

BRITISH REACTION TO THE SEPOY MUTINY, 1857-1858

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PREFACE

English and Indian historians have devoted considerable research and analysis to the genesis of the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 but have ignored contemporary British reaction to it, a neglect which this study attempts to satisfy. After the initial, spontaneous, condemnation of Sepoy atrocities, Queen Victoria, her Parliament, and subjects took a more rational and constructive attitude toward the insurrection in India, which stemmed primarily from British interference in Indian religious and social customs, symbolized by the cartridge issue. Englishmen demanded reform, and Parliament--at once anxious to please the electorate and to preserve the valuable colony of India--complied within a year, although the Commons defeated the first two Indian bills, because of the interposition of other foreign and domestic problems. But John Bright, Lord Edward Stanley, William Gladstone, Benjamin Disraeli, and their friends joined forces to pass the third Indian bill, which became law on August 2, 1858.

For this study, the most useful primary sources are Parliamentary Debates, Journals of the House of Commons and Lords, British and Foreign State Papers, English Historical Documents, Queen Victoria's Letters, and the Annual Register.

Of the few secondary works which focus on British reaction to the Sepoy Mutiny, Anthony Wood's *Nineteenth Century*

Britain, 1815-1914 gives a good account of British politics after the Mutiny. Justin McCarthy's History of Our Times from the Accession of Queen Victoria and Charles Knight's Popular History of England contain material on the Parliamentary reaction to the Indian problem. William Monypenny and George Buckle, Life of Benjamin Disraeli gives a good account of his role in the final passage of the India bill. The best study of conditions in India during and after the Mutiny is R. C. Muzumdar's Advanced History of India.

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PROLOGUE

GENESIS OF THE MUTINY

In 1857, cracks appeared for the first time in the administrative structure of Britain's Crown Colony, India. There had been warnings of the coming storm, but they were ignored by over-confident British officers. Failure to redress grievances, however, did not alone cause the military insurrection known as the "Sepoy Mutiny," for British aggrandizement and corruption, missionary activities, and the rapid introduction of European improvements, all served to exacerbate the fears of superstitious natives.¹

The Mutiny was not a national uprising, being confined to certain units of the Bengal army garrisoned along the Ganges River from Delhi to Allahbad. Indian troops in the districts of Madras, Bombay, and Punjab--the most recently conquered province--did not participate in the insurrection.

There is no evidence that civilians participated in the Mutiny or that its leaders advanced any social and political program.²

¹Sir Herbert Maxwell, A Century of Empire, 1801-1900 (3 vols.; London, 1910), II, 262; "The Indian Revolt," Atlantic Monthly, I (Nov., 1857), 217. The word "Sepoy" is an anglicized form of Sepahi. In the Hindi, Urdu, and Persian languages, it means a native of India employed as a soldier in the service of a European power, usually Great Britain.

²Charles Knight, The Popular History of England: An Illustrated History of Society and Government from the Earliest Period to our Times (9 vols.; London, 1883), X, 338.

Signs of disaffection appeared among the Hindus and Muslims when Britain became involved in the Crimean War and found it necessary to transfer 23,000 regular troops from India to the Russian front. While the press emphasized the weaknesses of the British army in the Crimea, Indians studied British policy in the Middle and Far East and concluded that England's military and diplomatic involvements in Russia, Persia, and China undermined her hegemony in their country.³ Mohammedans moreover, were angered by the loss of their empire and imbued with religious fanaticism. The weakened position of British forces in India seemed to offer an opportunity to overthrow Anglo-Saxon rule and to restore the Mughal empire.⁴

The insurrection scheduled to begin at Meerut on May 23, 1857, the centennial anniversary of the Battle of Plassey, broke out on the 10th, two weeks earlier. While British nationals were attending church services, the Sepoys at Meerut mutinied, murdered their officers, proclaimed Bhadur Shah, the pensioned King of Delhi, Emperor of India. According to plan, the city of Meerut was taken, and the "Feringhi Kaffirs"--British and other Christian residents--slaughtered. The conspirators swore on the Koran that they would all participate in the butchery and pillage of the Europeans, and

³Ibid., IX, 339.

