but no doubt the India Office consoled itself with the thought that Curzon would not be around long enough to implement his ideas. It was only when Sir Louis Dane, the Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, assumed that Curzon's minute had been approved¹⁴ that Godley replied to the effect that the India Office did not look favourably on a policy of "reducing the Native Princes to the status of glorified Noblemen."¹⁵ Clearly the India Office was now in favour of less rather than more interference in the affairs of the states. With the resignation of Curzon in November 1905 certain other factors in India meant that a beginning could be made in this direction.

The most important factor was the rise of militant nationalism in Bengal and Western India. Curzon had done so much to inflame this movement by partitioning Bengal in 1905. The growth of extremism, however, was not only a challenge to the British; it was also a challenge to the essentially moderate policies of the early Indian National Congress. The liberal

13. ibid., Godley to Brodrick, 31 October 1904.

14. ibid., Dane to Lee-Warner, 31 August 1904.

15. ibid., Godley to Dane, 4 November 1904.

John Morley, who had assumed office as Secretary of State in December 1905, recognized the quandary of the position of the moderates in the Congress and urged the need to conciliate them in order "to draw the teeth of the extremists."¹⁶ Lord Minto, Curzon's successor, appreciated the need but did not share Morley's confidence that the Congress could become "a power for good."¹⁷ Accordingly he sought more loyal allies and found the princes to be the likeliest possibility. As early as May 1906 the Viceroy suggested that a "Council of Princes" could function as a "possible counterpoise to Congress aims."¹⁸ It was during the five years of Minto's viceroyalty, especially after January 1908 when Harcourt Butler became Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, that some British officials began seriously to consider the princes as counterweights to the forces of Indian nationalism:

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- 16. Morley to Minto, 11 October 1906, Morley Collection, No.1.
 - 17. Minto to Morley, 28 May 1906, Morley Collection No.8.
 - 18. ibid., Morley assumed that when Curzon had suggested a Council of Princes in July 1905 the former Viceroy had had a similar consideration in mind. Curzon, however, never had any intention of using the princes for this purpose. He had intended that the Council would deal only with the subject of the contribution made by the states to the Imperial Service Troops scheme. He resigned before he could implement his idea, see Curzon to the King, 12 July 1905, Curzon Collection, No. 136 and Morley to Minto, 22 June 1906, Morley Collection No.1.

"We are only, I take it, at the beginning of an anti-British movement which is a permanent factor now in Indian politics ... Surely it is beyond measure important to strengthen the position of the chiefs and attach them to our side."¹⁹

Again:

"The ruling chiefs exist by our sufferance: and any attack upon us is an attack upon them. If we go under they will go under with us."²⁰

Many princes did in fact identify themselves strongly with the Imperial cause during the troubles associated with the partition of Bengal. The Government of India and the Bombay government co-operated with the Maharaja of Kolhapur in attempting to replace Brahmins, whom the British equated with extremism, by Marathas and other non-Brahmins in the administration of the state.²¹ Such efforts led in August 1909 to an exchange of letters between Minto and some leading princes in order to co-ordinate policy on methods of suppressing sedition.²²

Yet despite the advice and support rendered by the princes it would take time before old traditions could be dissipated. Minto's proposal of a Council of Princes met with formidable opposition. One of the Viceroy's principal advisers, Sir Denzil Ibbetson, the Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab, believed that it would be dangerous to establish a Council of Princes. He reasoned that if

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19. GOI. FPD. Confidential B, Internal Branch, Section A, 1911, No.3, Butler's note, 11 March 1909.
 20. ibid., Note by H.V. Cobb, Resident and AGG to Baroda, 17 April 1909.
 21. I.F.S. Copland, "The Maharaja of Kolhapur and the non-Brahmin movement, 1902-1910", Modern Asian Studies, 7, 2 (April 1973), pp. 209-225.
 22. GOI. FPD. Secret-Internal, March 1910, Nos.42-45, Measures desirable to prevent the spread of sedition in Native States.

the princes were allowed to confer they might be encouraged to unite against the government.²³ Even Morley shared this concern:

"What would the Council discuss? What power of directing or influencing the executive? How far could they be allowed to look into the secrets of government. Would they not try to find them out? In your Foreign Department, they would be sure to try for a finger in the pie?"²⁴

A reforms committee appointed by Minto thought that a Council of Princes would be too narrow and recommended instead periodic discussions with selected princes who could, on occasion, be associated with leading landlords from British India.²⁵ Accordingly, Minto considered the alternative of an Imperial Advisory Council²⁶ but again objections were raised. The princes of the larger states, particularly Hyderabad, Mysore and Baroda, refused to contemplate sitting with their inferiors, whether they be the British Indian gentry or other princes.²⁷ Moreover many political officers could not see the point of giving the states a voice in the administration of the country and argued that they could themselves provide the necessary information just as well as any Advisory Council.²⁸ The Viceroy then reverted to his original proposal of a Council

23. S.R. Wasti, Lord Minto and the Indian Nationalist Movement, 1905-1910, Oxford, 1964, p. 156.

24. Morley to Minto, 22 June 1906, Morley Collection No.1.

25. Wasti, op.cit., p. 155.

26. Minto to Morley, 18 June 1907, Morley Collection, No.12.

27. Minto to Morley, 14 November 1907, Morley Collection No.13.

28. Minto to Morley, 26 December 1907, Morley Collection No.13.

of Princes, "small in number to begin with, to deal with questions affecting Native States and their relations with British India, for the express purpose of recognizing the loyalty of Ruling Chiefs and enlisting their interest in Imperial affairs."²⁹ Morley's views finally resolved the debate. The Secretary of State now considered that such practical difficulties as expense, precedence and housing stood in the way of instituting a Council of Princes. He did not reject the idea outright and was prepared to allow it a trial if, after consultation with the leading princes, the Government of India was able to devise an acceptable and workable scheme.³⁰ Minto, however, did not pursue the issue any further.

Yet in one respect the princes did make a substantial, though not immediate, gain from Minto's viceroyalty. A trend began to emerge which subsequently assumed enormous significance, not only for the princes and their states, but also for the future relationship between the states and the Government of India. It was during these five years that Curzon's ideas were officially discarded and replaced by a policy of non-interference. Minto utterly despised everything that his predecessor stood for. His early correspondence with Morley is littered with references to how "intensely Curzon's egotism [I can call it nothing else] and ambitions have shed their influence over public life in India," and how much "bitter native feeling" he had aroused.³¹ In

29. Minto to Morley, 12 August 1908, Morley Collection, No.17.

30. Wasti, op.cit., p. 159.

31. Minto to Morley, 20 December 1905, Morley Collection, No.9.

August 1906 he remarked that there had been "far too much petty interference with the personal affairs and administrations of Native Chiefs."³² A year later he considered that something more serious had been involved. As if to emphasise the point made by Fitzpatrick in 1904 he wrote:

"If a true history of Curzon's role is ever written, it will make the world wonder. Few people at home know the legacy of bitter discontent he left for his successor. It is only this morning that I heard of a recent conversation with Scindia in which the latter got very excited, and said that the tyranny of Curzon's rule towards the Native Chiefs had been so unbearable that nothing would have induced them to continue to put up with it, and that they would have united together without regard to religion or caste to throw it off. And yet Curzon always posed as the greatest friend of the Native Chiefs."³³

Minto took Scindia's remarks at face-value. Notwithstanding the reservations of Morley and Ibbetson over a Council of Princes, for the Viceroy a change in government policy towards the states was necessary, not only in recognition of their potential as political allies, but also to prevent them becoming political enemies.

The Viceroy unveiled the new policy in an oft-quoted speech he delivered at Udaipur in November 1909:

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32. Minto to Morley, 29 August 1906, Morley Collection No.9.
33. Minto to Morley, 12 September 1907, Morley Collection, No. 12. Curzon often said of his policy towards the states that he would be "very surprised" if it was received by "anything but approbation", Curzon to Hamilton, 29 August 1900, Curzon Collection, No.159. Allowance must be made for an element of exaggeration in Scindia's remarks, but in view of the fact that he was one of Curzon's favourites, they are an interesting comment on the attitude of the princes towards the former Viceroy.
34. C.H. Philips (ed.), The Evolution of India & Pakistan, 1858-1947: Select Documents, London 1962, p. 427.

"The Governor-General in Council is opposed to anything like pressure on Durbars to introduce British methods of administration. He prefers that reforms should emanate from the Durbar, and grow up in harmony with the traditions of the State."³⁴

The details of the policy were largely formulated by Minto's Foreign Secretary, Harcourt Butler.

The principles of Butler's non-interference stood in marked contrast to Curzon's ideas. Basically they consisted of a series of do's and don'ts in which the latter heavily outweighed the former. Political officers were not to interfere between the prince and his subjects, they were not to encourage petitions from the latter against the former and they were not to inspect the administration of the state except at the wish of the prince. Ideally, political officers:

"should leave well alone; the best work of a Political Officer is very often what he has left undone."³⁵

Interference could only be contemplated in cases of gross misrule and:

"It may be stated generally that unless misrule reaches a pitch which violates the elementary laws of civilization, the Imperial Government will usually prefer to take no overt measures for enforcing reform: and in any case the attempt to reform should, so long as is possible, be confined to personal suasion."³⁶

Butler also had strong views on the type of officer required to implement this policy:

34. C.H. Phillips (ed), The Evolution of India and Pakistan, 1858-1947: Select Documents, London 1962, p. 427.

35. PIC, 1931-50, Coll.11, File 7, pt.2, No.1506/1934, Extracts from the introduction to the Political Department Manual.

36. ibid.

"We want lean and keen men on the frontier,
and fat and good natured men in the States."³⁷

The adoption of a new policy by the central government did not, however, mean that it would become immediately effective. The circumstances were not dissimilar from those which had prevented a Council of Princes being established. Both Minto and Butler realized that most political officers were still imbued with the Curzonian spirit. The Viceroy in fact suspected that their opposition to the idea of an Imperial Advisory Council had been influenced by fear of their direct authority over the princes being minimized. He admitted that this would probably have been the case "to the advantage, in my opinion, of the general position of the Native States."³⁸ The gain made by the princes, though substantial, was not therefore immediately tangible. In Butler's words:

"We are slowly introducing a new spirit, but the real change will come with a change of generation. The leopard cannot change its spots."³⁹

The reappraisal of government policy towards the states during Minto's viceroyalty was accompanied by an equally significant development among the princes. A new type of prince, increasingly anglicized in outlook and social habits began to emerge. Curzon's administration had done much to stimulate this development. In

37. T.C. Coen, The Indian Political Service: A Study in Indirect Rule, London 1971, p. 37.

38. Minto to Morley, 26 December 1907, Morley Collection, No.13.

39. Butler to his mother, 1 October 1908, Butler Collection, No.6.

attempting to foster a new sense of responsibility among the princes, Curzon was largely responsible for dismantling the traditional barriers of isolation which had prevented a prince having an outlook wider than the narrow confines of his own state. He considered that the colleges which had been established in the 1870's and 1880's to educate the sons of the princes had not only failed to produce the desired results but also to inspire confidence in the princes themselves. He assembled two educational conferences, in January 1902 and March 1904, in order that the colleges could be constituted "not to prepare for examinations, but to prepare for life."⁴⁰ Curzon's influence certainly stimulated a revival of interest. Enrolment at the Mayo College, Ajmer, rose from 60 in 1902 to 143 in 1906. Between 1905 and 1906 there was an increase from 33 to 50 at the Daly College, Indore, and an increase from 64 to 83 at the Aitchison College, Lahore.⁴¹ The system did produce some capable princes like Ganga Singh, the Maharaja of Bikaner, who was a product of the Mayo College. However, the Viceroy's ambitions did not materialize exactly as he would have liked. Of Ganga Singh he remarked:

"The young ruler has charming manners, and I believe an excellent disposition, but he is thoroughly Anglicized in taste and habits, - almost too much so for my conception of what a Native Chief should be."⁴²

40. Lovat Fraser, India Under Curzon and After, London 1911, p. 209.

41. I.A. Butt, "Lord Curzon and the Indian States, 1899-1905," unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of London 1963, p.165.

42. Curzon to Hamilton, 10 May 1899, Curzon Collection, No.158.

The development of these new princes reveals one of the greatest ironies of Curzon's administration. If Ganga Singh did not represent his conception of what a prince should be, who did? Scindia stood highest in his esteem, but as we have seen his regard for this prince was based upon conceit. Moreover it is unlikely that Curzon could have tolerated too many replicas of himself. In fact Sawai Madho Singh, who ruled Jaipur from 1880 to 1922 came closest to his definition of an Indian prince:

"He is one of the old-fashioned class of Princes whom I do everything in my power to encourage - conservative, reluctant to move away from their own States, liberal in the distribution of their funds, intensely loyal to the Queen and the British connection, adverse to being too much bothered or fussed, but capable, if skilfully and sympathetically handled, of being guided where we will."⁴³

Basically, therefore, Curzon's conception of a prince was one who would remain in his state - "his real work, his princely duty, lies among his own people,"⁴⁴ - and one who would, above all, bend before a superior British will.

Many of Curzon's policies, however, produced the exact opposite. No doubt the Viceroy intended that the younger element among the princes would be able to combine careers as army officers with the necessary administrative duties in their states. Yet all too often they did neither, preferring to idle their time in their capitals while accumulating purely honorary military distinctions. Moreover a number of princes who had been

43. Curzon to Hamilton, 25 July 1900, Curzon Collection, No. 159.

44. L.J. Zetland, The Life of Lord Curzon, Vol. 2, Viceroy of India, London 1929, p. 89.

educated at the colleges emerged from adolescence with an increasing awareness of the arbitrary manner in which they were treated. As far as Ganga Singh was concerned it soon became apparent that he would never prove amenable to "being guided where we will." Early in his career his autocracy matched the efficiency of Scindia's but as he grew older he became more concerned that the guarantees of his treaty rights and privileges should be fully maintained and respected.

In addition to Ganga Singh, the leading members of this new breed of prince were Jey Singh of Alwar, Bhupinder Singh of Patiala and the Jam Sahib Ranjit Singh of Nawanagar. Until 1921, Scindia could be counted amongst their number. They were an odd assortment and presented many contrasts. Bikaner, dignified and sophisticated - Patiala, petulant and temperamental - Alwar, a brilliant intellectual, but devious and sly - Nawanagar, a sportsman who made a name for himself as a Test cricketer. Finally, Scindia. As a Maratha of humble origin, he cowered before Alwar and Bikaner, two blue-blooded princes from Rajputana. When out riding he kept a respectful two lengths behind Alwar, even though as Butler remarked, the size and wealth of his state meant that he could "buy him out many times over."⁴⁵ What these princes shared in common was a greater consciousness of their rights and privileges, an ability to converse with high British officials and a physical proximity to New Delhi, the capital of British India since 1912.

45. Butler to his mother, 18 February 1909, Butler Collection, No.7.

Ganga Singh of Bikaner was principal spokesman and greatest celebrity of this group. He had suffered badly at the hands of the Political Department during his early years. When, in 1887, he had acceded to his gadi [throne], he had been given to understand that restrictions on his ruling powers would remain in force for two years only. However it was not until May 1907 that these restrictions were finally removed.⁴⁶ Moreover, Bikaner's first experience of a political officer left a profound impression upon him. From 1888 to 1897 he was confronted with the formidable Sir Charles Stuart Bayley who had a habit of demanding reports on selected petitions from state subjects. When Bikaner protested Bayley informed him:

"You must remember that though I have the pleasure of being your personal friend, I am also your Political Agent and as such have duties to perform, of which I and my superior officers are the only judges, and which cannot be neglected even though they unfortunately clash with your notions of what a Political Officer should do."⁴⁷

Bikaner subsequently spent the best part of his political career attempting to ensure that such a situation would not be repeated elsewhere. This, however, was not his only concern. During the Viceroyalty of Lord Hardinge, who succeeded Minto in November 1910, Bikaner expressed his concern that the proposal for a Council of Princes should have been rejected while an instalment of British

46. Rajputana Residency Files, Box 182, No.81, 1898-1907, Installation of His Highness Maharaja Ganga Singh of Bikaner with Ruling Powers and removal of restrictions.

47. K.M. Panikkar, His Highness the Maharaja of Bikaner, London 1937, pp. 95-6.

Indian reform had been introduced by the Indian Councils Act of 1909. He believed that these reforms had unleashed an "unskilled democracy" and felt that there was "more than a possibility of its eventually becoming intolerant and unsympathetic with those who have a real stake in the land and in the good government of the country as has happened elsewhere throughout the world." To have excluded the states from the government of the Empire was, according to Bikaner, fraught with danger for Britain's allies:

"We do not wish to become mere puppets and share the fate of some of the European aristocracies."

Moreover, without the states

"the whole Government of India might sink to a drab dead level of democracy without any of the interest or distinction that is suited to the instincts and imagination of the people."

Bikaner did not advocate the immediate establishment of a Council of Princes. Indeed in view of the possible British Indian reaction he considered that this would be "both impolitic and undesirable." Instead he recommended that before the Imperial Legislative Council reached a decision on any matter "even remotely affecting the states", the princes should assemble in order that their views be known first.⁴⁸

Hardinge thought Bikaner's fears exaggerated and that his note contained "a good deal of rubbish."⁴⁹

48. GOI. FPD. Confidential B, Internal Branch, Section A, 1914, No.6, Bikaner's note, 14 January 1914.

49. ibid., Hardinge to Wood, 19 January 1914.

The new Political Secretary, John Wood, echoed these sentiments and couldnot envisage the time when the princes would be able to take part in the "regular machinery of Government."⁵⁰ The Viceroy, however, could see no harm in the princes discussing some "anodyne" question affecting themselves and their interests only and cited the example of the management of states during minorities.⁵¹ The minorities issue subsequently became the most significant part of Hardinge's Viceroyalty as far as the states were concerned.

In December 1915, Scindia informed the Viceroy that although political officers had used minority periods to remove long standing abuses and improve the finances of the states, their methods had "shaken the adherence of the people to their traditional customs and ways." He considered that minorities had therefore worked to alter the ties of personal loyalty and obedience between the subjects and their prince when the latter entered upon his inheritance.⁵² Hardinge felt these complaints were not entirely groundless and considered that a clear and detailed study of British policy was required in order, not only to allay the suspicion which existed in the minds of some of the princes, but also to lay down principles for the future guidance of the government.⁵³ To undertake this task, he appointed a committee consisting of

50. ibid., Wood to Hardinge, 21 January 1914.

51. ibid., Hardinge to Wood, 19 January 1914.

52. PSSF, 1902-31, File 2811/1917, No.930/1917, GOI. FPD, Letter No.15, Enclosure No.11, to S/S, 9 February 1917.

53. ibid.

the Maharajas of Bikaner and Gwalior, the Begum of Bhopal, Wood and two other political officers. The committee sat at Delhi in February 1916 and recorded their recommendations in a memorandum which was subsequently communicated to the more important princes in Central India and Rajputana. The most significant recommendation was that which declared that any measure introduced during a minority "will be liable to revocation by the minor Ruler at any time after he obtains his full powers."⁵⁴ The contents of the memorandum were obviously welcomed by those princes to whom it was communicated but, as we shall see, this was not the case with certain members of the Secretary of State's India Council.

In April 1916 Lord Chelmsford replaced Hardinge as Viceroy. The change was accompanied by a further reappraisal of the Government of India's policy towards the states. The issue this time concerned an assemblage of princes. In May 1916, in sharp contrast to his earlier opinion, Wood recommended that a Council of Princes should be established. He was impressed by the possibilities of gatherings such as the committee which had discussed the minorities issue. They were not only welcomed by the princes, but were also of the greatest value to the Viceroy and the Political Department in that they served as a "safety valve through which minor grievances find a harmless vent, and tend to prevent subterranean communications behind the backs of Political Officers which are a source of danger to our administration." Above all,

54. ibid., Enclosure No.IV.

however, the response and contribution made by the princes to the allied war effort during the struggle with Germany had firmly entrenched them in the Imperial camp. Wood was anxious that nothing should happen to dislodge them:

"... it is recognized on all hands that the collective goodwill and support of the Ruling Chiefs is an Imperial asset of incalculable value. If the growing demand for collective discussion is disregarded, we run the risk of alienating the sympathies of those whose support is most worth having."

The constitution, functions and procedure of Wood's Council were not to be embodied in a formal document; the Council would be of a purely advisory character with no statutory powers. Its main purpose would be to strengthen the hands of the Viceroy by enlisting the collective support of the princes in any measure which the paramount power wished to take in connection with the affairs of the states.⁵⁵

When placed before Chelmsford's Executive Council, Wood's proposal received only qualified approval. The reservations expressed ten years earlier by Ibbetson had by now disappeared but part of Morley's still remained: it was felt that a Council dealing only with the states would suffer from lack of material for discussion. To compensate for this it was suggested that a Council of Princes should be more closely co-ordinated with other constitutional and political developments then under

55. GOI. FPD. Secret-Internal, July 1916, No.29, Wood's note, 27 May 1916.

consideration for British India.⁵⁶ Yet it was for this very reason that a Council could not be immediately contemplated. In 1915, Chelmsford had described British rule in India as "aimless" and characterized by a "hand-to-mouth policy of giving reforms piecemeal in response to agitation." At the first meeting of his executive in May 1916, the Viceroy therefore posed the following two questions:

- (1) What is the ultimate goal of British rule in India?
- (2) What are the first steps on the road to that goal?⁵⁷

Until answers could be found to these two questions it would not be possible to institute a Council of Princes.

In recognition of the princes' war services, however, a less ambitious scheme of association did receive official endorsement. At Delhi on 30 October 1916, Chelmsford presided over the first session of a Conference of Ruling Princes and Chiefs. Present were nine representatives from the Bombay states, six from the Punjab, eleven from Central India, ten from Rajputana and the Maharajas of Kashmir, Cochin, Cooch-Bihar and Benares. The rulers of the important states of Hyderabad, Mysore and Udaipur abstained, although on this occasion the Gaekwar of Baroda decided to attend. The most important discussion related to the minorities issue and the

56. *ibid.*, notes by C.R. Lowndes, 3 June 1916, G.S. Barnes, 3 June 1916 and C.H.A. Hill, 29 June 1916.

57. Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 5 May 1916, Chelmsford Collection, No.2.

conference unanimously endorsed the recent memorandum on the subject.⁵⁸

This aspect of the conference, however, disturbed certain members of the India Council in London. It emerged that when the Government of India had circulated the minorities memorandum in 1916, it had not sought approval from the Secretary of State, Austen Chamberlain.⁵⁹ Moreover, according to one member of council, the Government of India had committed a grave error in drawing up such a document. This was none other than Sir Charles Stuart Bayley, Bikaner's former political agent.⁶⁰ Bayley argued that in the past the government had avoided tying its own hands by refusing to define the principles of its policy towards the states. The doctrine of paramountcy was subject to change and growth and thus the principles involved in any one policy had always been kept as elastic as possible. He was quick to point out that both Bikaner and Gwalior had "axes of their own to grind", and took particular exception to the idea that a prince could rescind a minority measure on assuming his full powers. Revenue settlements, where none previously existed, were invariably the first reforms undertaken during minorities

58. Proceedings of the Conference of Ruling Princes and Chiefs held at Delhi on the 30th October 1916, 5th November 1917, 20th January 1919 and 3rd November 1919, pp.23-38,40,53-63,84-90 (hereafter, Conference of Ruling Princes).

59. PSSF. 1902-31, File 2811/1917, No.930/1917. Secret Letter No.9 to GGC, 15 September 1916.

60. It was common practice for political officers with distinguished careers to be appointed to the India Council. Bayley had risen to govern Bengal and Assam in 1912 and Bihar and Orissa between 1912 and 1915 before his appointment to the India Council. It was significant that officials like Bayley maintained the beliefs they had held as political officers, often to the irritation of their successors in India. See below, Chapter 3, the case of Robert E. Holland.

and to Bayley it was ridiculous that the Government of India would now allow these measures to be rescinded.⁶¹

The Under-Secretary of State, Sir Thomas Holderness, while appreciative of Bayley's views, was also more sympathetic towards the Government of India. He considered that the loyalty of the princes during the war might not have been so effectively secured had a stiff attitude been adopted as regards the prerogatives of the paramount power during minorities. Moreover, he believed there was another side to the argument that relations with the states were subject to change and growth. The altered outlook and education of the princes and their greater knowledge of the power of concerted action made it desirable for the paramount power to absolve something of the claim that its agents should be free to act untrammelled by rules:

"Intelligent men who can cite particular instances in which the occasion of a minority has been utilized by an energetic political to reform the State, and who ask that definite rules should be laid down, expect more than a bare assurance that the Paramount Power will always seek the well-being of its feudatories."⁶²

Yet it was precisely the arguments of his Under-Secretary that disturbed Chamberlain. Princes like Bikaner and Scindia now seemed to be emphasizing their claims to complete internal independence at the expense

61. PSSF. 1902-31, File 2811/1917, No. 2328/1916, Bayley's note, 23 August 1916.

62. ibid., Holderness's minute, 31 March 1917.

of the prerogatives of the paramount power. This tendency caused Chamberlain to make the following important statement on the relations subsisting between Britain and the states:

"In the scrupulous maintenance of our treaty obligations nothing less than the honour of the Sovereign is involved, and no Government could ever seek to belittle them. The relations of the Government with the Chiefs are, however, necessarily subject to variation, and the literal fulfilment of an obligation may become impossible, either through change in essential circumstances, or by the mere passage of time. Again, many of the treaties were concluded before the Crown stood forth in Lord Canning's phrase - the unquestioned Ruler and Paramount Power in all India; and since that event considerations of the general good of the Indian body politic have necessarily become a new factor in their interpretation. While they remain unrepealed in the letter and binding in the spirit, a constant development of constitutional doctrine is in process ... But of that process the superintendence, direction and control must remain in the hands of the Paramount Power."⁶³

The Government of India was subsequently obliged to revise the minorities memorandum and omit that section which enabled a prince to rescind a minority measure.⁶⁴ It was also advised to furnish the India office with copies of the agenda for any future conferences. Controversial or objectionable subjects would henceforth be censored.

The minorities issue, however, had more far-reaching implications. Much to Bayley's disappointment, Chamberlain's statement did not mean that the Government

63. ibid., Secret Letter No.15 to GGC, 27 April 1917.

64. ibid., No. P4209/1917, GOI. FPD. Resolution No.1894-I.A., 27 August 1917.

of India would have to abandon its non-interference policy. What it did mean was that the Secretary of State considered it impossible to define paramountcy in accordance with the principles of this policy. Yet for princes like Bikaner, Alwar, Patiala and the Jam Sahib, this was the most objectionable feature of their relationship with the Raj. They persistently argued that paramountcy required definition and that this should accord with the principles of non-interference. Moreover, they justified their argument by referring, not to Butler's policy - history had taught them to be wary of the durability of British policies - but to what they considered were everlasting guarantees in their treaties and sanads. The ensuing struggle between these princes and the Government of India becomes intelligible only when these two conflicting viewpoints are recognized.

In 1917 many princes viewed the prospect of a further instalment of British Indian reform with similar apprehensions to those expressed by Bikaner three years earlier. Bikaner himself, however, responded to the situation in a very different way during the first few months of 1917. In order not only to gain sympathy for princely aspirations but also to prove that the states were not obstacles to the political progress of their neighbours, he now openly advocated an adequate measure of British Indian reform. In April 1917, when in London as a participant of the Imperial War Cabinet and Conference, he presented Chamberlain with a note outlining the basic

reforms which should be granted to British India. In addition to the "desirability of greater autonomy being granted to the Government as well as to the Provincial Governments ...", he stressed the "extreme importance" of an authoritative declaration that "self-government within the British Empire is the object and goal of British rule in India."⁶⁵

Bikaner's activities in this respect disturbed Chelmsford. In February 1917 the Viceroy had written to Chamberlain asking him to warn Bikaner against "holding out encouragement to the political extremists."⁶⁶ In May 1917 the Secretary of State had a long interview with Bikaner and pointed out that just as the states resented any interference by the Government of India in their internal affairs, so the states must reciprocate by refraining from any interference in the affairs of British India. He also warned Bikaner that if the type of reforms he advocated became effective, the Government of India would become more interfering as it became more popular and claim a right of control over the states far in excess of that at present exercised.⁶⁷

The interview left a profound impression upon Bikaner. As early as January 1914 he had envisaged that

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- 65. Bikaner's memorandum, enclosed with Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 18 April 1917, Chelmsford Collection, No.3.
 - 66. Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 15 February 1917, Chelmsford Collection, No.3. 1916 and 1917 were years of agitation by the Home Rule League in which Mrs. Annie Besant and Bal Gangadhar Tilak played prominent roles.
 - 67. Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 8 May 1917, Chelmsford Collection, no.3.

in the future a "Federal Chamber representative of the states - and if necessary through the Governors and the Lieutenant-Governors, who could sit with the Ruling Chiefs, the Provinces of British India as well - would gradually grow up with at first advisory functions only."⁶⁸ Henceforth he would only contemplate such an arrangement if the princes received constitutional guarantees that they would remain free from Government of India interference.

In July 1917, fresh impetus was given to the reform movement by a change of personnel at the India Office. Criticism of the Government of India's handling of the Mesopotamian campaign during the war caused Chamberlain to resign. On 20 August 1917 his successor, Edwin Montagu, issued a statement to the effect that "the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire", was the declared aim of British policy in India.⁶⁹

The reference to "India" was pertinent, although at the time a mistake. It was inconceivable that responsible government was to be the declared aim for the Indian States. This was meant to apply only to British India, although by implication, the wording of the declaration did indicate that for the first time the problem of the states was to be identified with the

68. GOI. FPD. Confidential - B, Internal Branch, Section A, 1914, No.6, Bikaner's note, 14 January 1914.

69. Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms, 1918, Cmd. 9109, 1918, para.6 (hereafter, Montford Report).

political progress of the rest of the country.⁷⁰ The significance of this aspect of the declaration was not lost upon the participants of the Conference of Ruling Princes and Chiefs, a second session of which was held at Delhi in November 1917. Bikaner declared that "No scheme for the progress of India can be regarded as satisfactory or complete which does not take into consideration questions relating to those important territories outside British India." Heeding Chamberlain's warning, he disavowed any intention of encroaching upon the affairs of British India and asked only that the states be consulted in matters of "Imperial or common concern." To enable the states to keep pace with British India he suggested the early establishment of a "constitutional Chamber which may safeguard the interests and rights of ourselves and our States."⁷¹ In reply, Chelmsford said that it might be possible to arrange for an informal discussion with the princes towards the end of Montagu's forthcoming visit to India and suggested in the meantime that they frame the outlines of a scheme on the subject of their political future.⁷²

70. The error was corrected in the Government of India Act of 1919. As Parliament was not entitled to impose any constitutional enactments upon the states, the term "India" was replaced by "British India", see R. Coupland, The Indian Problem, 1833-1935, 5th impression, Oxford 1968, p. 61.

71. Conference of Ruling Princes, pp. 288-289.

72. ibid., p. 291.

Had it not been for Montagu, Chelmsford would have been at a loss on how to proceed with the princes. In February 1917, Bikaner had requested of the Viceroy that the princes be given land grants in India or in conquered German territory abroad, as rewards for their war services as had been done in appreciation for princely support during the mutiny. In forwarding the request to Chamberlain the Viceroy admitted:

"The position today may be as important as that at the close of the mutiny, but it differs in toto, inasmuch as while at that time we had land to give away, today we have none. The truth is we are in a great quandary so far as the chiefs are concerned."⁷³

Montagu, however, had previous experience of the princes and their aspirations. He had toured India as Under-Secretary of State during the cold weather of 1912-13. The frequent visits he made to the states left him with two impressions. First, he considered the westernized type of prince to be amongst the most distinguished personalities in India and counted Jey Singh of Alwar as his favourite.⁷⁴ Secondly he utterly despised the pompous and overbearing manner of many political officers and held them primarily responsible for the princes' complaints.⁷⁵ He found nothing to alter these impressions during his second tour of India from November

73. Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 1 March 1917, Chelmsford Collection, No.3.

74. Indian Diary, Vol.II, Alwar, 14 January 1913, Montagu Collection, No. 39.

75. see below, p.74

1917 to April 1918. Moreover, although he subsequently recognised that democratic and nationalistic "hopes and aspirations may overleap frontier lines like sparks across a street",⁷⁶ the Secretary of State appeared indifferent to the fact that most states were years behind British India in the quality of their administrative systems. His sole concern was to avoid any possibility of estranging the princes: "Our business ... is to refrain from interference and to protect the States from it."⁷⁷

The outline of a scheme on the political future of the states that Chelmsford had requested was produced by a committee of princes consisting of Bikaner, Alwar, Patiala and the Jam Sahib of Nawanagar. These four began by asserting that the "Treaty rights, position as Sovereign Princes and Allies, and the dignity and honour and privileges and prerogatives of the Ruling Princes shall be maintained intact and strictly safeguarded." The establishment of a "Chamber of Ruling Princes" was recommended in order to protect their rights. In addition, an "Advisory Board" of four princes would be created to advise the Political Department on all matters concerning the states. "Judicial Tribunals" would be appointed to determine inter-statal disputes or disputes between a state and the Government of India and the case for depriving a prince of his ruling powers was to be investigated by a "Commission of Enquiry". Finally, there was to be a "Committee of Reference for matters of Joint

76. Montford Report, para. 157.

77. ibid.

Interest" composed of representatives nominated by the Chamber of Princes and an equal number selected by the Government of India from the appropriate legislature. The committee envisaged that when the provincial governments had reached the same level of internal autonomy as the states, the only satisfactory solution to the problem of common interests would "probably" be a "confederation" of provinces and states.⁷⁸

The sum total of these proposals indicates that the major concern of the four princes was to gain protection from the arbitrary use of paramountcy. Closely allied to this was the recognition that if they could consolidate their rights against the existing bureaucratic machinery of the Government of India, then they would be in a stronger position to resist any future challenge to these rights should the government become more popular. Furthermore, although they wanted an effective voice in matters of common concern, the princes remained mindful of Bikaner's interview with Chamberlain. Thus they would only enter a merger with British India if their internal autonomy was respected.

At Delhi in February 1918, Montagu and Chelmsford convened a meeting with the princes and received the report of the committee. Besides the four responsible for the report, the meeting was attended by the Maharajas of Gwalior, Jaipur, Jodhpur and Kolhapur, the Maharao of Cutch and the Begum of Bhopal.⁷⁹ In discussion the

78. GOI. FPD. Secret-Internal, May 1918, No.1, Minutes of meeting at Delhi, 4-5 February 1918.

79. Not a single prince from south India was present.

princes complained that there had been a tendency to disregard treaty rights and although they were unable to cite any specific instances offhand, Bikaner made it clear that they were apprehensive about their future and wanted to make sure that "the fulfilment of the Treaties should not depend on the personal goodwill of high officers."⁸⁰ In order to see how far such claims were justified the Government of India invited the princes to indicate the occasions when they considered the government had failed to fulfil its treaty pledges. In their subsequent report, Montagu and Chelmsford recognized the anxiety of the princes and sought to assure them "that no constitutional changes which may take place will impair the rights, dignities and privileges secured to them by treaties, sanads and engagements or by established practice."⁸¹ As a positive gesture they suggested that, with the consent of those concerned, the situation could be reviewed "not necessarily with a view to any change of policy but in order to simplify, standardize and codify existing political practice for the future."⁸² The remainder of the report was largely a reproduction of the scheme presented by the four-man committee and concluded with a vision of the future embracing the "external semblance of some form of federation". The provinces would become autonomous units held together by a central government which would deal

80. GOI. FPD. Secret-Internal, May 1918, No.1, Minutes of meeting at Delhi, 4-5 February 1918.

81. Montford Report, para. 305.

82. ibid.

with matters common to them all, as they would be to the states. The gradual concentration of the Government of India upon such matters would make it easier for the states, while retaining their internal autonomy to enter a closer association with the central government if they wished to do so.⁸³

The two most significant recommendations of the report were those relating to the codification of political practice and the establishment of a Chamber of Princes. Moreover, the significance of these was not merely attributable to the issues at stake. Over both proposals the princes emerged, not as a united and coherent body but as a series of groups and factions urging a variety of demands designed to promote a number of particularist ambitions. Implicit in this disunity was a growing resentment among a large number of states at the manner in which the small activist group of princes, representative of the medium sized states, had assumed a monopoly interest in all the reform proceedings relating to the states.

At the princes' conference of January 1919, Chelmsford suggested that the proposed Chamber of Princes should consist of three classes of states: those with a salute of eleven guns or over, those which had a nine gun salute and possessed practically full internal powers, and finally such other states with a nine gun salute that the government considered fit for the grant of full, or

83. ibid, para. 300.

practically full, internal powers. The Viceroy also suggested that a "reasonable and proportional representation of the lesser states" should be secured to enable them to have a voice in matters affecting their interests. While the conference agreed to the first three categories, many princes of medium sized states objected to the second suggestion, particularly as the Viceroy had also hinted that some states which were the feudatories of others could be eligible for membership.⁸⁴ The matter was referred to the Political Department which, in August 1920, recommended that representatives of states not included in Chelmsford's first two categories, and exclusive of non-jurisdictionary Thakurs, Estates and mere feudatories, should form an integral part of the Chamber and be styled "Representative Members."⁸⁵ This recommendation was accepted: twelve minor princes were to be elected to represent 127 states in this manner. Of the twelve, four came from the Bombay Presidency, three from Bihar and Orissa, two from the Punjab, two from the Central Provinces and one from Central India.

The Chamber of Princes, which was inaugurated by Royal Proclamation on 8 February 1921, was thus to consist of 108 princes who were to be members in their own right, plus twelve representative members. However, inclusive in the former category were the princes of the larger states for whom the very idea of a Chamber was anathema. Their aversion to a princely organization had

84. Conference of Ruling Princes, pp. 588-9.

85. Proceedings of the meetings of the Chamber of Princes (Narendra Mahal), February 1921 (hereafter, Chamber of Princes).

remained unchanged since Minto's day and they subsequently refused to participate. According to the Nizam of Hyderabad:

"I should not like any questions affecting my State being determined on the advice of other Ruling Princes, or of their representatives, Hindus or Muhammadens ..., it would contravene the essential principle that each Prince is a Sovereign who is entitled to conduct his business direct with the British Government, without the intervention of other Indian States, or of any Legislative Assemblies of British India."⁸⁶

A similar position was adopted by the states of Baroda, Indore, Mysore, Jaipur and Udaipur.

In the absence of the larger states the Chamber was destined to be dominated by a league of princes from the medium sized states of Rajputana, Western India and the Punjab. They would contemplate no erosion of their position. During the first session of the Chamber a claim was made on behalf of the smaller states that the qualification rules be modified in order to accommodate more of their number. Bikaner replied:

"As regards the Representative Members, there has also been the apprehension expressed, not only of the levelling down process, but of the danger of our being flooded and out-voted by the lesser Rulers."⁸⁷

The Maharaja of Alwar warned that even those princes who had decided to attend the Chamber might abstain if they discovered "that their views do not carry the amount of importance due to their position."⁸⁸ Inevitably the

86. Conference of Ruling Princes, p. 507.

87. Chamber of Princes, February 1921.

88. ibid.

Standing Committee of the Chamber to all intents and purposes the Advisory Board recommended by the four princes in 1918, was tightly controlled by the medium sized states. Initially it comprised five members; in addition to the Chancellor of the Chamber there was to be one representative from each of the four divisions of Bombay, Central India, Rajputana and the Punjab. During the first session of the Chamber, however, two changes were made: in future members were to be elected on merit, not on any territorial basis and their number was to be increased from five to seven. In November 1921 the Committee consisted of the following princes - Bikaner [Chancellor], Gwalior, Cutch, Patiala, Nawanagar, Alwar and Palanpur. Of these, Scindia was the odd man out. With the exceptions of Patiala, who was a Sidhu Jat, and Palanpur, who was a Pathan, all the others were descended from one of the numerous Rajput clans.⁸⁹ Scindia, however, was a lowly Maratha, and although he had sponsored their cause over the past six years, the others treated him as an outcaste.⁹⁰ He resigned in 1924 and never returned. In all subsequent personnel changes made on the Standing Committee, the predominance of the medium sized states from Rajputana, Western India and the Punjab was perpetuated.⁹¹

89. A table listing the racial origins of the princes can be found in PIC 1931-50, Coll.11, file 4, No.4. Descriptive note on the Indian States, 1931.

90. GOI, FPD. Deposit-Internal (Secret), 1919, No.9, Bosanquet to Holland, 8 August 1919.

91. U. Phadnis, Towards the Integration of the Indian States, 1919-1947, London, 1968, Appendix VII, Members of the Standing Committee.

The larger states also objected to the proposal to codify political practice. The Gaekwar of Baroda expressed their apprehensions when he said that codification would have a "levelling and corroding influence upon the superior Treaty rights of individual States ... Uniformity of standards and codified methods of interpretation will tend to obscure these important distinctions of status no less than uniformity of nomenclature does now."⁹²

Montagu, who held but scant regard for the aloofness of the larger states, ignored these objections. At his insistence the Government of India appointed a codification committee consisting of Bikaner, Alwar, Nawanagar, Patiala and Cutch, Sir George Lowndes, the Law Member of Council and Robert Holland, the Deputy Political Secretary. The committee met first in September 1919 to discuss twenty-three points of political practice which the princes, in their replies to the government's enquiry about treaty infringements, alleged had encroached upon their rights and dignity. On this issue, however, the princes were unable to have things all their own way and a fundamental difference of opinion emerged between themselves and the British officials as to the procedure they should follow. The origin of this difference lay in the contents of a speech made by Alwar to the princes' conference in January 1919. He had argued that although the states could not claim a position

92. Conference of Ruling Princes, p. 487.

of equality with the British Government, the fact of their internal sovereignty meant that their position was not one of subordination either. It was therefore necessary that any discussion on codification should be accompanied by a mutual definition regarding the relative position of the two partners in the relationship "because without that we could not decide or discuss the abstract principles which shall guide and rule our treaty relations."⁹³ What in fact Alwar was asking for was an authoritative definition of paramountcy which would involve the Government of India indicating the limits of its rights and prerogatives. This was precisely the possibility that Chamberlain had vetoed in his correspondence with the Government of India on the minorities issue, and not even Montagu could contemplate such a procedure.

Accordingly, when Alwar repeated his proposal in the codification committee, Lowndes countered by suggesting that as political practice was so well established and extensive, it would be more useful to examine the existing usage and principles underlying it in order to ascertain if any of them conflicted with the terms of the princes' treaties. Lowndes was prepared to concede that the reforms being introduced in British India made future political developments uncertain and that ultimately it might be equally in the interests of both parties to define their mutual positions. As yet, however, this contingency had not arisen. The problem was eventually solved by a compromise solution, suggested by the Maharao of

93. ibid., p. 366.

Cutch. The committee would immediately concern itself with the examination of the twenty-three points of political practice, it being understood that this would not prejudice resort to Alwar's "analytical" approach should this seem necessary.⁹⁴

The Government of India was quite satisfied with the outcome. Four of the twenty-three points were successfully dealt with by the committee.⁹⁵ The government felt that the committee's proceedings had not only removed many misunderstandings but had also witnessed a "marked growth of mutual confidence" between itself and the states.⁹⁶ This self-congratulation omitted one vital consideration: because no attempt had been made to define mutual rights and obligations, the princes concerned considered it necessary to append their own note to the general report of the codification committee. In their opinion it was:

94. GOI. FPD. Secret-Reforms, February 1920, Nos.1-6, Proceedings of the Committee appointed by the Conference of Ruling Princes and Chiefs to examine the question of codification of existing political practice, 22 September 1919.

95. ibid., Report of the Committee appointed by the Conference of Ruling Princes and Chiefs to examine the question of codification of existing political practice, November 1919. The four points were (1) Tours and visits abroad by Princes, (2) The procedure for the examination in Indian States of commissions in criminal cases issued by British Indian courts, (3) The construction and maintenance of telephone lines in Indian States, (4) The acquisition of immovable residential property in British India by the princes.

96. ibid., Secret-Internal Despatch, No. 8 to S/S, 15 January 1920.

"hardly necessary to emphasize the inviolate character of our treaties, sanads and engagements. Suffice it to say that the treaties between the British Government and the Indian States provide the sole test of the latter's rights and the only correct standard for judging the obligations of the former. It must, however, be added that no laches, lapse of time or the growth of any practice in which the Princes had no voice can be admitted to modify the original relations of the States with the British Government as deducible from the treaties, much less to render these treaties obsolete." 97

Clearly these princes did not ~~share~~ the Government of India's satisfaction at the outcome of these negotiations.