⁴Alexander Duff, *The Indian Rebellion: Its Causes and the Results* (London, 1858), p. 300.

they fulfilled this pledge. The country was in a state of anarchy: bands of robbers murdered and plundered defenseless people; civil government virtually disappeared; and many stations in Bengal and Punjab exhibited indecision and incompetence. Thus, the Mutiny degenerated into a general massacre.⁵

Within the month, the Sepoys mutinied at Lucknow and captured the city after an eighty-seven day seige. Sir Henry Lawrence, the Chief Commissioner of Oude, was mortally wounded in the fighting. The sons of Bhadur Shah, meanwhile, mobilized a disciplined force of 50,000 to 70,000 mutineers and captured Delhi.⁶ In June, 1857, Sepoys, under Nana Sahib, mutinied at Cawnpore and killed many Englishmen. At Jhansi, Sepoys led by Rani Luxmi Bai, also shot their officers. Similar events occurred at other military stations in Bengal and the western provinces.

British and Indian historians disagree on the causes of the Mutiny of 1857. George M. Trevelyan, Sidney Low, and Vincent Smith, all attribute it to the use of greased cartridges. Both the Hindu historian Ishawari Parshad and the Muslim Mohammad Ikram, however, believe that dissatisfaction

⁵ Duff to Dr. Tweedie, Calcutta, June 16, 1857, Duff, *The Indian Rebellion* (London, 1858), p. 29; "The Indian Revolt," *Atlantic Rev.*, I, 219.

⁶ Gurbakh Singh Kapore, *Refresher Course in History of India* (Delhi, 1962), p. 555; Maxwell, *Century of Empire*, II, 262.

with British rule was the primary cause of the Mutiny.⁷ In any case, the causes of the Mutiny were varied and complex.

One factor was the 1856 annexation of Oude, a major recruiting area for native soldiers. Three alternatives confronted Lord James Dalhousie, the Governor General of India (1848-1856): (1) he could depose the newab (king) and annex Oude to the British dominion; (2) he could maintain the title and privileges of the newab but transfer the actual administration of the country to the East India Company; (3) he could temporarily transfer the administration of Oude to the British resident stationed at Lucknow. In the past, Dalhousie had cited "the Doctrine of Lapse" to justify other annexations. According to this doctrine, the East India Company⁸ had the right to annex any territory which was mis-governed.⁹ According to Charles Knight, the situation in Oude in 1856 was such that Dalhousie had no choice but to seize the state.¹⁰ The governor general favored the formula which Lord Richard Wellesley¹¹ had employed in 1801, whereby

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., p. 547; The East India Company was a semi-official British trading company which operated under a royal charter granted by Elizabeth I on December 31, 1600. Taking advantage of the weakness of the Indian princes, this company in the eighteenth century conquered India and ruled it under the same title.

⁹George Trevelyan, British History in the Nineteenth Century, 1782-1901 (London, 1922), pp. 319, 547-550.

¹⁰Knight, Popular History, p. 340.

¹¹Richard Colley Wellesley, Marquess Wellesley (1760-1842), the Duke of Wellington's eldest brother, was governor general of India, 1797-1805.

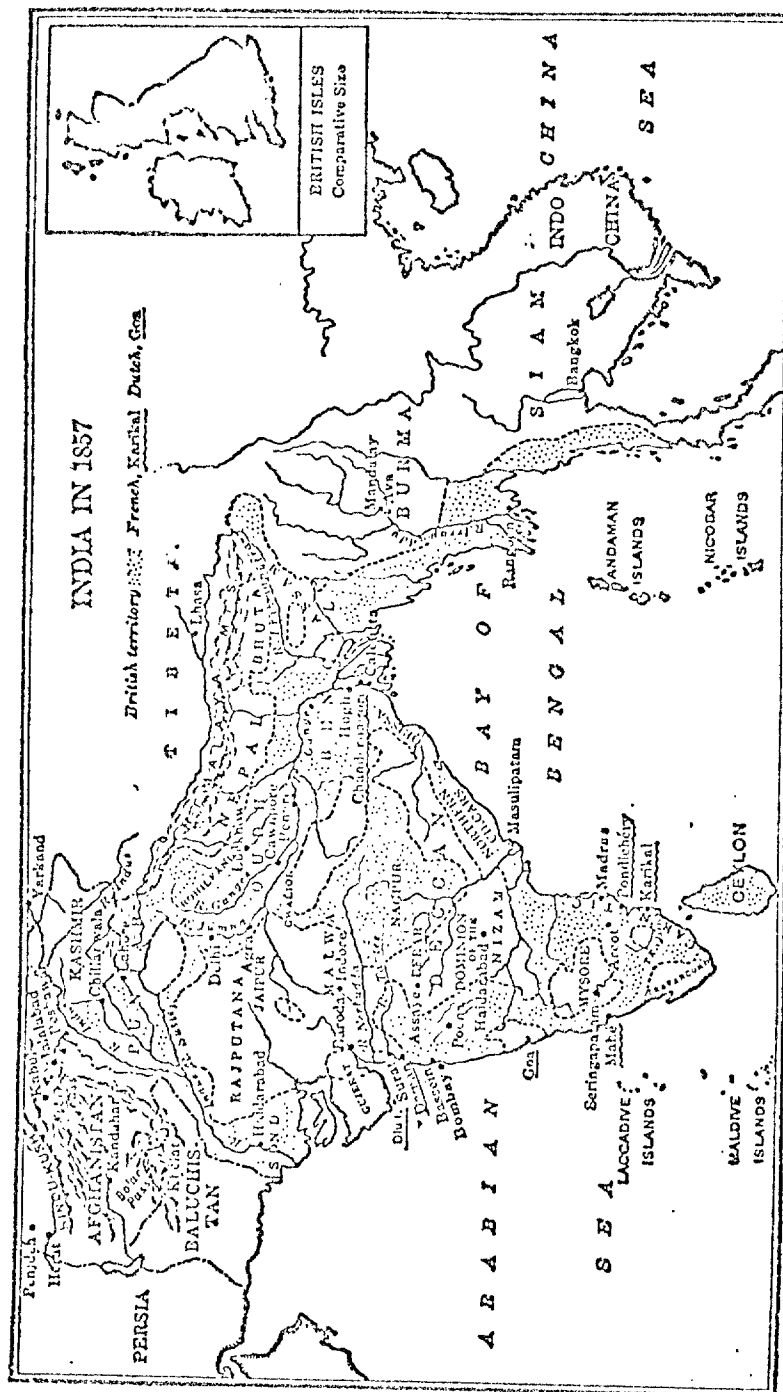


Fig. 1--Map of India in 1857

the Company would rule while the newab reigned, but the majority of his council opposed the idea. Eventually, he applied the Doctrine of Lapse to Oude, and the Court of Directors rejected the recommendations of his council. Dalhousie offered Wajid Ali Shah, the King of Oude, a kind of retirement without power, title, money, or responsibility. The king, of course, refused to accept such a proposal, whereupon the governor deposed him and sent him to Calcutta.¹²

In the wake of this annexation, Sepoys of the Bengal army, most of whom were natives of Oude, revolted. Neither sympathy for the king nor grievances against the revenue settlement prompted this violent response, but the loss of the privileged position they had enjoyed as members of the Talukdar class, a land-owning class which leased property for farming to tenant sharecroppers. Thus Sepoy resentment over annexation helped to precipitate the great insurrection.¹³

Another cause of the Sepoy Mutiny was the corruption of the East India Company. The rejection of British rule was a protest against the Company. Despite the Company's boast that it had governed Indians justly and had given them equality before the law, perspicacious Indians observed that the principle of equality did not apply to them vis-à-vis Europeans. If a peasant took a Zamindar (a landowner) to court,

¹²Kapore, Indian History, pp. 547-556.

¹³Sir T. Wolsley Haig and H. H. Dadwell, The Cambridge Shorter History of India (New York, 1934), p. 732; Arthur W. Jose, The Growth of the Empire (New York, 1910), p. 218.

he sometimes found the role of plaintiff and defendant reversed, but he could not hope to win a suit against an Englishman. Decisions in such cases often took an unduly long time, and court costs became very expensive. The courts became instruments of oppression in the hands of clever and rich people who could produce false witnesses to win their cases. The result, of course, was Anglophobia.¹⁴