V.P. Menon wrote of the position in 1921:

"The paramount power continued to be paramount and paramountcy remained as vague and undefined as ever." 98

Yet this did not mean, that by 1921, the states were in an analogous position to the one they had been in under Curzon. On the contrary, the states were now firmly established as Britain's principal allies. As Montagu had told Chelmsford in March 1918:

"I need not remind you, that after all, we owe a greater - or at any rate as great - a debt to the Princes than to British India, and it is equally incumbent upon us to try and satisfy them." 99

The inauguration of the Chamber of Princes despite its drawbacks, was the clearest indication that the days of isolation were over. Moreover, by 1921 a policy of non-interference was slowly beginning to pervade the Government

97. ibid., Report of the Codification Committee, November 1919.

98. V.P. Menon, The Story of the Integration of the Indian States, Calcutta, 1956, p.19.

99. Montagu to Chelmsford, 3 March 1918, Chelmsford Collection, No.4.

of India, and it is to this that we shall next turn our attention. It is important to recognize, however, that over the fundamental issue of paramountcy, the process of removing the isolation had left one section of these princely allies with a grievance; a grievance which their Imperial patron was most unwilling to redress. If this situation persisted, it was not inconceivable that in the future their effectiveness as allies would be subject to serious doubt.

CHAPTER 3.

THE POLICY OF NON-INTERFERENCE: 1920-1934.

The establishment of the Chamber of Princes was not only a major innovation in the evolution of British policy towards the states, it also represented a triumph for the eloquence and persistence of a select band of rulers of medium sized states. Throughout the reform discussions the manner in which they had enchanted Montagu was indeed remarkable, but it was also rather surprising that a liberal Secretary of State should have been able to establish such a harmonious rapport with some of India's leading autocrats. One of the principal reasons for this lay in the hostility they shared towards the bureaucracy of the Government of India. At the instigation of Princes like Jey Singh of Alwar, Montagu repeatedly protested to Chelmsford at the "petty acts of annoyance and interference by Political Agents."¹ Such complaints were not new to the Viceroy: Chamberlain had reported a conversation with Bikaner in which the latter had complained that some political officers were less courteous to the princes than they should be.² Chelmsford confessed that he felt some concern about the quality of the political service but considered that "the longer I am here the more reason I find for taking the stories of the Chiefs with no more than a grain of salt."³ Montagu, however, was not to be put

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1. Montagu to Chelmsford, 4 February and 4 March 1919, Montagu Collection, No.3.
 2. Chamberlain to Chelmsford, 8 May 1917, Chelmsford Collection, No.3.
 3. Chelmsford to Montagu, 1 April 1919, Montagu Collection, No.8.

off and he voiced similar complaints at an interview he held with the Political Secretary, Wood.⁴ This annoyed Chelmsford who replied imploringly: "Now I do earnestly ask you not to accept the tales which you get from the Chiefs on the subject."⁵ He reminded Montagu of an instance involving Patiala. The latter had constantly fulminated against what he considered to be unwarranted interference on the part of his Political Agent, L.M. Crump. From this Chelmsford deduced that Patiala would be particularly glad to see the back of this official, but when Crump was obliged to take his wife on leave to England, Patiala requested that he may be allowed to resume his duties as his political agent as they had always been the best of friends.⁶ Chelmsford was irritated and perplexed as he indicated to Montagu:

"I am left in doubt as to whether to take this as one more instance of the inconsistency of the human mind, or as a reflection on the rest of my Politicals, on the assumption that no change of Resident could possibly be for the better."⁷

Chelmsford's confusion represented a dilemma for the Government of India and its Political Department which supervised the states. Despite his uncertainty, the Viceroy had at least identified the problem when, with reference to Bikaner's complaint, he had informed Chamberlain that rather than the prestige of the princes being lowered

4. Chelmsford to Montagu, 18 June 1919, Montagu Collection, No.8.

5. ibid.

6. Chelmsford to Montagu, 1 April 1919, Montagu Collection, No.8.

7. ibid.

in recent years, the exact contrary was in fact nearer the truth.⁸ Princes like Alwar, Bikaner and Patiala were now beginning to reap the full benefit from the freedom which Butler's policy of non-interference had intended for the rulers as a whole. A reversal of roles had in fact taken place; whereas in the time of Curzon political officers had resorted to every conceivable means of petty interference to emphasize their commanding position over the rulers and their states, by the end of the war the rulers, for their part, were prompted almost in a spirit of revenge and spite to protest against every petty indiscretion they encountered in order to emphasise their independence from political officers and to press for more. The difficulties of the Government of India were further increased by the precedent, established during the reform discussions, by which the princes now considered it their right to have direct access to the highest officials in London, particularly the Secretary of State. Montagu positively encouraged this because he believed it was the only means of avoiding the influence of political officers and ascertaining the real wishes of the princes. The opportunities for such contact were greatly increased in the post-war period. Bikaner was a frequent visitor to Europe in his capacity as an Indian representative at Imperial Conferences and the League of Nations. The lifting of restrictions on foreign travel meant that there

8. Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 22 June 1917, Chelmsford Collection, No.3.

was a continual stream of Indian Princes seeking interviews at the India Office. As a purely formal matter of etiquette this would have been harmless but the manner in which the princes began to clamour for redress of their grievances in India was frustrating to the Government of India. A trend emerged whereby the princes assiduously cultivated their contacts in Britain to whom they would extol the virtues of Princely India and relate how they suffered under the iron hand of the Political Department.⁹ Many were completely taken in by the customary charms and graces of the princes; few bothered to enquire into what sort of men they really were, how they governed their states or what conditions in them were like. Few realized that Patiala's extravagant excursions to Europe were leading his state to bankruptcy.¹⁰ Disbelief was often expressed when the authorities in India endeavoured to prove that some of the princes behaved quite differently when they were in their states as opposed to when they travelled abroad. By 1920, with greater freedom in India and influence in London, the triumvirate of Alwar, Bikaner and Patiala represented a formidable combination which even a Curzon would have had difficulty in dealing with.

One of the major recommendations of the Montford Report had been the institution of direct political relations between the individual states and the Government of India. In its simplest form direct political relations

9. GOI. FPD. No. 488 - Political (Secret), 1927, Note by Major A.S. Meek, Political Agent, Mahi Kantha, 29 January 1927.

10. GOI. FPD. No. 105 - Political, 1929, Financial difficulties of the Patiala state.

meant that there should be only one intermediary between the states and the central government. In 1918 only the premier states of Hyderabad, Mysore, Baroda and Kashmir corresponded directly with the Government of India through four first-class Residents.¹¹ In all the other states a duplication of political control existed. There were three agencies under Agents to the Governor-General;¹² the Central India agency covering 150 states, the Rajputana agency with some 20 states and the Baluchistan agency managing two states. Beneath the A.G.G.'s. came the political agents who were assigned to individual groups of states within the agencies. The remaining states dealt with provincial governments; Madras dealt with 5, Bombay with over 350, Bengal with 2, the United Provinces with 3, the Punjab with 34, Burma with 52, Bihar and Orissa with 26, the Central Provinces with 15 and Assam with 16. These states were under a political agent or his assistant, who in turn was in direct contact with the Political Department of each province and each provincial government corresponded with the Government of India. The authors of the Joint Report concluded that the presence of two intermediaries involved a somewhat long and cumbersome process in the relationship with the states and recommended that, where possible, one of them should be removed.¹³ The principle of direct relations was welcomed by various princes for a significantly different reason; through it they saw a

11. Montford Report, para. 310.

12. Hereafter, A.G.G.

13. Montford Report, para. 310.

means to endorse their independence at the expense of the political officers who had been the symbols of their previous subordination.

For those states whose relations were with provincial governments it was not only a question of a single intermediary, they had also to be transferred to the Political Department of the Government of India. Although the Montford Report had given warning that the political hopes and aspirations of British India "may overlap frontier lines like sparks across a street",¹⁴ there was no intention to equate political advance in British territory with the same in Indian States. Reforms in the latter could not be brought about as a result of the constitutional changes in British India and it was therefore essential to remove those states from the control of provincial governments which would soon embark upon the experiment of semi-responsibility known as dyarchy. When the question of direct relations had been discussed at the informal conference in February 1918, the Jam Sahib of Nawanagar expressed the view that the Bombay Government was less liberal and broad-minded than the Government of India and stressed that as relations with the states were a central subject it was essential that in the future the Government of India should decide all questions affecting them.¹⁵ The Chief of Sangli considered that it would give the states a better "perspective of Imperial sentiment"

14. ibid., para. 157.

15. GOI. FPD. No. 30 - Political, 1923, p. 23.

if they were under the Government of India and thought that the provincial system encouraged "insular feeling."¹⁶

The proposal, however, met with strong opposition from the provincial governments concerned. The Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, Sir Michael O'Dwyer, considered that it would be detrimental to the Punjab states if they were to sever their political, economic and social connections with the neighbouring British districts. The fact that the revenue and administrative arrangements in the most important states were based upon the Punjab model, the growth of communications, the long-standing partnership in such joint ventures as the Jirhind Canal, which was one of the "pillars of prosperity of the Phulkian states", the closer co-operation in excise and police matters which had steadily been built up, all warranted the maintenance of the status quo.¹⁷ O'Dwyer considered that with his previous experience as Resident at Hyderabad and A.G.G. in Central India, he himself could assume the mantle of A.G.G. for the Punjab states and assured the Government of India that he would not act in this capacity with either his official or popular advisers.¹⁸ The Government of India remained unimpressed by these arguments and asked the Punjab for a tentative scheme of transfer. The Punjab's scheme, earmarking all the salute states and those which maintained Imperial Service Troops for transfer, were grudgingly forwarded by the Chief Secretary of that

16. ibid.

17. GOI. FPD. Secret-Internal, August 1921, Nos.1-21, No.3, Thompson to Wood, 21 September 1918.

18. ibid.

government, J.P. Thompson, who was still of a mind to question the utility of the proposal:

"The Lieutenant-Governor has done his best to advise the Government of India how the contemplated change could be carried out. But the question naturally arises - when there is in existence a system which has grown up with the Province, is in consonance with its history, traditions and geographical features, is working smoothly to the satisfaction of the Punjab Government and of the Punjab State generally - why should Government set up a novel organisation that will lack the weight which the above considerations give to the present system, or in other words why should it appoint a separate Agent to the Governor-General for the Punjab States, with all the administrative difficulties and risks of friction that such an appointment will involve, when the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab is already capable of discharging the functions of such an Agent smoothly and adequately." ¹⁹

As negotiations proceeded O'Dwyer still hoped that he would become the new A.G.G., ²⁰ but his representations, like those of his Chief Secretary, were to no avail. In November 1920 preparations were made to transfer the states of Patiala, Jind, Nabha, Bahawalpur, Kapurthala, Faridkot, Sirmur, Malerkotla, Mandi, Suket, Chamba, Bilaspur and Loharu to the control of an independent A.G.G. ²¹ Only the very minor states, eighteen located in the Simla Hills and the two Plains states of Dujana and Pataudi were left to the supervision of the Punjab Government.

Objections to the transfer proposals were also raised by the Madras Government under Lord Pentland and

19. ibid., No.5, Thompson to Wood, 12 October 1918.

20. ibid., No.10, French to Wood, 2 January 1920.

21. ibid., No.12, Wood to Thompson, 3 November 1920.

and even the Political Department had to admit that, prima facie, there was little reason for taking these states into direct relations.²² Montagu, however, urged that there should be no unnecessary delay²³ and in May 1921 the new Governor of Madras, Lord Willingdon, agreed that the states of Cochin, Travancore, Pudukkottai, Banganapelle and Sandur could be transferred.²⁴

The stiffest opposition came from Bombay. Here a special enquiry had recommended that it would be feasible to transfer fourteen of the sixteen first class states and eight second class states to the Government of India. The Bombay Government objected on the grounds that the transfer would be detrimental to the interests of the inhabitants since the provincial government was in a better position to supervize the administration of the states in the interests of their subjects than the central government. They argued further that the transfer would break the close economic and social association which had been built up between the majority of the Bombay states and the rest of the Presidency.²⁵ The Governor, Lord Lloyd, reasoned that the transfer was inexpedient at a time when the Chamber of Princes was still in its "earliest infancy" and when the reforms scheme which was only just being inaugurated in British India meant that "new forces were at work, the effect of which upon the general administration

22. GOI. FPD. Secret-Internal, July 1921, Nos.24-31, Proposal for the Establishment of direct relations between the Government of India and Indian States in the Madras Presidency, p. 5.

23. ibid., No.24, S/S to Viceroy, telg. 19 August 1919.

24. ibid, p.7.

25. GOI. FPD. Secret-Internal, January 1921, Nos.19-22, No.22, Secret-Internal Despatch No.8 to S/S, 20 January 1921.

of India could not be foreseen or measured." He attributed the orderly administration of the Bombay states to the nature of his government's supervision and was convinced on administrative and political grounds that it was both unnecessary and undesirable to introduce so many and so great changes at the same time. He therefore suggested a postponement of the transfer until the Government of India had gained further experience of the effect of such changes elsewhere.²⁶

Lloyd was obviously concerned that the prestige of the Bombay Government would be lowered if the states were taken away from their sphere,²⁷ but the Government of India recommended to Montagu that, in deference to Lloyd's views, the transfer should be postponed for the present.²⁸ This was only partially true, for the issue had divided Chelmsford's Government in a most revealing manner. W.H. Vincent, the Home Member, was in complete agreement with Bombay's arguments. He considered that even a partial transfer would lead to an over-centralization of authority which would impose an impossible burden on the Viceroy with the resultant loss in efficiency being detrimental to the states concerned. He doubted whether the Government of India would be able to deal with the repercussions and developments which the introduction of the reforms would produce in the states with the same

26. ibid.

27. Chelmsford to Montagu, 31 March 1920, Montagu Collection, No.10.

28. GOI. FPD. Secret-Internal, January 1921, Nos.19-22, No.22, Secret-Internal Despatch No. 8 to S/S, 20 January 1921.

sympathy and knowledge of local conditions as the Bombay Government.²⁹ The Finance Member, W.M. Hailey frankly admitted that:

"If I were the subject of a Native State, or were a Thakur or Jagirdar, I would rather on the whole that the States were in relation to the neighbouring Local Government than to the Government of India.... My case would be considered in a more independent and judicial atmosphere, interested rather in the securing of justice than in the maintenance of the pincilio of political relations."³⁰

However, at the same time, Hailey revealed that this was not the principal consideration:

"We cannot safely face a process which would contemplate putting the Chiefs on one side. The rapid growth of democracy will be inconvenient enough in many ways in our own territory; and it would seem to me wrong, in view of our previous relations with the Chiefs, to bring them against their wishes under the direct control of reformed Local Governments."³¹

In other words, Hailey had confirmed that, although the arguments of Bombay and the Punjab were valid, the necessity of preserving the princes as supporters of the Raj outweighed the consideration that the administration of the states should be conducted in accordance with the interests of their inhabitants. It was for this reason that Hailey had agreed to leave O'Dwyer and his government in control of the very minor Punjab states:

"The maintenance of large numbers of very small States is no gain to the country politically or economically: it is no

29. ibid., Minute of dissent by W.H. Vincent, 22 December 1920.

30. ibid., pp. 17-18, Hailey's note, 15 August 1920.

31. ibid.

particular source of strength or of stability to the Imperial Connection. The larger States stand on an entirely different footing."³²

Hailey expected that in time the princes would have to undergo democratization of their own territories and experience a change from autocracy to at least constitutional monarchy, but for the present they should be allowed breathing space to work out their own destiny without having to face immediate contact with the popularly controlled executives which were being created in the provinces. He concluded that the princes would never agree that the Governor of a Province could act as an A.G.G. because they would never be convinced that he would be entirely independent of the goodwill of his ministers.³³

Hailey had, in fact, shrewdly anticipated the key factor which was to influence the attitudes of the princes to British Indian politics for the next twenty years. What he did not anticipate was that the progress of reforms in the provinces would lead the princes in the opposite direction. The princes responded to each stage in the constitutional process by insisting that, if the provinces of British India were to be granted greater autonomy, then they should receive greater freedom in the control of their internal affairs. They justified their demands by reference to their treaty rights; but

32. ibid.

33. ibid.

these rights made no mention of Hailey's process of democratization. Thus, while British India proceeded on the path of democracy, the majority of princes sought refuge in the principles of autocracy embodied in their treaties. Any inducement there may have been for those princes who were supervized by provincial governments to keep in step with progress in British India, was lost when the process of transferring them to the Government of India began. For the Bombay states this was after Lloyd's departure in 1923. The states in the Kathiawar, Cutch and Palanpur Agencies were transferred to the Government of India in October 1924, and became the Western India States Agency under an A.G.G. stationed at Rajkot.³⁴

The question of establishing direct relations with the states of Central India and Rajputana which had not previously been supervized by provincial governments was, for this very reason, less immediate, but still of equal intricacy. Montagu had argued the case for direct relations with these states in 1913 when he had been Under-Secretary of State for India.³⁵ His solution then had been to abolish the A.G.G.'s and split the two agencies into several subordinate charges under the direct control of the Government of India. The respective A.G.G.'s for Rajputana and Central India, Sir Elliot Colvin and Sir Oswald Bosanquet, saw the proposal as a direct threat to their own positions and objected strongly to it. However, they also reasoned more sensibly that the withdrawal of

34. GOI. FPD. No. 186 - Political (Secret) 1924-5, Nos.1-28, No.19 (a), Viceroy to S/S, telg. 25 September 1914.

35. Indian Diary, Vol.11, Alwar, 14 January 1913, Montagu Collection, No.39.

political officers would result in instances of gross misrule escaping notice and the matter was therefore allowed to drop by the Government of India.³⁶

When Montagu returned to India in 1917 he still favoured the abolition of the A.G.G.'s, but the princes, particularly those in Rajputana, were undecided. When Montagu met them in February 1918 he found that although Alwar agreed with him, others like Bikaner, Jaipur and Jodhpur wanted to retain the A.G.G. and abolish the political agents.³⁷ To accommodate these differences the authors of the Joint Report made three alternative suggestions for the implementation of direct relations in Rajputana and Central India: the abolition of the political agent and the transfer of his functions to the A.G.G.; the abolition of the A.G.G. and the retention of the political agent; instead of abolishing either, to allow the political agent to communicate direct with the Government of India, a copy of the communication being sent to the A.G.G.³⁸ Alwar remained committed to the second alternative for a very significant reason; upon the abolition of the A.G.G. he wanted the appointment of non-resident political agents for groups of states. Under this scheme the political agents would congregate together in Ajmer where, according to Alwar, they would find more "society" than in a state. He also claimed that this

36. GOI. FPD. No.226 - Political (Secret) 1924-25, Nos.1-9, Proposed Establishment of direct political relation between the Government of India and the States in the Central Indian Agency, p.9.

37. GOI. FPD. No.30 - Political, 1923, Establishment of direct political relations between the Government of India and the Indian States in Rajputana, p. 23.

38. Montford Report, para. 310.

system would minimize any risks of misunderstanding and obviate the risk of political agents favouring the states in which they resided.³⁹ Alwar's charming consideration for the welfare of political agents could not disguise the real purpose of his scheme; his aim was to consolidate the gains he had already made at the expense of paramountcy by actually removing the instruments of that paramountcy from the confines of the states. The princes would then be left with a completely free hand in the management of their internal affairs. In announcing this scheme to the Conference of Chiefs in January 1919, Alwar was also able to reveal that he had managed to convert Bikaner shortly before the latter left for Europe to attend the Paris Peace Conference.⁴⁰ Bikaner's conversion however, came too late to prevent preparations being made, upon the basis of the opinion he had recorded in February 1918, to place his state in direct relations with the A.G.G. The transfer took place in March 1919,⁴¹ while Bikaner was still in Europe and upon his return the Rajput expressed his annoyance at the manner in which the proposal had been carried without his specific concurrence.⁴² Consequently he joined forces

39. GOI. FPD. No.30 - Political, 1923, p.23.

40. ibid.

41. GOI. FPD. Secret-Internal, July 1921, Nos.13-23, No.14, Enclosure No.1, R.E. Holland to Rajputana Chiefs, 27 March 1920. The state of Sirohi, which ranked fourteenth in the precedence of Rajputana states, was also placed in direct relations with the A.G.G. on the grounds of its proximity to agency headquarters at Abu.

42. GOI. FPD. No.30 - Political, 1923, Bikaner's "Note on the Question of Simplification of Political Relations between the British Government and the Princes and States of Rajputana", 11 September 1923.

with Alwar to campaign amongst the other Rajputana princes in favour of the non-resident scheme.

The activities of Alwar and Bikaner and the recommendations of the Montford Report were a source of serious concern to the former deputy political secretary and now A.G.G. in Rajputana, Robert E. Holland. He was hardly enamoured with any of the three alternatives suggested in the report; the second would see him lose his position, the third would reduce him to the position of a mere functionary while both the first and second were totally opposed to his political instincts. To undermine the work of Alwar and Bikaner he decided to ask all the Rajputana princes for their views and used the opportunity to impress upon them his opinion that, in the interests of preserving the unity of Rajputana, the abolition of the A.G.G. was impracticable. According to Holland, the correct solution was the elimination of the local political agents but even this could only be given effect to gradually as the A.G.G. could not immediately assume the duties of all the political agents in Rajputana; hence the experiment was being tried in Bikaner and Sirahi and if it proved successful it^t might be extended if local circumstances proved favourable.⁴³

The replies received by Holland were interesting in showing that at this stage only three states, Alwar, Bikaner and Banswana wanted the abolition of the A.G.G., while the majority of the remainder not only expressed

43. GOI. FPD. Secret-Internal, July 1921, Nos.13-23, No.14, Enclosure No.1, Holland to Rajputana Chiefs, 27 March 1920.

a clear preference for the retention of the A.G.G., but also admitted that there were good reasons for keeping the local political agent as well.⁴⁴ With this evidence Holland could become more precise in his reasons for wishing to preserve the existing status quo. His arguments were not only a commentary on the wishes of the princes but also a reflection upon the implications of the policy of non-interference; a policy to which Holland could never reconcile himself. There was a tendency to attach too much weight to the views of those princes who "owing to their better knowledge of the English language and experience of public life command a hearing in the Conference of Princes and too little to those who, though they did not play so prominent a part in public, wield as great if not a greater influence in Rajputana." The rulers of Udaipur, Dholpur, Jodhpur and Kotah, who were opposed to the abolition of the A.G.G., were as much entitled to consideration as those of Alwar and Bikaner and the impression was being created that "as in the politics of British India, attention will only be paid to the wishes of Princes who agitate." Alwar and Bikaner were obviously influenced by "overpaternal methods" adopted in the past. That they should strive to prevent a repetition of this was natural, but their manner of so doing had very grave implications:

"There are plain indications that some Darbars incline to the theory that political officers ought to be metamorphosed into diplomatic agents, the change typifying the purely reciprocal nature of the bond which unites the States with the Crown, and illustrating

44. ibid., No.14, Holland to Wood, 13 May 1920.

the Sovereign character of the Princes' powers. If the uniformity now asked for were granted, the change would, by weakening the political officer, tend to aggrandize the State vis a vis the Government of India."

Furthermore, Holland believed there were dangers inherent in the policy of non-interference. There was a general trend of apprehension among the jagirdars of Rajputana that this policy might leave them to the "unfettered caprice" of their rulers. There was no established public opinion or any effective checks on the actions of a ruling prince. Holland also drew attention to the fact that the Rajput states differed both in origin and political constitution from the great majority of states in other parts of India, in that the nobles of the states claimed to be "co-partners with the rulers in their right of dominion over the soil and to the fruits of it." The frequent state of tension that existed between the rulers and the nobility, particularly of the older States, meant that the Government of India had a particular obligation to see that, as a result of the security conferred upon the rulers by British protection, the status of the great nobles did not deteriorate. Holland also had the exaggerated notion that measures of the type advocated by Alwar and Bikaner would enable the princes to arm their states with modern weapons, in which case any effective opposition to their authority in future would be practically impossible. If this synchronized with the withdrawal of political officers or a further diminution of the authority of the Paramount Power, public apprehension would inevitably increase. Therefore great

caution was required in introducing any changes which might have the effect of converting political officers into "postal agents".⁴⁵

Holland's arguments received additional support from Hailey, who commented that Bikaner had "for some time considered that he occupies a position in which it is not consonant with his dignity to have relations with anyone below the rank of Governor-General". He agreed that the "tendency of the modern Indian Chief is to assume a position of autocracy which altogether neglects the historical basis on which, in Rajputana at all events, his personal position rests", and felt that the movement for the abolition of the A.G.G. was in part due to a belief held by the princes that they would have a clearer field in dealing in an arbitrary manner with their Thakurs and Taluqdars.⁴⁶ The Government of India therefore decided to recommend to the Secretary of State that, in view of the wishes of the majority of Rajputana princes, the status quo would have to be maintained for the present.⁴⁷ It was no surprise that Montagu was not prepared to accept this. He felt it was a direct violation of the recommendations of the Joint Report and suspected that there was a conspiracy on the part of political officers to sabotage them. He frankly disbelieved Holland's analysis and commented naively to Chelmsford: "Are you aware that some

45. ibid.

46. ibid., p. 5., Hailey's note, 18 August 1920.

47. ibid., No.16, Secret-Internal Despatch No.82 to S/S, 2 September 1920.

of the Princes, such as Alwar and Bikaner, deny the very existence of this majority as real?"⁴⁸ He insisted that the Viceroy should use the first available opportunity to personally ascertain the "real wishes" of the princes. Chelmsford saw no reason to doubt Holland's word, but he was never able to undertake the proposed enquiry because Alwar and Bikaner were now to get unexpected assistance for their case from the least likely quarter - the Government of India itself.

By 1922 the consequences of the dislocation which the Great War had imposed upon India's finances were becoming increasingly acute. The Government of India budget for 1922-23 showed a revenue deficit of Rs. 9,16,28,000. This was the fifth of a succession of deficits amounting in aggregate to about Rs. 100 crores and it was anticipated that the deficit for 1922 could work out at a figure considerably higher than the budget estimate. Immediate steps, therefore, had to be taken to balance the budget.⁴⁹ The Foreign and Political Department were asked to make cuts in their establishments and also to institute enquiries into whether it was necessary to maintain all the subordinate agencies in Central India and Rajputana.⁵⁰

Consequently in June 1922, Holland and his counterpart in Central India, Colonel Denys Brooke Blakeway, were asked to consider the possibility of dividing Rajputana

48. ibid., p.7., S/S to Viceroy, telg., 23 December 1920.

49. Report of the Indian Retrenchment Committee, 1922-1923, p. 291.

50. ibid., pp. 158-159.

and Central India into five units along the following lines:

- (1) A first class appointment for Western Rajputana with up to three assistants,
- (2) A second class appointment for Eastern Rajputana with one assistant,
- (3) A second class appointment for Bundelkhand and Baghelkhand with one assistant,
- (4) A second class appointment for Gwalior and Bhopal with one assistant,
- (5) A second [or possibly first] class appointment for the rest of Central India with two assistants.

It was estimated that such an arrangement would effect an annual saving of Rs. 1,34,000 in salaries of gazetted officers alone, while it would be possible to reduce the cadre of the Political Department by eight officers.⁵¹

The justification given by the Political Department for these proposals was not only economic. They would also enable the principle of direct relations to be implemented and conform with official policy towards the states. In their interpretation of that policy, the Political Department was clearly at variance with some of the more experienced officers serving in the states. Holland and Blakeway were informed that:

"Modern conditions of publicity and political organization render it unlikely, however, that the withdrawal of local officers will result in instances of gross misrule escaping notice,

51. GOI. FPD. No. 226 - Political (Secret), 1924-25, Nos.1-9, pp.8-9, Re-arrangement of political charges in Central India and Rajputana, 29 June 1922.

while their presence is the less necessary by reason of the inclination of the Government of India to interfere less and less with the internal affairs of the States." 52

It was too late in the day to expect Holland to readily accept this thesis; his world was that of the supervisor, not that of the distant and casual onlooker. He was particularly at pains to point out that he stood by the arguments he had already made for preserving Rajputana and its political establishment intact, and that he was only prepared to consider the proposals in the interests of economy, not because of any "new political factors". 53 He was also alarmed at what he considered would be the consequences for Rajputana of amalgamating the existing seven agencies, supervised by an A.G.G. into only two, and the reduction of the political establishment from eleven officers to six. 54 Although these changes would afford an annual saving of Rs. 75,528, Holland judged that they would result in "the occurrence of grave disorders, the settlement of which will be a far more costly business than the maintenance of establishments on their present footing." Not only was there a possibility of grave misrule escaping notice "but also the greatest danger that

52. ibid.

53. GOI. FPD. No.30 - Political, 1923, Holland to Thompson, 9 July 1922.

54. ibid. In 1922 Rajputana was served by an A.G.G. with two assistants; a second-class Resident at Udaipur; a second-class Resident at Jaipur; a political agent for the Eastern Rajputana states with one assistant; a second-class Resident for the Western Rajputana states; a political agent for the Southern Rajputana states; a political agent for Haraoti and Tonk, and a political agent for Kotahand Jhalawar.

agitators from British India, working insidiously among the people, will exploit their grievances, real or imaginary and estrange them from their Rulers, with the result of widespread disturbances which can only be quelled by our intervention." Moreover, whether or not government interfered in internal affairs less and less, it still had an obligation to intervene to restore law and order if the stability of the administration was threatened: "A policy of non-interference may lessen temporarily the work of political officers but, on the other hand, the withdrawal of the personal influence of the political officer and the trend of political affairs in British India, are likely to enhance the administrative difficulties of the Darbars and consequently to multiply the occasions on which they will need the advice and assistance of the political officer."⁵⁵

Holland was obviously conscious of the restrictions which the changes would impose upon his own authority, but in the case of Udaipur he had substantial evidence to support his arguments. In 1903 the A.G.G. in Rajputana, Sir Arthur Martinade, had observed of the Maharana of Udaipur: "As a Ruling Chief in the twentieth century of our era his administration and his qualifications leave much to be desired." The Maharana was "rigidly conservative, intensely suspicious and extremely sensitive to the least encroachment on his hereditary rights and dignity." He had no advantages in the shape of early

55. ibid.

training or education and with these characteristics, Martinade concluded, "the difficulty of inducing him to move in the direction of modern progress and reform will be admitted."⁵⁶ Curzon's Government had suggested that an improvement would be the introduction of an Executive Council, but in view of the fact that the Maharana was not unpopular and that petitions from his subjects were rare, no strong pressure had been exerted in this direction. Eighteen years later Holland was able to echo his predecessor:

"The administration of His Highness the Maharana is one of the worst in Rajputana, because his Highness will grant no delegation of his powers to any individual and insists on concentrating all authority in his own hands."⁵⁷

The situation now, however, was fundamentally different because disaffection existed and there were indications of sympathy with the non-co-operation movement in British India. Four main causes of unrest were cited; the despotic and autocratic methods of the Maharana, corruption among subordinate officials, the tardiness of the administrative machinery and the complete inadequacy of the judicial system.⁵⁸ The relationship between ruler and nobility was far from satisfactory. The Maharana had endeavoured to curtail their judicial powers, a much needed reform in itself, but he had not acted with the intention of establishing a reformed and uniform judiciary,

56. GOI. FPD. Secret-Internal, May 1922, Nos.1-35, No.3, cited in Holland to Wood, 7 June 1921.

57. ibid.

58. ibid., Enclosure No.3, W.H.J. Wilkinson to Holland, 18 May 1921.

rather as a means to extend his autocratic control.

This the British could not tolerate because they considered that without the co-operation of the nobility every scheme of internal reform, education, justice, police, irrigation and sanitation would be only partial and unsuccessful. Above all, as long as serious difficulties existed between a ruler and his nobles "the state, as a unit in alliance with the British Government, is practically valueless."⁵⁹

A serious agrarian problem had arisen within the state. In the districts of Bijolian, Parsoli, Begun and Basi, revenue had been withheld and attempts to collect it or to enforce official orders were met with threats of violence. In all four the villagers had refused to admit the direct authority of their jagirdars and independent tribunals had been established to decide civil, revenue and criminal cases. Large weekly meetings were held and all who attended were armed with lathis. From October to December 1921 volunteers had been posted in each village to disseminate notices of meetings and to refuse officials entry to the villages. These displays, although seemingly much more militant, resembled the campaign of non-co-operation which was being conducted across the border in British India and in December 1921 it was estimated that 250 villagers visited Ahmedabad to attend the session of the Indian National Congress. This so alarmed the jagirdars that one, the Rao of Bijolian, even wrote to the Resident in Udaipur, W.H.J. Wilkinson, asking whether they should send representatives to the Congress to

59. ibid.

counteract the influence of the agitators. Wilkinson was quick to advise against this as it would amount to a recognition that the Congress could interfere in the internal affairs of the States.⁶⁰

The situation was restored when the Maharana was obliged to delegate his powers to his son, the Maharaj Kumar,⁶¹ but the case of Udaipur remains one of the most vivid illustrations of the consequences of the non-interference policy. The problem had been identified since 1903 but no attempt had been made to rectify it despite the fact that it was common knowledge that the situation could only become worse as the Maharana grew older. Instead, government policy had accorded to that laid down in the Political Department Manual of judging each case on its merits and refraining from intervention until misrule had reached a pitch which violated "the elementary laws of civilization." In practice this now proved to be the stage when the subjects of the state were on the verge of open rebellion and by the time the government chose to interfere in Udaipur the state was virtually beyond redemption. Wilkinson was in no doubt as to where the blame lay:

"It is commonly said in Mewar that the administration took a steep downward curve from the time when Political Officers received instructions to leave the Darbars to their own devices, and in effect to refrain even from enquiries as to what was going on within the State. The news spread among the officials who were stimulated to

60. ibid., No. 33, Wilkinson to Holland, 24 December 1921.

61. ibid., No. 23, Enclosure No. 2, Terms for the delegation of powers by His Highness the Maharana to his son the Maharaj Kumar, 22 July 1921.

fresh opposition. The nobles and cultivators alike lost their only hope of protection, and became easier victims ... The people, knowing the Resident's impotence, have been less and less inclined to acquaint him with their troubles, and he each year becomes less well informed of the condition of the State and its inhabitants." ⁶²

For Holland, this was ample justification to oppose the new amalgamation proposals; the policy of non-interference was bad enough but to abolish five appointments would be sheer folly. He therefore suggested as "a less calamitous alternative" the creation of separate political groups. He considered that the Eastern Rajputana agency could be more easily "lopped off" since the four states of Alwar, Bharatpur, Dholpur and Karauli were in easy rail connection. To these he would add Kotah, Jhalawar and Jaipur and convert these seven states into a second-class Residency with headquarters at Jaipur. He estimated that this would secure an annual saving of Rs. 18,264. Holland wanted to draw the line here, but if the Government of India felt a greater saving was required, he suggested the creation of a group of the Southern states under a second-class Resident based at Udaipur. This would provide an additional saving of Rs. 15,864. Holland was obviously very reluctant to make these suggestions even though they fell well short, in terms of money saved, of those of the Political Department. The only advantage he could see in them was that they maintained the "paramount necessity" of preserving resident political officers in the premier states of Udaipur, Jaipur and Jodhpur. ⁶³

62. ibid., Enclosure to No.3, Wilkinson to Holland, 18 May 1921.

63. GOI. FPD. No.30 - Political 1923, Holland to Thompson, 9 July 1922.

In Central India, Blakeway shared Holland's concern about the amalgamation proposals. In deference to the seniority of Gwalior, that state had been accorded the status of a separate Residency in July 1920, but that was as far as the authorities in Central India wished to go.⁶⁴ The new proposals now meant that the existing six agencies, supervized by an A.G.G., would be amalgamated into three, and the political establishment reduced from ten officers to seven.⁶⁵ Blakeway was disturbed because he felt that any real advance on the part of the princes of Central India towards a more liberal and democratic conception of the theory of government could only be achieved through the persuasion and arguments of the political officers in touch with them. Like Holland, he was adamant that the position of the A.G.G. could not be abolished and expressed his own concern at the effect which the changes would have on the future cadre of the political service:

"The number of junior posts where a young officer can obtain first hand experience of Indian States is already lamentably small and the abolition of so many Political Agencies would make it impossible for all but a very small number of officers to obtain such experience even at a later stage of their service."⁶⁶

Blakeway also clearly illustrated where he differed from

64. GOI. FPD. No.226 - Political (Secret) 1924-25, No.1-9, p. 7.

65. *ibid.*, Blakeway to Political Department, 16 August 1922. In 1922 Central India was served by an A.G.G. with two assistants; a Resident at Gwalior; a political agent at Bhopal; a political agent for Bagelkhand; a political agent for Bundelkhand with one assistant; a political agent for the Southern states and a political agent for the Malwa states.

66. *ibid.*

official thinking; the latter considered that a policy of non-interference would induce the states to be more amenable in performing their role as Imperial allies while Blakeway reasoned that some measure of control was necessary to ensure that they were capable of fulfilling that role:

"Ordered development in the administrative system of the States is, however, a great political desideratum. Their fortunes are bound up with ours. Their strength is our strength; their weakness ours. Misgovernment allied with corruption and incompetence is calculated not so much to furnish an object lesson of the benefits of British rule as a handle for our enemies' accusation that this state of affairs is due to our approval and connivance. The seditious movement of the last few years has fortunately not made much headway amongst the conservative peoples of Central India, but agitation has not left them entirely unaffected ... In view of the general political situation throughout India it is hardly prudent to dispense with the best agency we possess for furthering the cause of reform in Central India and avoiding the troubles which may be anticipated sooner or later between democracy and unrestrained absolutism."⁶⁷

Moreover Blakeway believed that there were serious practical objections to the proposed amalgamations in Central India. The location of agency headquarters would be vital if Bundelkhand and Baghelkhand were amalgamated. There were two alternatives; Nowgong in the former or Sutna in the latter. Nowgong would probably be chosen because Bundelkhand was the change with the heaviest work, but this would deprive the state of Rewa in Baghelkhand of a political officer. Rewa was 132 miles by road from Nowgong and three unbridged rivers had to be crossed. The rail

67. ibid.

journey took sixteen hours to which had to be added a further road journey of 31 miles over two unbridged rivers at one end and twenty miles at the other. The condition of Rewa itself was far from satisfactory; in 1919 Bosanquet had expressed the view that "the State and its people are so backward in every respect that it will take years of uninterrupted effort to raise its administration to the level of ordinary efficiency even according to the standards of other States. It remains to be seen, too, whether the young Maharaja when he gets his powers will choose the path of progress."⁶⁸ Blakeway therefore considered that in the interests of Rewa alone, this particular amalgamation was premature. Mutual jealousy and pride also made it improbable that Gwalior and Bhopal would ever agree to form a joint residency. Accordingly, as Holland had done, Blakeway framed his own alternatives; the Malwa and Southern states should be amalgamated and Bhopal should amalgamate with the two Dewas states. This would effect an annual saving of Rs. 1,772, as compared with Rs. 3,022 in the Political Department's proposal, but it would enable one political officer and his establishment to be retained.⁶⁹

At the beginning of 1923, before a decision had been reached upon either Holland's or Blakeway's alternatives, Alwar and Bikaner chose this critical juncture to renew their attack upon the position of the A.G.G. The Viceroy, Lord Reading, who had succeeded Chelmsford in April 1921, was confronted with a deputation

68. ibid.

69. ibid.

of Rajputana princes consisting of Alwar, Bikaner, Bharatpur, Dholpur, Jaisalmer and Jodhpur at Delhi on 7 February 1923 during the Chamber of Princes session of that month. The deputation was totally manipulated by Alwar and Bikaner; from the records on file of the meeting with Reading, they were the only two princes who actually said anything. Alwar reiterated his idea of local political officers for groups of states, the salient feature of which was that they should reside in neighbouring British districts. Together with Bikaner, he urged that Ajmer could replace Jodhpur for the Western Rajputana states, Agra could replace Bharatpur for the Eastern states, the political agent for Haraoti and Tonk could be located at Deoli, that of Jaipur and Kishengarh at Ajmer and that of Udaipur at Neemuch.⁷⁰ These proposals now received the unanimous support of all the princes at the meeting. In the opinion of the Political Department this was not surprising "since it is natural that the masterful Bikaner and the subtle Alwar should have carried their less clever brethren along with them, especially when the reward held up before them was greater freedom from interference by Government and a raised status."⁷¹ An anxious Holland, however, urged Reading to make a definite pronouncement that the status quo would be preserved as even "those Princes who are most firmly in favour of the maintenance of things as

70. GOI. FPD. No.30 - Political, 1923. Proceedings of the informal discussion on the subject of direct political relations between the Rajputana States and the Government of India, 7 February 1923.

71. ibid.

they are may waiver if they think that the tide is really going to turn against them."⁷²

A final decision was eventually reached upon the basis of an important note written by the new Political Secretary, John P. Thompson, formerly Chief Secretary to the Punjab Government, who had succeeded Wood in March 1922. According to Thompson three fundamental questions were at issue: whether any definite promise had been given as regards the principle of a single intermediary, the general utility of the A.G.G. and whether the same official increased the possibility of undue interference. On the first question, he correctly concluded that no such pledge had been given. Not only had the recommendations of the Joint Report envisaged the retention of both the A.G.G. and the political agents, but it had also added the important phrase that direct political relations could only be introduced "wherever possible".⁷³ As regards the second, Thompson alluded to a point which he considered had been given less prominence in the discussions than it deserved. The Political branch of the Foreign and Political Department was unique in one respect. In all the other government departments, the Viceroy not only had a Member of Council and Secretary to advise him, but all important cases came up before his Council. On the Foreign side of the Political Department, although there was no Member of

72. ibid.

73. Montford Report, para. 310.

Council, the importance of international policy and frontier questions made it inevitable that most important cases would come up before the Viceroy in Council. On the Political side, however, only exceptional cases came up before the Council and the Political Secretary was the Viceroy's only adviser. Thompson considered that the A.G.G. functioned as a valuable link in the government's information and advisory service and concluded therefore that, in this respect, the balance of argument now lay in favour of Holland. On the final point, Thompson had to agree that both Colvin and Holland, who between them had held the post of A.G.G. in Rajputana with short intervals since 1905, had a reputation of being prone to interfere and that in some cases they had gone too far, but at the same time:

"no Agent to the Governor-General who did his duty could possibly come up to the progressive Princes' ideal of non-interference. For the rest, interference is largely a matter of temperament. Some men cannot resist the natural instinct to protest when they see things going wrong; others can and do. Possibly among successful officials there are more of the former type than of the latter."

He concluded that the presence of the A.G.G. probably did lead to a slightly greater degree of interference, but felt that the knowledge of his existence on the whole benefited both the princes and their subjects.⁷⁴

Thompson's almost casual appraisal of this distinction between political officers was in fact the very essence of the policy of non-interference. It is

74. GOI. FPD. No.30 - Political, 1923, Thompson's note, 7 May 1923.

recognized that the immediate retort to the theory that the proposals for amalgamations and service cuts would be detrimental to the interests of the states is that this would make no difference if, in any case, the political officers were pursuing a policy of non-interference. However, as Thompson recognized, interference was largely a question of temperament, which was entirely dependent upon the individual political officer. Whether or not an individual would interfere depended upon his political instincts which had been moulded by the length of time he had spent as a political officer, the number and different types of states that he had served in and the problems that had confronted him. There could be no set rules upon such a personal matter but the fact remains, as Thompson again recognised, that those who made it their business to know everything about their states often made more successful political officers than those who did not, and while there would always be some of the former, the nature of the non-interference policy was producing more of the latter.

On the issue of retaining the A.G.G.'s, Thompson's report had therefore vindicated the arguments of Holland and Blakeway. However, the amalgamations still remained. In Rajputana, much to the delight of Holland, preparations to create a second-class Residency for the Eastern states had to be suspended in November 1926 owing to disagreement among the states concerned over the location of a suitable headquarters. The Government of India suggested the

existing establishment at Bharatpur, but the latter protested on the grounds that it would have to finance the new facilities that would be required. Of the remaining states only Jhalawar seemed satisfied with Bharatpur, Alwar, Kotah and Karauli all favoured Agra.⁷⁵ The suspension of the proposal infuriated Jey Singh of Alwar who, after six years of negotiating and scheming, still found himself confronted by two intermediaries. In an effort to remedy this he made a complete volte face and asked to be placed in direct relations with the A.G.G. To rub salt further into the wound, his claim was rejected on the grounds that his status in Rajputana did not warrant this and that it would encourage similar requests from other princes.⁷⁶ Central India was not so fortunate. Upon memorials from the two Dewas states their proposed merger with Bhopal was shelved but the amalgamation of the Malwa and Southern agencies was implemented in May 1925. The combined agency now consisted of 10 salute states and 34 minor and guaranteed estates with a population of 983,953 and an area of 8,150 square miles, all of which would come under the supervision of a single political officer.⁷⁷

The first phase of amalgamations and establishment cuts were not as drastic as originally contemplated

75. GOI. FPD. No.195 - Political (Secret) 1925-27, Nos.1-6, Proposal to establish a Second Class Residency to be styled the Eastern Rajputana States Agency. Questions connected with the location of the headquarters of the proposed Agency, p.9.

76. ibid., p. 23.

77. GOI.FPD. No.226 - Political (Secret), 1924-25, Nos. 1-9, No.2, Proposals for the abolition of the Malwa Political Agency and its amalgamation with neighbouring Agencies in Central India.

but the interplay of personalities and policies had been revealing. Economic difficulties and princely pressure had combined to pose a grave threat to the existence of the instruments of British paramountcy in the states. That these instruments had survived relatively intact by 1926 was largely due to the fact that in seeking complete independence Alwar and Bikaner had pushed their demands too high. In retrospect, however, it is also clear that warnings about the implications of amalgamations and establishment cuts had been approached in the wrong way. These warnings had come from Holland and Blakeway, yet one must consider whose interests they claimed to be representing. They had argued for the preservation of the status quo by the retention of both the A.G.G. and the local political agent, and had considered that, if at all, the latter should be abolished. The Political Department had accepted this view but again the efficacy of their decision must be questioned. If the detection of misrule and the ability to give advice were the primary functions of a political establishment surely these functions could be best performed by the political agent who was the man on the spot. Holland and Blakeway had in fact argued very much from the point of view of their own interests because they had objected to a process which they envisaged would result in individual princes rising to a higher status than they possessed. Although the ideal solution would have been to maintain both officials, if one had to be removed it should have been the A.G.G. who could have been

transferred along the lines of Reading's compromise solution. The Viceroy considered that a great deal had been done to stimulate the princes' desire for direct relations but he had also been impressed with Thompson's comments upon the utility of the A.G.G. Consequently he suggested that an officer with specialist knowledge of Rajputana should be added to the secretariat of the Political Department.⁷⁸ His proposal was never seriously entertained because Holland was able to seal his already formidable battery of arguments with the information, supplied by the Regent of Jodhpur, Sir Sukhdeo Pershad, that what Alwar and Bikaner really wanted, was to get a member of the Diplomatic Service substituted for the Political Secretary, the underlying aim being to gain recognition of the princes as allies "pure and simple" with no hint of subordination.⁷⁹ As a result Reading was obliged to submit to the view that the one official who possessed really intimate knowledge of local grievances within the states should become the target for future retrenchment proposals. Even Thompson had admitted that given a choice he would prefer the political agent "as a protector of the interests of the subjects of the states," but he had refrained from advocating this because he considered that the A.G.G. was in a position to speak with more authority to the rulers than the less experienced local officers.⁸⁰ This argument, however, took no account

78. GOI. FPD. No.30 - Political, 1923, Viceroy to S/S, telg., 18 June 1924.

79. ibid., Holland to Political Department, 20 June 1924.

80. ibid., Thompson's note, 7 May 1923.

of the effect which the amalgamations would have upon the remaining political agents and it was their position which would subsequently give cause for the gravest concern. The amount of work expected of an officer who was appointed political agent for an amalgamated change like that of the Malwa and Southern states would now be double that to which he had been accustomed. Here in embryo was one of the major problems which would confront British policy ten years later when, in an effort to stem the tide of nationalist pressure directed from British India, the need for internal reforms in the states would be all important: there were too many states in too backward a condition and not enough political agents to supervise them.

There was one state to whom the policy of non-interference could never be said to apply and it is initially surprising to learn that this was Hyderabad, the largest and most important of them all. In Hyderabad, intervention was the rule rather than the exception; the precedent had been established over the past 150 years with British intervention repeating itself at regular intervals of fifteen or twenty years. On each occasion, the reasons for such intervention, either conflict between the Ruler and his Chief Minister ^{or} between the Ruler and Resident and Viceroy, had been remarkably similar. The British attributed this perpetual state of friction to the person of the Nizam. They had never succeeded in establishing cordial relations with Hyderabad because of what they considered to be the idiosyncracies of successive

generations of Nizams. Curzon described the Nizam of his generation as being "utterly ignorant of, and completely indifferent to, the administration of his State or the welfare of his people" who cared only "for the gratification of his personal whims and desires, and is surrounded by a horde of venal scribes and bloodsuckers of the worst description."⁸¹ Three years before partition, the Political Adviser, F.V. Wylie, wrote that the last Nizam "must surely be the most freakish and disreputable person to be at this date placed in a position of authority over some 16 millions of his fellow human beings."⁸² These were not purely personal prejudices for it was true that, with the exception of the first Nizam and founder of the Osmania dynasty, Asaf Jah, there was not one really successful Nizam who emerged with any credit as an administrator. These opinions, however, do not explain the reverse side of the coin; the mistrust with which successive Nizams viewed the British. For this, as Wylie admitted,⁸³ the paramount power had itself been responsible through the disgraceful conduct of early British officers in Hyderabad. This was the sordid affair involving the banking firm of "William Palmer and Company" which was established in Hyderabad in 1819 ostensibly to make loans to the Nizam to help him avoid financial disaster, but the exorbitant rates of interest charged and the methods

81. Curzon to Hamilton, 28 December 1899, Curzon Collection, No.158.

82. GOI. Political Branch, No.80 - Political (Secret), 1944, Wylie's note, 17 November 1944. For details about the post of Political Adviser, see below p. 285.

83. ibid.

employed in their collection served only to worsen the finances of the state and reduce the peasantry to conditions of abject poverty. The crucial point for future Anglo-Hyderabad relations was the discovery that the Resident, Charles Russell, in collusion with the dubious but cunning Chief Minister, Chandu Lal, not only acquiesced in, but drew handsome profit from these under-hand transactions.⁸⁴ Whatever good intentions the British may subsequently have had, they could never remove the stigma of this episode from the minds of successive Nizams. In 1899 the Secretary of State, Lord Hamilton, informed Curzon that it was unfortunate that "several of the Europeans who have been in Hyderabad have so conducted themselves and so done the Nizam that he has a natural detestation of the race."⁸⁵ Future interference was henceforth viewed with a mixture of suspicion and resentment and any Chief Minister who showed signs of becoming too independent of his master was either summarily dismissed or subjected to such a campaign of intrigue and abuse that he would be forced to resign. Of more serious concern to the British was that although the manner in which the Nizams displayed their hostility increased the problems for the administration in Hyderabad, they were denied the one sure means of retrieving the situation. In 1900 the perennial financial difficulties of the state led Curzon to believe that "some fine day we

84. For details of this period, see E. Thompson, The Life of Charles, Lord Metcalfe, London, 1937, chapter 8.

85. Hamilton to Curzon, 14 April 1899, Curzon Collection, No. 158.

shall have to step in and cleanse this Augean stable of the "premier Mahomedan State in India".⁸⁶ Hamilton had to agree that Hyderabad was a "sink of iniquity" but cautioned the Viceroy:

"The deposition of the Nizam would be so serious a matter that I would tolerate a good deal of oppression and maladministration before I had recourse to an act which would unquestionably frighten all the ruling princes."⁸⁷

The last Nizam of the Osmania dynasty, Mir Osman Ali Khan, succeeded in 1901 and although twenty-five at his accession he knew nothing even about his own dominions outside the walls of King Kothi, his palace in Hyderabad. He was intensely suspicious and jealous and possessed an insatiable appetite for accumulating and hoarding riches in the form of money and jewellery. In November 1914, in accordance with Hyderabad tradition, he engineered the resignation of his popular Chief Minister, Salar Jang, and took it upon himself to be his own minister. Imperial necessity had dictated Hardinge's acquiescence in this ill-advised decision, for upon Turkey's entry into the First World War, the Nizam issued a manifesto declaring that the Indian Muslims should remain loyal to the allied cause. This won for the Nizam the title of "His Exalted Highness" and confirmation of the traditional appellation of "Faithfull Ally of the British Government". His gesture of friendship, at best only superficial, was

86. Curzon to Hamilton, 1 April 1900, Curzon Collection, No. 158.

87. Hamilton to Curzon, 10 May 1900, Curzon Collection, No. 159.

certainly short-lived and by the end of the war the Nizam had renewed Hyderabad's anti-British bias. In 1918, largely at the instigation of a Bombay journalist, Abdullah Khan Khasmandi, who had previously been expelled from Hyderabad and was now attempting to regain the favour of his former patron, the Nizam was persuaded that being known as "His Exalted Highness" was both meaningless and insufficient and that instead he should enjoy the title of "king". Suitably flattered, the Nizam became all that more desirous of replacing British and Hindu officials in his administration by Muslims and he ordered the dismissal of two British officers who held the key posts of Revenue and Police in Hyderabad. Montagu reminded Chelmsford that he had always "feared something of this kind because of the reverence which you and your Government felt it necessary to show the Nizam, not on his personal merits, not because of his short lineage, but having regard to the position which he holds among Muhammadans ...", and doubted whether the Resident, Stuart Fraser, was the right man to deal with a person "so liable to become swollen headed and dangerous from stupid vanity".⁸⁸ The position of the Resident at Hyderabad, although the leading appointment in the political service, was hardly an enviable one and Montagu's concern at the attitude which Fraser had adopted during his term of office from 1914 to 1919 was not the first time such misgivings had been expressed. In May 1900, at the time of the financial crisis in Hyderabad,

88. Montagu to Chelmsford, 7 November 1918, Montagu Collection, No.2.

Hamilton in agreeing with Curzon that the then Resident, T.J.C. Plowden, was quite unsuited to the work, had added his own reflection that "very few of our officers who are quartered there contrive to leave it with as good a reputation as they had when they went there".⁸⁹ For his part, Chelmsford chose the occasion of the Nizam's impertinence to deliver a vigorous indictment of the administration in Hyderabad, the result of which was that in June 1920 the Nizam was obliged to accept an Executive Council of between five and seven members with a Chief Minister or President who was to be given the fullest powers of control.⁹⁰

From the beginning the experiment was doomed to failure for two basic reasons; the continued impotency of the Residency and the machinations of the Nizam. The first was itself largely due to the intransigence of the Nizam who adopted a policy of isolating himself as far as possible from the Residency and opposition to anything in the nature of even friendly advice. In March 1922, Stuart Knox who was deputizing for Sir Lennox Russell as Resident in Hyderabad, complained that he had not even been allowed a confidential conversation of five minutes with the Nizam.⁹¹ He received no help from the Political Department who informed him that the Nizam was not obliged to speak to him and that "if a Prince chooses to bury himself in his palace the Political Agent cannot dig him

89. Hamilton to Curzon, 10 May 1900, Curzon Collection, No.159.

90. For an analysis of the period 1914-1919, see Fraser's "Note on the Hyderabad Residency", 1 February 1948, Lothian Collection, No.4.

91. GOI. FPD. No. 663 - Internal 1922, Knox to Wood, 11 March 1922.

out merely for the purpose of cultivating his acquaintance, and however tactful and untiring he may be in his efforts, they will not always be crowned with success."⁹² This ridiculous state of affairs persisted until 1925 when the more forthright Sir William Barton was appointed Resident and in December of that year he produced evidence that conditions in Hyderabad had seriously and rapidly deteriorated. Corruption and oppression were now rampant and manifested in the Nizam's abuse of the practice of giving nazars.⁹³ Appointments were now sold to the highest bidder; the Director-General of Police was compelled to pay Rs. 40,000 for his continuance in office as a nazar of that amount had been offered by someone with designs on his position. The receipt of nazars had poisoned every aspect of public life: "The Revenue Department is honeycombed with corruption: Customs officials are a byword for rapacity: the Police are more concerned to line their pockets than to suppress crime." The heaviest demands were made upon the nobility who were constantly plagued by fear of their families being ruined by the seizure of their estates upon their death. The nobles in their turn, were forced to make heavier demands on the peasantry, the majority of which was Hindu, in order to meet the exactions. The Nizam had also succeeded in

92. ibid., Thompson to Knox, 31 May 1922.

93. Nazars were a form of tribute traditionally presented to a ruler to signify the loyalty of the donor. Petitioners asking for favours at court, the Nizam's birthday celebrations, or when the Nizam visited the districts were the occasions for presenting nazars.

undermining the influence of the Council. The first President, Sir Ali Imam, although he had played a major role in enabling the Nizam to thwart the Residency, soon aroused the jealousy of his master and, as a result of a deliberate campaign against him in the press, he was forced to resign in September 1922. From mid 1923 to 1925, the post had been held by a Paigh noble with no administrative capacity, Nawab Wali-ud-Daula, while two other Paigh nobles on the Council owed their positions to the Nizam's attempt to induce them to refrain from pressing their claims to their estates.⁹⁴ Basically

the Council functioned as "mere constitutional ~~camo-~~^{Camouflaged} flange

designed to screen the arbitrary acts of the Ruler: if its advice registered the Nizam's approval it was accepted, if not it was ignored." Finally, matters had been made worse by the attitude adopted by Barton's immediate predecessor, Sir Lennox Russell, who, being impressed with Sir Ali Imam's legalistic view of the Nizam's treaty rights, had deduced from it exaggerated theories as to the extent to which non-interference should be carried out. The result was not only that Russell had closed his eyes to many of the existing abuses, but also that the Nizam had now become intolerant of any interference from the Residency.⁹⁵

94. One of the Nizam's favourite devices for squeezing money was to keep succession cases involving the Paighs pending while his minions moved in to administer, in effect plunder, the estates. In the meantime the Nizam would wait to see who would pay him the biggest bribe. GOI. FPD. Political Branch, No.80 - Political (Secret), 1944, Wylie's note, 17 November 1944.

95. GOI. FPD. No.13(5) - Political (Secret), 1925-26, Nos.1-40, Barton's "Memorandum on Hyderabad Affairs and suggestions for future policy", 11 December 1925.

Barton concluded that: "We have to deal with the most complete absolutism in history, and ^{absolutism} ~~absolution~~ untempered by fear of danger from within or without."⁹⁶ Immediate steps had to be taken to prevent further deterioration and restore the position of the Residency. Upon the basis of Barton's suggestions, the Government of India, with the concurrence of the Secretary of State, formulated the following measures: The Nizam was required to appoint an efficient President and Council, neither of whom were to be appointed or dismissed without the approval of the Government of India; there was to be a fixed division of responsibility between the Nizam and his Council; the Revenue and Police departments were to be placed under the control of lent British officers; the system of giving nazars was to be regularized and limited to official occasions only.⁹⁷

The imposition of these restrictions upon the authority of the Nizam in 1926 had the most profound impact upon the future course of Anglo-Hyderabad relations. The British could justify their intervention not only by referring to the principles of non-interference, which had laid down that gross misrule could not be tolerated, but also by the precedent of their past policy towards Hyderabad. Yet previous experience taught them that the root of the problem lay in the person of the Nizam and everything now depended upon the attitude he would adopt.

96. ibid.

97. ibid., Secret - Political Letter No. 5 to S/S,
27 May 1926.

It was hoped that he would realize that the measures were not only designed to promote a spirit of reform within his administration but also to strengthen his position politically. There were already signs that the majority Hindu population were beginning to react against the degeneracy of those who governed them. In a state with a working population of nearly twelve and a half million, just over ten and a half million were Hindus and just over one million were Muslims. Out of a total of 3,521 employed in public administration, 1,711 were Hindus and 1,376 were Muslims, which meant that while there was one Muslim official for approximately every 900 of the Muslim population there was only one Hindu official for approximately every 6,000 of that community.⁹⁸ Even then these figures belie the fact that while Muslims held sixty per cent of the top administrative posts, the Hindus only held twenty per cent.⁹⁹ The attention of the Hindus was directed first towards the continual stream of Muslim immigrants from North India who were appointed to fill the leading administrative positions. Many of these were graduates of the Aligarh Muslim college which had been founded in the late nineteenth century and was intended to produce a class of Muslim leaders who, "endowed with a consciousness of their claims to be the aristocracy of the country as much in British as in Mughal times" could

98. Census of India, 1921, Vol.XXI, Pt.II, Table 10.

99. Carolyn M. Elliott, "Decline of a Patrimonial Regime? The Telengana Rebellion in India, 1946-1951", Journal of Asian Studies, XXXIV, 1, (November 1974), p. 31.

be encouraged to work for the welfare of the Muslim community in India.¹⁰⁰ When they came to reform backward Hyderabad in the 1920's they brought with them many ties to the religions and political movements of North India which were being increasingly divided among communal lines. An attempt, therefore, to exert pressure for a reduction of the number of foreigners in the bureaucracy was made by a movement of Hyderabad natives known as Mulkis who had been displaced from administrative positions. The movement, although predominantly Hindu, did not possess a wide enough basis of support to make it a success. It was led by families who had themselves migrated from the north during the early years of the Osmania regime and who remained isolated in the old quarters of Hyderabad City treasuring the Persian traditions of the old court. They could not attract the support of rural Hindus because they continued to use Urdu and advocate it as the medium of education and thus their ideology was correctly identified as being merely another "thinly veiled argument for government jobs." The remainder and majority of the Hindu population chose to express their dissatisfaction by forging links with the growing movements of linguistic nationalism in Andhra and Maharashtra.¹⁰¹ Many wealthy Telegu Desmukhs and landlords, who had been particularly

100. P. Hardy, The Muslims of British India, Cambridge 1972, pp. 103-104.

101. The Hindus of Hyderabad were divided into three regions by language. In the northern and eastern districts were Telegu speakers, in the west, bordering on Bombay, those who spoke Marathi and in the south-west those who spoke Kannada. 48 per cent of the population of Hyderabad spoke Telegu, 26 per cent Marathi and 11 per cent Kannada, Carolyn M. Elliott, op.cit., p. 32.

vulnerable to the exaction of nazars, sponsored the Andhra State Conference which had been established in Hyderabad in the early twenties and which put them in touch with the cultural-political association of Telegus outside the state, the Andhra Mahasabha. Similarly, in the Maharashtrian districts the merchants turned to communal organizations, in particular the Arya Samaj, which became the vehicle for Hindu communalism within the state.¹⁰² However, as Barton had indicated, the Nizam was oblivious to these as yet nascent threats to his regime. From 1926 he was determined at all costs to avoid the natural consequences of the scheme of quasi-constitutional government to which he had committed himself under pressure from the Government of India. He remained aloof from the Residency and continued his intrigue to paralyze the Council by attempting to enforce the appointment of his own nominees in the hope that this would neutralize the work of the British officers.¹⁰³ One of these, Theodore Tasker, who had been appointed Director-General and Secretary of the Revenue Department, considered that it was essential for the stability of his dynasty that the Nizam should himself head the reforms and gain the credit for any improvement that it might be possible to effect. The British officers should be seen to be "eating his salt and wholeheartedly at his service."

102. For an analysis of Hindu political movements in this period, see Carolyn M. Elliott, op.cit., pp.32-5.

103. GOI. FPD. No. 610 - Political (Secret), 1927, Barton to Political Department, 23 December 1927.

That they were not seemed to be "a political blunder of the first magnitude on his part: it confirms the belief that, although no ruler was worse advised or worse served during that period, he himself was in active sympathy with the old order of things."¹⁰⁴

By 1928, Barton had despaired of achieving any permanent remedy short of removing the Nizam¹⁰⁵ but by then the consequences of such a step would be even graver than those envisaged by Hamilton at the turn of the century. In justifying intervention the Resident had confidently predicted that outside a few extremist circles there would be no general outcry among the Muslims of British India.¹⁰⁶ The Nizam, however, assiduously began to cultivate contacts among this community in the hope that propaganda on his behalf, if carried far enough, would induce the Government of India to leave him alone. Through the offices of Abdullah Khan Khasmandi the Nizam sent Rs. 25,000 to finance the 'Nizam Conference', a subsidiary of the Conference of the Khuddam ul-Haramin which was held at Lahore in October 1926 to discuss means of reviving the Caliphate. It was reported that, as a result, a deputation consisting of such leading Muslim notables as Sir Muhammad Shafi, Sir Abdur Rahim, Sir Fazalbhoy Currimbhoy, Dr. Hasanlmam, Dr. Kitchlew and

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104. Tasker's note "From the point of view of the British Officers lent to the Government of Hyderabad", 1928, Tasker Collection, No.5.
105. PSSF. 1902-31, File 906/1925, No.P2764/1928, Barton to Political Department, 17 April 1928.
106. GOI.FPD. No.13(5) - Political (Secret), 1924-26, Nos.1-40, Barton's memorandum on Hyderabad, 11 December 1925.

the Maharaja of Mohamadabad should wait on the Viceroy.¹⁰⁷ The deputation never actually materialized and Muslim interest in the Nizam's affairs was only short-lived but it would evidently create serious misgivings in their minds if the premier Muslim Prince in India were to be deposed. When to this is added the importance which Hyderabad would subsequently assume in the forthcoming constitutional negotiations, it can readily be seen how far the hands of the Government of India were tied in their dealings with the Nizam.

The much vaunted intervention, which theoretically placed the most far-reaching restrictions upon the authority of a Ruling Prince, was therefore a conspicuous failure. The Nizam's one consuming ambition was to divest himself of British control and thus restore his independence and it is in this light that his prevarications up to the invasion by the new Indian Dominion in 1948 must be seen. For their part, the British had to be content with periodic remonstrances with the Nizam in the hope that, in time, fate might remove him for them. Unfortunately their prayers remained unanswered and in 1944, three years before the end of British rule, they were still lamenting the existence of the Nizam and longing for the day when "His Exalted Highness may oblige us by joining his predecessors."¹⁰⁸

If the problems of British officers acting in

107. GOI. FPD. No.13 (17) - Political (Secret) 1926, Nos.1-78, Barton to Political Department, 23 October 1926.

108. GOI. Political Branch, No.80 - Political (Secret), 1944, Wylie's note, 9 August 1944.

a spirit of intervention in Hyderabad were considerable, those of their counterparts in the remaining states who were pursuing a policy of non-interference were even greater. Lord Irwin, who succeeded Reading as Viceroy in April 1926, was made aware of the situation early in 1927. In January of that year, the political agent for a minor change in the states of Western India, Major A.S. Meek, forwarded a note to the Political Department with the remarkable title: "British India is advancing along the lines of Evolution: The Indian States are on the road to Revolution." Meek claimed that while British India was moving towards self-government through education and a general raising of the standard of living, with very few exceptions, there was no such progress in the Indian States. The policy of non-interference was not only causing the division between the two systems to become more pronounced, it was also responsible for the increasingly frivolous attitudes which were being adopted towards the states:

"There is bitter criticism of the subject of State administration by many who have knowledge of it; but a remarkable feature of the time is that British officials who have the same knowledge condone with light hearted good humour what the common judgement would hold intolerable and a matter of grave disgrace."

Meek attributed the weakness of the Indian State system to the nature of the relationship between the states and the paramount power. Prior to the British a ruler had been obliged to consult the needs and desires of his subjects in order to protect his own rule and life. There was a common interest in the safety of the state; rulers

often being selected or elected according to their qualifications, and those who failed in their duty as protectors of the interests of their states were liable to deposition. The British, however, in extending their paramountcy, had divested the rulers of the responsibility for the safety of their states and had themselves assumed this function. The result was that the modern ruler now stood apart from his people. Freed from any anxiety as to the security of their states many rulers absorbed themselves in luxury and in building up that strange phenomenon they called their 'izzat'. Meek concluded by recommending an immediate reversal of the non-interference policy in two ways. First, there should be more discussion between the Government of India and political officers: many of the latter were completely in the dark about official policy towards the states, while the former would benefit from the specialist knowledge of the latter in devising that policy. Secondly, political officers should cease to be held at arms length by the princes and be placed in actual contact with the details of state administration in order to avoid the necessity for drastic intervention when malpractices had been discovered too late.¹⁰⁹

Irwin considered Meek's note to be very "interesting and suggestive"¹¹⁰ and resolved to call an informal conference of political officers to examine the methods by which the Viceroy, within the framework of

109. GOI. FPD. No.48 - Political (Secret) 1927, note by Major A.S. Meek, Political Agent, Mahi Kantha, 29 January 1927.

110. ibid., Irwin's note, 9 February 1927.

general policy, could induce improvement when needed and also place the officers in fuller possession of the mind of the central government. Discussion upon non-interference at the conference, which was held at Simla in July 1927, varied according to the personality and experience of individual officers. Lt.Col.R.H. Chenevix-Trench, with nearly twelve months experience as Revenue and Police Member of Council in Hyderabad, strongly condemned the policy, which he considered had led to oppression and general misgovernment, as being "as short-sighted as it was unworthy of the Imperial Government."¹¹¹ From Central India the A.G.G., E.H. Kealy, considered that even if the policy was abandoned, the task of the Political Department would be doubly difficult as the princes would more than ever resent interference with what they believed to be their sovereign rights of independence. Moreover, the princes were now more united as a result of the Chamber of Princes which offered them greater opportunity for communication. Consequently: "Any suspected tendency to return to interference will close the remaining gaps in their ranks."¹¹² L.W. Reynolds, the A.G.G. from Rajputana, approached the subject from a theoretical angle: "the standard of the administration represents the stage of social development which the State has reached and we can hardly expect the administration of a State emerging from the 'tribal' stage of evolution to

111. GOI. FPD. No. 577 - Political (Secret), 1927, opinion recorded by Lt.Col.R.H. Chenevix-Trench.

112. ibid., opinion recorded by E.H. Kealy.

approximate to that of British India." He considered that the problems confronting the states of Rajputana were too deep-rooted for either a policy of interference or a well-intentioned ruler to make much progress. For this reason he was opposed to interference to improve an administration which was based upon indigenous talent. It was no use forcing the princes to adopt regular budgets and civil lists unless these measures were supervised by honest officials with some security of tenure. As such officials were rare in Rajputana, Reynolds concluded that the only solution was for the Government of India to loan to the princes the services of trained British Indian administrators until such time as the advance of education in the states had created the necessary indigenous supply.¹¹³

The opinions recorded by the representatives of Central India and Rajputana at the conference revealed yet a further dilemma for British policy. Kealy had indicated that a return to interference would meet with formidable opposition from the Chamber of Princes while Reynolds had declared that the only solution lay in going beyond the norm of interference by urging the states to employ British Indian officials. Lord Irwin was confronted with the task of resolving the dilemma.

From the beginning the Viceroy determined to steer a middle course. He was himself of the opinion that the instructions to political officers outlined in Butler's

113. ibid., opinion recorded by L.W. Reynolds.

Political Department Manual went too far,¹¹⁴ and was rather surprised at the conference to learn that the more junior officers thought that the government wished them to interfere as little as possible.¹¹⁵ He agreed with Kealy's analysis but not with that of Reynolds: the princes would never submit to the bureaucratic control of British Indian officials. Intervention there would have to be, but it should be pursued respectfully and tactfully and with the acquiescence of the general body of princes. In order to win them over, Irwin chose to work in close co-operation with the Chamber of Princes and more particularly with the Standing Committee of that organisation. As in his approach to the problems of British India, he adopted the principles of conciliation and consultation towards those of the states. Historians have since applauded his statesmanship in dealing with the conflicting elements of the nationalist movement in British India, but a similar judgement cannot be passed on his handling of the princes. His tactics made none of the necessary modifications in the non-interference policy and served only to elevate still further the members of the Standing Committee to a position of influence out of all proportion to the importance of their States.

An aristocrat himself, Irwin felt a natural empathy with the princes and found welcome relief from the

114. Irwin to Birkenhead, 31 August 1927, Halifax Collection, No. 3. (The Viceroy was created Baron Irwin in 1925 and succeeded his father as Viscount Halifax in 1934).

115. Irwin to Birkenhead, 7 July 1927, Halifax Collection, No.3.

complexities of Indian politics during the many hours of leisure he spent among them in their states. However it was the affluence of palace society which made him realize that all was not well in princely India. The lavish expenditure of the princes must have affected his conscience for he considered that the first "great reform" would be to induce them to have a regulated civil list for what they spent on themselves. He did not anticipate a great response:

"I do not conceal from myself that we are not likely to get them all to adopt this principle very quickly, or that even if they did they would still no doubt, as some do today, be able to wangle their accounts. But if one could get the principle into their minds, it would begin to create a public opinion in its favour and would gradually bear increasing fruit." ¹¹⁶

He spoke to Patiala about it in November 1926 and suggested that two leading princes might move a resolution to this effect in the Chamber of Princes. Irwin's reasoning was typical of his approach: "They would get the full credit of this public-spirited action and I should, on behalf of the Government of India, congratulate them on their progressive inclinations." ¹¹⁷ When informal discussions were held with the Standing Committee in May 1927, Irwin again hinted at the need for internal reforms in the states and, at his request, Bikaner agreed to move a resolution on the subject in the forthcoming Chamber session. Again the Viceroy was content in the knowledge that although there would be a "gulf between profession and practice", it would be a great step forward to have

116. Irwin to Birkenhead, 7 July 1926, Halifax Collection, No.2.

117. ibid.

secured a recognition of "sound principles".¹¹⁸

Accordingly, at the Chamber session in February 1928, Bikaner called for a definite code of law, guaranteeing liberty of person and safety of property, to be administered by a judiciary independent of the executive, and the settlement, upon a reasonable basis, of the purely personal expenditure of the ruler as distinguished from the public charges of his administration.¹¹⁹ The Rajput was clear that there should be no misunderstanding about the intention of such reforms:

"We naturally cherish, and desire to preserve intact, and to render secure for all time, our internal autonomy; and we resent ... undue intervention or interference from any source outside our States in our internal and domestic affairs, or any encroachment on our Sovereign powers."¹²⁰

In seconding the resolution, Patiala chose to be more explicit. Reforms in the states were not to be confused with those pending in British India:

"In the States our institutions are framed upon certain traditional lines, the position of the Ruler is fixed in accordance with the dictates of religion and morality. I for one believe that the position of Kingship in India is every bit as constitutional as that of the monarchies in the West, for which reason, I want to tell your Highness that in lending our support to his Highness of Bikaner's resolution, we are, I am sure, in no way committing ourselves upon the vexed question as to whether democracy is or is not a good thing, either for India in general or our States in particular."¹²¹

118. Irwin to Birkenhead, 11 May 1927, Halifax Collection, No.3.

119. Chamber of Princes, February 1928.

120. ibid.

121. ibid.

The speeches of Bikaner and Patiala made it clear that in contemplating reforms, the princes would not be obliged to consider the introduction of representative institutions. On the contrary, it was their positive duty to maintain the traditions of autocracy within their states. For his part, Irwin made no attempt to encourage the growth of democracy within the states. He recognized that only Mysore, Cochin and Travancore in the south, and possibly Baroda, possessed representative bodies exercising any degree of popular influence on the administration and considered that the events of the last ten years in British India had not convinced the princes that democracy was a worthwhile experiment. In 1930, in the midst of constitutional negotiations in London, he confided to the Secretary of State, Wedgwood Benn, that "it might even do harm if they suspected us of trying to stampede them towards responsible representative institutions", and concluded that it would be better to leave such reforms to the growth of public opinion both within and without the states once the constitutional position of British India had been settled.¹²² Irwin's contribution to reform was a note he prepared for circulation to those princes who requested it on the general principles of 'Administration and Government'. In it the Viceroy stressed the need for an administration conducted in accordance with the law, an efficient and uncorrupt police force and an efficient judicial system whose personnel

122. Irwin to Benn, 18 January 1930, Halifax Collection, No.6.

should be secure from arbitrary executive interference and who should be secure in the tenure of their office provided they continued to do their duty. He also drew attention to the fact that taxation should be proportionate to the ability of the tax-payer to pay and that the personal expenditure of the ruler should be fixed either at a definite sum or a definite percentage of the total income of the state. Reference was made to the need for every government to have some machinery, not necessarily "representative [or elective]", whereby it could inform itself of the wishes of its subjects and whereby the latter could make their voice heard. Finally, Irwin emphasized:

"Perhaps the principal necessity for a personal ruler is that he should be able to choose wise counsellors, and having chosen them that he should trust them, and encourage them to tell him the truth, whether or not this is always palatable."¹²³

The initiative for this note did not, as some believe, belong to the Viceroy:¹²⁴ it was written at Patiala's request¹²⁵ and the circulation it achieved created more problems than it purported to solve. Many princes completely misunderstood the purpose of the document. Some, like the Maharaja of Jind, thought it was intended as a criticism of their own administrations and replied with notes of their own in which they attempted to prove

123. Irwin's "Notes on Administration and Government", 14 June 1927, enclosed with Irwin to Benn, 18 January 1930, Halifax Collection, No.6.

124. Phadnis, op.cit., p. 82 and F.W.F. Smith, Second Earl of Birkenhead, Halifax: The Life of Lord Halifax, London 1965, p. 230.

125. Irwin to Sir L. Wilson, Governor of Bombay, 4 October 1927, Halifax Collection, No.21.

that they governed in accordance with the principles laid down by the Viceroy.¹²⁶ This had never been Irwin's intention and he had to reassure many princes that the note merely expressed his personal views and was not to be regarded as an official document.¹²⁷ In so doing, Irwin had let slip a rare opportunity of closing the gap in administrative standards between British India and the states. He appreciated that:

"In the last resort and in the fullness of time I am certain no doubt that an even more effective security for the States than assurances of goodwill on the part of either Viceroy's or Secretaries of State will in the long run be found to consist in the quality and in the calibre of their administrations."¹²⁸

However, the lack of sanction behind his note, which meant that it soon became a dead letter as far as the princes were concerned, and his repeated assurances as to the sanctity of treaty rights and Britain's obligation to uphold them,¹²⁹ served only to confirm the belief held by many princes that these rights would be sufficient to protect them from what they considered to be revolutionary influences across their borders. It would have been more to the point had Irwin made this support and defence of the princes contingent upon them reforming their administrations in accordance with the principles he himself laid down.

126. Maharaja of Jind to Irwin, 22 September 1927, Halifax Collection, No.21.

127. Irwin to Maharaja of Panna, 24 September 1927, Halifax Collection, No.21.

128. Chamber of Princes, February 1928.

129. ibid.

Irwin's tactics were more than complemented by those of a new Political Secretary, Charles Watson, who succeeded Thompson shortly after the conference of political officers. Watson, who had attended the conference in his capacity as A.G.G. for the states of Western India, was a firm believer in the policy of non-interference. It was significant that he was one of the few officers at the conference who considered that administrative conditions in many of the states compared favourably with those in British India.¹³⁰ It was also no coincidence that the most disastrous consequence of the non-interference policy occurred when Watson was head of the Political Department.

The issue was once again that of direct relations and amalgamations. At the July Conference, Kealy had expressed his opinion that it was essential to restore those agencies which had been abandoned or amalgamated in recent years. He considered that the amalgamation of the Malwa and Southern states in Central India had proved to be a very great mistake because the combined agency was too large for the political agent ever to get to know the states or use his personal influence with their rulers. As a result several of the States had not been visited for many years. He concluded: "If non-interference continues, however, these defects are immaterial."¹³¹ Kealy in fact emerged from the conference

130. GOI. FPD. No. 577 - Political (Secret), 1927, Opinion recorded by C.C. Watson.

131. ibid., opinion recorded by E.H. Kealy.

under the impression that Irwin meant to abandon non-interference and therefore recommended the separation of the Malwa and Southern states.¹³² He was informed by the Political Department that there was no question of departing from that policy and that it was Irwin's desire to diminish the instances of intervention by encouraging political officers to secure the confidence of the princes.¹³³ To this Kealy quite justifiably replied that the size of the new agency made it impossible for the political agent to achieve such a rapport. It was two-hundred miles from end to end with the headquarters station at Manpur being tucked away in one corner. The states, over forty in number, were almost inaccessible by road which made touring even more difficult. Many of them were hopelessly backward and in desperate need of more constant help and advice.¹³⁴ These misgivings, however, fell on deaf ears in the Political Department.

Of more immediate concern to Watson when he became Political Secretary was a renewed campaign for the conversion of the states in Eastern Rajputana into a second-class Residency. Not surprisingly, the initiative rested with Alwar. In February 1929, Watson approved the proposal¹³⁵ but he met with formidable

132. GOI. FPD. No.177 - Confidential/Establishment, 1930, Kealy to Watson, 25 July 1927.

133. ibid., Thompson to Kealy, 29 August 1927.

134. ibid., Kealy to Thompson, 31 August 1927,

135. GOI. FPD. No.177 - Political (Secret), 1929, Watson's note, 18 February 1929.

opposition from the then Secretary of State, Peel, who objected for reasons which stood in marked contrast to those which Montagu had used in making the original proposal for direct relations: "In seeking direct relations main object of Princes is to reduce control of Paramount Power." The Secretary of State considered that as this was one of the underlying issues of policy arising out of the report of the Indian States Committee, it was desirable to avoid any premature action which might appear even slightly to prejudge this question. Furthermore there was a danger that the princes might connect the proposal with the wider question of the retention of the A.G.G.¹³⁶ These arguments were reminiscent of those which had been used by Holland and indeed he was responsible for them having been appointed to the Secretary of State's Council upon the expiry of his term of office in Rajputana. Watson was furious; he considered that the "desire of the Princes to get rid of Paramountcy is an ever present bogey to the India Office,"¹³⁷ and again, after Peel had refused to reconsider, that the decision was "a typical example of the rigid conservatism of the India Office and their want of touch with the feelings of the Princes."¹³⁸ Alwar shared Watson's anger but he was able to take advantage of his presence in London for the first Round Table Conference to petition Benn, the new Secretary of State.

136. ibid., S/S to Viceroy, telg., 19 April 1929.

137. ibid., Watson's note, 23 April 1929.

138. ibid., Watson's note, 22 May 1929.

The latter eventually relented and proposed that while preparations were being made for the conversion of all the states in Eastern Rajputana, Alwar should be placed in direct relations with the A.G.G.¹³⁹ This took effect from July 1931, the month Holland left the India Council.

The arrangement for Alwar lasted under two years. In January 1933 British troops were moved into the state to suppress a rebellion by a tribe of Muslim peasantry known as Meos. An enquiry into the revolt revealed a sickening catalogue of financial oppression, corruption, torture and misery unparalleled in any other state.¹⁴⁰ The sinister personality of the Maharaja had pervaded every aspect of life in Alwar. Arthur Lothian, who was Prime Minister in Alwar from February to March 1933 wrote of Jey Singh:

"When to his arrogance there is allied a vindictive, capricious, and cruel temperament, his officials and attendants never dare put up any proposals that are unpalatable to him or they would get savagely punished by dismissal or fine, or at the least get held up to ridicule or approbium in files or in the State Gazette. As a result there is a cringing, frightened atmosphere in Alwar amongst the Maharaja's staff such as I have never seen in any other State."¹⁴¹

Lothian acknowledged that the Maharaja was somewhat of a Jekyll and Hyde; "... when he chooses to show the charming side of his character, a more intelligent man

139. GOI. FPD. No.53 - Political (Secret), 1931, S/S to Viceroy, telg., 10 January 1931.

140. GOI. FPD. No.223 - Political (Secret), 1933, Nos. 1-6, Notes on the financial position, oppression and maladministration in the Alwar State.

141. ibid., Enclosure to No.2, Report of A.C. Lothian, 19 April 1933.

than even the late Mr. Edwin Montagu might well be taken in."¹⁴² As a result of the enquiry, Jey Singh was forced to leave his state which was hurriedly re-incorporated on a temporary basis into the Eastern Rajputana states agency in the summer of 1933.¹⁴³

Responsibility for the sordid state of affairs that had arisen in Alwar lay not only with Jey Singh but also with the policy of non-interference. The Political Department had been aware of the existence of grave oppression and maladministration in the state for the past ten or twelve years and Watson reported of the Maharaja that there had "for some time been a general impression that his rule represents autocracy in its worst form."¹⁴⁴ He appreciated that the case would lead to criticism of the department but felt that this could be faced with "equanimity". He reasoned that officials could only intervene if there were complaints from the oppressed, and in Alwar fear of the Maharaja had prevented this. He had himself been political agent in Alwar from 1918 to 1921 and had never heard of any complaints either by letter or when he toured with the Maharaja.¹⁴⁵ He completely ignored the fact that because of the non-interference policy neither he nor his successors in Alwar made it their business to question how the state was governed. If they had, the calamity of 1933 might

142. ibid.

143. GOI. FPD. No.112 - Political (Secret), 1933, Question of reverting to the original position by which the Alwar State was in relations with the Political Agent, Eastern Rajputana States.

144. GOI. FPD. No. 223 - Political (Secret) 1933, Nos.1-6, Watson's note, 27 April 1933.

145. ibid.

have been avoided. Furthermore, in support of Alwar's claim for the upgrading of the Eastern Rajputana states in 1929, Watson had written:

"As the States administrations improve - as they gradually must - the Rulers are inclined to prefer that the exercise of Paramountcy should take place from a reasonable distance outside. The immediate presence of a Political Officer does tend to minor complaints being made by aggrieved persons, and the knowledge that such complaints are being received tends to make the Darbar suspicious of the local Political Officer even though he may take no action upon them. Where complaints are serious and widespread, justifying intervention, they will always reach the Agent to the Governor-General even although his headquarters are outside the State. In the case of States therefore with reasonably modern and efficient systems of administration it may be preferable that the Political Officer in relation with them should have his headquarters outside. The same does not of course apply where the administration is notoriously backward or inefficient or where there are special conditions, such as a minority, requiring closer and more detailed attention on the part of the Central Government." 146

What could be more notoriously backward or inefficient and in greater need of closer and more detailed supervision than the state of Alwar? The logic of the Political Department in their adherence to a policy of non-interference had reached the height of incompetence.

To make matters worse that policy received further confirmation from the financial crisis of 1929 to 1931 which necessitated even more widespread retrenchment. This time the Bundelkhand and Baghelkhand agencies in Central India could not escape and were amalgamated in

146. GOI. FPD. No. 177 - Political (Secret), 1929, Watson's note, 23 April 1929.

June 1933.¹⁴⁷ In July of the following year, Rajputana was re-organized upon the following basis: the Eastern Rajputana states, the Western Rajputana states, the Residency at Udaipur and the Residency at Jaipur to which Alwar was now transferred.¹⁴⁸ This meant that in the period from 1920 to 1934 the number of subordinate agencies in Central India had been halved, from six to three and those in Rajputana reduced from seven to four. Concurrently, the number of local agents expected to cope with the increase in work resulting from these amalgamations had been reduced from six to three in Central India, and from eight to five in Rajputana.

A future Viceroy would have cause bitterly to regret the policies that had been adopted in these fourteen years.

147. GOI. FPD. No.339 - Political (Secret), 1931, Nos. 1-39, Question of the reduction of Political Agencies in Central India in view of the urgent need for economy in expenditure.

148. GOI. FPD, No.693 - Political (Secret), 1933, Nos.1-10, Redistribution of political charges in Rajputana.

CHAPTER 4.THE INDIAN STATES COMMITTEE: 1921-1929.

Upon the establishment of the Chamber of Princes, the main concern of the princes on the Standing Committee was to achieve a suitable definition of paramountcy. By 1921 this had assumed a new dimension. The progress of the non-co-operation movement in British India had created grave misgivings in the minds of the princes. Only a few were directly affected by agitation within their territories but all were particularly vulnerable to the increasingly hostile attitudes which were being adopted towards the states and their rulers in the vernacular press. The princes sought protection by lobbying for press legislation and an assurance that in future they would conduct their relations solely with the Viceroy rather than with the Governor-General in Council who was head of a government that could become increasingly susceptible to popular opinion. At the same time, however, the princes remained anxious to prevent encroachments by the Political Department on their sovereignty and continued to press for a codification of political practice which would recognize that the exercise of paramountcy depended solely upon the terms of their treaties and not upon the vagaries of usage. These twin objectives were really incompatible for while the former depended upon the strength of paramountcy, the latter sought to weaken it. This chapter is concerned with the attempts by the Standing Committee to achieve a

subtle balance whereby the paramount power would be strong enough to protect the princes from any threats posed by British India but not to infringe their cherished rights.

Although the non-co-operation movement of 1920-1922 was India's first experience of "mass" involvement in politics, for some princes, like the Maharaja of Kolhapur, it revived bitter memories of the old anti-Brahmin campaigns of Minto's day. As early as January 1920, Kolhapur was advising Chelmsford to take stern measures to repress "the wild abuse of speech at Congress meetings."¹ The Nizam of Hyderabad was equally perturbed by the Khilafat agitation which existed as part of the non-co-operation movement. This agitation had been inspired by Muslim hostility towards the allied intention, revealed in the Treaty of Sèvres of May 1920, to dismember the old Turkish Empire. The Nizam responded by prohibiting all Khilafat meetings within Hyderabad and attacking Khilafat theory as both disloyal and unjustified by historical circumstances. As a result he was vilified as a traitor of Islam in certain Lahore based Urdu papers like the Zandur, Siyasat and Zamana. In July 1920, the Nizam warned Chelmsford that "the virulence of the Urdu Press had broken all bounds" and that it would become increasingly difficult for him to give the right lead to the Indian Muslims if these "scurilous attacks continued."²

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1. Kolhapur to Chelmsford, 19 January 1920, Chelmsford Collection, No.24.
 2. Barbara Nell Ramusack, "Indian Princes as Imperial Politicians, 1914-1939", unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Michigan, p.138.