Not only did injustice frustrate the natives, but also their own racial attitudes complicated the situation. In the eighteenth century, British rule had been characterized by benevolent paternalism and sympathy for Indian grievances, treatment which the natives appreciated.¹⁵ But in time, this latitudinarianism gave way to a narrower, more nationalistic, policy. By 1850, most Englishmen believed that the existence of their world empire "proved" that they were a superior people and that they would always remain a dominant class. This smug assumption of moral, physical, and intellectual primacy was depicted by William Russell, a London Times reporter, who observed while en route to India that some of his countrymen involved themselves too deeply in Indian affairs. They hated the bigoted Muslims and the slimy Hindus and had nothing but contempt for them. He quoted one

¹⁴Elizabeth Longford, Queen Victoria (New York, 1964), p. 280; George Douglas, George Douglas, Eighth Duke of Argyll 1823-1900, ed. the Dowager Duchess of Argyll (2 vols.; London, 1906), II, 86-89; Kapore, History of India, p. 500.

¹⁵Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, The Cause of the Indian Revolt (Benares, India, 1857), p. 10.

British officer as saying: "Those niggers are such a confounded sensual, lazy set, cramming themselves with ghee and sweetmeats. . . ."16

Russell's appraisal of the British attitude toward India was shared by William Delfield Arnold, who asserted on the eve of the mutiny that the British had become demoralized in their spiritual life. "The best or worse of his countrymen," he charged, "hated India and resorted to petty dissipations--drinks, sleep, gossip, entertainment. . . as an opiate for their discomforts."17

Born in India of a distinguished Anglo-Indian family, William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1863) understood better than most of his contemporaries how the British aristocracy and middle class regarded India, and his comments deserve attention. The civil and military officials who went out to India during the last years of the Company's government, he affirms, were "unpleasant--selfish, grasping, quarrelsome, and brutal toward one another."18 Sir John William Kaye has made the same observation, declaring in his History of the War in Afghanistan that the standards of British rule had deteriorated since the eighteenth century.19 Thus British

16"European Politics," Blackwoods's Edinburgh Magazine, LXXI (January-June, 1857), p. 132; George D. Bearce, British Attitude Towards India (Oxford, 1961), p. 235.

17 Ibid., p. 271. William Arnold was Mathew's brother.

18 Ibid., p. 248.

19 Ibid., pp. 268-269.

pride and posture of superiority towards their Indian subjects sowed the seeds of animosity in the hearts of natives who waited only for a provocation to overthrow the misgovernment of the East India Company.

Another cause was British violation of Hindu and Muslim taboos. Hindus commonly practiced infanticide and Suttee²⁰ until Lord Dalhousie stopped them, denounced Hindu learning, and introduced instruction in the tenets of Christianity into schools and colleges. Lord Charles Canning, Dalhousie's successor as Governor General of India, and General George Anson, the Commander-in-Chief of British forces in India, both pledged to Queen Victoria that they would convert all Indians to Christianity.²¹ Indians, of course, considered their efforts to implement this pledge as unwarranted interference in domestic affairs. Writing in 1857, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan insisted that all men, "whether ignorant or well informed, high or low, felt a strong conviction that the British intended to force the Christian religion and foreign customs upon Hindu and Mussulman alike."²²

²⁰Suttee Paritha was a Hindu custom whereby a widow--to show fidelity to her deceased husband--committed suicide by leaping on his funeral pyre.

²¹Vincent A. Smith, The Oxford History of India (Oxford, 1958), pp. 664-665; Kapore, History of India, pp. 561-562; "The History of the Sepoy War," Edinburgh's Review, XLIV (Oct., 1866), 299-340.

²²Khan, Cause of the Revolt, p. 16.

This policy of deliberate proselytizing so vexed Muslims and Brahmins alike that they allied to resist the Christian influence. For the first time, they united against a common enemy: the English iconoclasts. "Christianity had its first martyrs in India, natives as well as European."²³ Fearing persecution because of their religion, many natives became reluctant converts to Christianity during the Mutiny.