The question of press legislation to protect the princes was first raised by Kolhapur during the informal meetings held concurrently with the inauguration of the Chamber of Princes in February 1921. Accordingly, Bikaner was deputed to raise the issue with the Political Secretary. By November 1921, when the second session of the Chamber was held, princely concern had been increased by the knowledge that the restrictive Press Act of 1910 would probably be repealed. This Act, designed to afford protection to both the government and the princes against such press criticism as the government considered would lead to "disaffection or hatred", had been widely condemned by nationalist politicians because the proprietors and editors of accused papers were denied the opportunity to defend themselves in court. Montagu was anxious to see a revision of some of the more objectionable features of the Act in order to ensure that the government would have the support of moderate politicians in working the new constitution. Chelmsford responded by appointing a nine man Press Act Committee in March 1921 to consider if any modifications were necessary. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, the Law Member of the Government of India, and W.H. Vincent, the Home Member, were the only official members of the committee which reported in July 1921. The princes were disturbed to find that it had unreservedly advocated total repeal of the Press Act.³ If this recommendation was accepted, the only protection available to the princes would

3. ibid., p. 158.

be for them to prosecute offending newspapers. This, however, was precisely what they wished to avoid as they considered court actions to be beneath their dignity and status.

Chelmsford had been on the point of retirement when he appointed the committee. His successor, Lord Reading, was quickly informed by Alwar that no prince would allow his name to be mentioned in connection with court proceedings.⁴ In August 1921 Montagu gave his approval to the introduction of legislation to repeal the Press Act but asked the Government of India "to consider whether you could not afford the protection of your courts to Princes and Chiefs in some form which would not be rendered nugatory by their objection to appear in court."⁵ The answer to this query was provided by Sir Ali Imam during an interview he held with Wood in September 1921. According to Imam, it was not only a question of princely aversion to court appearances; the damage would have been done once a newspaper had published. For a prince to have to answer criticisms of his administration in court would only be adding insult to injury. Imam confided to Wood that as far as Hyderabad was concerned, the Nizam would never agree to abdicate his despotic powers and would inevitably be driven to take strong measures to protect his reputation and to prevent the penetration of democratic ideas into his state from

4. Reading to Montagu, 21 July 1921, Reading Collection, No.1.

5. Ramusack, op.cit., p. 158.

British India.⁶ At the Chamber session of November 1921 Alwar moved a resolution calling for protective press legislation. Scindia objected because he thought that the princes would be emphasizing the weakness of their position by asking for special protection. Scindia's influence, however, was rapidly declining in the Standing Committee, and his was the only voice of dissent.⁷

The Government of India was therefore obliged to reconsider the necessity of special press legislation for the princes. In March 1922, Montagu was forced to resign over his handling of the Government of India's protest against the Treaty of Sèvres. His Conservative successor, Lord Peel, refused to approve the repeal of the Press Act until he had received definite assurances that the princes would be protected.⁸ Sapru remained adamant that legislation to this effect was unnecessary but Vincent was obliged to change his mind because he felt that if the princes were not protected, "we shall ourselves suffer from the reaction and the Princes might, as indeed some of them have done in the past, encourage sedition and intrigue against the Government of India in their states."⁹ On 23 September, just six months after the repeal of the Press Act, Vincent asked leave to introduce a bill in the Legislative Assembly to prevent

6. GOI. FPD. Secret-Internal, January 1922, No.3, Wood's "Memorandum of conversations with Sir Ali Imam", 16 September 1921.

7. Ramusack, op.cit., p.159.

8. ibid., p. 162.

9. ibid., p. 163.

the dissemination of news calculated to excite disaffection against the princes and their governments. The Assembly rejected the motion but on the following day Reading used his powers of certification to enable the bill to become law. On 3 October Peel wrote to Reading expressing satisfaction that certification under the Act of 1919 had first occurred in a matter which was one between Indians and Indians.¹⁰

The princes of the Standing Committee had sufficient political acumen to realize that special press legislation could not, of itself, secure adequate provision for the protection of the states and their rulers. Even before Reading's certification they realized that any Press Act could, like its predecessor, become the subject of a debate demanding its repeal. Moreover, it was not inconceivable that a future Government of India might consider it more politic to submit to nationalist opinion in British India rather than endorse the claims of its less numerous princely clients. It was this possibility that led the princes to seek an assurance that in future they would conduct their relations with the Viceroy rather than the Governor-General in Council. The offices of Viceroy and Governor-General in Council were held by the same person. The term Viceroy was used to describe the representative of the Crown in India and it was through the Viceroy that the Indian States owed allegiance to the British monarch. As the states were not constitutionally part of British India it was extremely rare for the Viceroy to act in his capacity as Governor-General and thereby consult his Council on matters concerning the states. However, fearing

10. ibid., p. 165.

that the logical development of the Government of India Act 1919 would be the responsibility of the central executive to the central legislature, many princes now sought an assurance that the Viceroy would never consult his Council on matters concerning the states. In this way the princes hoped to gain immunity against interference by the British Indian executive and legislature.

This issue had in fact been the subject of a controversy between two members of Chelmsford's Council in 1920. Sir George Lowndes, the Law Member, had been in favour of making the Viceroy immediately responsible for all the affairs of the states which did not directly affect the administration of British India. He argued that the change should have been made in 1870 when the Indian Empire had been constituted because all the matters involved referred to suzerainty which, in his opinion, was definitely a relationship concerning only the states and the British Crown. He considered that the princes did not contemplate the change as an attempt at "aggrandisement" but rather out of a "genuine fear of the effect of a popular government of India upon the rights and privileges which we have guaranteed them." Lowndes concluded:

"The ruling Chiefs all want this, and, if we are to be able to consolidate the Indian Empire, which is to me of the greatest possible importance at the present time, I feel that we must carry them with us."¹¹

11. GOI. FPD. Secret-Internal, January 1921, Nos.1-22, Lowndes' note, 20 August 1920.

A different view had been expressed by the Home Member, Sir Malcolm Hailey. He considered that it would be wrong to lend any encouragement to what he believed was a mistaken theory that the states were dependent only on the Crown and entirely independent of the Government of India. He saw the problem in terms of central responsibility and argued that the position could only be reconsidered if a radical change was contemplated in the constitution of the Government of India whereby the Viceroy's executive gave way to a popularly elected ministry. In these circumstances Hailey admitted that it would be impossible to make the princes subordinate to an authority elected by British India.¹²

Hailey's opinion was the one that prevailed. In July 1921, when Alwar asked if it would be possible to amend the wording of the 1919 Act to the effect that the states were in relation only with the Viceroy, he was informed by Reading that as it was extremely rare for the Viceroy to consult his council on matters concerning the states, no such action was necessary. Alwar, although expressing misgivings as to the attitude of a future Viceroy, was reluctantly obliged to let matters rest there.¹³

The princes were similarly disappointed with the promised negotiations on the codification of political practice. Although Lowndes had previously conceded that future political developments could necessitate a definition

12. ibid., Hailey's note, 15 August 1920.

13. Reading to Montagu, 21 July 1921, Reading Collection, No.1.

of mutual rights and obligations,¹⁴ the Political Department remained convinced that there was nothing to be gained by Alwar's analytical approach. When the Standing Committee met Thompson in January 1924, Patiala argued that:

"... if the position of the States was strengthened in the manner proposed [i.e. the analytical approach] great benefit to the Empire might be expected. When the Government of India is surrendering its power into the hands of the people why should the Government not increase the powers of the Princes who have always been loyal and who do not desire to be handed over to the British Indian democracy."¹⁵

To this Thompson replied that numerous difficulties would arise if an attempt was made to extract principles from treaties and sanads, many of which had been concluded over a century ago. Moreover the Political Secretary thought that it was not inconceivable that a thorough examination of these treaties and sanads might result in a case being justifiably made for an even stricter interpretation of political practice.¹⁶ By August 1924, Thompson had slightly modified his position in that he was prepared to work with Alwar in formulating a set of principles based upon treaties provided that due recognition was given to usage and that such an examination would not be binding on the government or the princes.¹⁷

14. See above, p. 70.

15. Ramusack, op.cit., p. 167.

16. ibid., p. 168.

17. GOI. FPD. No.73 - Reforms, 1928, Nos.1-4, Appendix 1, Political Department, "Memorandum regarding the relationship between the Paramount Power and the States."

By then, however, the princes' reflections on events which had accompanied the first three years of the reforms in British India, had persuaded them that something far more substantial than a codification of political practice was required.

In May 1922 Bikaner had written to Reading asking for a "round-table conference with a selected number of princes" to enable the Viceroy to "understand at first hand the difficulties, hopes and aspirations of the princes and the remedies they suggest."¹⁸ Bikaner could possibly have been influenced by the knowledge that in December of the previous year Reading had been prepared to convene a round-table conference with moderate nationalist politicians and Gandhi as a means to end the non-co-operation movement. To the relief of Reading's advisers and the exasperation of some of Gandhi's lieutenants the conference never met because Gandhi imposed certain conditions upon his attendance which were completely unacceptable to the government. By the time Bikaner made his request the government's position had been considerably strengthened. The violence of Chauri Chaura brought non-co-operation to an end in February 1922 and in the following month Gandhi was arrested and sentenced to six ^{years} ~~months~~ imprisonment. Thereafter the Indian national movement fell into sad disarray. While the Congress split into various factions over the adoption of a new political

18. GOI. FPD. No. 179 - Political (Secret) 1924-25, Bikaner to Reading, 18 May 1922.

strategy the Khilafat agitation began to appear pointless in view of the enthusiasm which greeted the movement by Kemel Attaturk in Turkey to abolish the Caliph. By the summer of 1922 the confidence of the Government of India led to a summary rejection of Bikaner's suggestion:

"The idea underlying a round-table conference is that all meet on a footing of equality and this alone is sufficient to show that it is impossible where the Princes and the Viceroy are concerned."¹⁹

Bikaner was informed that as the princes now had a regular organ of expression in the Chamber of Princes, they should make use of it for the purpose of bringing matters to the attention of the Viceroy.

Two years later Bikaner tried again. In July 1924 he presented Reading with two lengthy and detailed notes. In the first the Maharaja dropped the idea of a round-table conference and wrote instead of the "urgent need" for informal discussions between the Viceroy and the princes. He explained that since the constitutional negotiations of 1918 the states had been able to reflect upon how matters stood and to focus upon the great difficulties that lay ahead of them. As a result:

"The time would therefore appear to be fully ripe when, in the best interests of both parties, the British Government and the States ought to take stock of the whole situation and without loss of time concentrate, during the period of transition in British India on measures leading to a settled line of action and with the goal clearly defined and the future position of the Indian States clearly in view when a

19. ibid., Thompson's note, 3 August 1922.

condition of affairs will prevail in British India. Otherwise the position of the Princes and States will be an unenviable one and in many respects probably even worse off than that of the Loyalists in Ireland."

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Bikaner emphasised that his suggestion would not undermine the Chamber of Princes and that the proposed discussions would not take place regularly "but, as in this case, when special circumstances demand them, or at the outset of each new Viceroyalty." What then, were the special circumstances of this particular case? It was clear that Bikaner, in common with many other Chamber members, had been unnerved by the campaign of non-co-operation, the controversy that had surrounded the special press legislation and the reluctance of the Political Department to recognize the importance of treaty rights. These princes feared that unless their position was defined before the next stage of constitutional advance, they could find themselves at the mercy of the democratic movement in British India. Thus, "in order to eliminate all elements and risk of surprise, uncertainty and haste," Bikaner considered that it was imperative to give the princes sufficient time to consider their future well in advance of the Statutory Commission which was due to report on the progress of the British Indian constitution in 1929.²¹

In his second note Bikaner chose to be rather more explicit:

20. ibid., Bikaner to Reading, 27 July 1924.

21. ibid.

"The day may be near or distant when India attains full Self-Government but, without the least hostility to constitutional advance in British India ..., the instinct of self-preservation urgently demands every timely effort and precaution to preserve the entity and to safeguard the rights and autonomy of our States and, wherever possible, even to strengthen our position."²²

Bikaner again emphasized the need for informal discussions but this time his proposals went further because he felt that the result of any "stock-taking" would be to reveal the multiplicity of inter-dependent subjects requiring thorough investigation. He considered that this work would be beyond the capacity either of the Viceroy or the Standing Committee and therefore requested the appointment of an "important Committee" to go into the whole matter and report to the Viceroy. The Committee would have to be chaired by someone who was "endowed with statesmanlike qualities and imagination and a broad outlook and genuine sympathies with the legitimate aims and aspirations of the Princes and States ...". Bikaner had even prepared a time-table: informal discussions would be held immediately prior to the Chamber session in November 1924; the Committee would be appointed either in December 1924 or January 1925; approximately three months would be allowed for the investigation with the Committee thus submitting a report in March or April 1925.²³ Bikaner was in fact anticipating that if an Indian States Committee reported in the spring of 1925, the British Government

22. ibid., Bikaner to Reading, 29 July 1924.

23. ibid.

would be in a position to settle the future position of the Indian States four years before it was due to examine the future of British India.

Reading and the Political Department reacted to Bikaner's suggestions in two very different ways. Thompson welcomed the proposal for informal discussions because he believed that:

"Private conversations do not give them [the princes] quite the opportunity that they want, and do not inspire the same degree of confidence in the minds of the Princes as a body, as informal discussions with a few selected rulers."²⁴

As for the subsequent enquiry he considered that although a Committee would eventually have to be appointed, there was no immediate urgency about it.²⁵ In viewing the informal discussions and the appointment of a Committee as two quite separate issues, Thompson appears entirely to have missed the point. The very idea of informal discussions was that they would give the princes an opportunity to present their case in readiness for the investigation to be undertaken by a Committee. Informal discussions by themselves would, for the princes, be useless. Reading, however, appears to have been more aware of Bikaner's intentions. Realising the implications of the type of Committee that Bikaner had anticipated would follow the informal discussions, the Viceroy refused to even contemplate the latter. He

24. ibid., Thompson's note, 3 August 1924.

25. ibid.

argued that they would create a "camarilla"²⁶ in the Chamber of Princes. Reading must have been aware that his argument made little sense in view of the fact that the Chamber was already controlled by a camarilla. He was, however, prepared to use any excuse in order to prevent discussions on the constitutional future of the states preceding similar discussions on British India by four years. As far as Reading was concerned the situation was similar to the one in 1916 when Wood had suggested a Council of Princes: no decision could be taken on the future of the states until British Indian policy had been settled.

The attitudes of Reading and Thompson were also responsible for their differing responses to a suggestion made by Scindia when the Chamber of Princes met in November 1924. Scindia put forward the idea of an "Advisory Committee of the Princes" which the Viceroy could consult periodically.²⁷ He suggested that it could be consulted on matters such as the economic development and fiscal interests of the states, the organization of minority administrations and the reconciliation of communal differences. Reading looked more favourably on this idea for it was intended only to discuss "matters of the moment" rather than the larger issue of the constitutional position of the States.²⁸ Thompson, however, saw Scindia's suggestion as an attempt to circumvent

26. ibid., Reading's note, 7 August 1924.

27. Chamber of Princes, November 1924.

28. GOI. FPD. No. 179 - Political (Secret), 1924-25, Patterson's note, 3 March 1926.

the Chamber and considered that it was therefore "nothing but unreasonable on the part of the Princes to ask for the constitution of another Committee which could not but prove unnecessarily embarrassing, much less of any real benefit either to the States or to the Government."²⁹ In the event no action was taken upon the basis of an Advisory Committee for an issue which originated with Hyderabad's claim for the restoration of the Berars convinced the princes that they would gain nothing from negotiations with the Reading administration.

The Berars were a tract of country to the north of Hyderabad consisting of the four districts of Amraoti, Yeotmal, Akola and Baldana. For administrative purposes these districts had been part of the Central Provinces since 1853. Their three million inhabitants, however, were not British Indian subjects, but subjects of the Nizam whose sovereignty over the Berars had been acknowledged by Dalhousie in the same year. In 1902 the then Nizam of Hyderabad had been forced by a severe financial crisis to conclude an agreement with Curzon's government whereby the British held the Berars on perpetual lease in return for a fixed annual payment of Rs. twenty-five lakhs. In 1918, in pursuit of his ambition to divest himself of British control Mir Osman Ali Khan employed Sir Ali Imam, at a fee reported to be in the region of Rs. 1,000 a day, to prepare a case justifying

29. ibid., p. 33, Thompson's undated note.

the reincorporation of the Berars into his dominions. Eventually, in October 1923, the Nizam presented Reading with an enormous and extraordinary document. It contained a survey of the past 150 years of Anglo-Hyderabad relations and concluded by suggesting that if the Berars were restored to Hyderabad, the Nizam would grant their inhabitants a constitution for responsible government with complete popular control save in matters relating to his relations with the Crown and the Hyderabad Army Department. Copies of this document, together with a covering letter from Sir Ali Imam asking for support, were also sent to Peel and several other members of Prime Minister Baldwin's cabinet. Peel expressed his surprise that the Nizam should have appealed over the head of the Government of India and it was this audacity, together with a recognition of his ultimate objective, that led Reading to reject the claim in March 1925.³⁰

The Nizam, however, was not prepared to let matters rest there. In September 1925 he wrote to Reading requesting the appointment of a Court of Arbitration to examine the Berars controversy. He justified his request upon the following basis:

"Save and except matters relating to foreign powers and policies, the Nizams of Hyderabad have been independent in the internal affairs of their State just as much as the British Government in British India. With the reservation mentioned by me, the two parties have on all occasions acted with complete freedom and independence in all inter-Government questions that naturally arise

30. For a brief resumé of the Berars case up to 1925, see GOI. FPD. No.13 - Political (Secret), 1924-26, Nos. 1-49, Question of retrocession of Berar to His Exalted Highness, the Nizam of Hyderabad, pp. 7-9.

from time to time between neighbours. Now, the Berar question is not and cannot be covered by that reservation. No foreign power or policy is concerned or involved in its examination, and thus the subject comes to be a controversy between the two Governments that stand on the same plane without any limitations or subordination of one to the other."³¹

In deriving a theory of internal independence from the fact that he was the equal of the British Government in this respect, the Nizam was striking at the very essence of paramountcy. For the Resident, Barton, this served only to compound the already considerable difficulties he was facing in dealing with the Nizam. He produced a lengthy note of his own in which he described how the numerous occasions of British interference in Hyderabad proved beyond all doubt that the state had never been internally independent. He concluded with a remark made by a previous Resident in 1903:

"If I may say so I think the tendency is to treat Hyderabad with undue importance; to place the State too much on an equality with the Government of India."³²

Barton recommended a clear and definite assertion of the government's right to interfere in Hyderabad in order to impress upon the Nizam "that his position is more in accord with history than with his own interests."³³ Reading, however, saw the issue in a much wider perspective. In January 1926, the Viceroy took the decision to publish all correspondence relating

31. ibid., Nizam to Reading, 25 September 1925.

32. ibid., Barton's note, 14 February 1926. The remark was made by Sir David Barr who was the Resident in Hyderabad between 1900 and 1905.

33. ibid.

to the Berars once a reply had been officially sent to the Nizam. Reading thought this necessary

"not only for the purpose of publicly refusing the Nizam's claim, but also because there is an underlying current of thought among the Princes ... to claim that under their treaties and engagements, they or most of them, are Allies of His Majesty and consequently should be in a position of complete internal independence whatever may happen regarding foreign relations."³⁴

Moreover in view of the princes' recent concern to gain acceptance of this theory in any consideration of their constitutional future, Reading saw the occasion as an opportunity to inform them all exactly where they stood in relation to the paramount power. In March 1926 the following statement was made in a letter to the Nizam:

"The Sovereignty of the British Crown is supreme in India, and therefore no Ruler of an Indian State can justifiably claim to negotiate with the British Government on an equal footing. Its supremacy is not based only on Treaties and Engagements but exists independently of them and, quite apart from its prerogative in matters relating to Foreign Powers and policies, it is the right and duty of the British Government, while scrupulously respecting all Treaties and Engagements with the Indian States, to preserve peace and good order throughout India... The right of the British Government to intervene in the internal affairs of Indian States is another instance of the consequences necessarily involved in the supremacy of the British Crown. The British Government had indeed shown again and again that they have no desire to exercise this right without grave reason. But the internal no less than the external security which the Ruling Princes enjoy is due ultimately to the protecting power of the British Government, and where Imperial interests are concerned or the general welfare of the people of a State is seriously and grievously affected by the action of its Government, it is with the Paramount Power that the ultimate responsibility of taking

34. Reading to Birkenhead, 14 January 1926, Reading Collection, No.6.

remedial action must lie. The varying degrees of internal sovereignty which the Rulers enjoy are all subject to the due exercise by the Paramount Power of this responsibility." 35

Reading's statement came as a shock to the princes. While respect for treaties had been mentioned, the degree of intervention now claimed seemed almost to invalidate the rights which the princes believed to be embodied in them. A stronger declaration of the omnipotence of the paramount power could not be imagined.

In April 1926, a month after the publication of the Berars correspondence, the Viceroyalty changed hands. For the princes, the circumstances in which Irwin succeeded Reading were similar to those in which Minto had succeeded Curzon. They hoped that the new Viceroy would, like Minto, prove to be more sympathetic to their interests than his predecessor. In this respect Irwin did not disappoint them. In sharp contrast to Reading he was immediately prepared to consider the future of the states. At the end of June 1926, after a mere exchange of pleasantries with the Standing Committee, he confided to Lord Birkenhead, Peel's successor at the India Office:

"I think myself it is quite vital that we should seek to clear our minds on this problem in advance of the Statutory Commission. It must be faced sooner or later and failure to do so will inevitably breed uneasiness in the minds of the general body of the princes." 36

35. GOI. FPD. No.13 - Political (Secret), 1924-26, Nos.1-49, Reading to Nizam, 27 March 1926.

36. Irwin to Birkenhead, 30 June 1926, Halifax Collection, No.2.

Irwin proposed to institute a preliminary enquiry through a sub-committee of his Executive Council following which he hoped to be in a position to hold informal talks of an exploratory nature with the Standing Committee.

Birkenhead was dubious about any informal talks:

"It is always a danger in discussion with the Princes that even the most informal remarks may be brought up again subsequently as 'pledges', and in a matter of this importance to the Princes we should have to be specially cautious on this point."³⁷

He gave his reluctant consent on condition that nothing which could be construed as commitments were made.

Irwin commissioned Thompson to write a note which would form the basis of discussion in the sub-committee of his council. Before considering Thompson's remarks, however, it is worthwhile to recall that some important conclusions had already been reached on one aspect of the future relationship between the states and British India. At the Chamber session of January 1926, the princes had expressed dissatisfaction with the existing economic and financial policy of the government which they considered to be totally biased in favour of British India. According to the Maharaja of Bharatpur this was due to the failure to initiate the kind of joint deliberations between the Council of State and the Chamber of Princes which had been recommended in the Montford Report.³⁸ As a result a situation had arisen in which although the princes were theoretically independent of the British

37. Birkenhead to Irwin, 22 July 1926, Halifax Collection, No.2.

38. Montford Report, para 326.

Indian legislature and free to tax their subjects as they saw fit, in practice acts passed by the legislature applied with equal force in the states as in British India. Bharatpur cited the example of the salt tax. Despite the fact that most states had salt treaties with the Government of India, they were all equally affected by the periodic increases and decreases in the salt tax sanctioned by the legislature. If this practice was to continue, then Bharatpur argued that the states were entitled to a share of the salt revenues of the Government of India. He also complained that the states had not been consulted on such major questions as the adoption of a tariff policy and the establishment of a tariff board. Moreover, as the customs revenue derived from this tariff policy should legally be used for the benefit of India as a whole, the states, as in the case of salt, were entitled to receive a share of it.³⁹

Bharatpur's views were endorsed unanimously by the Chamber with the result that Reading was obliged to appoint a committee of his council, consisting of Sir Basil Blackett, S.R. Das, C.A. Innes and B.N. Mitra, together with Thompson, to consider the states' claim to a share in the customs and salt revenues of the Government of India.⁴⁰ The committee was also asked to frame the substance of a reply which would be given to

39. Chamber of Princes, January 1926.

40. PSSF. 1902-31, File 2764/1927, pts. 1 and 2, No. 1747/1927, GOI. FPD. Secret-Internal Despatch No. 8 to S/S, 9 September 1926, Claim of the Indian States to a share in the customs and salt revenues of the Government of India.

the princes in the event of their claims being found unacceptable. In their evidence before the committee the princes added a further argument to their customs claim: as the Government of India had no right to impose taxes within their states, it also had no right to continue the existing practice of levying customs duties on goods which, although imported through British Indian ports, were intended for consumption in the states. Thompson thought that these claims were justified in view of the enormous increase in customs duties which had been occasioned by the adoption of a protective tariff in 1922. He also believed that the backwardness of many state administrations was due to their lack of funds. The Government of India was therefore hardly helping the states by forcing them to pay such heavy customs duties.⁴¹ The other members of the committee disagreed with Thompson. They argued that the states derived considerable revenue from other sources such as income tax, the proceeds of which in the provinces went completely to the central government. They also considered that it would be impossible to admit the claim to a share of the customs revenue unless the inland customs duties, levied by a large number of states, were abolished.⁴² Moreover as long as the princes occupied a position in which they stood strictly by the terms of their treaties and held themselves as far aloof as possible from British India, there could be no justification for giving them a voice in decisions concerning the

41. ibid., Enclosure No.4, Report of the Committee appointed by His Excellency Lord Reading to enquire into the claims of the Ruling Princes to a share of the customs and salt revenues of the Government of India, 4 June 1926, para. 11.

42. ibid, para 12.

fiscal policy of the Government of India. If the states wished to obtain such a voice they would have to agree to the formation of a Zollverein or Customs Federation with British India. This in itself would involve something more than the mere adoption of a common tariff. Representatives from the states would have to be directly associated with representatives from British India for the purpose of determining customs policy. Hence:

"It should be regarded as a cardinal principle that any step taken to alter the status quo of the relations, particularly the financial relations, between the Government of India and the Indian States, should be a step in the direction of federal unity, and this proposal, unless combined with far-reaching changes of other kinds, offends against this cardinal principle."⁴³

Thus the committee's conclusion was that economic considerations alone could not determine the basis upon which the states could be given a voice in financial policy. They would have to enter some form of political, as well as economic, federation with British India. Yet it was by no means certain that the princes would agree to this. Would they, for instance, agree to rescind their sovereignty in the administration of matters deemed federal when they had persistently argued that this sovereignty derived from inviolable treaty rights?⁴⁴

The Committee did not feel competent to predict the possible reaction of the princes and therefore concluded that the claim to a share of the customs and salt revenues were aspects of the much larger question of the future

43. ibid.

44. The adoption of a common tariff was a case in point. It would have to be administered by Federal officials.

political relationship between the states and the Government of India. According to the committee, this was

"... one of the most difficult problems which will have to be faced in working out a scheme for self-government in India. It will no doubt be reviewed in all its aspects by the Statutory Commission, and we do not think any useful purpose would be served by our attempting to anticipate the conclusions of the Commission."⁴⁵

Reading had departed by the time the committee presented its report in June 1926. Irwin was therefore informed that the question of a reply to the princes should be decided by the Secretary of State in consultation with the Government of India.

Thompson was mindful of these conclusions when he prepared his note for Irwin. He began with an appraisal of princely apprehensions:

"The princes are afraid of the future ... They are the last congenital autocrats in the world. Democracy has swept away others before their eyes. The reflection that it may end in dictatorship brings them no balm. Such a dictatorship would mean their downfall. With the examples of Ireland and Egypt before them, they discount our assurances of protection, and they are terrified lest out of deference to clamour or fetish of the people's will we should let all the powers of the Government of India pass to a responsible Government composed of the type dominant among politicians, a type they dislike and distrust."⁴⁶

The Political Secretary suggested two ways in which these fears could be overcome. First, as soon as an element

45. Report of the customs and salt Committee appointed by Lord Reading, para. 15.

46. GOI. FPD. No. 302 - Political, 1926, Thompson's note, 17 July 1926.

of responsibility was contemplated in the central government, the Viceroy would have to act apart from his council on matters concerning the states. This had been advocated by Hailey in 1921 but Thompson now added that while it would give satisfaction to the princes it would also distinguish the Viceroyalty in India from a Governorship in the other dominions in that a permanent portfolio would be left in the hands of the Crown Representative.⁴⁷ Secondly, Thompson suggested that the recent idea of a Customs Union should be extended to all matters of common concern by the establishment of a "union" legislature. He contemplated that representatives from the states and British India would participate in a unitary legislature, the former being nominated by the princes. Rejecting the misgivings of the other members of the customs committee, Thompson was of the opinion that this scheme would in fact appeal to the princes. Although education and the growth of democracy were destined "to bring the despot down", the scheme would "break his fall and tend to keep him on his throne with powers equal in extent to those of the 'autonomous' provincial governments of the future, and with his ceremonial position safeguarded permanently."⁴⁸

Irwin endorsed Thompson's conclusions and expressed his own view that he had no wish to see the disappearance of the states as independent entities in British India by forcing compulsory constitutional progress upon them.⁴⁹ The Viceroy, however, was also of the opinion

47. ibid.

48. ibid.

49. ibid., Irwin's undated note.

that it would take many years before ^{India}~~Irwin~~ achieved self-government and therefore asked his Political Secretary for a further opinion on the immediate necessity of devising means for discussion of matters of common concern.⁵⁰ Thompson's reply was extremely subtle for in arguing that there was such a need he was also now able to make out a case for the Viceroy acting independently of his council well in advance of British India achieving responsible government. He argued that provision should be made for the Viceroy to act independently and for the establishment of a Union Legislature in 1929, the year the Statutory Commission would be appointed. This would not only remove the princes' apprehensions that the "progress of British India towards responsibility will be marked by a steady growth in the influence of popular representatives on the policy of the Central Government", but also make them even more amenable to participation in the Union legislature.⁵¹

Thompson's views were debated in September 1926 by a sub-committee consisting of Irwin, Blackett, Sir Alexander Muddiman, Das and Thompson.⁵² Blackett, the Finance Member and Muddiman, the Home Member, objected strongly to the Political Secretary's hypothesis. They both considered that it would be wrong to protect the states in this manner from the pressure of popular opinion. Muddiman also thought that there was a tendency to think

50. ibid.

51. ibid., Thompson's note, 28 August 1926.

52. ibid., Minutes of the proceedings of the sub-committee appointed by the Viceroy to discuss future relations between British India and the Indian States, 17 September 1926.

only in terms of the princes and asked whether their subjects would welcome the states conducting their relations only with the Viceroy. Moreover the Home Member considered that in ignoring the probable reaction of British Indian politicians, Thompson had failed to realise that the existing Legislative Assembly would never agree to the change. Eventually a compromise was reached upon the basis of the suggestion made by Thompson in his first note: the principle of the Viceroy acting independently of his council was endorsed but it was agreed that, as a matter of tactics, the change could only be effected simultaneously with a change to responsible government in British India.⁵³

The sub-committee was, however, unanimous in its approval of the idea of a Union Legislature. Due recognition was given to the fact that the British Indian representatives would be likely to take exception to their association with state representatives who were nominated by the princes and not elected by popular vote. The committee therefore considered that "something in the shape of federation" would be the only satisfactory solution. Such an association would involve a substantial sacrifice of sovereignty on the part of the princes with the Union Legislature exercising direct and indirect matters of taxation and powers of federal execution within the states. Despite Thompson's optimism, the other members of the committee still thought that this would be a highly contentious issue as far as the states were

53. ibid.

concerned. It was recognized, therefore, that it might be necessary to begin with a less ambitious scheme of association, but the details of the form this would take were not discussed.⁵⁴

Before these preliminary investigations had been completed, the Government of India felt ready to reply to the claims made by the princes, particularly in respect of customs policy. In September 1926 Birkenhead was informed that when the Chamber of Princes assembled in November, Irwin proposed to make a statement to the effect that although customs policy could only be considered as but one aspect of the future political evolution of India:

"... Parliament has provided machinery for the timely consideration of future developments and he [the Viceroy] hopes that it will be found possible to bring the larger questions here involved within the scope of that enquiry ... The solution to be aimed at must be one which will tend to unity and not to dissidence among the various elements which go to make up the Indian empire. In this sphere of customs duties there appear to exist already the beginnings of a federal unity which may be of the greatest value in working towards the solution which all must desire."⁵⁵

Here the Government of India had officially recommended that an investigation into the relationship between the states and British India should be undertaken by the Statutory Commission. It was upon this basis that Irwin wished to initiate informal discussions with the Standing

54. ibid.

55. PSSF. 1902-31, File 2764/1927, pts. 1 and 2, No.1747/1927, GOI. FPD. Secret-Internal Despatch No. 8 to S/S, 9 September 1926, Claim of the Indian States to a share in the customs and salt revenues of the Government of India.

Committee. Birkenhead, however, doubted the wisdom of the Government of India's suggestion. The Statutory Commission would be required to report only on British Indian matters. Moreover: "We cannot feel certain that combined enquiry would be acceptable either to Princes or to British Indian opinion, since no-one knows what composition of Commission may be."⁵⁶ He also deprecated any mention of federation as this "raises large questions and may perhaps frighten the princes". Birkenhead in fact thought that it would prove more convenient to dispose first of an enquiry concerning the states in order that the conclusions resulting therefrom could be available for the Statutory Commission as a basis for its separate investigations.⁵⁷ This idea was almost exactly the same as the one Bikaner had suggested to Reading in 1924; the essential difference being that at this stage Birkenhead was not prepared to commit himself as to how such an enquiry would be conducted or indeed what it would discuss. The Government of India accepted the observations of the Secretary of State. When Irwin addressed the Chamber in November he invited the Standing Committee to hold informal discussions with him. He emphasized that it would be premature for the Government of India to commit itself in regard to the question of customs policy but did express the hope that the ultimate solution to the problem would be one tending "to unity and not to dissidence among the

56. ibid., S/S to Viceroy, telg., 13 November 1926.

57. ibid., S/S to Viceroy, telg., 14 November 1926.

various elements which go to make up the Indian Empire."⁵⁸

The informal discussions took place at Simla in May 1927. Present were the Maharajas of Alwar, Bikaner, Kashmir and Patiala, the Jam Sahib of Nawanagar and the Nawab of Bhopal. They were assisted by Sir Mirza Ismail, the Dewan of Mysore, Sir Prabhashankar Pattani, the Dewan of Bhavnagar, Sir Manubhai Mehta, the Dewan of Bikaner who also acted as representative for Baroda, Kailas Haksar on behalf of Gwalior and L.F. Rushbrook Williams on behalf of Patiala.⁵⁹

Discussion focussed upon an Aide-Memoire which had been prepared by the princes. In it they ascribed their feeling of insecurity to two reasons: the infringement of their treaty rights by the paramount power and their uncertain position with regard to their future relations with a self-governing British India. "The result of our stock-taking" said the Aide-Memoire, "has been increased realization of the fact that our position, during the last ten years of intensive developments in British India, has been adversely affected to a degree not generally appreciated." Thus in view of the forthcoming Statutory Commission on constitutional reform in British India it was essential that the position of the states should be investigated by a committee whose personnel "should be such as would be welcome to, and inspire confidence amongst the Indian States."⁶⁰

58. Chamber of Princes, November 1926.

59. GOI. FPD. No.654 - Political (Secret), 1927, Nos.1-8, Minutes of the Proceedings of an informal conference which took place at Viceregal Lodge, 4 May 1927.

60. ibid.

In preparing the Aide-Memoire, the princes were unaware of the Government of India's opinion that they were not to be transferred to a responsible Indian government. They knew only of Reading's reluctance to commit himself to this view. They therefore devised a formula which made the Secretary of State and not the Viceroy the final authority on matters concerning the states. Moreover they suggested that if the powers of the Secretary of State were curtailed or even removed altogether by a further devolution of power in British India, there should be statutory machinery competent to adjudicate on disputes between the states and British India. The princes also wanted the suggested committee to report upon methods of harmonizing political practice and to recommend means of effective co-operation with British India on matters of common concern whereby the disabilities under which the states were labouring as a result of the financial policy of the Government of India would be removed. Finally the princes suggested that a distinguished British statesman like Lord Ronaldshay should preside over the committee which would consist of the following personnel: an eminent jurist, a member of the Secretary of State's Council, representatives of the Government of India, an economist and financier of "European repute", some ruling princes and some ministers from the states.⁶¹

There was a fundamental contradiction in these proposals. While the princes sought legal protection in

61. ibid.

matters of dispute with British India, they also wanted an effective voice in matters of common concern. The princes were prepared to consider some form of economic merger with British India but wanted to maintain their distance politically. Evidently they were as yet unaware that an economic union was to a large extent dependent upon the consummation of some form of political association.

In reporting the informal discussions to Birkenhead, Irwin confided that the princes were unclear as to what they really wanted not only because of the complexity of the problem but also because "they are undoubtedly hampered by lack of ability in their Counsels and by their temperamental incapacity to agree among themselves."⁶² Indeed he believed that the only unanimity reached at the meeting was a "cordial dislike of Alwar."⁶³ The immediate problem confronting the Viceroy was to devise some means of making the princes realise that it was impossible to divorce their economic from their political future. He considered that while it would be premature to consider the hypothetical case of the relationship between the states and a responsible Indian government, "it might not be impossible to approach the main political problem more indirectly through an enquiry ostensibly directed to economic and financial issues." He therefore suggested that an Indian States Committee should be appointed to enquire not only into the relationship between the states and the paramount power but also into the economic relations

62. Irwin to Birkenhead, 5 May 1927, Halifax Collection, No. 3.

63. Irwin to Birkenhead, 11 May 1927, Halifax Collection, No. 3.

between British India and the states and to make any recommendations considered desirable for their more satisfactory adjustment.⁶⁴ Irwin's idea was not for the committee to suggest a new constitutional relationship between the states and British India but for it to present its report on economic and financial issues in such a way as to impress upon the princes that ultimately such a relationship would be necessary.

In his response to Irwin's suggestions, Birkenhead appeared at first to be contradicting himself. Having previously considered that it might be wise to dispense first with a states' enquiry, he now began to express doubts.⁶⁵ Apparently when Birkenhead had suggested a separate states' enquiry in 1926, he had anticipated that it would serve only as a preliminary investigation into the economic and financial relations between the states and British India. He had not anticipated that it would discuss paramountcy. Indeed it was clear that the Viceroy and Secretary of State had different views about the possible results of a states' enquiry; whereas the former believed that it would above all induce the states to be more realistic in their attitude towards relations with British India, the latter was more concerned at the effect it might have on the paramountcy issue.

In December 1927 Birkenhead confessed that he was agreeing to the appointment of a states' committee as

64. Irwin to Birkenhead, 26 May 1927, Halifax Collection, No. 3.

65. Birkenhead to Irwin, 16 June 1927, Halifax Collection, No. 3.

a matter of expediency only in order to show the princes that the government was not unaware of their anxieties.⁶⁶ His greatest fear was that the paramountcy findings of the Committee might satisfy the princes. On the one hand this would seriously hamper the conduct of the government's relations with the states, while on the other, "giving them a written constitution on their relationship with the paramount power" would in all probability "impede the adjustment of the states to any future developments in British India."⁶⁷ Birkenhead's approval of a states' committee was therefore dependent upon Irwin impressing these considerations upon its designated chairman, Sir Harcourt Butler. Realizing that Butler was likely to be "out of touch"⁶⁸ with the states, Birkenhead instructed Irwin to inform the former Foreign Secretary that there could be no weakening of the paramountcy question as expressed in Reading's letter to the Nizam. The Secretary of State concluded:

66. Birkenhead to Irwin, 15 December 1927, Halifax Collection, No.3.

67. ibid.

68. Butler's views on the states had not changed since he was Foreign Secretary during Minto's Viceroyalty. In June 1927 he wrote to Irwin: "I should be very sorry myself to see any popular body in British India interfere in any way with the Native States. They existed long before there was any idea of democratic institutions in India and they are an excellent foil. Also the Indian Princes are likely to be the best friends that we shall ever have... Democratic institutions have not succeeded anywhere in the East as yet, and although I am by no means a pessimist as regards India, I think it is a very large assumption to expect that they will blossom at an early date." Butler to Irwin, 1 June 1927, Butler Collection, No.61.

"Even granted that it may be in the interests of Great Britain (as many people think), no less than of the States themselves that they should be entrenched against an Indianized Government of India responsible to an Indian legislature, the dreaded day is remote, and we cannot afford in the meantime to entrench them against ourselves." 69

It is clear, therefore, that the subsequent paramountcy recommendations of the Indian States Committee had been effectively prejudged before the Committee began its deliberations.

The personnel on the States' committee, which arrived in India at the beginning of 1928, were a disappointment to the princes. Besides Butler, it consisted of two other members only; Professor W.S. Holdsworth, an eminent jurist, and Sidney Peel, a financier. The princes, however, were not as one in presenting their evidence before the committee. The Standing Committee of the Chamber of Princes established a Special Organization, briefed by Sir Leslie Scott, K.C. and four other constitutional lawyers, to prepare a case on its behalf. Approximately three-quarters of the Chamber states associated themselves with the activities of the Special Organization which functioned under the guidance of Haksar, Williams and K.M. Panikkar. The larger states, however, continued to maintain their distance from the Chamber. Hyderabad, Mysore, Baroda and Travancore chose to present their cases before the committee independently. Rampur, Junagadh and some of the Kathiawar states adopted a similar course. 70

69. Birkenhead to Irwin, 15 December 1927, Halifax Collection, No.3.

70. Report of the Indian States Committee, 1928-1929, Cmd. 3302, 1929, para.6.

The case prepared by Sir Leslie Scott on behalf of the Standing Committee monopolised the proceedings of the Indian States Committee. Birkenhead's fears of what was likely to happen should the princes gain satisfaction on paramountcy were immediately confirmed by the strategy of the Standing Committee's advisers. Scott and his colleagues sought a positive assurance that paramountcy derived literally from the treaties between the government and the states. This was essential in order to secure for the princes permanent protection against interference either from the Political Department or subsequently from a self-governing British India. From this virtually unassailable position the princes would then be able to dictate the terms upon which they were prepared to reach an understanding concerning their relations with British India.

Scott's work consisted of three parts, the first being an interpretation of paramountcy. He claimed that the states had originally been independent and that they had remained as such save to the extent that they had transferred any part of their sovereignty to the Crown. All sovereign rights not so transferred were vested in the ruler of the state. As it was only in respect of foreign affairs and internal and external security that any sovereignty had been surrendered, the states were therefore fully independent in matters concerning their internal administrations.⁷¹

71. ibid., Appendix III, Joint Opinion of Sir Leslie Scott, K.C; Mr. Stuart Bevan, K.C; Mr. Wilfred Greene, K.C; Mr. Valentine Holmes and Mr. Donald Somervell.

The second part concerned proposals for the Political Department. Scott recommended the virtual abolition of the department and its replacement by an "Indian States Council" consisting of the Viceroy, three princes or ministers, two "impartial" Englishmen and the Political Secretary. Each member of the council would subscribe to a solemn obligation to protect the interests and rights of the states. Future Viceroy's would take a separate oath to this effect upon assuming office. Political officers would operate under the direction of the princes and there would be a royal proclamation limiting interference in the affairs of the states. Finally, the Viceroy's intervention in the event of gross misgovernment in a state would be subject to the condition that he first consulted and took advice from the Indian States Council.⁷²

The third and final part concerned the relations between the states and British India. Scott suggested the creation of a "Union Council" for discussion of matters of common concern. It would consist of representatives from the Indian States Council together with representatives from the Governor-General's executive. The interests of the states would be safeguarded by stipulations that the Governor-General's executive could not outvote the Indian States Council and that any proposal to which the latter objected would be withdrawn.⁷³

72. Private Office Papers, L/PO/401, Indian States Committee, 1927-29.

73. ibid.

Irwin was cynical in his response to these proposals. He believed that Scott was not only misleading the princes but also suffering from delusions of grandeur:

"I am afraid that his trouble really is that he convinced himself that his intervention at this juncture is one of the direct attempts of Providence to bring order into a disordered world and his critical faculty has suffered some obliteration under his enthusiasm."⁷⁴

The Indian States Committee proceeded to dismantle Scott's contentions.

Acting upon instructions, Butler and his colleagues declared: "The relationship of the Paramount Power with the states is not merely a contractual relationship, resting on treaties made more than a century ago. It is a living, growing relationship shaped by circumstances and policy, resting ..., on a mixture of history, theory and modern fact." Moreover it was not true that the states were originally independent: "Nearly all of them were subordinate or tributary to the Moghul empire, the Mahratta supremacy or the Sikh kingdom, and dependent on them. Some were rescued, others were created by the British."⁷⁵ The committee therefore concluded: "Paramountcy must remain paramount; it must fulfil its obligations, defining or adapting itself according to the shifting necessities of the time and the progressive development of the States."⁷⁶

74. Irwin to Birkenhead, 9 August 1928, Halifax Collection, No.4.

75. Report of the Indian States Committee, 1928-29, Cmd. 3302, 1929, para. 39.

76. ibid., para. 57.

The Committee rejected the idea of an Indian States Council although it did suggest that more frequent discussion between the Standing Committee of the Chamber and the Political Department might lessen the friction between the two.⁷⁷ However, the Committee also suggested a new and novel theory of intervention. If an insurrection which occurred in a state was due, not to misgovernment on the part of the ruler, but to a widespread popular demand for a change in the form of government, then the paramount power would be bound to take such measures as would satisfy this demand without eliminating the prince.⁷⁸ The Political Department's acquiescence in this recommendation was typical. Watson thought it "unthinkable for many years to come" that the government would be required to act in this manner provided the autocratic rule of the princes was "tolerably just and efficient." Moreover, agitators who might stir up discontent "could always be won over by a prudent ruler who gave them employment in the state service."⁷⁹

77. ibid., para 73.

78. ibid., para. 50.

79. GOI. FPD. No. 73 - Reforms, 1928, Nos.1-4, Watson's undated note on the "Position of the Government of India in supporting a Ruler against a demand of his subjects for a change in the methods of State Government." As he had been in the case of Alwar, Watson was again proved wrong. In the summer of 1931 the grievances of the Muslim population of Kashmir exploded into rioting and forced the Government of India to intervene with troops. The Hindu prince, Hari Singh, was subsequently obliged to inaugurate a council system of government and to appoint a commission of enquiry headed by a British official to investigate the Muslim grievances. For an account of the disturbances in Kashmir, see Prem Nath Bazaz, The History of the Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir: From the earliest times to the present day, New Delhi, 1954, pp. 151-171.

In considering relations between the states and British India, Butler's committee recommended the appointment of an expert body to enquire into the "reasonable claims" of the states to a share in that part of the government's revenue which was derived from matters of common concern to the states and British India.⁸⁰ It also suggested that policy on such matters as excise and postal arrangements should henceforth be decided after joint consultation between the states and British India.⁸¹ These proposals were designed to prod the states in the direction intended by Irwin. Anything in advance of them, particularly any scheme of a "federal character" was deemed by the Committee to be wholly premature.⁸² Endorsing the opinion reached by Irwin's executive in 1926, the Committee concluded:

"For the present it is a practical necessity to recognize the existence of two Indias ... there is need for great caution in dealing with any question of federation at the present time so passionately are the Princes as a whole attached to the maintenance in its entirety and unimpaired of their individual sovereignty within their states."⁸³

Irwin's expectation of the Indian States Committee never materialized. The reason was that when the Committee presented its report in March 1929 the attention of the princes was riveted upon its paramountcy recommendations. Needless to say this aspect of the report horrified the princes of the Standing Committee.

80. Report of the Indian States Committee, 1928-29, Cmd. 3302, 1929, para. 80.

81. ibid.

82. ibid., para. 66.

83. ibid., paras. 67 and 78.

For them it represented a complete repudiation of nine years prolonged, and often expensive, labour.⁸⁴ Yet they were not the only ones to feel aggrieved. The princes in general were alarmed at the suggestion that the government could suggest changes in the form of their governments should popular demands for such arise. This appeared to be an open invitation to their political opponents to encourage agitation for change. Moreover, in this respect it was significant that in December 1927 the first meeting of an All-India States' People's Conference had been convened at Bombay. The conference had been partly inspired by the government's refusal to allow the forthcoming states committee to receive deputations from subjects of the states on the grounds that this would exceed its terms of reference. The conference, which subsequently attracted the support of such prominent Indian politicians as C.Y. Chintamani and N.C. Kelkar, moved a resolution urging "responsible government for the people of the Indian States through representative institutions under the aegis of their Rulers."⁸⁵

The only consolation for the princes in the Butler Report was its recommendation, also advocated by Irwin's executive in 1926, that the states could not be transferred to a responsible Government of India and that accordingly relations with the princes should be conducted through the Viceroy and not the Governor-General in Council.⁸⁶

84. Scott's fees were estimated at £100,000.

85. R.L. Handa, History of the Freedom struggle in the Princely States, New Delhi, 1968, p. 31.

86. Report of the Indian States Committee, 1928-29, Cmd. 3302, paras, 58 and 67.

For the princes, however, events in British India seemed to emphasize the uncertainty of this solitary gain.

In February and March of 1928 an All-Parties Conference had been convened in British India with the object of devising a constitution for an Indian Dominion. In the following August Motilal Nehru and Tej Bahadur Sapru presented the conference with details of such a constitution which became known as the Nehru Report. With reference to the Indian States the report proposed that the new Indian Commonwealth would have the same rights and obligations towards the states arising out of the treaties as were exercised and discharged by the Government of India.⁸⁷

For the princes a more alarming prospect could not be imagined. Moreover by 1929 it appeared to them that an attempt might be made to give effect to this threat. Jawaharlal Nehru and the radical wing of the Indian National Congress were annoyed that the Nehru Report had advocated Dominion Status instead of complete independence for India. With their attitude threatening to split the Congress, Gandhi emerged from his self-enforced political retirement to effect a compromise. At Calcutta in December 1928 the Congress confirmed Dominion Status as its goal, but threatened to resort to civil disobedience in order to achieve complete independence if dominionhood was not conceded by 31 December 1929.⁸⁸

87. All Parties Conference, 1928. Report of the Committee appointed by the Conference to determine the principles of the Constitution for India, 1928, cited in C.H. Philips (ed.), The Evolution of India and Pakistan, 1858-1947: Select Documents, London, 1962, p.233.

88. S.R. Mehrotra, India and the Commonwealth, 1885-1929, London, 1965, p. 140.

When seen in the context of the report of the Indian States Committee, the Congress decision at Calcutta had placed the princes, particularly those on the Standing Committee, in an extremely invidious position. These princes had completely failed in their efforts to achieve that subtle balance whereby the paramount power would be strong enough to protect the states from a hostile British India but not to impinge upon their cherished rights. On the contrary, the Indian States Committee's definition of paramountcy seemed to invalidate these rights; its novel theory of intervention seemed to invite hostile action from British India; while the Congress decision at Calcutta seemed to confirm the imminent possibility of such action taking place. It was these considerations which prompted the latest recruit to the Standing Committee, Hamidullah, the Nawab of Bhopal, to inform Irwin that the time had come for the British to distinguish between friends and enemies. Appealing for a rejection of the conclusions of the Indian States Committee and for the princes to be freed from all the restraints of intervention so that they could appear as effective rulers in the eyes of their subjects, Bhopal declared:

"You will, I am sure, find amongst the Princes of India certain Rulers who could be fully trusted and taken into confidence and who, in their turn, if they are well supported, would be of far greater use to you than any of the most influential and clever politicians in British India. I will go as far as to say that you will find them more useful and more tactful than many of the responsible Englishmen who are today guiding the destinies of the Indian Empire. These Rulers will be ready to

stand by you through thick and thin; and they will be able to collect behind them a power which none of the politicians would dare to flout or ignore, and which would always be at the disposal of the British. After all the fact remains that the utility of the Indian Princes has stood the test of time and trial. Is it therefore in the best interests of the Empire to create a position for them whereby they should cease to be a real factor in guiding the destinies of the country and thus strengthen the position of the British Indian politicians whose loyalty and allegiance to the Empire is not only debatable but is unquestionably non-existent? If you would only give us a chance and trust us, we would, God willing, prove ourselves worthy of the confidence reposed in us."89

89. Bhopal to Irwin, 4 September 1929, Halifax Collection, No. 28.

CHAPTER 5.THE POLITICS OF AN ALL-INDIAFEDERATION: 1930-1935

Irwin used the opportunity of his mid-term leave in the summer of 1929 to take soundings from political opinion in Britain on proposals which he believed might forestall the Congress threat of civil disobedience. His intention was first to gain an assurance from the recently elected Labour Government that ultimate Dominion Status was implicit in the Montagu declaration of 1917, and secondly, to secure a promise that Indian leaders would be consulted on any conclusions the Government might reach upon the basis of the Statutory Commission's report before they were included in a new Government of India Act.¹ Of the two, Irwin considered the latter to be the more problematical. It would be difficult to devise a suitable occasion for making such a declaration without implying a change in policy and also impairing to some extent the position of the Statutory Commission. Ultimately the questions raised by the report of the Indian States Committee and the obvious

1. In this respect Irwin was also attempting to atone for his own error of judgement. That India had been brought to the verge of civil disobedience was largely due to the Viceroy's insistence that the Statutory Committee should consist solely of representatives from the British parliamentary parties. The appointment of the Commission had been brought forward from 1929 to 1927 by the Conservative government in an attempt to prevent a Labour government supervising its proceedings.

necessity of considering the future of the Indian States provided the only feasible opening.² In London Irwin met with formidable opposition from spokesmen for the Conservative and Liberal parties who believed that both parts of the Viceroy's strategy would persuade Indians to believe that far-reaching constitutional changes were imminent. However, on 31 October 1929 a statement was issued to the effect that Dominion Status was implicit in the declaration of 1917, and representatives from British India and the Indian States were invited to convene a conference in London with the British Government for the purpose of discussing both British Indian and all-Indian problems.

Irwin was subsequently disappointed to find that his initiative had failed to prevent civil disobedience. In part this was due to the uproar which greeted the statement in Britain. The hostility displayed during the debates in both the House of Commons and House of Lords was sufficient to convince many Indians of British insincerity. Above all, however, when Gandhi and Motilal Nehru met the Viceroy on 23 December they informed him that they would only attend the conference on the understanding that its task would be to draft a Dominion constitution. Irwin was in no position to give such an assurance with the result that when the Congress

2. Hailey to Goschen (acting Viceroy), 8 August 1929, Hailey Collection, No.156. Irwin discussed his strategy at length with Hailey shortly before his departure for England.

assembled at Lahore on 31 December 1929 it opted for civil disobedience and declared its goal to be complete independence.³

For the princes of the Standing Committee, however, the October statement represented a possible solution to their dilemma. The obdurance of Gandhi and Motilal had not doomed the London conference. On the contrary it was now more than ever essential that it should be a success. Moreover, as the princes were seen as an integral part of the conference, its success was in no small measure dependent upon the attitude that they would adopt. The Standing Committee princes therefore considered that they were in an exceptionally strong bargaining position. They would make their co-operation in any constitutional scheme that might result from the conference conditional upon a satisfactory settlement of paramountcy. Thus when these princes expressed readiness to reconsider their relationship with British India they did so purely with the intention of subverting paramountcy.

This became apparent at the Chamber session of February 1930. The proceedings were monopolised by a deliberate assault upon paramountcy. In his opening speech as Chancellor, Patiala welcomed the conference invitation but quickly moved on to accuse the Indian States Committee of "having gone further than the most ardent champion of the Political Department." He also declared that the "findings of the Committee, unless they

3. S.R. Mehrotra, India and the Commonwealth, 1885-1929, London, 1965, p. 142.

are agreed to by the Chamber, should not be considered as authoritative pronouncements or interpreted as political practice binding against the States."⁴ Similar sentiments were voiced in speeches by Alwar, Bikaner, Kashmir and the Jam Sahib of Nawanagar.

Irwin was surprised by the vehemence of the onslaught, particularly as this was the first occasion upon which the proceedings of the Chamber had been made public. He considered that the princes had committed a "tactical error" in attacking paramountcy in this manner because he believed that in the absence of popular government in the states many people in British India regarded the protection afforded by paramountcy as the sole refuge for the subjects of the princes. The Viceroy subsequently asked for authority to meet the princes in the near future in order to dissuade them from disputing paramountcy any further.⁵

It was evident from Irwin's reaction to the Chamber session that he was unaware of the Standing Committee's motives. This was not the case with the more astute Sir Robert Holland in the India Office. Holland realized that the princes were not concerned with conciliating British Indian opinion because they were convinced that paragraph 58 of the Butler Report [which declared that the states should not be transferred to a responsible Indian government] would be accepted. Holland argued that from this starting point the Committee's tactics were to divide

4. Chamber of Princes, February 1930.

5. PIC. 1931-50, Coll. 11, File 12, No. 1848/1930, Viceroy to S/S, telg. 15 March 1930.

sovereignty between themselves and the Crown, thus restricting the paramount power's intervention in their internal affairs and eliminating its discretionary element: "They regard this as the bargain issue upon which their co-operation in a Federal scheme depends." This analysis led the former A.G.G. to believe that the only way of countering the Committee's "carefully thought out strategical plan" was to inform them that just as the question of paramountcy was sub judice so the same applied to paragraph 58 of the Butler Report.⁶ Wedgwood Benn, the Labour Secretary of State, accepted this conclusion and advised Irwin to communicate it to the princes.⁷

Holland's analysis, though undoubtedly correct, was slightly premature in its assumption that the Standing Committee was contemplating federation. In May 1930 the Statutory Commission reported that the evolution of a federal association "will be slow and cannot be rashly pressed." The Commission therefore limited its recommendation to the establishment of a Council of Greater India with consultative and deliberative functions on matters of common concern to the states and British India.⁸

It was upon the basis of this recommendation that the Standing Committee initially approached the subject of constitutional reform. During an informal conference held at Simla in July 1930, members of the Committee, together with representatives from Baroda, Hyderabad and Mysore, told Irwin that although the princes

6. ibid., Holland's note, 20 March 1930. Holland had been knighted in 1925 upon the expiry of his term of office as A.G.G. in Rajputana and his appointment to the Secretary of State's India Council.

7. ibid., S/S to Viceroy, telg., 26 March 1930.

8. Report of the Indian Statutory Commission, Cmd. 3569, 1930, 11, paras, 228 and 368.

realized that an "All-India Federation may possibly prove the most satisfactory solution of India's problem", they considered that the offer of a "Council of Greater India should be accepted without hesitation, subject to safeguards ... dealing with matters of concern."⁹ Reference was also made to the need for a satisfactory settlement of the paramountcy question which, according to the Standing Committee, would be essential even if the forthcoming round table conference left the position of the central government unchanged.¹⁰

Irwin's role at the July conference was based upon the assumption that the princes were not contemplating immediate federation. Despite the reference to paramountcy the Viceroy did not therefore consider that the Standing Committee was in a bargaining position. Moreover, this being the case, he saw no need to inform the princes that paragraph 58 of the Butler report was still sub judice. Instead Irwin virtually assured them on this point by indicating that in future the Viceroy would act apart from his council on matters concerning the states. He also agreed to discuss questions relating to paramountcy with the Standing Committee upon their return from the round table conference; an agreement which convinced Irwin that there was no danger of paramountcy being raised at the

9. PIC. 1931-50, Coll.11, File 12, No.1848/1930, Minutes of the proceedings of an informal conference held at Simla, 14 and 15 July 1930.

10. ibid.

conference.¹¹

The Viceroy maintained his belief that neither federation, nor consequently paramountcy, would be discussed at the round table conference throughout the remainder of the summer and the autumn of 1930. In a Reforms Despatch of September 1930, the Government of India endorsed the Statutory Commission's "distant ideal of an All-India Federation" but recognized that "the time had not yet come when the general body of Indian states would be prepared to take a step so far-reaching in its character as to enter any federal relations with British India."¹² On 1 October Irwin wrote of the princes: "Whatever lip-service [they] may pay to the federal idea, they will, when it comes to the point, want to begin through some consultative machinery before they burn any boats."¹³ Within a month it was

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11. ibid., No. 4592A/1930, Viceroy to S/S, telg. 17 July 1930. The Political Department of the India Office was unpleasantly surprised by the proceedings of the July Conference. It was felt that Irwin had gone too far in committing the government, particular disquiet being expressed that he had not informed the princes that paragraph 58 of the Butler report was still sub judice. A departmental minute commented: "The general impression left by the proceedings is that the princes have on the whole scored." ibid., No. P5189/1930, minute dated 19 August 1930. Nor was the India Office as confident as the Viceroy that paramountcy would not be raised at the round table conference. The Political Secretary, Paul J. Patrick, believed that it would be raised, if not by the princes, then by the British Indian delegates when discussing the future relationship between the states and the central government, ibid. No.4592A/1930, Patrick's note, 24 July 1930.
 12. Government of India Despatch on Proposals for Constitutional Reform, 20 September 1930, Cmd.3700, 1930, para.16.
 13. Irwin to Fisher, 1 October 1930, Halifax Collection, No. 19.

evident that Irwin had miscalculated. From London, Sapru explained why to his son: "The only organized party here is that of the Princes and they are taking very progressive lines. They are ready to join the All-India Federation ... at once."¹⁴

The initiative for an immediate All-India Federation came from Hyderabad. Responsibility for it lay with Lieutenant-Colonel Terence H. Keyes who became Resident in the state in February 1930. Keyes was disturbed by that part of the Statutory Commission's report which dealt with British Indian reform. The prospect of autonomous provinces growing into a powerful British-Indian Federation was not one that could be recommended to the princes, particularly to the Nizam. According to Keyes this type of political development would strengthen the regional movements in Maharashtra, Andhra and Berar and enable them to seize the first available opportunity of attacking the Muslim oligarchy in Hyderabad. Furthermore, Hyderabad had to consider its economic interests. Unlike the states of Rajputana and Central and Western India, Hyderabad in common with Mysore, the other major southern state, was landlocked. Whereas the former category of states could maintain their economic survival upon the basis of the ports of the Kathiawar peninsula, Hyderabad and Mysore were totally dependent for their economic existence upon the goodwill of the neighbouring provinces. Keyes concluded that the only salvation for

14. Sapru to Ranjit, 14 November 1930, Sapru Collection, 10L Microfilm, 1st series, R. 66.

Hyderabad lay in its recognition of British paramountcy and its immediate entry into an organic all-India federation. By so doing, the Nizam would not only be able to prevent "plots" being "hatched" against Hyderabad but also to secure a more favourable economic future for the state.¹⁵

The Nizam was impressed by these arguments for two reasons. First, by 1930 he was beginning to realize the implications of the fact that his state was landlocked. When Keyes arrived as Resident he found the Nizam busily re-examining Hyderabad's commercial treaty of 1802 with its promise of a free port at Masulipatam on the Madras coast.¹⁶ Secondly, it made a pleasant change for the Nizam to have a Resident more interested in securing a stable future for Hyderabad than in condemning his personal conduct. Keyes subsequently assumed that the Nizam had agreed to favour all-Indian federation and to admit British paramountcy. His first assumption was correct but his second required an important qualification. The precarious position of his state made the Nizam realize that it would be impracticable to impose general restrictions upon the exercise of paramountcy. At the same time, however, his determination to rid himself of the restrictions upon his own ruling powers remained unchanged. The result was an ambiguous situation in which the Nizam approved the principles of an omnipotent paramountcy provided that they were not applied within his state.

15. Keyes to Nizam, 30 June 1930, Keyes Collection, No.28.

16. Keyes to Watson, 15 April 1930, Keyes Collection, No.28.

Evidently Keyes, who was quite taken with the Nizam,¹⁷ did not realize this. In the month preceding the Simla conference he continually petitioned both Viceroy and Political Department to lend their support to his proposals. He was also anxious to be present at Simla because he was deeply concerned at the calibre of the delegation Hyderabad was sending to the ⁱⁿ formal Conference. It was to be led by Sir Akbar Hydari, Finance Member of Hyderabad's executive council. Keyes had nothing but contempt for Hydari. He confided to Sir George Cunningham, Irwin's private secretary, that although Hydari had originally been in favour of federation, he had changed his mind as a result of Congress threats to his mill-owning interests in Bombay. According to Keyes these had "frightened the wits out of that chicken-hearted little creature" with the result that the Hyderabad delegation at Simla would pursue "a timorous course of wait and see in the hope that an opportunity will occur of bargaining in the true baniah spirit."¹⁸

Much to his annoyance, Keyes was refused permission to be present at Simla although on the eve of the conference he was able to persuade the Nizam to telegraph instructions to his delegation that he was prepared to enter an all-India federation under due

17. Keyes wrote to Irwin of the Nizam: "... the queer little creature - he's so pathetically anxious to be liked; he never seems to bear malice; takes every setback with good humour and, within his limitations, I believe, really means to do well." Keyes to Irwin, 4 May 1930, Keyes Collection, No.28.

18. Keyes to Cunningham, 5 July 1930, Keyes Collection, No.28.

safeguards.¹⁹ The telegram, however, arrived too late to influence the conference proceedings. On hearing of this, Keyes was furious. He subsequently attributed the fact that he had not been allowed to attend to an attempt by the Political Department to sabotage the idea of a federation before it got off the ground. Of an equally serious nature, he also accused the department of deliberately misrepresenting Irwin's views. In a letter to Sir Denys Bray, Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, Keyes declared that the department was so obsessed by the picture of an Indian India and a British India portrayed in the report of the Indian States Committee that they were working in a way that would make an all-India federation impossible:

"To me this is the madness that the gods send before destruction... What Butler calls British India is just that part of India that is trying to repudiate all that is British... What he calls Indian India is that part that wants to retain the British connection. Swaraj India and Maharaja's India are mixed up like the bits of a jigsaw puzzle, and everywhere they touch there will be continued friction."

In the same letter, Keyes restated his belief in federation as the only means to avoid such friction and expressed his disquiet that Irwin was being unwittingly "manoeuvred" into accepting the Political Department's point of view.²⁰

The idea that an attempt had been made to sabotage the federal idea in the summer of 1930 re-

19. Nizam to Hyderabad delegation, 9 July 1930, Keyes Collection, No.28.

20. Keyes to Bray, 21 July 1930, Keyes Collection, No.28.

appeared six years later in the India Office. In April 1936 the Political Department of the India Office was astonished to read the following extract from the appendix to an Administration Report from Hyderabad for the year October 1932 to October 1933:

"Rightly anticipating in the light of the discussions with certain Princes and representatives of other States that took place in Simla in July 1930 that Federation was likely to become an immediate issue, Sir Akbar Hydari, in consultation with his colleagues, drew on the voyage to England a federal scheme in broad outline."²¹

Paul J. Patrick, the Political Secretary at the India Office, commented that this was the first time his department had heard of any reference to federation at the Simla Conference.²² Sir Findlater Stewart, a member of the Secretary of State's India Council, remarked that it was the first time any department in London had heard mention of it.²³ The Under-Secretary of State, R.A. Butler, summed up the general impression in the India Office: "Presumably there were persons in official circles in India at the time who hoped to see the idea overlaid at birth."²⁴ Evidently the Government of India had not seen fit to inform the India Office in July 1930 that the Nizam was prepared to contemplate federation.

21. PIC, 1931-50, Coll.11, File 57(2), No.PY564/1936, Appendix to Hyderabad Administration Report, 6 October 1932 -5 October 1933, "Note on the Round Table Conference."

22. ibid., Patrick's note, 9 April 1936.

23. ibid., Findlater Stewart's note, 20 April 1936.

24. ibid., Butler's note, 19 April 1936.

However, the accusations made by Keyes cannot be accepted at face-value. His claim that the Political Department was "manoeuvring" Irwin was certainly false. The Viceroy was just as much impressed by the notion of "two Indias" as was the Political Department. He was quite content with the recommendation for a Council of Greater India because this accorded with the conclusions reached by the sub-committee of his council in 1926. In the meantime Irwin wanted to deal with the more pressing problem of the British Indian centre. Hence the recommendation in the Government of India's Reforms Despatch to make the government "responsive" to the central legislature except on matters such as defence, foreign relations, internal security, finance, protection of minorities and the protection of services recruited by the Secretary of State.²⁵ As for the Political Department itself, Watson had already recorded his views on federation at the time of Holland's warning about the paramountcy strategy of the Standing Committee. Although the Political Secretary realized that the princes would welcome, and indeed press, for "any federation with British India which would leave the internal administration of the states unchanged and intact", he doubted if any, with the possible exceptions of the Maharajas of Mysore and Travancore, would agree to a federation which involved the grant of constitutional government to their subjects. Moreover, according to

25. Government of India Reforms Despatch, para. 116.

Watson: "without such a grant true Federation scheme with British India seems impracticable."²⁶ It would appear therefore that the Political Department was not going to lend any encouragement to federation while the paramountcy issue remained unsettled. Finally it is significant that Irwin and the Political Department shared a profound mistrust of both Keyes and the Nizam. The Resident was not liked in official circles. Irwin's successor, Lord Willingdon described him as "one of those people who rather likes spreading themselves and has to be watched pretty closely."²⁷ Statements emanating jointly from Keyes and the Nizam were thus inevitably suspect to Irwin and Watson. Indeed it appears that in July 1930 both Viceroy and Political Department had preconceived ideas on federation which they saw no need to change in view of the opinion expressed by the general body of princes and ministers present at Simla. They therefore dismissed the recommendation for an immediate federation as the work of two misfits.

Between the Simla conference and the opening in November of the first round table conference in London, certain representatives of the states began to reconsider their attitude towards federation. The first to do were Haksar and Panikkar on behalf of the Special Organization of the Chamber. In August 1930 they completed the first

26. Watson's memo, 28 March 1930, cited in R.J. Moore, The Crisis of Indian Unity, 1917-1940, Oxford, 1974, p. 129.

27. Willingdon to Hoare, 19 March 1934, Templewood Collection No.7 (Samuel Hoare was created Viscount Templewood in 1944).

draft of a book, later to appear on the opening day of the London conference with the title "Federal India", which contemplated the grant of complete responsible government to British India save for the transfer to a federal council of matters of common concern to the states and British India. This conception of federation was precisely that which Holland had warned against. A large part of Federal India was devoted to describing how, in return for British India achieving central responsibility, the states would obtain complete internal autonomy safeguarded by a supreme court.²⁸ The scheme therefore had obvious attractions to the Standing Committee princes.

In late August 1930 a similar scheme of federation was evinced by Sir Mirza Ismail, Dewan of Mysore. At a conference of South Indian states held in Bangalore, Ismail declared himself to be at variance with the way the Statutory Commission had surrounded their vision of a federal India "with the misty twilight of a distant future." In his concluding remarks at the conference Ismail recommended "a constitution which provides full autonomy in the Provinces, responsibility at the Centre [subject to such transitional safeguards as may be unavoidable] and a closer association between British India and the States in matters of common concern."²⁹ Ismail, however, was not influenced by paramountcy

28. K.N. Haksar and K.M. Panikkar, Federal India, London, 1930.

29. Madras Mail, 22 August 1930.

considerations. He was concerned at the growth of vocal opinion among the subjects of the states against the continuation of autocracy and his suggestion was largely inspired by a States' People's Conference which had met simultaneously with that of the South Indian states at Bangalore.³⁰ Ismail was also influenced by the consideration that if Mysore entered a federation it might gain relief from the heavy burden of tribute which it paid to the British Government.

In September of 1930 a yet further scheme of federation appeared from Hyderabad. The initiative this time rested with Sir Akbar Hydari who had real cause to reconsider his previous attitude. The responsible British Indian centre envisaged in the Haksar-Panikkar and Ismail schemes was, as Keyes had indicated, a serious threat to Hyderabad's existence and the autocracy of the Nizam. Hydari therefore sketched a plan for federation which involved the abolition of the British Indian centre and its replacement by a small "aristocratic" federal assembly consisting of 36 provincial representatives, 24 state representatives and 12 Crown nominees. All matters of common concern would come under federal jurisdiction, while all remaining British Indian subjects would be completely provincialized. Reserved subjects, particularly foreign affairs, political relations with the states, defence, finance and law and order would

30. *ibid.*, see also PIC. 1931-50, Coll. 11, File 5, No. 7639/1930, Departmental note on impression gained in conversation with representatives of Indian States at the approaching Round Table Conference, 31 October 1930.

remain as such under the jurisdiction of the Crown.³¹ Hydari explained his scheme to Sir George Schuster, Finance Member of the Government of India, on the voyage to London for the opening of the conference. Schuster, though appreciate of Hydari's concern to eliminate "the popular demagogues from British India", pointed out that British Indian politicians would never accept the abolition of their "central political stage."³² Hydari therefore revised his scheme to accommodate a British Indian centre. However, he was emphatic that the activities of this centre were in no way to influence those of the federal assembly. Thus the British Indian representatives in the assembly were not to be indirectly elected from those who held seats in the British Indian centre but directly from the individual provinces.³³

Despite the varying motives which had produced these schemes, the delegation of princes and their advisers arrived in London in late October 1930 and appointed a committee to consider the attitude that they should adopt towards federation.³⁴ On 2 November they reached agreement

31. Hydari's note, 2 October 1930, Reading Collection, No.56e.

32. Schuster to Irwin, 9 October 1930, Halifax Collection, No.19.

33. Hydari's undated later supplement, Reading Collection, No.56e.

34. The Indian States delegation included all members of the Standing Committee - the Maharajas of Alwar, Bhopal, Bikaner, Kashmir, Patiala and the Jam Sahib of Nawanagar; Manubhai Mehta and Kailas Haksar from the Chamber's Special Organisation plus seven other members chosen by Irwin. Four of the premier states were represented - Hyderabad by Sir Akbar Hydari, Mysore by Sir Mirza Ismail, Gwalior by Sahibzada Ahmed Khan and Baroda by the Gaekwar, Prabhaskar Pattani represented those states under minority administrations, Gulab Singh, the Maharaja of [contd. over].

that the states should join with British India in a federal structure for joint control of matters of common concern.³⁵ This attitude had a marked effect upon the other delegations to the Conference, both British and Indian.

Sir Malcolm Hailey had been sent to London as a constitutional adviser. On 14 November he wrote back to Irwin:

"If the movement of the Princes can be guided on to really useful lines, there is something of real substance behind it, because if we could obtain a Federal Assembly in which they were well represented, and in which the Viceroy would have a wide nomination in order to discharge his responsibilities to Parliament, then we should all of us be prepared to go further in the way of responsible Government than we should if matters took their ordinary line in development of the proposals of Simon or the Government of India. As I suggested to a friend the other day, the proposal may possibly be merely a good red herring but, if we are lucky, it may actually turn out to be a good 'fishable salmon'."³⁶

This was an accurate appraisal of the official British mind. The Conservative and Liberal parties in particular were agreed that the princes' initiative had given them the basis for a twofold strategy to pursue at the conference. During the preliminary stages of the conference spokesmen for these two parties had been

34. [contd]. Rewa, represented the so-called conservative states and the Chief of Sangli was chosen to represent the smaller states.

35. Barbara Nell Ramusack, "Indian Princes as Imperial Politicians, 1924-1939", unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Michigan, p. 256.

36. Hailey to Irwin, 14 November 1930, Halifax Collection, No.19 [Lord Simon chaired the Statutory Commission].

obsessed with the fear that when discussion commenced the British Government would be confronted with a united demand for Dominion Status. Now, however, the princes' federal initiative could be used on the one hand to divert attention from Dominion Status, while on the other it could prove of more lasting value in dealing with the vexed problem of how much power should be transferred to Indian control in the central government. Lord Reading, Liberal spokesman on India remarked: "If the Simon Commission and the Government of India had known what we now know they'd have written very different reports."³⁷ For the Conservatives, Samuel Hoare subsequently submitted a memorandum for the consideration of his party's Business Committee in which he spoke of federation extricating British India "from the morass into which the doctrinaire liberalism of Montagu had plunged it." Moreover, with a federal constitution Britain could "yield a semblance of responsible government and yet retain ... the realities and verities of ... control."³⁸ Clearly for the Conservatives federation was indeed to become another "good red herring."

The final link in the federal chain was Sapru, head of the Indian Liberal delegation. According to Hailey, Sapru had in fact arrived in London with the intention of demanding a declaration in favour of Dominion

37. Minutes of Liberal Delegation meeting, 19 November 1930, Reading Collection, No.56g.

38. Hoare's memorandum, "Conservative Policy at the Round Table Conference", 12 December 1930, Templewood Collection, No.52(1).

Status. He did not succeed because the Muslim delegates refused to contemplate such action without corresponding guarantees for their own position.³⁹ Sapru was therefore obliged to consider federation with the states as the only means of acquiring some form of central responsibility. At the end of November he wrote to a colleague in India: "if we leave the States out, we shall get nothing, and certainly responsibility at the Centre, with a unitary form of Government is not going to come to us."⁴⁰ Indeed it was Sapru who helped Bikaner write his speech agreeing to join a federation which the Maharaja delivered on behalf of the princes when the conference opened on 17 November 1930.⁴¹

Irwin was astonished when he received news of events in London. He wrote to his father that he doubted if the princes realized what they were doing.⁴² Certainly in the case of Hyderabad it was clear that when the conference closed in January 1931, Hydari had been manoeuvred into a position which he had not intended. Largely at the insistence of Sapru and the Hindu Liberals, the Federal Structure Committee which had been appointed by the conference recommended that the federal authority should ultimately inherit such central subjects as income tax, civil and criminal law, and law and order from the Government of India. Sapru and his colleagues sought a

39. Hailey to Irwin, 14 November 1930, Halifax Collection, No.19.

40. Sapru to Setalvad, 29 November 1930, Sapru Collection, IOL Microfilm, 1st series, S. 131.

41. Ramusack, op.cit., p.259.

42. Irwin to Viscount Halifax, 23 November 1930, Halifax Collection, No.27.

strong federal authority with a wide range of powers in order to make a reality of central responsibility. The Muslim delegates objected to this because they wanted to avoid a Hindu dominated centre and preferred that these subjects should be devolved upon the provinces. Having previously envisaged that the federal authority would only discuss a limited number of subjects of common concern, Hydari had similar misgivings. Furthermore, the Federal Structure Committee recommended a bicameral federal legislature with representatives from British India and the states in both houses to replace the existing central legislature. Hydari was thus confronted with a much closer association with British India than he had originally intended. In India, the Nizam responded to this situation by insisting that his accession to Federation would be conditional upon receipt of a written assurance that the Crown would possess the "moral and material means" of protecting his state in accordance with the terms of his treaties.⁴³ Whether or not Britain could give the Nizam such an assurance subsequently became a key factor in determining Hyderabad's attitude towards federation.

Hydari's misgivings did not influence the princes of the Standing Committee. Federation for them was primarily a means to gain autonomy in their internal affairs. This was just beginning to dawn upon Irwin:

43. PIC. 1931-50, Coll.11, File 6, No.PY706(1931), The Nizam's instruction to the Hyderabad delegation before the Second Round Table Conference, 9 August 1931.

"I am not sure... that they may not have some ideas in their minds of using federation to get rid of the exercise of paramountcy."⁴⁴ Hailey confirmed the impression: "They seem to be out for the extinction of the Political Department, rather than the creation of a Federal constitution."⁴⁵ The princes of the Committee revealed their true colours at meetings they held with the Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, on 3 December 1930 and 9 January 1931. At the first Bikaner threatened that the princes would be unable to federate until they knew what their position was regarding paramountcy.⁴⁶ At the second Bikaner, supported by Alwar and Patiala, declared that the princes were "up against a stone-wall of departmental prejudice" in India and that a "high legal luminary" from Britain was required to supplement the personnel of the Political Department.⁴⁷

From India, Watson's response to these discussions was truly remarkable. The Political Secretary declared that he might even be prepared to abandon non-interference in order to counter the Standing Committee's assault upon paramountcy. Moreover, in stark contrast to his previous utterances, Watson now considered that the policy of non-interference had resulted in "an increase of irresponsible autocracy and lessened protection and benefit to the

44. Irwin to Lawrence, 17 November 1930, Halifax Collection, No.19.

45. Hailey to Irwin, 20 November 1930, Halifax Collection, No.19.

46. PIC. 1931-50, Coll.11, File 3, No.6590/1930, Note on Proceedings at a meeting in the Prime Minister's room, 3 December 1930.

47. PIC. 1931-50, Coll.11, File 7, pt.1. No.6590/1930, Note on Proceedings at a meeting in the Prime Minister's room, 9 January 1931.

states subjects." He concluded: "The more the Paramountcy presses upon the States, forcing them to improve the conditions of their subjects, the more ready they will be to welcome a Federation on really effective terms as an alternative or to escape the rigours of intervention by granting their people some effective voice in the administration."⁴⁸ This was not the first occasion upon which the Political Department had used the truth about non-interference merely to justify its own authority in the states.

Irwin's reaction to the discussions was essentially to repeat the foreboding expressed three years previously by Birkenhead when he had authorized the appointment of an Indian States Committee. It was only now that the Viceroy became fully conversant with the tactics of the Standing Committee. He realized that if, in addition to an assurance being given that the states would never be transferred to a responsible Indian government, large concessions were made over paramountcy, then the princes would have no need for federation.⁴⁹ Irwin anticipated difficulties during the paramountcy discussions he had promised the Standing Committee when they returned from London. However, at the Committee's own request, these discussions were postponed.

One of the reasons for this postponement was that Irwin's term of office would expire in April 1931

48. GOI. FPD. No.3 - Special (Secret), 1931, Watson's note, 5 January 1931.

49. PIC. 1931-50, Coll.11, File 3, No.8576/1930, Viceroy to S/S, telg. 8 December 1930.

and the Committee felt that the issue could not be fully discussed in the short time before he was due to leave. The main reason, however, was that personal rivalries were beginning to disrupt the Committee. Bikaner and Patiala had always felt a mutual antipathy. Their close co-operation for a decade could not conceal the fact that Patiala greatly resented Bikaner's reputation as a more capable and experienced statesman. Friction between the two came to a head in March 1931 when Bikaner's support for the Nawab of Bhopal enabled the latter to defeat Patiala by a narrow margin in the elections for the Chancellorship of the Chamber of Princes.⁵⁰

Patiala's reaction to his defeat took the form of an attack upon the federal scheme adopted at the first round table conference. On 15 June 1931 he published a pamphlet entitled "Federation and the Indian States." Denouncing federation as a "radical innovation" which "subverts the very basis of the well-tried and time-honoured political institutions of the states", Patiala suggested instead that the Chamber of Princes should be enlarged into a "Union of States" from which a Standing Committee would confer with a Standing Committee of the British Indian legislature on matters of common concern.⁵¹ Patiala was undeterred when a meeting of princes in Bombay in July rejected his scheme. In August he joined forces with his cousin, the Maharaja of Dholpur, to produce a

50. Ramusack, op.cit., pp. 268-270.

51. PIC. 1931-50, Coll.11, File 44, No.1053/1931, Patiala's "Note on Federation and the Indian States", released to the press, 15 June 1931.

further scheme for a confederation of states. This envisaged that an enlarged Chamber of Princes would operate as an electoral college for the purpose of electing state representatives to the federal legislatures. Provision was made for responsibility to be exercised in a federal executive but only in respect of matters which were strictly of common concern to the states and British India.⁵²

Neither Patiala nor Dholpur could claim to have originated the confederation scheme. This honour rested with Sir Prabhashankar Pattani, regent to the Maharaja of Bhavnagar, ruler of one of the Kathiawar states. Pattani had recommended/^{con}federation at the first round table conference on the grounds that it would enable the states to "perpetuate their existence, for, standing together as a collective body, they can induce British India to take account of their united strength." For the states to federate individually would "only result in the individual state being swallowed up."⁵³

Pattani's ideas appealed particularly to the smaller states and to their principal spokesmen, the Chief of Sangli and the Raja of Sarila. Their size and collective number meant that the small states would never gain individual representation in an all-Indian federation. Confederation, however, would provide them with an opportunity of influencing the election of state delegates to the federal legislatures. The attractions

52. ibid., No.1657/1931, The Dholpur-Patiala scheme for a Confederation of States.

53. Sir P. Pattani, "The Indian States: A letter on their relations with British India", September 1930, Templewood Collection, No.53a (2A).

that confederation held for the smaller states was primarily responsible for Patiala's support for the confederate cause. By championing the interests of the smaller states he hoped to strengthen his chances of regaining the Chancellorship of the Chamber. Patiala's manoeuvres infuriated Bikaner and Bhopal who found themselves bombarded with demands from the smaller states that they were entitled to individual representation in an enlarged Chamber of Princes. Bikaner spent a large part of the summer of 1931 threatening the smaller states that if they persisted their larger brethren would have to "seek protection by securing a plurality of votes for themselves in the Chamber, and also in both Federal Houses and elsewhere, which might be more proportionate to their size and importance."⁵⁴

Confederation also appealed to those states whose geographical location made them particularly susceptible to agitation directed from British India. Indeed this was Dholpur's main reason for supporting confederation. The Maharaja was said to stand in "great dread" of the influx of democratic propaganda from the contiguous district of Agra.⁵⁵ In this respect confederation had attractions for a conservative prince like Gulab Singh, the Maharaja of Rewa. The state of Rewa was less than one hundred miles from Allahabad in the United Provinces, a point which Gulab Singh had stressed

54. GOI. FPD. No. 5(3) Special, 1931, Nos.1-3, Bikaner's circular letter to princes, 11 July 1931.

55. "Attitude of the Indian States Delegation towards Federation", memorandum by Sir Reginald Glancy, a member of the Secretary of State's India Council, 1 September 1930, Templewood Collection, No.53A.

to Watson in 1930 when some of his more recalcitrant thakurs had attempted to settle a dispute by securing the mediation of Jawaharlal Nehru.⁵⁶ However, Rewa could never become firmly entrenched in the Patiala-Dholpur camp. As a conservative prince he greatly resented the domination of the Chamber princes and the facilities they enjoyed for appearing to represent the states as a whole. He would never tolerate dictation from the Chamber princes which the electoral college implied. Moreover Rewa did not share Patiala's paramountcy views which had remained unchanged by his support for confederation. Unlike Patiala, Rewa believed that an unrestricted paramountcy would still be necessary to protect the states from British Indian agitation whatever form the future Government of India might take. Rewa was therefore prepared to accept that he could never be completely independent in the conduct of his internal affairs.⁵⁷ On paper confederation

56. GOI. FPD. No. 148 - Political (Secret), 1930, Gulab Singh to Watson, 15 July 1930.

57. Rewa had expressed these opinions to Irwin just before the Viceroy initiated his first informal discussions with the princes in 1927, see GOI. FPD, No. 654 - Political, 1927, Nos. 1-3, Rewa to Irwin, 2 February 1927. Rewa also privately disassociated himself from the views of the Standing Committee at the meeting with MacDonald in December 1930, see PIC. 1931-50, Coll. 11, File 3, No. 8576/1930, S/S to Viceroy, telg., 4 December 1930.

should also have held attractions for Hyderabad, particularly in view of the recommendation to limit discussion at the responsible centre to matters of common concern. Yet like Rewa, the Nizam would not submit to Chamber dictation nor did he subscribe to the Chamber version of paramountcy. Rewa and the Nizam differed only in respect of the latter's belief that he could still be internally independent.

In reality therefore confederation could never be considered as a viable alternative to federation. Other important states like Mysore, Baroda and Travancore would never accept an electoral college. The three premier states of Rajputana, Udaipur, Jodhpur and Jaipur had always maintained their distance from the Chamber and moreover accepted the Rewa version of paramountcy. Confederation therefore served not only to emphasize the bitterness and divisions within the Standing Committee, but also to show how unrepresentative the Committee was of the princes as a whole. It was, however, also significant in that it represented the first recoil among the princes from the federal ideal.

In August 1931, Ramsay Macdonald formed a National Government with a 'doctor's mandate' to deal with the economic crisis in Britain. His cabinet consisted of only ten members - four Conservatives, four Labour and two Liberals. Among the Conservatives was Samuel Hoare who became the new Secretary of State for India. Within a month of the opening of the second round table conference in September 1931, Hoare recorded

the following impression of the princely mind:

"I have been terribly depressed by the individual talks I have had with almost all the members of the Conference, and particularly with the Princes, for I have found that we have scarcely a friend amongst them. This makes me think that however the Conference ends, we must somehow keep the princes happy ... the princes talk to me as if it were certain that we were leaving India in the next five years."⁵⁸

This latter remark was a reference to the Gandhi-Irwin pact of the previous April which had brought a temporary cessation to civil disobedience. The new Viceroy, Lord Willingdon confirmed that he had spent the first five months of office disabusing the princes of the idea that a "Gandhi Raj" was imminent.⁵⁹ In August, the Nawab of Bhopal had written to Willingdon:

"The people of British India, as a result of intense agitation, are being given and promised powers which they never possessed, whilst the princes cannot get ratification even in regard to their rights which 'inviolable and inviolable' Treaties had secured for them more than a century ago."⁶⁰

In order to go some way towards removing the anxieties of the princes Hoare suggested to Willingdon:

"Would it not.... be practicable at once to refer to arbitration some question of fact that may be outstanding between the Government of India and one of the princes."