The spark needed to ignite these inflammable materials was supplied by the use of greased cartridges. The Minie Rifle--named for its inventor, a Frenchman--had proven so effective in the Crimean War that the British decided to use it in India. Unfortunately, the rifle's cartridge had to be lubricated before it could be inserted into the barrel, and the tallow used for this purpose was a mixture of hog and cow fat. Hindus could not touch the cartridge without violating a sacred taboo, and Muslims would not touch the fat of swine because it was defiling. The Sepoys, already convinced that the British were undermining their caste and subverting their religion, refused to listen to British explanations. In an attempt to remove the objections to using the new cartridges, Dr. Macnamara, a chemist, conducted a special inquiry at Barrackpore in February, 1857. After analyzing the paper used in greasing, he solemnly declared on February 11, that it "had not been greased or treated with an oily matter during or since its manufacture." British officers agreed,

²³"Crisis of Sepoy Rebellion," London Quarterly and Holborn Review, IX (1857), 564.

however, that regardless of what materials had been used in the past, each soldier in the future would grease his own cartridges with clarified butter.²⁴

On May 6, the new cartridges were issued to the native cavalry at Meerut, an important military station near Delhi, but eighty troopers rejected Macnamara's assurance and refused to receive them. The precautionary measures taken by the government had come too late to change the minds of the Sepoys who were condemned by a court-martial to long terms of imprisonment.

In résumé, historians disagree on the causes of the Great Mutiny of 1857. British historians point to the issuing of greased cartridges as the main cause of the insurrection, while Hindu and Muslim scholars insist that the greased cartridge affair merely precipitated the crisis, but did not create it. They do not single out one cause but contend that many factors--political, economic, social, and religious--culminated in the Mutiny.

By June, 1858, the small army of British regulars and loyal Sepoys had defeated the mutineers, who fought with

²⁴ Annual Register, XCIX (1857), 242, 288-291; J. A. Marriot, England Since Waterloo (New York, 1922), p. 28; Jose, Growth of Empire, p. 219; Knight, Popular History, IX, 342; Smith, Oxford History of India, pp. 664-665; Anthony Wood, Nineteenth Century Britain, 1815-1914 (London, 1960), pp. 218-219; Kapore, History of India, p. 565; Sir Spencer Walpole, A History of England From the Conclusion of the Great War in 1815 (6 vols.; London, 1912), VI, 289; "British India," London Quarterly Review, IX (1857), 246; T. Rice Holmes, History of the Indian Mutiny (New York, 1933), p. 631; A. W. Ward and G. P. Gooch, The Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy (6 vols.; London, 1923), II, 414.

great determination but without capable leadership, national support, and organization. But the Indian question did not end with the restoration of British rule, for the Mutiny had emphasized the need for reform. What would be Britain's reaction to these events half-a-world away? The answer to this question will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER I

PUBLIC REACTION IN ENGLAND

Early in June, 1857, the first news of the Mutiny struck England like a thunderbolt. As shocked Londoners learned that native troops stationed at Meerut and Umballah had set fire to the empty European barracks, the native infantry hospitals, the officers' quarters, and the Sepoy houses, the affairs of India absorbed their attention.¹ The seriousness of the disaster was such that the typical Englishman "could not think of anything else."² George Mifflin Dallas, the American minister at London, in describing the public excitement, declared that all eyes, hearts, and heads were fixed on India, and that accounts of savage, indiscriminate, and

¹Sidney Low and Lloyd C. Sanders, *The Political History of England during the Reign of Victoria (1837-1901)* (London, 1913), p. 152; *Illustrated London News*, June 13, 1857.

²Palmerston to Victoria, Piccadilly, June 26, 1857, *Alexandrina Victoria, Queen Victoria, The Letters of Queen Victoria: A Selection of Her Majesty's Correspondence between the Years 1837 and 1861*, 1st ser., ed. A. C. Benson and Viscount Esher; (3 vols.; London, 1908), III, 234; *Alexandrina Victoria, Queen Victoria's Early Letters*, ed. John Raymond (New York, 1964), p. 222.

fanatical butcheries increased daily as the circle of mutiny and murder widened.³

As the grim facts of the Mutiny became known, Englishmen throughout the United Kingdom began expressing their anxiety over the gravity of the situation.⁴ The Duke of Argyll, who, as Postmaster General, was a member of the Cabinet, deplored it as a military revolt, which Lord Charles Cavendish Fulke Greville, the diarist, believed that British imperialism had provoked the Mutiny. Englishmen, he observed, were willing to contribute more to crush the Sepoys in India than they had been to fight the Russians in the Crimea.⁵

At first, the queen and her government were skeptical that the Mutiny was so great as reported. The tales of massacre, they thought, had been exaggerated, but the British public was sufficiently intimidated to petition the government to decree a fast day.⁶ Victoria liked the idea because

³Dallas to Secretary of State Lewis Cass, London, Aug. 25, 1857, George Mifflin Dallas, *A Series of Letters from London*, ed. his daughter Julia Dallas (Philadelphia, 1869), p. 198; *The Times* (London), Sept. 21, 1857, p. 4. The British inhabitants of Calcutta petitioned Parliament to take some action against the Sepoy Mutiny. Granville to Canning, London Aug. 10, 1857, Fitzmaurice, *Second Earl Granville*, I, 255.

⁴Evelyn Ashley, *Life of Lord Palmerston* (London, 1876), pp. 348-349.

⁵Charles C. F. Greville, *Leaves from the Greville Diary*, ed. Philip Merrell (New York, n.d.), p. 790; George Douglas, *Autobiography and Memoirs of George Douglas, Eighth Duke of Argyll*, ed. the Dowager Duchess of Argyll (2 vols.; London, 1906), II, 92.

⁶Entry for Dec. 2, 1857, Greville, *The Greville Diary*, ed. Philip Whitwell Wilson (2 vols.; New York, 1927), II, 558; Dallas, *Letters from London*, pp. 186-187.

it paralleled her own desire for a day to express national support for her subjects in India who faced such great dangers. Viscount Henry John Temple Palmerston, the Whig Prime Minister, also approved the suggestion to set aside a day for "National Prayer and Humiliation," following the precedent established during the Crimean War. The queen, of course, accepted the proposal, and Palmerston planned the event with the Archbishop of Canterbury. On September 11, 1857, The Times (London) announced that the queen had designated October 7, 1857, National Humiliation Day to express public concern over the sad state of affairs in India.⁷

The British, moved by the prayer day and reports of massacre, became fanatical in their suggestions for quelling the Mutiny. An Indian commissary general, recently returned to England, accurately reflected this mood when he declared: "One thing is quite certain: that this country will concentrate all its energies against insurrection, first to put it down, second to revenge its cruelties, and third to reform its causes."⁸ Others recommended the reinforcement of the

⁷Longford, Queen Victoria, p. 280; Annual Register, XCIX (1857), 181-192; Palmerston to Victoria Bocket, Sept. 10, 1857, Victoria Letters, III, 313-314; Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, LXXXII (1858), 616; The Times (London), Sept. 11, 1857, 8-10; Palmerston also ordered Indians to observe this day, but Lord Canning refused to obey his instructions, declaring that British authorities should not disturb the natives' religion.

⁸W. F. Monypenny and George Earl Buckle, The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield (4 vols.; London, 1916), IV, 97; Dallas, Letters from London, p. 184.

British army in India. A survivor of the Mutiny expressed the attitude of most Englishmen in July, 1857, when he proposed:

Let every man taken in Delhi with arms in his hands be treated as Sir Henry Lawrence at Lucknow has treated the rebels there, and Delhi be razed to the ground, its puppet king publically tried and found guilty and publically executed. Then let the work of mercy and reorganization commence, after a searching inquiry into the causes of this terrible outbreak, and by God's help our empire in India will be more firmly established than ever.⁹

The public cry for vengeance reached such proportions that the usually restrained British called for an eye for an eye and a life for a life. The widely read Red Pamphlet declared that "as a preliminary measure it will be necessary, merciless as it may sound to English ears, to hunt down every mutineer. India will not be secure so long as a single man still remains alive."¹⁰ The Times momentarily lost its equanimity and published Vicar William Dews' sanguine appeal to his countrymen: "Punish to death every Sepoy who has been accessory to the murder of any officer or civilian."¹¹

⁹The Times (London), July 17, 1857, p. 10; Sir Spencer Walpole, A History of England from the Conclusion of the Great War in 1815 (6 vols.; London, 1912), XI, 308; Punch or the London Charivari, Oct. 10, 1857, p. 154. This article was published in Punch under the title of "Pity for the Poor Sepoys!"