Hoare was sure that the effect this would have upon the princes would be "out of all proportion to the magnitude

58. Hoare to Willingdon, 2 October 1931, Templewood Collection, No.1.

59. Willingdon to Hoare, 12 October 1931, Templewood Collection, No.5.

60. PIC, 1931-50, Coll.11, File 7 pt.1, No.1653/1931, Bhopal to Willingdon, 6 August 1931.

of the question referred to arbitration."⁶¹ It was obvious that the Secretary of State had in mind the customs dispute of the Jam Sahib of Nawanagar.

The Jam was in dispute with the Government of India over the reimposition of a customs barrier known as the Viramgam Line in 1927. Between 1917, when the line had ceased to operate, and 1927, the Jam had been permitted to retain all customs receipts on goods, including those on goods destined for British India, which were imported through his port at Bedi Bander. During these ten years, however, extensions to the port had resulted in an enormous increase in the Jam's customs receipts. From Rs. 10.49 lakhs in 1922-23, they had risen to Rs. 78.90 lakhs in 1926-27. In 1927 the Government of India therefore reimposed the Viramgam Line allowing the Jam to retain only Rs. 2 lakhs of duty on goods passing into British India in any one year. The Jam protested on the grounds that in 1917 he had received an assurance that nothing would be done to hinder the capacity of his port at Bedi Bander. The Government of India however considered that this assurance had been given on condition that the position would be reconsidered should any one of the Kathiawar states develop a port capable of attracting a greater quantity of sea-borne traffic than British Indian ports.⁶² It was because of this dispute that the Jam became the keenest

61. Hoare to Willingdon, 2 October 1931, Templewood Collection, No.1.

62. For a history of this dispute, see PIC. 1931-50, Coll.13, File 45, No.1305/1932, memorandum by J.C.C. Davidson, 27 July 1932.

exponent of a paramountcy settlement involving the use of arbitrational procedures to decide upon justiciable disputes between the Government of India and the states in which the former acted as both judge and party.

At the end of 1931 the Government of India acted upon Hoare's advice and appointed a Court of Arbitration under Lord Dunedin to determine the Nawanagar customs dispute. This gesture, however, did not prevent the Jam using the dispute to create yet further difficulties over federation. In February 1932 he denounced federation as being dangerous to the states and advocated instead a return to the Statutory Commission's idea of a Council of Greater India. His views were endorsed by a conference of some fifty Kathiawar princes who assembled at Rajkot in the same month. According to Rushbrook-Williams, who was now acting as the Jam's legal adviser, the reason for the conference decision was that many of the smaller states had only just begun to realise that princes like Bikaner and Bhopal were committing them to accepting arrangements over their heads. Moreover the smaller states were becoming convinced that federation would lead to their extinction and therefore they were recoiling from an "embrace which they feared might be octopus like in its effect on them."⁶³

This second volte face meant that Bikaner and Bhopal were forced to come to terms with the Chamber dissidents. In March 1932 the princes agreed that their

63. Private Office Papers, L/PO/58, Williams to Hoare, 3 March and 1 April 1932.

ministers should meet in committee with the object of reconciling the different schemes "for associating the States with the proposals for all-India constitutional reforms."⁶⁴ On the personal level, Bikaner and Patiala agreed that neither they, nor Bhopal and Dholpur, their respective understudies, should contest the Chancellorship of the Chamber of Princes for the coming year. The result of this particular arrangement was to leave the way open for the Jam, by now the most dedicated opponent of federation, to assume the office of Chancellor for the period March 1932 to March 1933.

This series of princely defections from the federal ideal was also highly disturbing to Hoare. In October 1931 the National Government had emerged triumphant from a general election with an overwhelming majority of Conservative M.P's. who were not prepared to contemplate any changes in the central government of India unless by federation with a strong princely content. Moreover since the first round table conference there had been no further commitment by any of the princes to federation. With another Chamber session due at the end of March 1932, Hoare impressed the gravity of the situation upon Lord Lothian who had been sent to India as Chairman of the Franchise Committee:

"On no account must the Princes be allowed to give a negative to All-India Federation. If they are in a negative mood at the forthcoming meeting of the Chamber of Princes they must almost at any price be induced to adjourn and

64. Cited in U. Phadnis, Towards the Integration of the Indian States, 1919-1947, London, 1968, p. 65.

not definitely to say 'No'. If they say 'No', all the fat in the world will be in the fire here. Nine out of ten members of the House of Commons will then go straight back to the unadulterated Simon Report." ⁶⁵

Hoare also wrote in a similar vein to Willingdon and to members of the Indian States [Financial] Enquiry Committee which had accompanied Lothian's Committee to India. In fact it was the chairman of the Financial Committee, Sir John Davidson, together with his colleague, Lord Hastings, who intervened in the manner suggested by Hoare. In the evening of 30 March Davidson wrote letters to the Jam and Bikaner arranging for them to be delivered during the afternoon of the following day when the Standing Committee was discussing what its resolution on federation would say. Bikaner was informed that "nothing could be more disastrous than that the Princes should, however innocently, convey to their friends in England the impression that on the one hand they were dilatory or on the other that agreement between themselves is never likely to be reached." ⁶⁶

As a result of this warning the Chamber passed a resolution on 1 April 1932 to the effect that the states would join an all-India federation on condition that the Crown would give them the following guarantees:

- "(a) that the necessary safeguards will be embodied in the constitution;
- (b) that under the constitution the rights arising from Treaties, or Sanads or

65. Hoare to Lothian, 3 March 1932, Templewood Collection, No.14.

66. Davidson to Bikaner, 30 March 1932, enclosed with Davidson to Hoare, 31 March 1932, Templewood Collection, No.14.

Engagements, remain inviolate and
inviolable;

- (c) that the sovereignty and internal
independence of the States remain
intact and are preserved and fully
respected and that the obligations of
the Crown to the States remain unaltered."⁶⁷

On 2 April Hastings confided to Hoare: "What
the official view may be of the really rather dreadful
intrusion of J.C.D. and self at this critical moment is
perhaps best not enquired into."⁶⁸ Davidson in fact
never told Willingdon about his letters to Bikaner and
the Jam. He believed the Viceroy's attitude to be
primarily responsible for the difficulties encountered
with the states. He described Willingdon as "perfectly
charming from the ceremonial point of view", but "he has
been out of touch with British politics for so long that
he really knows very little about the situation at home."
Davidson's overall impression was that the Government of
India was totally opposed to federation: "The fact is
that there is not a politically minded individual in India
among the British officials, and of course Willingdon is
hopeless."⁶⁹ Lord Lothian had a different view. He
considered that while the Government of India had never
been "friendly" towards federation because the idea had
been "the child of the Round Table Conference, and not of

67. Chamber of Princes, April 1932.

68. Hastings to Hoare, 2 April 1932, Templewood
Collection, No.14.

69. Davidson to Hoare, 31 March and 1 April 1932,
Templewood Collection, No.14.

its own initiative," opinion was now coming round to accept that federation was inevitable.⁷⁰ When challenged by Hoare on the point in March 1932,⁷¹ Willingdon replied that although officials in India, himself included, had originally thought it unwise for the princes to "tumble into federation", they had always considered that once the princes had committed themselves it would be impossible for them to keep out.⁷² However, like Irwin before him, Willingdon would have preferred, and indeed had been preparing, to proceed first with reform at the British Indian centre. In November 1931 he had informed Hoare that to insist upon federation as a condition of central responsibility was both "unnecessary and dangerous, particularly as it leaves the fate of India at the discretion of the states."⁷³ Yet in his response to Hoare's challenge, the Viceroy now expressed his full commitment to federation because he realized that political opinion in Britain would not tolerate central responsibility without federation and moreover that without this responsibility "probably the whole of British India would go over to the Congress side."⁷⁴

It would indeed appear therefore that it was not until 1932 that the Government of India appreciated the

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- 70. Lothian to Hoare, 27 March 1932, Templewood Collection, No.14.
 - 71. Hoare to Willingdon, 18 March 1932, Templewood Collection, No.1.
 - 72. Willingdon to Hoare, 27 March 1932, Templewood Collection, No.5.
 - 73. Viceroy to S/S, telg., 29 November 1931, Templewood Collection, No.11.
 - 74. Willingdon to Hoare, 27 March 1932, Templewood Collection, No.5.

extent to which any meaningful reform was dependent upon the accession of the princes to a federation. Consequently, while it was legitimate to argue, as Willingdon had done, that the future of India should not be left to the discretion of the princes, the conclusion to be drawn is that it was also not until 1932 that the Government of India began considering the actual framework of a federal constitution in earnest.

Despite his belated appreciation of political realities in Britain, the Viceroy was optimistic about the princes in view of the recent Chamber resolution: "... the Princes as a whole now feel that Federation, in some form is inevitable, and that if a reasonable scheme emerges, it must be accepted, even if they are not altogether satisfied with the details."⁷⁵ Hoare's advisers in the India Office did not share this optimism. They were concerned at the implications of the second guarantee which had been included in the princes' resolution, particularly in view of the long awaited paramountcy discussions which had taken place between Willingdon and the Standing Committee just before the formal Chamber session. During the discussions Bhopal had put forward a formula intended to reassure the princes as to the inviolability of their treaties. It stated that if, in any matter affecting the interests of both the states and British India, the former claimed that a proposed policy infringed their treaty rights, the

75. Viceroy to S/S, telg., 29 November 1932, Templewood Collection, No.11.

Viceroy, after attempting to secure agreement by negotiation would appoint an ad hoc impartial tribunal whose decision would be final.⁷⁶ When Hoare's advisers compared this formula with the second guarantee in the Chamber resolution they reached the conclusion that what the Standing Committee really wanted was "provision whereby the protection of the Crown secured to them by their treaties and engagements, would remain operative even within the field of Federal subjects, in other words, potential protection against the action of the federal administration itself."⁷⁷ Bhopal's formula, however, represented the price which he and Bikaner had been obliged to pay in order to effect a reconciliation with the Standing Committee. These two princes were really more interested in securing protection against infringements of their sovereignty by the paramount power than protection against the actions of a federal administration.⁷⁸ Yet for the Jam, who was motivated primarily by experience of his customs dispute, both these types of protection were to be treated as essential preconditions if he was ever to contemplate accession to a federation.

76. GOI. FPD. No.125 - Reforms, 1932, Nos.1-8, Minutes of the proceedings of an informal conference, 10 March 1932.

77. PIC. 1931-50, Coll.11, File 7 pt.2, No.1740/1932, Committee on India, No.14: Relations with the Indian States after Federation outside the Federal field, October 1932.

78. Bikaner and Bhopal cherished ambitions of holding high office in a future federal ministry. Bikaner was said to covet the defence portfolio and, at a later stage, even the Viceroyalty. "Attitudes of the Indian States Delegation towards Federation", memorandum by Sir Reginald Glancy, 1 September 1931, Templewood Collection, No.53A.

Hoare subsequently instructed Willingdon to hold a further and more representative conference with the princes. Clearly a stand had now to be taken against the pretensions of the Standing Committee. The princes were to be informed that under no circumstances would the protection of the paramount power be available to them in the field of federal subjects. Cases of disputes between the states and British India would, once the federation had become operative, be referred to a Federal Court from which there would be a right of appeal to the Privy Council.⁷⁹

The more representative conference with the princes took place in September 1932. In the two months preceding it the Jam attempted to prevent any further discussion of federation until he had gained acceptance of his paramountcy views. In July he addressed a letter to the other members of the Standing Committee in which he stated that "the authorities in England" should be told that the princes would not be able to federate until their views "regarding the false doctrine of paramountcy" were effectively met. In August he wrote to Hoare requesting that the paramountcy discussions be transferred to London where he believed he would receive a more sympathetic hearing. The Jam also told the Secretary of State that the Standing Committee now regarded a satisfactory settlement of the paramountcy question not only as a condition

79. PIC. 1931-50, Coll.11, File 7 pt.2, No.1740/1932, Committee on India, No.14.

of their accession to federation but also of their willingness to continue negotiations regarding the federal scheme in the interval. Hoare's India Committee construed the Jam's letter to be "nothing short of a concerted attempt to blackmail [the government] into making concessions, hitherto regarded as outside practical politics, in order to secure an undertaking from the princes to federate."⁸⁰ However, the Jam was unable to carry his colleagues on the Standing Committee with him. He had written to Hoare without consulting either Bikaner, Bhopal or Patiala. These three subsequently issued a statement declaring that:

"It is not our position that we decline to discuss further the federation scheme, although it is our position that we shall not enter Federation unless Government settles the Paramountcy question to our satisfaction."⁸¹

The Jam had therefore failed in his attempt to use the paramountcy issue to delay negotiations over federation. He was a conspicuous absentee when Willingdon met representatives from twenty-five states in conference at Simla from the 20th to the 22nd of September.⁸² Discussion at the conference focussed upon the relationship between the paramount power and the states in the federal

80. ibid.

81. cited in Haksar to Sapru, 4 September 1932, Sapru Collection, 10L Microfilm, first series, H.95.

82. The following states were represented: Dholpur, Panna, Bikaner, Bhopal, Sangli, Alwar, Dungarpur, Rewa, Bahawalapur, Cutch, Rampur, Malerkotla, Sarila, Hyderabad, Udaipur, Mysore, Kolhapur, Jhalawar, Travancore, Kashmir, Indore, Baroda, Jodhpur, Jaipur and Cochin.

and non-federal fields. As regards the former, the Jam's absence meant that the conference unanimously accepted the position which Hoare had described to Willingdon: disputes between the states and British India would be subject to interpretation by a Federal Court. Discussion on the latter was much more controversial and protracted. Bikaner and Bhopal argued strongly for a formula whereby alleged infractions of treaty rights by the paramount power would be submitted for arbitration to an ad hoc tribunal whose decision would be final. However, this attempt to restrict the discretionary authority of the paramount power was equally strongly opposed by Gulab Singh of Rewa and Sir Akbar Hydari. They argued that it would be suicidal for the princes themselves to weaken the protective function of the paramount power at a time when "autocratic systems of government are being openly challenged in British Indian circles." To this Willingdon added that it was improbable that the British Government would ever "consent to the subordination of the Crown's representative and the Crown itself to the ruling of an outside authority." In the face of this opposition Bikaner and Bhopal were forced to submit to revision of their formula. In future it would be obligatory to submit disputes of a justiciable nature to a tribunal but the decision reached would only be of an advisory character and not binding upon the paramount power.⁸³

83. PIC. 1931-50, Coll.11, File 7 pt.2, No.1740/1932, Committee on India, No.14.

The Simla Conference of September 1932 was not only a defeat for the Standing Committee but also a turning point in princely politics. After the conference the princes of the committee began to lose that monopoly of influence which they had maintained unchallenged for the past decade. Willingdon observed:

"It seems to me that there is a great deal of feeling among the greater number of Princes owing to the fact that the Standing Committee of the Chamber of Princes has for long years been a very close corporation, largely controlled by Bikaner, Bhopal and Patiala."⁸⁴

The reluctance of Hyderabad in particular to impose restrictions upon the exercise of paramountcy had come as an unwelcome surprise to members of the committee. They had always assumed that the Nizam would be the first to want to impose restrictions. Evidently it was only now that they realized that the Nizam's sole concern was to prevent his state "from being swallowed up ... by the monster of British India."⁸⁵ This did not, however, indicate a smooth passage for the government with the Nizam. On the contrary, it was precisely because of this concern to gain protection from British India that the Nizam was beginning to raise the price for his accession to federation. In addition to requesting a written guarantee that Britain would protect Hyderabad in accordance with the terms of his treaties, the Nizam now wanted to

84. Willingdon to Hoare, 26 September 1932, Templewood Collection, No.6.

85. Haksar to Sapru, 5 October 1932, Sapru Collection, IOL Microfilm, first series, H.99.

see Berar, a potential spring-board for attacks on Hyderabad from the Central Provinces, separated from that province and constituted as a federal unit in its own right.⁸⁶

On 17 November 1932 the third and final round-table conference opened in London. The only prince present was the Raja of Sarila on behalf of the smaller states. The reason for this was that Patiala, who had not attended the second conference because his own extravagance had brought his state to the verge of financial collapse, was again obliged to remain in India. For the sake of ^{his} reputation, Patiala requested Bikaner and Bhopal to do the same. When they agreed the Government of India decided that the princes would be represented by their ministers at the conference.⁸⁷ Hoare's first impression of these ministers was that they had "explicit instructions not to commit their rulers too far."⁸⁸

Discussion relating to the states centred on the complex problems of their representation in the federal legislatures and their contributions towards federal finance. It proved impossible to make any substantial headway on either issue. On the first, representatives of the larger states advocated an upper house of less than 200 members with the states being represented in accordance

86. GOI. FPD. No.27 - Special, 1931, Nos.1-17, Question of the future Administration of the Berars: Representations made by the Nizam's Government on the subject.

87. Ramusack, op.cit., pp. 282-283.

88. Hoare to Willingdon, 18 November 1932, Templewood Collection, No.5.

with their importance and population. Hydari was particularly anxious to reduce as far as possible the number of British Indian politicians in both legislatures. The medium sized states, however, wanted an upper house with something in excess of 250 members in order that each of the 108 Chamber princes could be individually represented. Without agreement on the size of the Chambers, nothing could be done to decide the allocation of seats between the states themselves and between the states and British India.⁸⁹ An important decision was however taken during the conference. This concerned the number of accessions by the states which would be required to inaugurate the federation. The formula arrived at was basically a compromise between the positions of the large and medium sized states. Federation would thus be dependent upon the accession of "States with an aggregate of over fifty per cent of [the] total States' population, provided that they include not less than half of [the] States individually represented in the Upper [Federal] Chamber."⁹⁰

The problem of federal finance involved those states which paid tributes and those which enjoyed certain immunities. Contributions in the form of tributes amounted to Rs. 74 lakhs in 1932. Mysore, with its tribute of

89. In the final Government of India Act of 1935, the Upper House was to consist of 260 seats: 156 for British India and 104 for the states. The Lower House was to consist of 375 seats: 250 for British India and 125 for the states.

90. S/S to Viceroy, telg. 21 November 1932, Templewood Collection, No.11

Rs. $24\frac{1}{2}$ lakhs, contributed one-third of this total. The states concerned claimed immediate relief from these payments but were disappointed by the gloomy predictions being made about the prospective stability of federal finance. In order to maintain adequate reserves in the federal exchequer the government in London considered that it would only be possible to remit the tributes at the same time as the British Indian provinces were allowed to keep the proceeds of their income tax.⁹¹ The Indian States [Financial] Enquiry Committee, which reported in July 1932, had calculated that upon this basis it would take twenty years before the tributes could be remitted in full. The only concession that the Committee had felt able to make was that immediate relief should be given by the remission of the amount of any contribution which was in excess of five per cent of the total revenues of the state.⁹² This would reduce Mysore's tribute to Rs. $17\frac{1}{2}$ lakhs, but it was by no means certain that this would prove acceptable. In February 1932 Willingdon had reported that Ismail had virtually "put a pistol at our heads" by saying that Mysore would refuse to federate unless relieved of its tribute payment in full.⁹³

Immunities constituted financial advantages which individual states enjoyed, by Treaty or Agreement,

91. Committee on India, No.17: Federal Finance, November 1932, Templewood Collection, No.56(S).

92. Report of the Indian States [Financial] Enquiry Committee, July 1932, Cmd. 4103, 1932, paras. 88-90.

93. Willingdon to Hoare, 5 February 1932, Templewood Collection, No.5.

in respect of certain sources of revenue which under Federation would normally lie at the disposal of the federal administration. The largest immunity was in respect of customs receipts. In 1932 the amount of customs receipts retained by the states totalled just over Rs. 182 lakhs. Bhavnagar, Nawanagar, Kashmir, Travancore and Cochin were the major beneficiaries of this arrangement and were therefore loathe to yield such a large part of their income.⁹⁴ In its report, the Indian States [Financial] Enquiry Committee recognized that such immunities were important to the states, not only because of their financial value, but also because they represented the outward symbol of their cherished sovereignty. However, the Committee also considered that the retention of customs receipts by any federal unit would be "hard to reconcile with the ideal of a true Federation."⁹⁵ Hoare's India Committee agreed and thought that it might be necessary to exclude these states from the federation rather than admit them on such highly privileged terms.⁹⁶

The third round-table conference closed in December 1932. Such conclusions as the government in London had been able to reach were embodied in a White Paper which was published in March 1933. Here it was explained that when the new Government of India Act had

94. Of the total Rs. 182 lakhs, Bhavnagar accounted for Rs. 50 lakhs, Nawanagar Rs. 44 lakhs, Kashmir Rs. 25 lakhs, Travancore and Cochin, Rs. 12 lakhs each.

95. Report of the Indian States (Financial) Enquiry Committee, July 1932, Cmd.4103, 1932, para. 380.

96. Committee on India, No.17: Federal Finance, November 1932, Templewood Collection, No.56(5).

been passed, each individual prince would be asked to sign an Instrument of Accession specifying those subjects which could be transferred from his own sovereignty to that of the federal administration. The princes would also be allowed to make certain "limitations" upon the extent to which they agreed to any particular subject becoming federal and it would ~~fall~~^a to the British Government to decide whether or not these limitations were reconcilable with the federal principle.⁹⁷ In the cases of the major tribute and customs states, it was already evident that the period after the Act had been passed would be one of prolonged bargaining and negotiation.

If therefore federation was to become a reality, time was of the essence. However, a further two years elapsed before the Government of India Act was passed. During this period the attitude of the princes hardly ensured a smooth passage for the government bill containing details of the federal proposals. A week before the appearance of the White Paper, Willingdon attempted to explain its contents to a gathering of some fifty princes and ministers at Delhi. The Viceroy subsequently regretted that he had bothered for he found the princes hopelessly divided by personal rivalries and jealousies.⁹⁸ The formal Chamber session at the end of March fared no better. Animosity between the princes resulted in Bhopal, Kashmir,

97. Proposals for Indian Constitutional Reform, Cmd. 4268, 1933 (March), pt.1, No.2.

98. Willingdon to Hoare, 26 March 1933, Templewood Collection, No.6.

Kolhapur and Travancore serving notice of their intention to quit the Chamber. The absence of Bhopal and Kashmir, and the death in April 1933 of the Jam Sahib, meant that when Patiala was elected Chancellor for the coming year he was given a Standing Committee which, with the exception of Bikaner, consisted largely of ^{princely} non-entities. Willingdon consoled himself with the thought that the defections indicated that the Chamber "as an organized and representative body of princely opinion, is moribund for the time being at any rate."⁹⁹ Hoare was not satisfied with this sentiment. Princely intransigence provided the diehard faction within the Conservative party with ample justification for condemning federation. The Secretary of State persistently badgered Willingdon to give him some assurance that the princes would federate. It was cold comfort for him to learn from the Viceroy that it was impossible to "get any assurance from any of them until the Bill is an Act, and they see exactly what their position is going to be. This really is reasonable, and I don't see any other way out of it."¹⁰⁰

In these circumstances it was inevitable that nothing would come of a suggestion made by Hoare that political officers should be instructed to commend the federal scheme to the princes. Moreover, the Political Department was not the most reliable agency to use for the task. During his investigation in India, Sir John

99. Viceroy to S/S, telg., 26 March 1933, Templewood Collection, No.11.

100. Willingdon to Hoare, 26 March 1933, Templewood Collection, No.6.

Davidson had been as critical of the Political Department as he had of Willingdon. He reached the conclusion that although political officers in general were of a very poor calibre, the main problem was that the department had failed to give them any lead. Thus when the Jam and his adviser, Rushbrook-Williams, had been hatching their "absurd" scheme at Rajkot, the A.G.G., E.H. Kealy, formerly A.G.G. in Central India, had received no word from Delhi as to whether or not he was to intervene.¹⁰¹

Throughout the period of the round-table conferences, the Political Department had in fact remained committed to the position it had adopted in 1930. There could be no open encouragement for federation while the paramountcy issue remained unsettled. Federation, with federal agents operating in the states, would not only result in a loss of sovereignty for the princes, but also diminution of the authority of political officers. This was accepted by the department. However, if the Standing Committee had gained acceptance of their paramountcy views, then the role of the individual political officer would have been reduced to that of a mere dignatory. This line of argument had of course an essential weakness. Most political officers were already mere dignatories because of the non-interference policy. For the Political Department, however, it was a matter of principle: the principle that political officers should not be made completely redundant.

101. Davidson to Hoare, 6 March 1932, Templewood Collection, No.14.

The recent defeat of the Standing Committee made the Political Department more amenable than it might otherwise have been to Hoare's suggestion. A conference of political officers was held in March 1933. Willingdon briefed the officers and emphasized that the princes should be made fully aware of the consequences if they did not federate. The Viceroy would be unable to act independently of his council on matters concerning the states. Moreover it was inevitable that the Viceroy's council would become more responsive to the views of the British India legislature in which the states had no say. In sum, if the princes did not federate, they would be "exposed in many ways to the pressure of ideas against which defence may be difficult."¹⁰²

In one instance, however, action taken upon the basis of this brief had an unfortunate consequence. Colonel Wilberforce-Bell, the A.G.G. of the Deccan states, chose to place his own interpretation on the consequences for the princes if they did not federate. He told the princes in his charge:

"If the Federal scheme breaks down because of the refusal of the States to adhere to it, it will inevitably be said that they are reactionary and not in tune with modern ideas of constitutional progress."

The Colonel was subsequently reprimanded not only because he had been over-zealous but also because his remarks came to the attention of two conservative M.P's. who were

102. PIC. 1931-50, Coll.11, File 58 pt.1, No.PY816/1933, Memorandum prepared for the use of Political Officers at the Informal Conference, 7 March 1933.

visiting India. When news of this reached England it was used by the diehards as evidence that the Government of India was applying undue pressure on the states to federate.¹⁰³

It was largely because of diehard opposition that a further two years elapsed before Parliament approved the India Bill. Patiala gave every encouragement to the diehards. In February 1935 a meeting of princes and ministers at Bombay declared that the bill and a draft Instrument of Accession which had been prepared were unacceptable without fundamental modification. Through the offices of Madhava Rao, the editor of the Morning Post, Patiala was able to inform Churchill of the princes' decision before official confirmation reached the India Office.¹⁰⁴ The result was highly embarrassing for Hoare. On 26 February, Churchill informed an astonished House of Commons that the decision represented an outright rejection of federation by the princes.¹⁰⁵ Hoare was furious. In order to satisfy Parliament that the princes had not vetoed federation he had to produce an additional White Paper explaining the basis of the princes' objections and detailing the extent to which the government was prepared to modify the bill and draft Instrument of Accession.¹⁰⁶

Willington had long suspected that Patiala's intrigue with the diehards was based upon the belief that

103. Private Office Papers, L/P/O/88, Allegations of pressure being placed upon the States to join the Federation.

104. Butler to Brabourne, 4 March 1935, Brabourne Collection, No.20A.

105. Viscount Templewood, Nine Troubled Years, London 1954, pp. 86-87.

106. The Government of India Bill: Views of Indian States, Cmd. 4843, 1935 (March).

that he would "receive all the honours he was inclined to ask for so long as he came out against the reforms."¹⁰⁷ Patiala was certainly vain enough to be persuaded in this manner but his action at the time of the Bombay meeting was much more politically motivated. In the formal Chamber session of January 1935, Patiala had delivered a vehement assault on democracy. With an obvious reference to recent political developments in Germany he declared:

"While the princes of India have always been willing to do what was best for their peoples and ready to accommodate themselves and their constitutions to the spirit of the times, we must frankly say, that if British India is hoping to compel us to wear on our healthy body politic the Nessus shift of a discredited political theory, they are living in a world of unreality."¹⁰⁸

This outburst had been inspired by certain remarks made by Rajendra Prasad, the President of the Indian National Congress, on the attitude of the Congress towards federation and the role that the states would play in it. Throughout the period of the round-table conferences the Congress had shown a marked reluctance to become involved with the problems of the states. This did not mean that the Congress was oblivious to these problems but rather that it intended to deal with them at a later and more convenient juncture. This is clearly illustrated by the brief prepared by the Congress Working Committee

107. Willington to Hoare, 30 April 1934, Templewood Collection, No.7.

108. Chamber of Princes, January 1935.

for Gandhi's use at the second round table conference. Here it was explained that the accession of the states to a federation should be made conditional first upon a guarantee being given of the fundamental rights of their subjects, safeguarded by a Supreme Court, and secondly, representation of the states in the federal legislatures on an elective basis. However, if the princes did not accept these terms:

"... we suggest that the consideration of the question of the States be postponed for the moment and the future of what is known as British India may be discussed with the British Government... In case a settlement is reached as between British India and the British Government the question of the States can be taken up afresh."¹⁰⁹

When therefore at the second round table conference the princes refused to contemplate either of the aforesaid conditions, Gandhi did not attempt to make an issue of them. This apparent indifference to the problems of the states disturbed the leaders of the All-India States' People's Conference as N.C. Kelkar indicated to Gandhi in June 1934:

"... it will be well to refer to the apprehensions that have arisen in the minds of the Indian States people by passages in your speeches at the Round Table Conference. You pleaded earnestly in this Conference with the rulers of the Indian States for allowing the States' representatives in the federal legislature to be chosen by election and for allowing the fundamental rights of the States people to be written into the federal constitution and placed under the protection of the federal court. But your pleadings on this

109. Working Committee instructions to Gandhi, 11 September 1931, sent by J. Nehru to Gandhi in London, Gandhi Collection, by courtesy of Dr.B.N. Pandey.

occasion have given rise to an impression that if the Princes did not agree, as they did not and do not agree, you would accept a constitution in which provisions of the kind that you suggested did not find a place. If this impression is well founded, we cannot help saying, and saying it straight out, that you have done a grave wrong to the States people."¹¹⁰

Kelkar asked for a categorical assurance that the Congress would not accept a federal constitution which did not include provision for the election of state representatives and a guarantee of fundamental rights. He also appealed for a clear statement of policy to the effect that the Congress supported "all legitimate movements for the establishment of popular government in the Indian States under the aegis of their rulers."¹¹¹ It was because of these attempts to commit the Congress that Prasad included a reference to the states in his presidential address to the Congress at Bombay in December 1934. Prasad was severely critical of the role assigned to the states in the government's White Paper. On the one hand the federal representatives of the states were to be nominated, while on the other, the princes would be able to continue their autocratic rule without any guarantee of fundamental rights "which are, or rather ought to be, the basis and foundation of any allegiance which the people may be required to bear to the state."¹¹²

It was this address which occasioned Patiala's outburst in the Chamber. Willingdon thought the Maharaja's

110. N.C. Kelkar to Gandhi, 22 June 1934, Gandhi Collection, by courtesy of Dr.B.N. Pandey.

111. ibid.

112. Indian Annual Register, July-December 1934, Vol.11, pp. 237-250.

remarks indiscreet but agreed with the opinion of his new Political Secretary, Sir Bertrand Glancy,¹¹³ that they were "not of any serious account" as Patiala "feels himself peculiarly exposed to attack and is more vulnerable than most." With a view to the prospects for federation Glancy further believed that "unless considerably more serious developments occur in this respect in British India, it is unlikely that the Princes will make any actual use of these attacks as a breaking-point."¹¹⁴ Opinion in the India Office was more cautious. Glancy's namesake, Sir Reginald, a member of the Secretary of State's Indian Council who had had a distinguished career as a political officer in Hyderabad, Baroda and Jaipur, believed that Patiala's remarks indicated that the "ultimate decision of the princes will be largely influenced by the reactions of British India to the new bill."¹¹⁵

Thus although the Government of India Act reached the statute book in August 1935, the prospect of its federal provisions becoming operative were extremely

113. Glancy succeeded Watson as Political Secretary in July 1933.

114. Private Office Papers, L/P0/88, note by B.J. Glancy on the Chamber session of January 1935. Patiala's financial extravagance and dubious personal conduct had been the subject of severe condemnation in a document entitled "Indictment of Patiala", published by the All-India States' People's Conference in February 1930. After this date, special arrangements had to be made for Patiala to avoid hostile demonstrations whenever he left his state. Ramusack, op.cit., pp. 247 and 255.

115. PIC. 1931-50, Coll.3 File 1, No.126/1935, Sir Reginald Glancy's note, 27 July 1935.

uncertain. Among those princes who had originally sponsored the federal idea, none could claim to have seen the fulfilment of the ambitions which had prompted them to act. Moreover, once the Act had been passed it soon became apparent that the princes in general had little conception of what federation actually involved. Sir Walter Monckton, who became legal adviser to the Nizam, observed in October 1935 that few princes recognized even the most basic principle that federation implied a loss of sovereignty. According to Monckton the princes would therefore attempt to preserve as much of their sovereignty intact when it came to negotiating their Instruments of Accession.¹¹⁶ When to this is added the unpredictability of the Congress attitude to both the states and federation, the enormity of the task confronting Willingdon's successor, Lord Linlithgow, can readily be appreciated.

116. PIC. 1931-50, Coll.11, File 86, No.PY 1897/1935, Monckton to Zetland, ? October 1935.

CHAPTER 6

THE FAILURE OF FEDERAL NEGOTIATIONS AND THE ABANDONMENT OF THE NON-INTERFERENCE POLICY, 1935-1939.

(1) The failure of federal negotiations.

The outstanding feature of the scheme for an All-India Federation was that it was never implemented. Upon the outbreak of war in September 1939 federation was put in cold storage and thereafter could never seriously be considered as a solution to the problem of India's political future. In 1954, eight years after the country's future had been settled by partition, Viscount Templewood, formerly Samuel Hoare, reflected on the reasons why the federation had never been established. He was convinced that it could have been established before the outbreak of war if the Government of India Act had reached the statute book in 1933 instead of 1935. That it was not passed in 1933 he attributed to the delaying and obstructionist tactics pursued by the diehards in Britain. Templewood was also aware that federation never became operative because an insufficient number of princes had agreed to join it by the outbreak of war. This he attributed to the Government of India. He believed that "if greater efforts had been made in Delhi to explain the advantages of Federation, we could have obtained the voluntary assent of a sufficient number [of

princes] for starting the Federation before the war."¹
 Similar sentiments were expressed in 1957 by the Earl of Halifax, formerly Lord Irwin. He considered that the authorities in India could have done more to push the princes had they not been so overawed by the strong tradition of respect for their treaty rights. Halifax also saw fit to exonerate the India Office:

"It was no longer a case of the India Office acting in restraint of the Government of India, for the India Office was working night and day to get the scheme for Federation adopted with the least possible delay."²

In private correspondence with Templewood, Halifax laid the blame for the delay at the feet of Willingdon and Lord Linlithgow who succeeded him as Viceroy in April 1936:

"I have often thought, though this was after my time and I may have been wrong about it, that a good part of the trouble and delay came from the fact that Freeman (Willingdon) liked the Princes and really disliked the British Indian leaders and Hopie (Linlithgow) had not much use for the Princes and did not really get on in human terms with anybody... If they had really been willing to push the Federal idea and had not been inhibited by one cause or another, either in approach to Princes or Congress, you would have been able to get the Cabinet and Party to move more quickly."³

In that Linlithgow was specifically charged with inaugurating federation, Halifax presumably thought that he was the more culpable of the two. Indeed his opinion of

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1. Viscount Templewood, Nine Troubled Years, London, 1954. pp. 102-103 (brackets mine).
 2. Earl of Halifax, Fulness of Days, London, 1957, p.124.
 3. Halifax to Templewood, 13 July 1953, Templewood Collection, No.76.

Linlithgow was the conventional one - a distant and aloof individual who was dilatory in his approach to Indian problems, particularly federation.

However, the validity of the assumption that delay caused the failure of federation has recently been authoritatively challenged. It has been suggested that to see the failure in terms of delay is to ignore the fact ^{the} that/federal constitution itself was unworkable because it failed to satisfy the minimum demands of either the Indian National Congress or the Muslim League.⁴ It is true that both Congress and League were dissatisfied with the 1935 Act. The Congress objected largely because of the reserve powers concentrated in the hands of the Viceroy while the Muslims feared the ultimate prospect of a Hindu dominated federal centre against which they would have inadequate protection. Yet because they both had strong reservations does not necessarily mean that they would have refused to work the federation. A recent survey of Congress politics in the pre-war years has concluded that its attitude towards federation was one of "rejection in theory and a readiness to come to terms in practice."⁵ The Muslim attitude was rather more significant. Lord Zetland, Hoare's successor at the India Office, confided to Linlithgow in January 1939 that when the time came to decide over federation he would not be surprised if Muslim opposition to the scheme was even more embarrassing than that of Congress.⁶ His

4. R.J. Moore, The Crisis of Indian Unity, 1917-1940, Oxford, 1974.

5. B.R. Tomlinson, "Nationalism and Indian Politics: The Indian National Congress, 1934-1942," Ph.D. Thesis, University of Cambridge, 1973, p. 408.

6. Zetland to Linlithgow, 24 January 1939, Linlithgow Collection, No.7.

intuition proved correct for on 5 November 1939 Muhammad Ali Jinnah, leader of a revived Muslim League, met Linlithgow and demanded assurances that the 1935 Act would be wholly reconsidered.⁷ Yet this was only the position by November 1939, it cannot automatically be said to apply to the previous four years when for the most part Muslims were politically weak and divided. Moreover when Muslims contested the 1937 provincial elections they did so with the assumption that:

"... India would remain constitutionally united, albeit under a federation, and that Muslims would continue to live as fellow-citizens of non-Muslims all over the sub-continent. Indeed, in many spheres of policy Muslim politicians went into the elections determined to prove how much Muslims shared with their fellow-countrymen. In 1935 an individual and distinct Muslim political identity, yes; a separate independent state, no."⁸

If, therefore, the rejection of federation by the Congress and Muslim League cannot be taken for granted, the views of Halifax and Templewood require further investigation. After all, federation could only become operative if the requisite number of princes agreed to join and thus it is necessary to decide whether there was any possibility of this happening before the suspension of federal negotiations in September 1939. It should be emphasized that the intention is not to prove that the federation could have been established had the princes

7. P. Hardy, The Muslims of British India, Cambridge, 1972, p. 230.

8. ibid., p. 221

agreed but rather to examine the consequences of the time factor in deciding their attitude towards federation and also the argument that the Government of India was primarily responsible for the delay in negotiating with the princes.

In September 1935, Arthur C. Lothian, who had been appointed additional Political Secretary to the Government of India, asked the India Office to approve the following method of negotiating with the princes. Political officers would be instructed to communicate a draft Instrument of Accession to the princes upon receipt of the draft from the India Office. Upon the basis of this one draft the princes would be asked to federate. They would be told that there was a minimum number of subjects for which they would be required to federate. They would also be invited to specify any limitations they wished to impose on the extent to which particular subjects could be administered by the federal authority within their states. Once these limitations had been examined by the Secretary of State and Government of India, a formal Instrument of Accession would be presented to each prince for his signature.⁹ The intention of the Government of India was therefore to obtain an immediate commitment from the princes to federate and then to work out the details of what this would involve in the case of individual states.

9. PIC. 1931-50, Coll.11, File 45(6), No.PY 1711/1935, Lothian to Patrick, 9 September 1935.

In London, Sir Richard Carter, the Assistant Under-Secretary of State, considered these proposals to be "a trifle crude"¹⁰ and an alternative method of approach was devised by the India Office. Before a draft Instrument of Accession could be drawn up it would be necessary for the Secretary of State and Viceroy to reach an agreement on the extent to which limitations for the states would be acceptable. There would also have to be preliminary discussions in London with the legal advisers of the states on the technicalities of the draft Instrument. In the light of any observations made by these advisers the draft would be drawn up and sent to India for communication to the princes. The princes would have a fixed time in which to record their opinions of the draft, although it was envisaged that it might be necessary to allow some of them to send their ministers to London for further consultation with their advisers before they did so. By the spring of 1936 it would then be possible to produce a document embodying the standard limitations for various categories of states. This would be presented to the princes for further comment. Once these comments had been examined by the Secretary of State and the Government of India, political officers would go back to the princes with formal Instruments of Accession and for the first time ask them to federate on the terms offered. Exactly when this would be the India

10. ibid., Carter's note, 30 September 1935.

Office declined to predict. What it did say was that:

"It is considered that no specific enquiry as to the willingness of individual States to accede on the terms offered should be addressed to any State until this very late stage in negotiations had been reached and the prospects of achieving the proportion of accessions fixed in the Act seemed assured."¹¹

In India, Lothian was shocked by this procedure which he considered to be a "radical departure" from his own. He pointed out that it would serve no purpose and indeed would waste a great deal of time for the government to fix standard limitations before some idea had been gained of what limitations the states wanted. Lothian also emphasised the time factor. The longer the delay the greater the possibility of the princes becoming more lukewarm and critical in their attitude to federation. He was of the opinion that even if some of the princes did not like federation, they all regarded it as inevitable:

"Psychologically therefore we consider that it is sound to take the federation as an inevitable development and to strike while the iron is hot, rather than to make tentative and doubtful approaches towards it."¹²

In view of Lothian's objections the India Office did modify its position slightly. There would still be discussion with states' counsel but ministers from the states would not be allowed to come to London for further

11. ibid., Rumbold to Lothian, 18 October 1935.

12. ibid., No. PY 2081/1935, Lothian to Patrick 2 December 1935.

consultation. Once the draft Instrument had been drawn up the princes would be given six months to specify the limitations they wanted on condition "that nothing which they might say at this stage would be held to prejudge the question of their decision to execute an Instrument of Accession." Once these limitations had been classified by the government formal Instruments of Accession would be drawn up and presented to the princes by political officers. Although the princes would at this stage be asked to federate, the India Office thought it inevitable that in many cases a further period of bargaining and negotiation would take place before the states actually committed themselves.¹³ In February 1936 Lothian was obliged to accept these proposals which had taken over five months to formulate.

Two points emerge from this lengthy correspondence. First, Lothian, on behalf of the Government of India, had undoubtedly been optimistic in assuming that the princes would commit themselves to Federation before they knew the terms for so doing. Secondly, it is clear that at the outset it was the India Office and not the Government of India that applied the brake to federal negotiations with the princes. As early as September 1935 Patrick confessed to Lothian that the India Office wanted "to postpone early action on the accession problem." He explained that the view in London was that "... we need not lay ourselves open to any criticism of forcing

13. ibid., Patrick to Lothian, 10 January 1936.

Federation on the princes and, if we exhibit a little patience ... the Princes may swim into the net of their own accord."¹⁴ Zetland reiterated the argument to Willingdon when he said that the India Office wanted to "avoid any risk of the Government being accused of having unduly hurried their decision about federating."¹⁵

The comments of Patrick and Zetland indicate the two considerations which weighed most with the India Office throughout the period of federal negotiations with the princes. On the one hand it was anxious to avoid any charge of applying pressure on the princes to federate. On the other, and perhaps more important, it was convinced that a leisurely approach to the princes would have the desired effect. The princes would of their own accord agree to federate once they realised their disadvantageous position. With no voice in matters of all-India concern and with the executive, though not responsible certainly more responsive to the views of the central legislature, the princes would have no alternative but to federate.

It is not surprising that in the post-war period Lothian made attempts to absolve the Government of India of the charge that it had delayed federal negotiations with the princes. In October 1957 he was able to convince Halifax who confessed that had he known of the correspondence between Delhi and London when he published his

14. Patrick to Lothian, 12 September 1935, Lothian Collection, No.1.

15. Zetland to Willingdon, 18 January 1936, Zetland Collection, No.6.

memoirs he would not have implied so complete an exoneration of the India Office.¹⁶ What most concerned Lothian, however, were the observations made by Templewood in his book Nine Troubled Years. In a note written in 1962 Lothian explained how he had once spent an afternoon with Hailey in the House of Lords showing the former Secretary of State copies of the relevant correspondence. This part of the note is somewhat confusing in that it does not indicate whether the meeting took place before or after the publication of Templewood's book. Either way it would appear that Lothian did not gain from Templewood an admission similar to the one made by Halifax and this encouraged him to dig deeper. The subsequent evidence that he uncovered led him to accuse Templewood of being "Altogether dishonest" in Nine Troubled Years. Zetland, in writing a first draft of his own memoirs Essayez, had included a reference to how Templewood, who was then Foreign Secretary, had been responsible for vetoing the Government of India suggestions for negotiating with the princes. Zetland was later persuaded by Sir Norman Brook, Secretary to the Cabinet between 1947 and 1962, to drop this reference as it was too controversial. From this Lothian concluded that in Nine Troubled Years Templewood was trying to blame others for a failure which had been of his own making.¹⁷ It seems likely, therefore, that Templewood was himself the originator of the India

16. Halifax to Lothian, 4 October 1957, Lothian Collection, No.1.

17. Sir Arthur Lothian's "Note on the Foreign and Political Department of the Government of India", 1962, Lothian Collection, No.6.

Office hypothesis that less haste more speed would produce the necessary results with the princes. One can only assume that the former Secretary of State, having spent four exhausting and often frustrating years bringing the 1935 Act into existence, was now anxious to avoid further controversy within his own Conservative party which he feared would be the case if there was the slightest hint of the princes being subject to pressure to secure their accession to the federation.

When Lord Linlithgow assumed office in April 1936 the procedure for negotiating with the princes had already been established. From the start the new Viceroy sought ways to shorten it. In June 1936 he was appalled when he received a time-table from the Political Department which envisaged six month intervals between each stage of the negotiations. He immediately issued revised instructions to the effect that the princes would only have six months to consider the final offer, all other stages of the negotiations were to be reduced to three months.¹⁸ The Political Department subsequently informed the Viceroy that it would be difficult to meet his requirements when so much time was spent in consultation between London and Delhi and between various departments of the Government of India. Linlithgow was impressed by this latter argument and commented himself

18. Linlithgow to Zetland, 29 June 1936, Linlithgow Collection, No.3.

on the extent to which "the energy and experience of even the highest officials is absorbed to the detriment of the handling and control of major issues of policy, in the disposal or the pursuit of relatively minor side-issues."¹⁹ Undoubtedly, however, the main cause of delay lay in London. Originally it had been intended to forward the draft Instrument of Accession to India in the spring of 1936. By the beginning of July it had still not arrived. Patrick admitted to Lothian that he was "disturbed" by the delay for which the India Office had been responsible. Indeed he feared that because the India Office was so dependent for constitutional advice on the Parliamentary counsels' office and the princes' lawyers "who are up to their eyes in court work and only deal with these knotty problems in their spare time," federation might be indefinitely delayed.²⁰ The draft eventually arrived at the beginning of August.

Linlithgow was able to make one major alteration in the procedure for negotiating with the princes. His first idea had been to convene a conference of as many princes as possible to explain federation to them. He changed his mind when he realised that this would involve a risk of "one or two voluble individuals" creating a sense of "apprehension out of all proportion to the real importance of the issues involved."²¹ However, having

19. Linlithgow to Zetland, 4 July 1936, Linlithgow Collection, No.3.

20. Patrick to Lothian, 1 July 1936, Lothian Collection, No.1.

21. Linlithgow to Zetland, 1 June 1936, Linlithgow Collection, No.3.

opted for an individual approach, the Viceroy decided that it should be made, not by political officers, but by three emissaries ^{who} ~~which~~ he would appoint. The reason for this was that Linlithgow had already gained the impression that most political officers were very ignorant about federation. He wrote to Zetland: "I am sending Agents to the Governor-General a little reading for the monsoon in the shape of the Act of 1935 with a guide thereto written from the point of view of the Indian States!"²²

The three emissaries were Courtenay Latimer, A.G.G. for the Western India states, who was to tour Baroda, the Gujarat and the Deccan states; Frances Wylie, a political officer holding an ex-cadre appointment, who was to tour Kashmir and the states in Rajputana and the Punjab, and Lothian who was to tour Hyderabad, Mysore, Cochin, Travancore and the states in Central India.²³ There was controversy before the emissaries embarked on their tours. Zetland was disturbed by reports received from Delhi which indicated that the emissaries had been briefed to inform the princes "authoritatively and without the necessity of reference back to the Government of India" the maximum limitations in respect of certain financial matters that the government would be prepared to accept. The Secretary of State pointed out to Linlithgow that it had already been decided that the first approach to the

22. Linlithgow to Zetland, 22 June 1936, Linlithgow Collection, No.3.

23. Linlithgow to Zetland, telg., 24 July 1936, Linlithgow Collection, No.15.

princes would only be one of an "exploratory and elucidatory" nature. He did not wish to "act as a drag on the wheel of the coach which you are driving with so much skill" but felt that the princes were "shy birds" who might easily take fright if they thought they were being pushed.²⁴ In reply Linlithgow explained that he had hoped to reach agreement on the type of limitations which would be applicable to all the states before the emissaries departed.²⁵ This never materialised; the emissaries were restricted to a mere fact-finding mission. Linlithgow's last word to them when they departed in October 1936 was that he hoped to see federation in operation by 1 April 1938.²⁶

The tours by the emissaries lasted until January 1937. Their first reports reached Delhi in November 1936. Wylie observed that none of the princes he had visited "had displayed any practical appreciation of the contents of the Government of India Act." All appeared obsessed by the fear that they would be "flooded" with federal officials over whom they would have no control.²⁷ Wylie encountered formidable opposition from some of the princes. During the discussions he held in Patiala, Bhupinder Singh left the room on more than one occasion leaving Wylie to deal with his legal adviser. When the Maharaja did decide to participate Wylie observed that he "allowed a bitterness to come into his tone which betrayed how much

24. Zetland to Linlithgow, 25 September 1936, Linlithgow Collection, No.3.

25. Linlithgow to Zetland, 11 October 1936, Linlithgow Collection, No.3.

26. ibid.

27. Wylie to Glancy, 27 November 1936, enclosed with Linlithgow to Zetland, 4 December 1936, Linlithgow Collection, No.3.

he hates the whole thing."²⁸ Bikaner was even more obstructive. He not only suggested some 116 limitations, in contrast to Patiala's 40, but also greeted Wylie's every remark with "scorn and derision." Wylie, however, did not attach too much importance to Bikaner's opposition. He considered that most of the other Rajputana princes regarded Bikaner as "an out-of-date windbag whose capacity for self-advertisement is very nearly exhausted."²⁹ Despite the difficulties, therefore, Wylie felt generally optimistic about the prospects for federation. He recognised that there would have to be concessions to the princes but felt that the limitations they had suggested were "not excessively serious or numerous and provide a fairly reasonable basis for negotiation of a genuine Instrument of Accession."³⁰

From Mysore, Lothian reported that Sir Mirza Ismail was concerned more with the financial rather than the political aspects of federation. Ismail was of the opinion that Mysore would have no difficulty in federating if its tribute was fully remitted. In fact while Lothian was in Mysore, J. Raisman, his assistant from the finance department of the Government of India, suggested to Ismail that it might be possible to remit the tribute if in return Mysore would agree to surrender its postal immunity

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- 28. Wylie to Glancy, 4 January 1937, enclosed with Linlithgow to Zetland, 17 January 1937, Linlithgow Collection, No.4.
 - 29. Wylie to Glancy, 9 January 1937, enclosed with Linlithgow to Zetland, 17 January 1937, Linlithgow Collection, No.4.
 - 30. Wylie to Glancy, 27 November 1936, enclosed with Linlithgow to Zetland, 28 January 1937, Linlithgow Collection, No.3.

and the revenue it derived from match and sugar excises.³¹ The suggestion caused a stir in London because it obviously contravened the terms of reference for the emissaries. Zetland expressed concern to Linlithgow that the suggestion, however informal and non-committal, might be seized upon by the other states as an indication that the government was prepared to entertain similar bargaining arrangements with them.³²

Of all the states Hyderabad presented the greatest difficulty. Not only were the Nizam's conditions for federation extensive, some of them were of a blatantly anti-federal character. He demanded that he should be allowed to retain his own currency and postal system and also substantial control over Hyderabad's railway network. He also sought guarantees that Britain would protect the Osmania dynasty and that any forces used to implement this guarantee would always be composed of races not politically hostile to the government of Hyderabad. In this respect he also demanded an assurance that he would still be able to employ Arabs and Africans in his own military and police forces. The Nizam's advisers frankly admitted that the princes, in considering their attitude towards federation, were faced by a conflict between the desire for unity and the desire for autonomy:

31. Lothian to Glancy, 26 November 1936, enclosed with Linlithgow to Zetland, 4 December 1936, Linlithgow Collection, No.3.

32. Zetland to Linlithgow, 15 March 1937, Linlithgow Collection, No.4.

"Where the urge to unity is dominant, the interests of the units must naturally give way before the dominant motive. With the Indian States the urge to unity is not dominant. The States cannot, in the interest of unity, submerge their separate identities, and this means that any conceptions familiar in other Federations cannot be readily accepted by them."³³

Clearly in the case of Hyderabad the dominant motive was to preserve the internal autonomy of the state. There was strong opposition to federation from the Mulki population. The Mulkis, with their slogan "Hyderabad for the Hyderabadis", demanded that the state should enjoy complete internal autonomy. They already resented the operation of paramountcy in Hyderabad, not only because it infringed the sovereignty of the state, but also because it militated against the development of indigenous talent. The Mulkis appreciated the need to supervise the Nizam's government but argued that this should be done internally by Hyderabadis, not by an external force. For the Mulkis it was not therefore simply a question of imposing limitations on the extent to which Hyderabad federated. Any form of federation would mean a yet further sacrifice of sovereignty in addition to that sacrificed through the exercise of paramountcy.³⁴ As an outsider and one who had supported the federal idea at the round table conference, Sir Akbar Hydari was particularly vulnerable to Mulki attack. Lothian observed how uncertain Hydari was about his own

33. PIC. 1931-50, Coll.11, File 57(3), No.PT1906/1937, Memorandum showing Hyderabad's Requirements for Accession to Federation, 1937.

34. Times of India, 25 January 1938.

position and doubted whether he would be able to "deliver the goods" as far as federation was concerned.³⁵

By the end of February 1937 the final reports of the emissaries had been received and the Government of India began the process of classifying the limitations required by the states. In August 1937 Linlithgow informed Zetland that the results of this classification had convinced him that concessions were needed to persuade the states to federate and that in order to make them the Government of India Act would have to be amended. He suggested that with regard to those states which derived revenue from corporation tax, salt duties, match and sugar excises and also the customs duties collected by the maritime states, the Act would have to be amended upon the basis of the "status quo" principle.³⁶ What this meant in practice was that even though the states concerned would agree to federate on these subjects, they would retain what revenue they derived from them.

With regard to customs duties, the report of the Joint Select Committee in 1934 had indicated that the maritime states should only be allowed to retain the duty on goods which were consumed within their own territories. However in 1936, following negotiations with the states concerned, the Government of India concluded agreements by which the states would retain the duty on goods entering British India provided that

35. PIC. 1931-50, Coll 11, File 57(3), No.PY 2095/1936, Lothian to Glancy, 21 November 1936.

36. Linlithgow to Zetland, 19 August 1937, Linlithgow Collection, No.4.

this did not exceed specified annual totals (in the case of Nawanagar Rs. 5 lakhs and Rs. 2 lakhs for the others). As part of the agreements the states undertook to offer no improper inducements to shippers with a view to stimulating trade at their ports at the expense of those in British India and also agreed that the Government of India had the right of inspection to satisfy itself that these conditions were being observed. Linlithgow appreciated that the agreements were contrary to the recommendations of the Joint Select Committee but felt that they would have to stand in order to secure the accession of the maritime states.³⁷

The Viceroy was even more convinced of the necessity of adopting the status quo principle for match and sugar excises. Following the imposition of these excises in 1934, the Government of India had made agreements with states manufacturing matches and sugar in order to prevent them flooding British India with untaxed or lightly taxed products in the absence of effective customs barriers. The agreement on matches provided for the states to impose excise duty at the rate applicable in British India. It also provided for all proceeds of the match excise in British India and the states to be paid into a common pool and divided between them on a consumption basis calculated by reference to population. The agreement on sugar provided for the states to impose excise duty at the British Indian rate but allowed them

37. PIF. 1931-50, File 1135/1938, No.PY1135/1938, Cabinet Memorandum: The Negotiations with the Indian States as to the Terms of their Accession, 21 July 1938.

to retain the proceeds. As most states benefited from these agreements Linlithgow was emphatic that none of them would federate unless guaranteed as a maximum the amount which they had derived from match and sugar excises for the year 1936-1937.³⁸

The Viceroy was fully aware of the dangers implicit in his recommendations. He recognised that an amendment might revive the controversy in Parliament which had surrounded the 1935 Act. He also recognised that the British Indian reaction would be one of hostility and thus intensify the already strong feeling that the federal scheme was biased in favour of the princes. At the same time, however, he was certain that the alternatives to making the concessions would be much worse. The government would either have to drop federation altogether or postpone it. If the latter course was adopted the time would inevitably come when the government would again have to face the question of concessions to the states. In all probability these would be the same as the Viceroy was now contemplating, but the princes "having seen the first scheme successfully rejected, would undoubtedly pitch their demands for amendments much higher than they would dare now."³⁹ Finally in support of his proposals Linlithgow revealed that he did not accept the India Office view that the government could afford to wait for the princes themselves to realise that it was in their interests to federate:

38. ibid.

39. Linlithgow to Zetland, 19 August 1937, Linlithgow Collection, No.4.

"If federation means an immediate sacrifice of revenue, it will have no attraction whatever to the states. The only thing which could make them take a different view would be fear of the consequences if they did not federate. It may be that if the Rulers were as enlightened as they should be, that fear would be widespread among them. There is however no indication of its existence in fact, and I know of no reason for anticipating that it will emerge in the near future."⁴⁰

In view of his reaction to the suggestion regarding Mysore's tribute it is not surprising that Zetland took strong exception to Linlithgow's proposals. In October 1937 he informed the Viceroy that the Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, would be very unwilling to contemplate a bill which would be likely to revive former divisions within the Conservative Party.⁴¹ He was emphatic that no concessions could be allowed for salt and customs duties or for corporation tax. However he could not ignore Linlithgow's opinion that the states in general would refuse to federate unless ensured of some major concession over the match and sugar excises. Accordingly in November 1937 he suggested a compromise upon the basis of a "sliding-scale" principle. The amount of match and sugar excises retained by the states would diminish over a fixed period of time until eventually they would be entirely at the disposal of the federal administration. Zetland justified this compromise on the grounds that it would be more acceptable to Parliament as it did not alter the principle or substance of the 1935

40. ibid.

41. Zetland to Linlithgow, 6 October 1937, Linlithgow Collection, No.4.

Act.⁴² Linlithgow, however, did not feel that this would be acceptable to the princes and continued to press for the status quo principle.⁴³ There followed a prolonged controversy between London and Delhi over the nature of the concessions which could be accorded to the princes. The controversy was not finally resolved until the summer of 1938, some two months after the Viceroy had anticipated that federation would be in operation.

In June 1938 Zetland relented and agreed to the status quo principle for the match and sugar excises. This was the only concession he was prepared to make. He considered that it would be improper for the maritime states to federate on such privileged terms. Instead the 1936 agreements would remain in force in the hope that eventually the states concerned would agree to federate on the terms laid down by the Joint Select Committee.⁴⁴ A similar position was adopted with regard to salt duties and corporation tax. Zetland's agreement to the status quo principle for the match and sugar excises was made on the condition that "the offer [to the princes] will be final and that there should be no concessions afterwards on any major issue."⁴⁵ In the event the concession to be made did not require an amendment to the 1935 Act. Linlithgow suggested and Zetland agreed that the status quo principle for the match and sugar excises could be

42. Zetland to Linlithgow, telg., 1 November 1937, Linlithgow Collection, No.26.

43. Linlithgow to Zetland, 11 November 1937, Linlithgow Collection, No.4.

44. PIF. 1931-50, File 1135/1938, Cabinet Memorandum: The Negotiations with the Indian States as to the Terms of their Accession, 21 July 1938.

45. Zetland to Linlithgow, 12 June 1938, Linlithgow Collection, No.5.

incorporated as a limitation for federal excises in the individual Instruments of Accession.⁴⁶

What emerges from this controversy over the terms on which the states would be required to federate is that Linlithgow, in his anxiety to inaugurate federation, was moving steadily away from the principles of the 1935 Act. Yet it is equally clear that it was not simply a question of whether or not the princes should be allowed to retain the proceeds of their match and sugar excises but also one of how best to approach the princes to secure their accession. From when Linlithgow became Viceroy in April 1936 until the summer of 1938 when the terms of the federal offer to the princes were agreed upon, Zetland and his advisers in the India Office firmly believed that the princes would recognise the need to federate of their own accord and that it was therefore unnecessary and indeed dangerous to pressure them. Linlithgow could never reconcile himself to this view and constantly sought authority to apply more pressure on the princes. In January 1937, upon receipt of the first reports from his emissaries, the Viceroy had asked Zetland to allow him "to take a few risks provided that I avoid saying anything which might fairly be interpreted as amounting to a threat to Their Highnesses or to the exercise of unfair pressure upon them."⁴⁷ Beyond saying that he wanted to "push hard and very directly"⁴⁸ Linlithgow never indicated what these risks would entail.

46. Linlithgow to Zetland, telg., 9 February 1938, Linlithgow Collection, No.26.

47. Linlithgow to Zetland, 4 January 1937, Linlithgow Collection, No.4.

48. ibid.

Zetland, however, advised caution. Churchill was "on the look out" for indications of pressure on the princes while influential pressure groups such as the Lancashire cotton merchants and the Chamber of Shipping were becoming increasingly opposed to federation for fear that it would lead to the rapid disintegration of their trade with India.⁴⁹ It is in the light of these considerations that the subject of concessions to the princes must be seen. Linlithgow was convinced that there would have to be some inducement to the princes to federate yet the suggestions he made in this respect irritated the India Office because they represented a marked departure from the principles of the 1935 Act. In reality, however, it is clear that the India Office had left Linlithgow very little room for manoeuvre.

Once the details of the offer to the princes had been finalised Linlithgow wanted to leave them alone to consider it in an atmosphere conducive to calm and thoughtful deliberation. For this reason he persuaded Zetland to withhold a White Paper which the Secretary of State had contemplated publishing at the same time as the offer was made known to the princes. Zetland had frankly admitted that the White Paper would have the advantage of "placing on princes publicly the onus of rejecting our proposals and of removing grounds for charge that progressive concessions were being made to them at the expense of British India."⁵⁰ Thus it was intended as a

49. Zetland to Linlithgow, 25 January 1937, Linlithgow Collection, No.4.

50. Zetland to Linlithgow, telg., 21 February 1938, Linlithgow Collection, No.26.

safeguard to ensure that if the princes did reject the offer they and not the government would be blamed.

Linlithgow objected on the grounds that if the White Paper did result in hostile criticism of the princes they would have a ready made excuse to decline the federal offer before they had even considered its details.⁵¹ It was therefore decided to indicate the terms of the offer informally to a few of the leading princes and then to present it to them all to consider in seclusion for a period of six months.⁵² Unfortunately the conducive atmosphere sought by Linlithgow never materialised. The princes found themselves subject to external pressure conducted in the name of the Indian National Congress.

The Congress agitation began in Mysore in October 1937 and culminated in 1939 with two civil disobedience campaigns conducted by Gandhi and Jamnalal Bajaj in Rajkot and Jaipur respectively. Most British observers, and the princes themselves, were convinced that the agitation was part of a deliberate campaign to force democracy on the states in order that elected state representatives could be used by Congress to secure a majority in the federal legislature and thus power in the federal ministry.⁵³ This was a mistaken analysis of Congress policy towards the states, the principles of which

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- 51. Linlithgow to Zetland, telg., 18 March 1938, Linlithgow Collection, No.26.
 - 52. Linlithgow to Zetland, telg., 3 May 1938, Linlithgow Collection, No.26.
 - 53. Private Office Papers, L/PO/89, Cabinet Memorandum: Congress and the Indian States, 9 February 1939.

had been declared by the Congress Working Committee when it met at Wardha in August 1935. While supporting the establishment of responsible government in the states the Working Committee had emphasised that:

"... the responsibility and the burden of carrying on that struggle must necessarily fall on the States people themselves. The Congress can exercise moral and friendly influence upon the States and this it is bound to do wherever possible. The Congress has no other power under existing circumstances ... In the heat of the controversy the limitation of the Congress is often forgotten. Indeed any other policy will defeat the common purpose."⁵⁴

Implicit in this statement was the recognition that Congress was not strong enough to wage a dual struggle against the British in British India and the British and the princes in the Indian States. In this respect the Working Committee's statement confirmed the tenor of Gandhi's instructions at the second round table conference:⁵⁵ Congress would deal with the states from a position of strength once it had won the struggle in British India. This attitude continued to irritate leaders of the All-India States' People's Conference [AISPC] and also dissident Congressmen and women who resented the controlling influence exercised by right-wingers such as Rajendra Prasad and Vallabhbhai Patel in the formulation of Congress policy. Once such dissident from the Karnatak, Shrimati Kamaladevi,

54. Indian Annual Register, July - December 1935, Vol.11, p. 224.

55. See above, p. 238.

sarcastically described the Working Committee's statement as an "appeal to nobody" and an "expression of helpfulness" which had been "colouring their imagination far too much and far too long."⁵⁶

After April 1936, when Jawaharlal Nehru had been elected Congress President, dissident Congressmen attempted to exploit the discontent of AISPC leaders and also to strengthen their own position vis à vis the Congress establishment by organising Congress committees and civil disobedience campaigns in the states. N.S. Hardiker, the Bombay Karnataka Congress leader was anxious to boost the voice of the Karnataka Provincial Congress Committee in all-India Congress circles by recruiting members from Mysore. He met with considerable success when, in September 1936, he persuaded Nehru to write a letter of endorsement for his efforts:

"It is entirely wrong to say that the Congress or its leaders are not interested in the future of the Indian States subjects ... Therefore it is desirable and necessary that Congress work should be carried on in the Indian States and Congress Committees organised there."⁵⁷

Hardiker's success led to a civil disobedience campaign in Mysore in October 1937 and encouraged other dissidents such as K.F. Nariman and Yusuf Meherally to support the agitation in order to strengthen their own power bases in Bombay.⁵⁸ In the same month leaders of the Congress

56. Indian Annual Register, July-December 1935, Vol.11, p. 279.

57. Nehru to N.S. Hardiker, 3 September 1936, cited in B.R. Tomlinson, "Nationalism and Indian Politics: The Indian National Congress, 1934-1942", Ph.D. Thesis, University of Cambridge, 1973, p. 337.

58. ibid., p. 339.

Socialist Party, with Nehru's assistance, managed to get a resolution passed during a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee to the effect that all Congressmen should give moral and material support to civil disobedience campaigns in the states.⁵⁹ These activities alarmed the right wing Congress leaders and also Gandhi who feared that the resolution would lead to demands for civil disobedience campaigns in British India in support of the Mysore agitation. This was the background to the Haripura Congress session in February 1938 when as a compromise it was decided that existing Congress committees in the states would be allowed to continue but not conduct work in the name of Congress without Working Committee authorisation.⁶⁰

It is clear therefore that Congress agitation in the states was not part of a campaign to promote democracy in them, but a by-product of political infighting between Congress dissidents and the Congress establishment. Nevertheless the Haripura resolution was subject to varying interpretations. AISPC leaders assumed that it only imposed restrictions upon the activities of existing Congress committees in the states but not on the establishment of new ones. In the period after Haripura there was a marked increase in Congress activities in the states as AISPC leaders encouraged

59. Rajendra Prasad to Nehru, 24 December 1937, Rajendra Prasad Collection, by courtesy of Dr.B.N. Pandey.

60. Indian Annual Register, January-June 1938, Vol.1, pp. 299-300. For further details on Congress policy towards the states, see B.R. Tomlinson, op.cit.pp.336-347.

their followers to set up new Congress organisations. Although agitation was conducted in large states such as Hyderabad, Kashmir and Travancore, the most vulnerable were the smaller Deccan and Orissa states which were embedded in neighbouring British Indian provinces. In one of the Orissa states, Ranpur, the agitation was accompanied by violence which culminated in January 1939 in the murder of Major Bazalgette the political agent.⁶¹ Consequently during the first half of 1939, Congress leaders found that they could only control activities in the states by direct personal supervision. Nehru became President of the AISPC while Gandhi and Bajaj conducted model agitations in their respective native states of Rajkot and Jaipur.⁶²

According to India Office calculations, the onset of Congress inspired agitation was just the situation in which the princes would realise that they could best protect themselves by agreeing to federate. In fact it had precisely the opposite effect.

In September and October 1938, ministers from the states of Hyderabad, Mysore, Baroda, Gwalior, Travancore, Cochin, Patiala and Kolhapur were informed of the federal offer, the contents of which had been agreed by Linlithgow and Zetland in the preceding summer.

61. Private Officer Papers, L/PO/89, Cabinet Memorandum: Congress and the Indian States, 9 February 1939.

62. Tomlinson, op.cit., p. 346.

Only D.A. Surve, the prime minister of Kolhapur, claimed to be fully satisfied,⁶³ the others all voiced dissatisfaction with specific points of detail. Ismail for instance agreed to Mysore's tribute arrangement but wanted it translated into practice before federation became operative.⁶⁴ Hydari explained that it would come as a "profound shock" to the Nizam to find that federal subjects were to be administered by federal officers within his state rather than by Hyderabad officials.⁶⁵ However, with the exception of Surve, one fundamental objection was voiced by all the ministers: the terms offered contained inadequate protection for those treaty rights of the states which would remain outside federal jurisdiction. Hydari in particular was dismayed that the necessary defence guarantees for Hyderabad had not been included in the Instrument.⁶⁶

Under the terms of the 1935 Act all treaty rights not affected by federation were to be protected by the Governor-General through the use of his reserve powers. Consequently it had been considered unnecessary to include in each individual Instrument of Accession a comprehensive schedule or list of such rights. Only

63. PIC. 1931-50, Coll.11, File 45/10(5), No.PY1590/1938, Informal discussions with D.A. Surve, 21 and 22 October 1938.

64. *ibid.* No.PY1410/1938, Informal discussion with Sir Mirza Ismail, 20 September 1938. It had been agreed that Mysore would abandon its postal and salt immunities in return for the remission of its tribute.

65. PIC. 1931-50, Coll.11, File 57(3), No.PY 1371/1938, Informal discussions with Sir Akbar Hydari and Mirza Ali Yar Jang, 12 and 13 September 1938.

66. ibid.

federal subjects would be included in the Instrument. There would be a list of such subjects and under each heading the ruler would specify one of the following three alternatives: non-accession; federation without limitations, which meant that the federal government would have unrestricted authority to make laws for a particular subject within the state; federation with limitations, which meant that the federal government would have authority to make laws for a particular subject upon certain conditions. Hence, as far as the match and sugar excises were concerned, the states would become subject to federal administration on condition that they were allowed to retain the proceeds of these excises derived in the year 1936-37. If the federal government infringed these arrangements, the states would have the right of appeal to the Federal Court. However, for protection on subjects from which the federal administration was to be excluded, for example the customs rights of the maritime states and Hyderabad's defence guarantees, the states concerned would have to rely on the reserve powers of the Governor-General.

Recent experience had taught the princes that this was inadequate protection. They noted how reluctant provincial governors had been to invoke the special powers accorded to them under the 1935 Act to prevent incursions into the states from the provinces on the grounds that this would precipitate the resignations of

the Congress ministries.⁶⁷ From this the princes deduced that the Governor-General might likewise be reluctant to invoke his reserve powers to protect their treaty rights should the occasion demand it. The princes therefore demanded the inclusion of a comprehensive schedule of these rights in their Instruments of Accession. These rights would thus become part of the federal constitution. If subsequently the federal administration infringed them, the states would not have to rely on the reserve powers of the Governor-General but could appeal to the Federal Court, the decision of which the paramount power would be found to enforce.

Although the fallacy of India Office thinking had now been exposed, there was no modification of the terms of the federal offer before it was communicated to the general body of princes in January 1939. They were informed that they had six months in which to reach a decision. The Chamber of Princes appointed a Committee of Ministers, chaired by Sir Akbar Hydari, to examine a standard Instrument of Accession. In April the Committee reported that in the absence of adequate protection for

67. In the provincial elections of 1937 the Congress secured a clear majority in six out of the eleven British Indian provinces. The governors of five of these provinces were convinced that if they used their special powers to protect the states the Congress ministries would resign. Haig [United Provinces] to Linlithgow, 21 October 1938, Linlithgow Collection, No.101; Lumley [Bombay] to Linlithgow, 16 February 1938, Linlithgow Collection, No.51; Erskine [Madras] to Linlithgow, 15 November 1938, Linlithgow Collection No.66; Wylie [Central Provinces and Berar] to Brabourne [Acting Viceroy] 11 October 1938, Linlithgow Collection, No.59; Boag [Orissa] to Brabourne, 19 October 1938, Linlithgow Collection, No.80.

non-federal treaty rights, the standard Instrument was unacceptable.⁶⁸ In June 1939 a larger and more representative gathering of princes met at Bombay and passed a resolution endorsing the verdict of the Hydari Committee. The resolution concluded:

"... At the same time the conference records its belief that it could not be the intention of His Majesty's Government to close the door on an All-India Federation."⁶⁹

Although the princes had rejected the offer they clearly now expected the government to make it more acceptable.

In view of the comments of those ministers consulted on the terms of the federal offer in the autumn of 1938, the Bombay decision did not come as a surprise to either Zetland or Linlithgow. The former was now anxious to publish a White Paper in order to prove how favourable the offer was and how unreasonable the princes had been in rejecting it. The Secretary of State had already been informed that it would be impossible to safeguard the non-federal treaty rights of the princes in the manner they desired. In March 1939, Sir Findlater Stewart, the Permanent Under Secretary of State, recorded the view that Britain was not in a position to give Hyderabad the necessary defence guarantees. The Nizam could only be guaranteed that Britain would fulfil its treaty obligations "if it could",⁷⁰ the implication being that the time would come when the paramount power would

68. Cabinet Memorandum: The Indian Federation - Negotiations with the Indian States as to the terms of their Accession, 27 July 1939, Zetland Collection, No.25B.

69. ibid.

be unable to maintain the treaties it had concluded with the states. Findlater-Stewart was of the opinion that because it would be regarded as a "confession of weakness" to make such a declaration and also because the Nizam would in any case regard it as an "empty promise", it would be better to say nothing about non-federal treaty rights.⁷¹ In this respect the British had been less than honest with the princes as Zetland admitted to Linlithgow in July 1939:

"It must be admitted that we share their doubts, even if we do not say so in so many words; yet we tell them that their only possible safeguard is to be found in the exercise by the Governor-General of the special responsibility vested in him and we say that they must rely upon the good faith and the ability of Great Britain to honour the treaties and engagements into which in the past she entered with them."⁷²

Such observations foreshadowed what happened to the princes at the end of the second world war when the British did depart from India leaving the princes to negotiate their fate with British Indian politicians. They also shed new light upon Britain's obligations towards the states: paramountcy might have been paramount but it was also impermanent.

The Bombay decision in April 1939 represented the end of serious federal negotiations with the princes. In July 1939 Linlithgow did attempt to break the deadlock

71. ibid.

72. Zetland to Linlithgow, 17 July 1939, Linlithgow Collection, No.8.

by suggesting that the customs rights of the maritime states should be safeguarded in the desired manner. He felt that this might persuade the maritime states to change their minds and thus "turn the tide strongly in favour of federation."⁷³ However he could not guarantee that this would be the case and consequently Zetland rejected the idea.⁷⁴ On 11 September 1939 the Viceroy announced the suspension of federal negotiations for the duration of the war. He was at pains to point out that suspension was the operative word and that his announcement did not mean the abandonment of federation:

"We shall have to keep the threads in our hands, and if the situation admits of our doing so, be prepared to move without the least hesitation in the direction of Federation under the Act if that is still practicable at the end of the war."⁷⁵

However, in March 1940 the Muslim League meeting at Lahore passed the famous "Pakistan" resolution to the effect that the north-western and eastern zones of India, where Muslims predominated, should become independent states.⁷⁶ For all practical purposes, federation was now a dead letter.

The princes had rejected the federal scheme in April 1939 on the grounds that it afforded inadequate protection for their non-federal treaty rights. The Congress campaign had made them aware of this deficiency

73. PIC. 1931-50, Coll.11, File 45/10(8), No.PY 1871/1939, Viceroy to S/S, telg., 18 July 1939.

74. ibid., S/S to Viceroy, telg., 22 July 1939.

75. Linlithgow to Zetland, 18 September 1939, Linlithgow Collection, No.8.

76. For the full text of the resolution, see, C.H. Philips, (ed), The Evolution of India and Pakistan, 1858-1947: Select Documents, London, 1962, pp. 354-355.

in the 1935 Act. One is left to ponder how they would have reacted had they been asked to federate before the onset of the Congress campaign. This is of course a hypothetical question but one point is certain; they would not have been able to reject federation on the grounds that they did in April 1939. Indeed the offer was so favourable in most other respects that they would have been hard pressed to find an alternative reason for refusing to federate. It seems not unreasonable to suggest therefore that with the exception of Hyderabad, most states, including the other major ones, would have given their consent. In retrospect it is apparent that Hyderabad was a hopeless case. The Nizam was already working on the idea that if he could secure an outlet to the sea at the port of Masulipatam in the Madras Presidency then he would be able to claim a viable existence for his state as an independent unit.⁷⁷ Federation could only become operative if those states whose aggregate population was over half that of the states as a whole acceded and not less than half of the states individually represented in the Upper Chamber did likewise. In this respect Hyderabad's loss would have been damaging but not fatal to the federal cause. Upon the basis of this formula federation could still have been established had all the twenty-one gun salute states, with the exception of Hyderabad and all the nineteen and seventeen gun salute

77. GOI. Political Branch, No. 241 - Political (Secret), 1945, Nos.1-15, Desire of Hyderabad for an outlet to the sea.

states accepted the offer.⁷⁸ Moreover, it is wrong to assume, as many British observers did, that without Hyderabad federation was unthinkable because many of the smaller states looked to this premier ranking state for a lead. The Nizam was a far from popular figure among his princely brethren and it is just as likely that the smaller states would have followed a lead given by either Mysore or Baroda.

Where then does the responsibility lie for the fact that the princes were asked to federate in 1939 instead of 1937 or even some earlier date before the Congress campaign? Obviously the princes themselves must share some of the responsibility. They were never particularly enthusiastic about federation, an attitude which they never concealed throughout the negotiating period. However, in fairness the princes were no less entitled to bargain for what they regarded as necessary amendments to the 1935 Act than were the Congress or Muslim League. Undoubtedly the major responsibility for the delay in presenting the federal offer to the princes rests with the British authorities. It seems after all that there might be justification in Templewood's assertion that had the 1935 Act been passed in 1933 the princes would have agreed to federate. However, it is

78. Twenty-one gun salute states - Mysore, Kashmir, Baroda, Gwalior: Nineteen gun salute states - Travancore, Udaipur, Indore, Kolhapur, Bhopal, Kalat: Seventeen gun salute states - Jaipur, Jodhpur, Patiala, Rewa, Cochin, Bahawalapur, Bikaner, Kotah, Cutch, Bharatpur, Tonk, Bundi, Karauli. PIC. 1931-50, Coll.11, File 46(3), No. PY 263/1934, Hoare's memorandum, "The proposed distribution of seats among Indian States in the Federal Legislature", 22 February 1934.

equally clear that once the Act had been passed it was the India Office and not the Government of India that was responsible for the delay. It is ironic that Templewood appears to have originated the idea of approaching the princes in a leisurely fashion. Zetland often confided to Linlithgow that although time was not on the side of the princes they themselves would eventually realise this and agree to federate. In one respect Zetland was right. Time was not on the side of the princes, it was soon to catch up with them and bring their existence as rulers of independent states to an end. Yet what the Secretary of State and his advisers failed to realise was that if federation was ever to be established then time was not on the side of the government either. Linlithgow appreciated this more than most, but all his warnings fell on deaf ears in the India Office.

2. The abandonment of the non-interference policy.

The Congress agitation also served to highlight the second major aspect of the states problem - the nature of their internal administrations. It had not taken Linlithgow long to realise that all was not well in this respect. In June 1936 he wrote to Zetland:

"I cannot help feeling very definitely that for whatever reason, certain of the Princes have been allowed to have too much of their own head in the recent past, and that whether

because of uncertainty as to the degree to which they would find support from higher authority, or for some other reason, our local representatives have not always taken as firm a line with them as was desirable."79

However, it was not until the onset of Congress agitation that the authorities both in Delhi and London began to reappraise the policy of non-interference. They were prompted to do so by a memorandum written by the Chief of Sangli in the summer of 1938. Sangli was of the opinion that the smaller states were incapable of coping with the "sweeping character" of demands being made for constitutional, revenue and financial changes within their states. He considered that the policy of transferring the states to direct relations with the Government of India had been a mistake, particularly for the smaller ones like his own which were enmeshed in neighbouring British Indian provinces. Previously the governors of the provinces could ensure that the interests of the states were safeguarded but since the inauguration of provincial autonomy in 1937 the transfer now meant that legislation was frequently passed in the provinces without due consideration for these interests. The reluctance of the governors to exercise their special powers to protect the states only made the problem worse. As a possible solution Sangli suggested that groups of small states should pool their resources in matters such as public health, education and justice in order to raise administrative standards and thus "anticipate criticism and

79. Linlithgow to Zetland, 22 June 1936, Linlithgow Collection, No.3.

and disarm attack."⁸⁰ Sangli's views are exceptional in that they represent the only recognition by an Indian prince that at least one aspect of the policy of non-interference had been misguided in its conception. In 1918 Sangli had petitioned for his state to be taken into direct relations with the Government of India, now his arguments served to vindicate the opinions of the Bombay and Punjab governments when they had opposed such a policy.

The problems confronting the smaller states were indeed serious. Their resources were totally inadequate to maintain reasonable administrative standards. Most of what little they did have was used to support the ruling family. They were an obvious target for external attack and criticism and it is not surprising that most of the Congress activities were directed against the petty states of the Western India, Deccan and Eastern states agencies. In 1938, the ruler of Aundh, a small state in the Deccan agency agreed to grant his subjects a constitution in order to stave off external pressure. The constitution, which was introduced in January 1939, provided for a Legislative Assembly with the power to dismiss a ministry chosen from its members by the ruler on a vote of confidence and also with the power to enforce any measure which the ruler had previously rejected on three separate occasions.⁸¹ Linlithgow was horrified not

80. Memorandum by the Chief of Sangli, 1938, enclosed with Zetland to Brabourne, 15 September 1938, Linlithgow Collection, No.6.

81. PIC. 1931-50, Coll.13, File 105, No.PY 1351/1940, Political Department note, "Recent Constitutional Developments in Indian States", July 1940.

only because of what had happened but also because of how it had happened: the ruler had been left to his own devices to deal with his critics and had received no advice or assistance from the Political Department.⁸²

The Viceroy now feared that unless the government took some action what had happened in Aundh might act as a catalyst with the smaller states scampering to come to terms with Congress.⁸³ Linlithgow was made fully aware that the initiative rested with the government as a result of an interview he held with the Maharaja of Bhavnagar in March 1939. The Maharaja wanted to introduce reforms within his state but he was at a loss as to where to start and what to do.⁸⁴ The interview was an awkward experience for Linlithgow as he was equally at a loss as to what advice he could give to the Maharaja. He confessed to Zetland:

"As you will see, he put me a somewhat embarrassing question and one which we will have to face up to without delay and which, I suspect, we shall get, in one form or another from a great many of the other Princes."⁸⁵

Thus at the beginning of 1939, Linlithgow and Zetland began devising a new policy to be adopted with regard to conditions within the states. The evolution of this policy continued well into the second world war but

82. Linlithgow to Zetland, 13 December 1938, Linlithgow Collection, No.6.

83. ibid.

84. Note of an interview with the Maharaja of Bhavnagar, 24 March 1939, enclosed with Linlithgow to Zetland, 28 March 1939, Linlithgow Collection, No.7.

85. ibid.

the main outlines had been established by the summer of 1939. Its most important principle was the renunciation of the non-interference policy. The Viceroy wrote to Zetland in April 1939:

".... the policy of abstention from interference pursued for so many years can no longer be defended and must be abandoned."⁸⁶

It should be noted, however, that the new policy was never made official. Neither Linlithgow or Zetland, nor any other senior government official, ever made a formal and public pronouncement to the effect that the principles outlined in Minto's Udaipur speech no longer applied. To make such a pronouncement would not only be a confession of failure but would also run the considerable risk of stampeding the princes into the arms of the Congress. It is also significant that the new policy was designed primarily for the medium sized and smaller states. The larger ones, by virtue of their greater resources which enabled them to maintain adequate security forces, were more capable of looking after themselves and there was thus less risk of them surrendering to external pressure.

In revising previous policy towards the states, Linlithgow confessed that the dilemma in which the British now found themselves was one of their own making:

"The great mistake, I am now disposed to think, lay in the change of policy after Curzon's retirement which led us to relax our control over individual princes and over happenings inside their States to the extent which we have [a tendency inevitably encouraged by

86. Linlithgow to Zetland, 5 April 1939, Linlithgow Collection, No.13.

the transfer of control from provinces to the Centre]; and we and the States have now, and will I suspect continue, to pay for thirty years of laissez-faire."87

Zetland fully agreed:

"When Minto succeeded George Curzon he undoubtedly went to extremes in relaxing the control which Curzon had exercised over the Princes. No doubt Curzon's intervention was bitterly resented by the Princes themselves, but as you of course know well enough, tact in matters of this kind was not George Curzon's strong suit, and while there was, I think, great justification for his policy, it was unfortunate that he pursued it in so dictatorial a manner."88

The new policy fell into three distinct parts: the question of constitutional advance in the states, suitable measures to raise administrative standards in the states and the problem of how to secure an adequate and competent political staff to implement the new policy.

With regard to the question of constitutional advance in the states, a written reply to a parliamentary question put down in December 1938 had stated that while the paramount power would not obstruct constitutional changes in the states it would not encourage them either. The initiative in this respect was to be left to individual princes. However the experience in Aundh and his interview with the Maharaja of Bhavnagar had convinced Linlithgow that something more than this was required. It would be embarrassing if a prince approached

87. Linlithgow to Zetland, 21 February 1939, Linlithgow Collection, No.7

88. Zetland to Linlithgow, 5 March 1939, Linlithgow Collection, No.7.

the government for advice on constitutional reform and the government was not in a position to reply. Linlithgow therefore suggested that a distinction should be drawn between the larger states and the medium-sized and smaller ones. For the former he advocated the creation of a small expert committee [he did not give details of its composition] which would devise constitutional schemes for communication to those princes who wanted advice in this respect. For the latter he advocated an ad hoc committee which would meet in Delhi and be chaired by the Political Adviser,⁸⁹ with the Reforms Commissioner of the Government of India as one of the other members. The committee would devise suitable constitutions for different categories of medium and small states on the understanding that the princes would not be bound to accept such advice as was offered.⁹⁰

89. Under the terms of the Government of India Act of 1935, the relations of the princes were still with the Crown, not with the central government, and this position would continue until the federation came into being and the princes joined it. In order to make this clear the Viceroy was, in 1937, given a new title, that of Crown Representative. To assist the Crown Representative in his relations with the states a new post of Political Adviser was created. The Political Adviser became the head of the Political Department, above the Political Secretary, and was given the status of a member of the Governor-General's Council. In this capacity he attended Council meetings to help the Crown Representative watch over the interests of the States.

90. Linlithgow to Zetland, 5 April 1939, Linlithgow Collection, No.13.

Zetland and Sir Bertrand Glancy, who became Linlithgow's first Political Adviser, were opposed to these suggestions. The Secretary of State appreciated that there were risks in leaving the princes to their own devices, but felt that there were still graver dangers in Linlithgow's proposals. Constitutional advance could not be regulated in the same manner as administrative reform. It was not inconceivable that constitutional advance could eventually result in full responsible government thus absolving the ruler of his obligations towards the paramount power.⁹¹ Zetland and Glancy proposed that princes contemplating reforms should approach the Chamber of Princes for advice "even though its advice is unlikely to be on progressive lines." They were also of the opinion that any advice offered by political officers should be confined to such matters as reserve powers during emergency periods and how not to breach paramountcy obligations.⁹² In that the views of Zetland and Glancy ultimately prevailed it is not surprising that none of the states made significant constitutional advances during the war. In fairness, however, this was not because of the nature of advice given by the Chamber or political officers but more the

91. In this respect the ruler of Aundh was subsequently informed that the government interpreted his constitution as leaving him free to discharge his obligations towards the paramount power. PIC. 1931-50, Coll.13, File 105, No.PY 1351/1940, Political Department note, "Recent Constitutional Developments in Indian States", July 1940.

92. Zetland to Linlithgow, 3 May 1939, Linlithgow Collection, No.13 and Glancy's memorandum, "The attitude of the Paramount Power to Constitutional Reforms in the States", enclosed with Linlithgow to Zetland, 12 April 1939, Linlithgow Collection, No.13.

result of the cessation of Congress activities against the states when war broke out which meant that they were rarely consulted. With the pressure off most princes felt no need to consider constitutional reforms.