¹⁰The Times (London), July 7, 1857, p. 7; Albert H. Imlah, Lord Ellenborough (Cambridge, 1939), p. 246. Vicar William Dews Letter to the editor of The Times, Suffolk, Aug. 10, 1857, published under the title of "Indian Mutinies."

¹¹The Times, Aug. 12, 1857, p. 7; Walpole, History of England, p. 310; "An Anglo-Indian View of Indian Crisis," Fraser's Magazine, LVII (March, 1858), 269.

By August, 1857, not one Englishman in ten thought that hanging or shooting fifty thousand mutineers was less than just.

When British soldiers in India conducted bloody reprisals against defeated Sepoys, Sir Erskine Perry, M.P. supported their actions, declaring:

For everyone who has treacherously joined in the ranks of the rebels or who has taken arms in hand, there can be and ought to be one penalty and that penalty is death. With regards, however, to those miscreants who have murdered women and children and perpetrated atrocities and horrors. . .inflict upon them a doom far worse than death.¹²

British troops, however, did not need the urging after they had defeated the mutineers in each district; volunteer hangmen would enter them to carry out summary executions without regard to sex or age. Later they boasted of the numbers which they had executed in an artistic manner.¹³ Sometimes these self-appointed vengeance squads would blow their victims from cannon, a practice which shocked Lord Canning and led him to complain to the London government that "aged women and children are sacrificed as well as those guilty of rebellion!"¹⁴

¹²Sir Erskine Perry, Feb. 12, 1858, in the Commons, Parl. Debates, CXLVII (185), 943-944.

¹³Herbert Paul, A History of Modern England (5 vols; New York, 1904), II, 137; Thompson and Garrett, British Rule in India, p. 453; Arthur Irwin Dasent, John Thadeus Delane Editor of The Times' His Life and Correspondence (2 vols; New York, 1908), I, 272.

¹⁴Edward Thompson and G. T. Garrett, Rise and Fulfillment of British Rule in India (London, 1934), p. 252; Walpole, History of England, p. 415.

In Delhi alone, more than three thousand men--twenty-nine of whom belonged to native ruling families--were executed.¹⁵

In England, meanwhile, Richard Cobden, Liberal M. P., humanitarian, and internationalist, urged his countrymen to return to the moderation that had made them a great nation. The blot on Britain's reputation caused by these atrocities, he admonished, would never be removed from the pages of history, unless Englishmen stopped wreaking their vengeance upon Indian natives and looked elsewhere for a solution. Lord Shaftesbury, Conservative member of Parliament, endorsed these views and charged that the British press, by exaggerating reports of Sepoy atrocities, had incited equally sanguine reprisals. Brought to contrition by the eloquent appeals of Cobden and Shaftesbury, the British public retreated from its initial bloodthirstiness and turned to the task of finding a permanent solution to the Indian problem.¹⁶

The first step toward ending the conflict was to reinforce the British army in India. Acting on the urgent request of generals in the field, the London cabinet dispatched 19,000 troops to Bengal and Punjab.¹⁷ Next, public scrutiny brought to light the misrule of the East India Company and emphasized

¹⁶Entry for December 2, 1857, Greville, Diary, II, 558.

¹⁷Victoria to Palmerston, Osborne, Aug. 22, 1857, Victoria, Letters, p. 243; Entry for Sept. 6, 1857, ibid., p. 793; Monypenny and Buckle, Life of Benjamin Disraeli, VI, 8a6, 560; The generals in the field were Sir Colin Campbell, Sir James Outram, and Sir Henry Havelock.

the need for reforming the government of India. When the Duke of Argyll denounced the Company for sacrificing the Indian commonwealth to its own profit and blamed it for provoking the Mutiny, he merely expressed what most Englishmen already had come to believe. The duke's indictment, moreover, was supported by Sir Thomas Erskins Perry, an Indian judge, who criticized the Company's exploitation of India's human and material resources. Both men urged the government to abolish the East India Company.¹⁸

The Tory press, after hearing the initial public response to the Mutiny, championed the popular clamor for Indian reform. Realizing that the fall of the Indian government could pull down with it the Whig government at home, Tory journals began to attack the Company's misrule of India. The Quarterly Review, after admonishing its readers to examine their consciences, declared:

It is essential. . . that the people of this country should clearly understand our position in India and should ascertain how far any misconduct or neglect on our part may have led to this terrible event.¹⁹

The Tories characterized the Mutiny as a national revolt. The Indians, they contended, hated their government and eventually conspired to overthrow British rule. "This estrangement was

¹⁸Bearce, British Attitude towards India, pp. 239-240; Argyll, Duke of Argyll, 11, 87, 786; Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, LXXXII (1857), 617; Connell, Regina vs. Palmerston (New York, 1961), p. 231.