In considering measures to raise administrative standards in the medium and smaller states, Linlithgow and Zetland agreed on the following proposals. Groups of smaller states were to pool their resources in order to establish joint administrative services for police, justice, public health, education, rural development and transport. This would apply to all states whose revenue was less than Rs. 10 lakhs per annum. Compulsion would be used for states refusing to co-operate:

"If, however, their own financial and other resources cannot provide what is essential for good administration, we cannot be expected to defend them from the consequences of shortcomings or to supplement their individual resources at the expense of the Indian tax-payer, when the desired result could be achieved by co-operation with neighbouring States."⁹³

The privy purses of the rulers of the medium and smaller states was to be fixed at 10 per cent. This had only been a suggestion in Irwin's note on administration in 1927,⁹⁴ now it was to be enforced. Each of the states would be required to publish an annual budget and also, within six months of the end of each financial year, an Administration Report containing details of all revenue

93. Zetland to Linlithgow, 3 May 1939, Linlithgow Collection, No.13.

94. Irwin's "Notes on Administration and Government", 14 June 1927, enclosed with Irwin to Benn, 18 January 1930, Halifax Collection, No.6.

expenditure and administrative improvements and constitutional changes. It was appreciated that these requirements would be beyond the competence of most of the princes. Zetland therefore suggested that more advice should be given to them when they appointed ministers and subordinate officials to ensure a minimum degree of competence.⁹⁵ Linlithgow also recognised the need for a revision of government policy during minority periods. He was appalled to learn that many of the small Orissa states had been under minority for at least fifty years yet their administrative standards still left much to be desired.⁹⁶ Finally, Viceroy and Secretary of State came to the conclusion that the host of petty estates and jagirs, third in the Butler Committee classification of the states,⁹⁷ could no longer survive as individual entities and would therefore have to be merged into larger neighbouring states.⁹⁸

Linlithgow was aware that the change in policy might antagonise many of the princes but he was convinced that it was in their own interests to co-operate. As he told Zetland in April 1939, it was not simply a question of ensuring that the states did not yield to Congress agitation but also one of their own survival:

95. Zetland to Linlithgow, 3 May 1939, Linlithgow Collection, No.13.

96. Linlithgow to Zetland, 5 April 1939, Linlithgow Collection, No.13.

97. see above, p. 8.

98. Zetland to Linlithgow, 3 May 1939, Linlithgow Collection, No.13.

"But there, too, I feel that the risk is one that must be taken; and if in fact, as I believe to be the case unless the States are to disappear, administrative improvements (and, too, constitutional change) are bound to come, I would rather they came as a result of pressure from us than as a result of pressure from the Congress acquiesced in by the Ruler and by the Paramount Power."99

The final aspect of the new policy, how to secure an adequate and competent political staff, was a constant nightmare for Linlithgow. Ever since his appointment as Viceroy he had had serious misgivings about the calibre of the Political Department; hence his use of personal emissaries instead of political officers to make the first approaches to the princes over federation. In fact he had been loathe to delegate any major responsibility to political officers throughout the period of federal negotiations. However, they could not be kept in the background when a deliberate attempt was to be made to reform the states. It was essential, to ensure success for the new policy, that residents and political agents should make it their business to keep in far closer touch with the states within their charges. Their tours would have to be more regular and more frequent, they would have to advise on constitutional changes, administrative reforms and on the selection of ministers and officials. They would have to intervene to remedy delays in dealing with grievances and ensure that accurate budget accounts and administration reports were published. For years political officers had been

99. Linlithgow to Zetland, 5 April 1939, Linlithgow Collection, No.13.

under the impression that, in the words of the Political Department Manual, they "should leave well alone: the best work of a Political Officer is very often what he has left undone."¹⁰⁰ Would they now be able to cope with their new responsibilities?

Linlithgow had serious doubts. He considered that the Political Department contained a "large proportion of somewhat second-rate men" and even contemplated abolishing it altogether and transferring its responsibilities to ordinary Indian Civil Service (I.C.S.) cadres:

"I feel sometimes that nothing short of a shake-up of this kind will purge the Political Service of their mediaevalism, the consequence of generations of experience in the Indian States."¹⁰¹

Such sentiments were the result of Linlithgow's experience of the handling of Gandhi's civil disobedience campaign in Rajkot. An I.C.S. official, Reginald Maxwell, Home Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, had intervened to assist Glancy and Courtenay Latimer, his assistant as additional secretary to the Political Department, in settling the dispute. For the Viceroy the contrast in approach between Maxwell on the one hand and Glancy and Latimer on the other, was poignant:

"It is the contrast of approach of the civil servant of ability who has for the last 20 years been in British Indian politics, dealing with various ups and downs of our relations with Congress and with the development of

100. See above p.43.

101. Linlithgow to Zetland, 7 February 1939, Linlithgow Collection, No.7.

institutions of a representative character in the Provinces, with the civil servant of equal ability who has lived in an entirely different atmosphere and inherited a different tradition, and who now for the first time hears the sound of the mob outside his own house."

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There were two inter-related problems to be confronted in overhauling the Political Department. The first was a problem of manpower; there were simply not enough officers to cope with the projected increase in work-load. This was a direct result of the amalgamation and retrenchment programme of the 1920's. That programme had been designed not only to save money but also to conform to the principles of the non-interference policy. Ironically the grave consequences of implementing such a programme which had been illustrated so graphically by men like Blakeway, Holland and Kealy had now materialized.¹⁰³ The second problem concerned the qualifications of political officers. They had no experience of financial and revenue administration, the two subjects which were at the heart of the new policy. Zetland suggested that all political officers above the rank of political agent should take a course in these subjects,¹⁰⁴ but Glancy pointed out that it would be extremely difficult to fill the temporary vacancies which would arise from the deputation of officers to such courses.¹⁰⁵ As a result it was decided that

102. Linlithgow to Zetland, 28 February 1939, Linlithgow Collection, No.7.

103. See above, Chapter 3.

104. Zetland to Linlithgow, 27 December 1938, Linlithgow Collection, No.6.

105. Linlithgow to Zetland, 28 July 1939, Linlithgow Collection, No.13.

political officers should merely familiarize themselves with revenue manuals provided by neighbouring provinces.¹⁰⁶

Linlithgow did attempt to ease the burden by adding to the numbers in the Political Department. Recruiting more army officers to assist with purely administrative matters was one of his ideas, but it was cut short by the outbreak of war in 1939. The Viceroy was therefore forced to fall back on the conventional stand-by of seconding I.C.S. officers for service in the states. Even here there were grave difficulties as the case of the United Provinces illustrates. In October 1938, H.G. Haig, governor of the United Provinces, pointed out that although officially the province was supposed to maintain a staffing ratio of 45:30 between Europeans and Indians, from 1931 to 1936 the number of Indian recruits had been thirty compared with only fourteen Europeans.¹⁰⁷ This was largely due to an overall reduction in European levels of recruitment but the position in the United Provinces was not helped by the secondment of European officers for service in the states. Haig explained that his civil service was under a severe strain because the Congress ministry was encouraging the people of the province to press for redress of every kind of grievance or injustice, however petty.¹⁰⁸ He considered that it would be impossible for him to spare any more men and

106. ibid.

107. Haig to Brabourne, 3 October 1938, Linlithgow Collection, No.100.

108. Haig to Linlithgow, 23 April 1938, Linlithgow Collection, No.100.

indeed he was even contemplating requesting the return of a European finance officer who had been loaned to the state of Ranpur.¹⁰⁹ Linlithgow's efforts to strengthen the Political Department therefore met with little success. To implement the new policy he was forced largely to rely on the existing cadre which was both undermanned and lacking in essential qualifications.

Given the circumstances and the magnitude of the task, it is hardly surprising that the new policy did not achieve a great deal. It was an attempt to reverse within two or three years the trends of the previous thirty. To stand even the remotest chance of success an air of urgency had to surround the new policy but this was lost upon the outbreak of war when the Congress agitation ceased and the Congress itself reverted to the priority of the struggle for power in British India. Relieved of the external pressure the attitude of the princes towards administrative reform was the same as their attitude towards constitutional change - they simply lost interest.

Admittedly there were some achievements. The publication of a report in November 1940 by J.S.H. Shattock, provided the basis whereby the smaller states and estates of the Gujarat and Kathiawar agencies were to be absorbed by the larger states in their neighbourhood.¹¹⁰ Some

109. ibid.

110. PIC. 1931-50, Coll.11, File 94B, No.POL.1288/1942, "A Report on the future of the Smaller States and Estates of Gujarat and Kathiawar", by J.H.S. Shattock, 1 November 1940.

groups of smaller states did manage to devise joint services. By 1943 states in the Bundelkhand and Malwa agencies in Central India had established a joint High Court and a joint Police Adviser. In the Eastern agency the states of Orissa and Chattisgarh had created a joint Armed Police Force. In the Punjab the tiny hill states had agreed to co-operate for police and judicial services. In the Deccan a joint Police Force had been established but this was serviced by detachments from the largest of the Deccani states, Kolhapur, and could hardly therefore be regarded as a co-operative measure.¹¹¹ There was little disposition to extend the co-operative principle to spheres other than the police and judiciary. The princes that acted did so primarily from the point of view of defence in order to protect themselves should there be a repeat of the Congress campaign. Nothing was done to improve conditions for their subjects by devising joint schemes for public health, education and transport.

It is also significant that none of the princes submitted voluntarily to the establishment of joint police and judicial services. They each resented the loss of sovereignty and indeed it was only by inviting the participation of the Maharaja of Kolhapur that the Deccan scheme was introduced.¹¹² It was a similar story

111. For details of these schemes, see PIC. 1931-50, Coll.11, File 7 pt. 4, No.POL.1053/1943, Note by the Political Department in the India Office, "Relations with the Indian States", 26 July 1943, Annexure X(2), Circular letter from the Political Secretary, Sir Kenneth Fitze, to Residents, 20 May 1943.

112. GOI. FPD. No.14 (24) - I.A. (Secret), 1940, Nos.1-27, Creation of a Joint Police Force for the Deccan States.

with the Punjab Hill states where the Nawab of Loharu was loathe to co-operate with the Nawab of Pataudi because he was jealous of Pataudi's international reputation as a cricketer.¹¹³ In May 1941 the Political Department of the India Office made the following summary of the efforts which had been made to encourage co-operative groupings of states:

"The present Viceroy ... has done his utmost to impress upon the Rulers the importance of 'collective security' through combining the appropriate administrative services of separate States. So far, however, this doctrine has yielded as little result in the states as it did in the field of defence in the Europe of recent years. No ruler will willingly sink a portion of his separate sovereignty in a joint stock concern. Rulers who are neighbours seem particularly prone to mutual jealousy and suspicion, often increased by communal divergence. Vested interests in the official class are banded against reduction of posts. Court flatterers warn petty monarchs of the risk of parting with one jot of their autonomy."¹¹⁴

It was not only the smaller states that created difficulties, very little could be achieved in the medium-sized states. It was often the rulers of these states who had vigorously campaigned for a policy of non-interference and they were determined that its principles should not be relinquished. Arthur Lothian, now A.G.G. in Rajputana, wrote after visiting Ganga Singh of Bikaner in 1939:

113. PIC. 1931-50, Coll.13, File 94, No.PY 732/1940, Pataudi, Loharu and Dujana joint administrative scheme.

114. PIC. 1931-50, Coll.11, File 7 pt.4, No.POL 1053/1943. Note by the Political Department in the India Office, "Relations with the Indian States", 26 July 1943, Annexure VIII, "The future of the Indian States in relation to Constitutional Developments" (Memorandum sent to the Viceroy under cover of Secretary of State's letter dated 16 May 1941.

"Although His Highness showed me anything which I asked to see, and allowed me to talk to his officials, he was always present, and I could get no opportunity of seeing them alone. I do not, however, think this is so much a result of design as of inability to conceive of the State functioning apart from himself. For far more than in any other Indian State that I have visited 'l'état c'est moi'." ¹¹⁵

The problems created by the mentality of the princes were compounded by the attitude of most political officers. When asked in January 1939 to consider joint services between groups of small states, only Kenneth Fitze, A.G.G. in Central India replied immediately and with practical suggestions of his own. ¹¹⁶ Indeed it was Fitze's perseverance in the face of persistent opposition from the rulers of Bundelkhand and Malwa that eventually led to the creation of the joint police and judicial services. Elsewhere political officers were leisurely and lukewarm in their response. Typical was Colonel Wilberforce-Bell, A.G.G. for the Punjab states, whose first reaction was that it would be pointless to sound out the princes within his agency on joint services. He considered that as the Punjab states were so lacking in indigenous administrative talent there was no alternative but to continue the existing policy of relying on the neighbouring government of the Punjab either to train state officials or to lend experts of their own to the states. ¹¹⁷ To this Glancy retorted:

115. GOI. Political Branch, No.40(17) - Political (Secret), 1939, pt.11, Lothian to Glancy, 1 December 1939.

116. PIC. 1931-50, Coll.13, File 94, No.PY 406/1939, Fitze to Glancy, 19 January 1939.

117. ibid., No.PY 636/1939, Wilberforce-Bell to Glancy, 18 February 1939.

"Col. Wilberforce-Bell like so many political officers has not had sufficient experience of modern Indian administration to appreciate when the shoe pinches. I still think there should be an expert inspection staff for minor states to reveal the skeletons in the cupboard. Once the actual trouble has been diagnosed - it is no doubt easy to borrow specialists from a province like the Punjab. To remain in ignorance of maladministration till the place blows up - is to court disaster and that is where Col. Wilberforce-Bell's attitude would leave us."¹¹⁸

No doubt what Glancy said was true. What he did not point out was that Wilberforce-Bell was a very experienced political officer having joined the service in 1909 and having served as Deputy Political Secretary and A.G.G. for the Deccan states before his appointment to the Punjab in 1934. Like so many of his counterparts, Wilberforce-Bell lacked administrative experience because he had been nurtured under a policy of non-interference. When Harcourt Butler established that policy during Minto's day he had been of the opinion that the "leopard cannot change his spots" and that it would require a change of generation before political officers became fully reconciled to the principles of the policy.¹¹⁹ By 1939 Wilberforce-Bell was a product of the change and it was equally unrealistic now to assume that he had the ability or indeed the desire to change his spots. Unfortunately for the British and also for the princes, the damage done to the concept of Empire by the second world war would not allow them the luxury of another change of generation.

118. ibid., Glancy's note, 8 March 1939.

119. See above, p. 44.

By 1939 the princes had conspicuously failed in their role as Imperial allies. Their refusal to embrace federation meant that the British had been denied the means of transplanting a conservative element into the Indian constitution which would support the maintenance of British rule in India. Future constitutional negotiations were soon proceeded upon the basis of a British withdrawal from India. Moreover, it was apparent that the princes were not only reluctant to give the support that the British required of them, but also that they were actually incapable of so doing. In their review of the position of the states in 1918, the authors of the Joint Report on Constitutional Reforms had been of the opinion that democratic and nationalistic "hopes and aspirations may overleap frontier lines like sparks across a street."¹²⁰ By the late 1930's the sparks had begun to fly and the princes were woefully unprepared to resist the challenge which appeared in the form of Congress agitation. They were losing the support of their subjects and many were incapable of maintaining law and order within their territories. This state of affairs was attributable to the non-interference policy which had stimulated a totally negative mentality in both princes and political officers. It enabled the princes to live a sheltered existence cut off from the main stream of developments in British Indian politics. It also gave them a false sense of security as it encouraged their

120. See above, p. 62.

continued belief in what in fact was the fallacious theory that the paramount power was duty bound to preserve their precarious existence whatever the circumstances. Similarly, as Linlithgow's comparison of Maxwell with Glancy and Latimer, and Glancy's own comment about Wilberforce-Bell indicate, the inability of most political officers to deal with novel situations, caused by the repercussions of British Indian politics within the states, was due to the fact that an equally sheltered existence had been imposed upon them by the principles of non-interference. In an administrative sense, the shortcomings of the princes and the decline in the calibre of political officers, were also directly attributable to the policy of non-interference. Having been released from constant checks and supervision, most princes allowed administrative standards in their states to either deteriorate or stagnate. For their part, political officers, having been given specific instructions that they were only to interfere in the domestic affairs of the states in exceptional circumstances, received no relevant administrative training whatsoever. By confessing in 1939 that the British were being forced to pay for the thirty years of laissez-faire which had elapsed since the end of Lord Curzon's Viceroyalty, Linlithgow was under no illusions as to where the responsibility lay for the difficulties he was encountering in his dealings with the states. In this respect it is appropriate, and indeed ironic, to recall the remark which had been made by his illustrious predecessor to the Queen-Empress at the turn

of the century:

"There is not a day in my life in which I do not say to myself, 'What is going to happen in this country 20 years, or 50 years hence?' And I say with the proudest conviction that any Viceroy, or any Government that adopted the attitude of letting all these Princes and Chiefs run to their own ruin, would be heaping up immeasurable disaster in the future."

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121. See above, p. 28.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

It would not be possible to attribute the disappearance of the Indian States system between the outbreak of the war in 1939 and the establishment of a republican constitution in India in 1950 entirely to the policy pursued by the British towards the states between 1905 and 1939. With the consummation of Indian independence in 1947 it was inconceivable, unless the country was to become balkanised into five or six separate regions, that the autocratic tradition of the states could co-exist with the democratic structure of the new dominion. That the politicians of the new dominion would not countenance such a development had been made perfectly clear by Jawaharlal Nehru in April 1947 when he declared that all those princes who refused to participate in the Constituent Assembly which had been summoned to devise a constitution for the new dominion "would be regarded as hostile States and they will have to bear the consequences of being so regarded."¹ Moreover, as we have already seen, the vast majority of states were dependent for their very existence upon the protection of the paramount power. They were so small and their financial resources so limited that they could not possibly survive on their own once this protection had

1. Jawaharlal Nehru's speech at the Gwalior session of the All India States' People's Conference, April 1947, cited in U. Phadnis, Towards the Integration of the Indian States, 1919-1947, London, 1968, p. 172.

been withdrawn. It could be assumed therefore that, irrespective of British policy, the disappearance of the states was an inevitable development once India had been granted independence. However, we believe it can be asserted that British policy, which, by its very nature between 1905 and 1939, had enabled an outmoded system of autocracy to be perpetuated and had also served to sustain units which had no intrinsic qualifications for survival, was certainly a major factor in contributing to the inevitability of the ultimate demise of the Indian States.

By 1947, the year of partition and the transfer of power, the princes were confronted with three options. They could join either India or Pakistan, the two new dominions that were to be created, they could become independent in their own right or they could combine to form independent unions of states. Most princes chose the first option because they realised that the lapse of paramountcy would leave them powerless to resist the demands for accession from the new successor governments and also their own subjects. In most cases geographical proximity and religious affinity meant accession to the Indian dominion. In view of Jawaharlal Nehru's remarks in April 1947 the second and third options were quite impracticable. Nevertheless some princes resolved to resist the demands for accession. Predictably the stiffest opposition came from the Nizam of Hyderabad who, upon being told that paramountcy would lapse, was reported to have

said: "You mean I can then do as I like?"² The Nizam's stubborn resistance was finally overcome in September 1948 when units of the Indian army invaded Hyderabad. Similar action had been required in June of the preceding year to thwart the plans of the Muslim Nawab of Junagadh who had announced his intention to accede to Pakistan against the wishes of the majority of his subjects of whom approximately eighty per cent were Hindus. The bulk of the state of Kashmir was also captured by India. In October 1947 Muslim tribesmen from Pakistan's North West Frontier Province invaded Kashmir. The Hindu Maharaja of this predominantly Muslim state appealed to the Indian government for armed support but had to agree to accede to the Indian dominion before this was forthcoming. It was not until January 1949, under the auspices of the United Nations, that a truce was established which left India in possession of three-fifths of Kashmir and Pakistan the rest.

Elsewhere, once power had been transferred in August 1947, the new Congress government of the Indian dominion began the task of integrating the states. Many were absorbed into neighbouring provinces such as Baroda into Bombay and Pudukkottai into Madras. Most of the princes suffered a fate not dissimilar to that of the German Imperial princes at the hands of Napoleon when the latter abolished the defunct Holy Roman Empire in 1806 and established the Confederation of the Rhine. While they retained their princely rank their authority was

2. Sir Conrad Corfield, The Princely India I knew: From Reading to Mountbatten, Madras, 1974, p. 56.

mediatized and their states merged to form larger unions over which one of their number presided with the purely honorific title of Rajpramukh. Thus the Maharaja of Jaipur became the Rajpramukh of the state of Rajasthan and the Jam Sahib of Nawanagar the Rajpramukh of the United State of Kathiawar, more commonly known as Saurashtra. During the initial stages of the integration process generous privy purse allowances were used to persuade the princes to accept the proposals. In most cases a ceiling of Rs. 10 lakhs was fixed although exceptions were made for the eleven most important princes. However, with the introduction of a uniform system of democracy, enshrined in the republican constitution of 1950, the ruling powers of the princes were effectively liquidated. As an independent factor in Indian politics they had become extinct.³

The introduction of a policy of non-interference during the viceroyalty of Lord Minto was a landmark in the development of Britain's relationship with the Indian States. This policy was a radical departure from the interventionist policy which had been pursued during the half century which had elapsed since the mutiny of 1857. British policy during this period had been specifically designed to mitigate the consequences of what in fact was an essential flaw within the Indian states system. Although

3. Full details of the integration process can be found in V.P. Menon, The Story of the Integration of the Indian States, Calcutta, 1956.

many states were British creations those that existed before the British arrived in India were ruled by princes who derived their position and power from their ability to protect their charges and cater for the needs of their subjects. However, by guaranteeing them protection against either internal revolt or external attack in return for the surrender of their right to conduct external relations with foreign powers or each other, the British absolved the princes of their responsibilities towards their states. Many in fact relapsed into a life of frivolity and luxury content in the knowledge that the British were duty bound to safeguard them against the consequences of their follies. Successive Viceroy from Canning to Curzon recognised this essential flaw within the system. In 1879, when considering the restitution of Mysore to princely rule, Lord Lytton had remarked:

"It is certain that this freedom from fear of the consequences of lax and injurious administration has been to some perceptible extent detrimental in its effects upon the Chiefs, upon their counsellors and officials and upon all those who are influential in the government of the States."⁴

However, during the second half of the nineteenth century, the British were also of the opinion that despite this essential flaw, the princes could serve some useful purposes. Besides providing revenue in the form of a tribute they could assist with the administration of the country and also retain the loyalty of the subjects of the states in

4. PSCI. 1875-1911, Vol.22, GOI. FPD. Secret Letter No. 124 to S/S, 22 May 1879.

a way that the British as aliens could not. There were thus two aspects to the Indian states system: the system itself was far from perfect but there were advantages to be derived from it. During the second half of the nineteenth century the British pursued an interventionist policy in order to emphasise the advantages. Hence, despite Canning's adoption of *sanads* which guaranteed the princely dynasties, the main features of British policy during this period were the deposition of miscreant rulers and the deliberate use of minority periods to raise administrative standards in the states. The interventionist policy reached its height between 1899 and 1905 when Lord Curzon was Viceroy. Curzon's belief that the advantages of the system could not be maintained unless the princes were deprived of the symbolism of royalty did not meet with the approval of the government in London. Yet with his departure in 1905 the framework of a new policy was devised which was ultimately to emphasise the flaw within the system at the complete expense of its advantages.

The authors of the non-interference policy were Lord Minto, Viceroy between 1905 and 1910; and Harcourt Butler, Foreign Secretary to the Government of India between 1908 and 1910. Both were convinced that during the first decade of the twentieth century British rule in India was under greater threat than at any time since the mutiny. Confronted with the rise of extreme nationalism following Curzon's partition of Bengal in 1905, Minto and Butler reached the conclusion that the princes were

Britain's only dependable allies in India. Their policy towards the states was based therefore upon the contention that the princes should be both capable and willing alliance partners. During the reform discussions which led to the Indian Councils Act of 1909, Minto suggested the creation of a Council of Princes to serve as a counter-weight to the Indian National Congress, the vehicle for the nationalist movement. John Morley, the Secretary of State, doubted the wisdom of the suggestion on the grounds that if the princes were allowed to combine and confer they might conceivably use the opportunity to unite against the government. However, although Minto failed to secure constitutional recognition for the princes, he was determined that his viceroyalty would not leave them empty-handed. In a speech at Udaipur in November 1909 he unveiled the principles of a new non-interference policy, the precise details of which were subsequently formulated by Butler in the Political Department Manual. In sharp contrast to the policy of the previous fifty years political officers were now given specific instructions that they were not to interfere in the domestic affairs of the princes unless misrule reached a pitch which violated the "elementary laws of civilisation." A relaxation of British control over the conduct of their internal affairs was the bait that Minto and Butler dangled before the princes in order to persuade them to become willing alliance partners. They appear to have taken it for granted that the princes would also be capable alliance

partners if they were in receipt of the necessary British support.

Minto and his Foreign Secretary were aware that the new policy could not become immediately applicable. They realised that the then generation of political officers could never reconcile themselves to these new guidelines and that the political service itself would only become amenable when it was staffed by a new generation of officers who had no ties with the old interventionist practices. However, a development of immediate significance was the emergence of princes who were ready to take advantage of the new spirit which was slowly being introduced within the government hierarchy. Although never representative of the princely order as a whole, these princes were educated men who were acutely aware of the arbitrary manner in which they had been treated while the British pursued interventionist policies. Although they welcomed the announcement of a change in policy they were disappointed that the government had not seen fit to grant them constitutional recognition by agreeing to the establishment of a Council of Princes. During the viceroyalties of Lord Hardinge and Lord Chelmsford, their leading spokesman, Ganga Singh of Bikaner, constantly reminded the Government of India that the princes could only become effective allies if they were allowed to meet to discuss important political issues and also matters of common concern to themselves. The First World War and the support of Edwin Montagu when Secretary of State between 1917 and 1922 eventually

enabled the princes to achieve constitutional recognition. The contribution that the princes made to the war effort seemed to confirm their alliance value. Montagu was anxious to consolidate this position. Resenting the bureaucratic ^{obduracy} ~~obduracy~~ which he encountered within the political cadres of the Government of India, the Secretary of State was prepared to embark upon a policy of wholesale concessions to a select group of princes of medium-sized states. As a result of such preferential treatment these princes began to assume that they could claim to represent the princely order as a whole. The establishment of a Chamber of Princes in February 1921 was, however, more than simply a triumph for princes such as Bikaner, Alwar, Patiala and the Jam Sahib of Nawanagar. It marked the end of an old isolationist tradition which for a century had precluded contact between the princes. It also coincided with the first determined effort to translate the principles of a non-interference policy into practice. In 1921 the princes were firmly acknowledged as Imperial allies. Between 1921 and 1939 their willingness and capacity to act as such were put to the test.

The conflict over paramountcy which was such a major feature of princely politics between 1921 and 1939 soon raised doubts about the willingness of the princes to serve as allies. In that the government was pursuing a policy of non-interference it appears at first sight somewhat illogical that there should have been a conflict of this nature. For the princes who dominated the Chamber, however, the paramountcy issue was central to their

relationship with both the British Government and the growing democratic movement in British India. Seeking complete independence in the conduct of their domestic affairs these princes could never be satisfied while paramountcy remained vague and undefined and the paramount power retained a discretionary element of interference. Moreover they needed a strict interpretation of paramountcy to safeguard themselves against the possibility of paramountcy rights being transferred to a successor government in British India. These princes were dismayed in 1926 by Reading's definition of paramountcy in his letter to the Nizam and positively shocked in 1929 when the Indian States Committee recommended a further dimension to the discretionary element of paramountcy by suggesting that the princes could be required to implement changes in their systems of government should popular disturbances within their states be prompted by demands for such. They sought refuge in the proposal for an All-India Federation which emerged from Hyderabad in 1930. They would only contemplate accession to a federation if paramountcy was defined to their satisfaction, an attitude which initially placed the paramount power in a dilemma. The British could only stem the tide of nationalist advance in British India by conceding a degree of responsibility within the Government of India but the political situation in Britain itself dictated that central reform could not be contemplated unless by federation with a strong princely content. However, the British were fully aware that if they surrendered over paramountcy they would be placing

the princes in a position of complete internal independence. Moreover if the princes were internally independent they would have no need to federate as they would also have secured for themselves an unassailable position in regard to their relationship with their neighbours in British India. Although in 1932 the Government of India managed to defeat the views on paramountcy as represented by the Chamber princes there were other difficulties with which it had to contend. The larger states, whose support was essential if federation was to become a reality, entered the negotiations in a similar bargaining frame of mind. Mysore required remission of its tribute, the maritime states demanded the retention in full of their customs receipts, while the Nizam of Hyderabad would not even contemplate federal officials operating within his state. In considering constitutional developments between 1921 and 1939 one can only conclude therefore that the princes were not willing but wholly unreliable allies. However, the ultimate failure of the federal idea cannot be attributed entirely to princely intransigence. The attitude of the princes towards federation eventually turned on the crucial question of timing. They rejected federation in 1939 because the Congress campaign of the previous two years had convinced them that the scheme contained inadequate protection for their treaty rights. It is not inconceivable that sufficient numbers of them would have agreed to federate had they been asked to do so before the agitation which began in Mysore in 1937

spread to other states. That they were not asked to federate earlier was due to the obstructionist tactics of the diehards in London, which delayed by two years the 1935 Government of India Act, and also to the influence of Sir Samuel Hoare's ideas which meant that in the period after 1935 the India Office constantly urged restraint upon those in India responsible for federal negotiations with the princes.

If the princes were never particularly willing alliance partners, their capacity to act as such was completely destroyed by the non-interference policy. The policy became effective during the decade which followed the Reform Act of 1919. For the sake of establishing direct relations with the Government of India many states were detached from the supervisory control of neighbouring provincial governments. Similarly, within the large agencies of Central India and Rajputana, some of the more important states were removed from the influence of local political agents and placed in a position whereby they communicated with the Government of India through the distant figure of an A.G.G. Subsequent retrenchment proposals requiring the abolition of many political posts resulted in the remaining states being amalgamated into vast subordinate charges under the control of a single political officer. These measures were officially justified on the grounds that the princes would more willingly serve as allies if the control that the paramount power exercised over them was relaxed. This was an erroneous assumption for it was the capacity, not the willingness, of the princes

to serve as allies that was at stake. The princes could never be regarded as capable allies unless their authority was accepted by their own subjects. Yet in retrospect it can now be seen that the relaxation of control by the paramount power was followed by a rapid deterioration of administrative standards in the states which, together with the spread of democratic and nationalist ideas from British India, enabled the subjects of the states to first question and then to openly challenge the autocratic powers of their princes.

There had been frequent warnings about the possible consequences of a policy of non-interference. During the 1920's these warnings came principally from provincial governments protesting about the establishment of direct relations and senior political officers complaining not only about the establishment of direct relations, but also about the implications of amalgamation and retrenchment proposals. Admittedly these protests had been originally inspired by concern for the prestige and status of provincial governments and political officers, but nevertheless the arguments actually used by Lloyd in Bombay, Holland in Rajputana and Blakeway in Central India were irrefutable. As Lloyd had indicated the establishment of direct relations with states which had previously been supervised by provincial governments militated against administrative standards in the states concerned keeping pace with the progress in neighbouring provinces. In the large agencies of Central India and Rajputana the situation was more serious because here the establishment of direct

relations and the amalgamation of subordinate charges meant that those political officers who survived the retrenchment measures were hard pressed to perform even the perfunctory tasks required of them by the dictates of the non-interference policy.

The adoption of a policy of non-interference did not, of course, completely rule out the possibility of intervention within a state by the paramount power. The cases of Hyderabad, Udaipur and Alwar all bear testimony to this. However, as far as the intervention in Hyderabad was concerned, it soon became obvious that no successful reforms could be introduced while the Nizam remained in power. Fearful of the consequences if they deposed the premier Muslim prince of India the British reconciled themselves to the abuses that existed in Hyderabad in the vain hope that natural causes would remove the Nizam for them. Nor do the interventions in Udaipur and Alwar reflect any credit upon British policy. In both states misgovernment had not only existed but had also been identified long before the paramount power decided to intervene. Moreover the cases of Udaipur and Alwar revealed that the theoretical reference to intervention which appeared in the Political Department Manual was in practice a situation in which the subjects of the states were on the verge of open rebellion. Successive Viceroys were aware of this. In 1927 Lord Irwin summoned a conference of political officers after reading a note by a junior officer entitled: "British India is advancing

along the lines of Evolution: The Indian States are on the road to Revolution."⁵ Yet despite being impressed by the arguments outlined in the note and also by the opinions expressed at the conference, which in general were very critical of the non-interference policy, Irwin did nothing to stop the drift. The lack of compulsion behind his subsequent note on administration was indicative of a reluctance on the part of the British to commit themselves in favour of reform in the states for fear that they would lose princely support. Yet what British policy makers never seemed to appreciate was that because of the policy of non-interference, princely support was not worth having.

The non-interference policy accentuated the basic flaw in the Indian States system. While it enabled the princes to become more despotic and irresponsible it also generated a stifling atmosphere of inertia within the Political Department. Above all it damaged beyond repair the justifications for the very existence of the states. The Congress campaign of the late 1930's revealed that most of the princes had forfeited the allegiance of their subjects and also that they were incapable of maintaining law and order, the most fundamental principle of government. In fact the onset of Congress agitation proved conclusively that the princes could no longer be considered as capable or dependable allies for the British: on the contrary the non-interference policy had converted them into serious liabilities. If the Congress had no wish to embark upon

5. See above, p. 125.

a simultaneous war of attrition against the British in British India and the princes in the Indian States, the British for their part had no wish to embark upon a similar campaign against the Congress in both territories. Yet this was precisely the position in which the depleted administration of Lord Linlithgow found itself from 1937 until the outbreak of war in 1939. Lord Linlithgow was the only Viceroy between 1905 and 1939 who made a serious effort to repair the damage caused by the non-interference policy. By attempting in 1939 to effect a return to the interventionist policies of Curzon's day, Linlithgow had brought British policy towards the states full circle. Indeed in 1941 he even went so far as to authorise the communication of instructions to political officers concerning the preparation of Indian State administration reports which had been drawn up by the Curzon administration in 1904 and which had lain dormant in the Political Department archives since Curzon's resignation in the following year.⁶ Yet as Linlithgow himself appreciated any attempt to turn back the clock in the hope of producing some tangible improvement could not possibly succeed. Princes and political officers alike were not only reluctant but also incapable of changing their ways.

6. PIC. 1931-50, Coll.10, File 7, No.POL 3286/1941, circular letter from the Secretary to the Crown Representative to Residents, 16 June 1941, "Preparation and publication of administration reports of Indian States." The Residents were referred to GOI. Foreign Department, circular letter No. 4064-4067-1.A., 2 November 1904.

In that there had been many warnings about the implications of a policy of non-interference perhaps the gravest indictment of British policy concerns an episode which occurred towards the end of the constitutional negotiations in London. In June 1933, Ronald Wingate was appointed Joint Political Secretary to the Government of India. In May of the following year he became Officiating Secretary. Having served in the foreign branch of the Foreign and Political Department Wingate had no previous experience of the states. He was appointed to relieve the Political Department Secretariat which at the time was permanently occupied examining details of the federal scheme. Nevertheless, Wingate was soon able to identify the essential flaw within the Indian States system. In August 1934 he produced a note in which he wrote:

"In the India of the future the conservatism and loyalty of the States is to be the makeweight against the democracy and disloyalty of British India. In fact the White Paper scheme is based by implication upon this assumption."⁷

Wingate described this statement as the "theory of the balance of power in India." The remainder of the note was devoted to a penetrating analysis of how the non-interference policy was destroying this balance of power. Writing in the aftermath of the tribal uprising and notorious revelations in Alwar and government intervention to suppress an uprising by the Muslim subjects of the Hindu

7. PIC. 1931-50, Coll.11, File 7, pt.2, No.PY 1506/1934, Wingate's note, 18 August 1934.

Maharaja of Kashmir, Wingate was of the opinion that the Government of India "must now face the fact that their policy of the last 30 years has failed." To reverse the trend he urged the restoration of interventionist policies:

"Advice must in future be given if it is not sought and it must be accepted, and if it is not we must compel acceptance."⁸

In conclusion Wingate suggested that the Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, should immediately make a public pronouncement to this effect and that new instructions should be issued to political officers "enlarging the scope of their responsibilities."⁹

In London, Wingate's note met with varying responses. Patrick considered the problem to be one of political officers maintaining secrecy in communication when forwarding reports of maladministration to higher authority. Information sent through "ordinary office channels" too often proved to be a "timely indirect warning to the Ruler to prepare his defence."¹⁰ Sir Reginald Glancy considered that Wingate's note conveyed the impression that "things are worse than they actually are."¹¹ He also pointed out that under rules which had been formulated in October 1920 a prince could not be suspended or deprived of his ruling powers without first being given the option of having the charges against him investigated

8. ibid.

9. ibid.

10. ibid., Patrick's note, 27 October 1934.

11. ibid., Sir Reginald Glancy's note, 29 October 1934.

by a Commission of Enquiry. The Government of India could enlist the assistance of a panel of ruling princes to hear the case. Glancy was of the opinion that the presence of other princes, together with the fact that the Commission required proof, as distinct from evidence, of misconduct or maladministration, made it extremely difficult to take action against a prince.¹² Nevertheless he admitted that political officers were seldom experts in finance or revenue. In view of the fact that the "majority of cases where intervention has been too long delayed are cases of extravagance or financial folly leading to bankruptcy," he recommended that this defect in the training of political officers should be remedied

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12. These rules had been formulated by the Chelmsford administration at the behest of those princes who became dominant in the Chamber. It should, however, be noted that an enquiry with other princes in attendance was never undertaken. In the cases of Udaipur, Hyderabad, Alwar and Kashmir, none of the princes concerned requested an enquiry. In Alwar and Kashmir independent enquiries were undertaken by officials of the Political Department. In 1926 the Maharaja of Indore, who was implicated in a murder which had been committed in British India, declined the offer of a Commission and proposed to abdicate provided an investigation into the crime was abandoned. This was accepted by the Government of India. In 1927 a Commission was offered to the Maharaja of Bharatpur whose state was bankrupt. The offer was declined and the Maharaja was required to appoint a European Dewan selected by the government and to delegate full powers of administration to him. The Maharaja's subsequent refusal to co-operate with this measure led to his expulsion from the state. In 1922 a Special Commissioner was appointed to investigate serious allegations of misgovernment and oppression against the Maharaja of Nabha. As a result of the enquiry the Maharaja was required to reside outside Nabha and to hand over the administration of the state to the Government of India. The Maharaja was eventually deposed in 1928. GOI. FPD. No.19 - Special (Secret), 1931, Nos.1-2, pp. 5-7, "Recent cases illustrative of the exercise of paramountcy."

without delay.¹³

At this juncture Bertrand Glancy, the Political Secretary in Delhi, intervened. Had he seen Wingate's note before it was sent to London, he would certainly have censored it. He was now faced with the awkward task of explaining the contents of the note. This he did by referring to the state of Wingate's health. In December 1934 he wrote to Patrick that Wingate had been "suffering from strain lately due to overwork" and thus his views were not to be taken seriously.¹⁴ He even reported that Wingate had changed his mind about the note just eleven days after it had been sent to London.¹⁵ There was obviously friction between Glancy and his deputy. As Wingate was due to take some leave as soon as his services could be spared, Patrick suggested that the work he had done within the Political Department should receive a commendation from the Secretary of State. This acknowledgement was never sent because in the words of J.P. Gibson, a Principal in the Political Department of the India Office, "this will only make matters worse with Mr. Glancy."¹⁶ Needless to say no action was taken upon the basis of Wingate's note. Admittedly it would not have been an auspicious moment to act upon his advice. The government was in the process of attempting to persuade the princes to accept the federal scheme embodied in the

13. PIC. 1931-50, Coll.11, File 7, Pt.2, No.PY 1506/1934, Sir Reginald Glancy's note, 29 October 1934.

14. PIC. 1931-50, Coll.11, File 7 pt.3, No.PY 1745/1934, B.J. Glancy to Patrick, 3 December 1934.

15. ibid.

16. ibid., J.P. Gibson's note, 18 December 1934.

White Paper in the hope that their status as Imperial allies could be further consolidated. Yet as Wingate had been at pains to point out, the alliance value of the princes had been virtually destroyed by the policy of non-interference. A further five years elapsed before Wingate's views were officially endorsed and the non-interference policy abandoned. By then, however, it was far too late as the princes found to their cost in the post independence decade.

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GLOSSARY

- Amir - In the thirteenth and fourteen centuries a rank of nobility. In the fifteenth century also a provincial governor.
- Arya Samaj - Hindu reform movement founded in the Punjab in the late nineteenth century.
- Begum - A princess, a Muslim lady of rank. In the context of the Indian States, a Muslim woman ruler or wife of a Muslim ruler.
- Brahmin - A member of the first of the four hierarchical castes of Hindu society.
- Chauri Chaura - A village in the Gorakhpur district of what used to be the United Provinces. Scene in February 1922 of the mob murder of twenty-one policemen. As a result of this incident Gandhi suspended his first non-co-operation movement.
- Crore - One hundred lakhs or ten millions.
- Darbar (Durbar) - The court or levée of a ruler. It is also used to signify the executive government of an Indian State and various ceremonial occasions such as the coronation of a ruler or the birth of an heir.

Desmukh -	Under native government, an hereditary official with police and revenue authority in a district; under the British, a revenue official.
Dewan (Diwan) -	The Chief Minister of an Indian State.
Firman (Farman) -	A government mandate; a formal order issued by the ruler of an Indian State.
Gadi (Gaddi) -	The throne.
Gaekwar -	The ruling family of the Baroda State.
Holkar -	The ruling family of the Holkar State.
Izzat -	Dignity, honour, reputation.
Jagir -	A tenure common under Mughal rule, in which the collection of the revenues of a given tract of land were made over to a servant of the State. The assignment was either conditional or unconditional. In the former event, some public service such as the levy and maintenance of troops was engaged for.
Jagirdar -	The holder of a Jagir.
Jam Sahib -	Title used by the rulers of the State of Nawanagar.
Khalsa -	Land reserved for the State, as opposed to land assigned or granted to individuals.

- Khilafat -** A movement organised by Indian Muslims after the First World War in defence of the office of Khalifa (Caliph), acknowledged by Sunnis to be the religious and temporal head of Islam.
- Lakh -** One hundred thousand.
- Maharaja -** The Hindu ruler of an Indian State. Other names include Maharana, Maharao and Maharawal.
- Mahasabha (Great Assembly) -** The All-India Hindu Mahasabha was a communalist party founded in 1915.
- Mulkis -** Natives of Hyderabad, descendants of families who had migrated from north India upon the foundation of the Osmania dynasty. Although predominantly Hindu, they were isolated from the majority of Hyderabad's Hindu population by virtue of their Persian culture and use of Urdu. They made their presence felt by demanding the removal of foreign influences from Hyderabad, whether in the shape of British paramountcy or rival Muslim administrators from outside the state.
- Nawab -** A viceroy or governor of a province under Mughal government, whence it became a mere title of any man of high rank upon whom it was conferred, without office

being attached to it. Many of the Muslim rulers of the Indian States assumed the title of Nawab.

- Nazar - an offering or gift made to a ruler to signify the loyalty of the donor.
- Nizam - An administrator: the viceroy of the Deccan, a title retained by the ruler of Hyderabad.
- Osmania - The ruling family of the Hyderabad State.
- Paigahs - The most important jagirs in Hyderabad, created by Asaf Jah, the founder of the Osmania dynasty.
- Peshwa - Originally the chief minister of the Maratha power: in the eighteenth century becoming prince of an independent Maratha State. The Peshwa's power ceased with the surrender of Baji Rao II, the last to hold the title, to the British in 1817.
- Phulkian States - The three principal states of the Punjab; Patiala, Jind and Nabha. The ruling families of these states were descended from Phul, a Sikh official of the local Mughal governor during the first half of the seventeenth century.

Pindaris -	Originally bodies of irregular horse allowed to attach themselves to Mughal armies, employed especially in collecting forage and permitted, in lieu of pay, to plunder. During the early years of the nineteenth century Pindaris were organised associations of mounted marauders in Central India, finally suppressed by the British in 1817.
Raj -	A rule, sovereignty. 'The Raj' denotes British rule.
Raja -	Hindu ruler of a small Indian State. Other names include Chief, Rana and Rao. These terms were also used as titles by the nobility in certain states and by big landlords in British India.
Rajpramukh -	First among rulers.
Rani -	Wife of a Hindu ruler of a small Indian State.
Sanad -	A title deed or Charter.
Scindia -	The ruling family of the Gwalior State.
Subahdar -	Viceroy, governor of a province.
Swaraj -	Self-government, political independence.
Taluq -	A division of a province, an estate.
Taluqdar -	The holder of a taluq.
Thakur -	A minor Rajput Chief.