¹⁹"British India," Quarterly Review, XCIV (1858), 225.

the principal cause of the hatred shown during the insurrection, which no impartial person can deny; . . . its removal is essential to the preservation of our Indian empire, which no statesman can question."²⁰

The Tory opposition, moreover, accused the East India Company of having confiscated property in the province of Oude without regard for India tenure customs. Such a policy, the Quarterly Review asserted, would create a class of English landed gentry in India between the native rulers and the cultivators of the land, a consequence which would mean ruin to the Indian aristocracy and a recurrence of insurrection. The remedy to the problem lay in the transference of the Company's rule to the crown.²¹

In answer to these Tory attacks, the Edinburgh Review, the chief Whig organ, argued that the Indian Mutiny was, in fact, a military revolt, not a national reaction to civil misgovernment. The contention that the uprising was the work of a pampered and trusted soldiery, not that of an oppressed and indignant people, was supported by John W. Kaye's History of the Sepoy War.²² The Mutiny, the Whigs countered, did not indicate that Indians hated the British

²⁰Ibid., pp. 238-240.

²¹Ibid., pp. 247-255, 260, 273-275; "India," Edinburgh Review, CVI (1857), 550; "Kaye's History of the Sepoy War," ibid., CXXIV (1866), 299-300; John W. Kaye, "The Indian Mutiny," Westminster Review, CXII (1879), 362.

²²"India," Edinburgh Review, CVI (1857), 545.

government, but that they resented poor military administration, such as that employed by Canning's predecessor as governor of India. The government of the colony, they insisted, must rest upon good will rather than military force.²³

Notwithstanding the Whig defense of its policies against Tory criticism, the Palmerston ministry realized for the first time that the Company's rule of India had serious defects. The cabinet finally concluded that the solution to the problem lay in changing the structure of the Indian government.

Queen Victoria found the Mutiny was "much more distressing" than the Crimean War and feared that it would bring down the Palmerston government, an occurrence she wished to prevent. In support of the prime minister, she quickly approved the sending of military reinforcements to India and urged him to consult the Duke of Cambridge, Britain's Commander-in-Chief, on the proper measures to take in this crisis. In accordance with the duke's suggestion, the government dispatched two regiments of foot soldiers to Madras, and Bombay, and two companies of artillery to each province.²⁴

Queen Victoria realized, of course, that the trouble stemmed from the double government of India. Though she requested Palmerston to remain in office to handle the problem,

²³Annual Register, XCIX (1857), 9-10; "The Second Derby Government," *Edinburgh Review*, CVII (1858), 58.

²⁴Brian Connell, *Regina vs. Palmerston*, pp. 246-247; *The Times*, Aug. 8, 1857, p. 5.

she imposed upon him two conditions: first, communication between the crown and the new government must come directly from the monarch, not from subordinates; secondly, there must be but one army--whether native, local, or general--with one discipline and command.²⁵ Encouraged by public and royal support, Palmerston agreed to challenge the East India Company, but he doubted that the situation in India would lend itself to immediate improvement. By December, 1857, however, he had reluctantly concluded that the Company must be abolished. To Greville, he confided:

The government is about to hurry into this measure as if the existing system had been the cause of the present Rebellion and conflict and that the one they propose to substitute would be much better and capable of repairing the mischief which the government of the Company has caused by its alleged mismanagement. I have no prejudice or partiality for the Company, but I believe any great change at this moment to be fraught with danger, and that the notion of improving the state of affairs by the abolition of what is called the double government a mere delusion.²⁶

Thus all parties, prodded by public opinion, finally agreed that Company rule should be ended. How Palmerston's proposal was carried out by Lord Derby, his Tory successor, will be related in the next chapter.

²⁵Victoria to Palmerston Windsor Castle, Dec., 1857, Victoria, Letters, III, 257-258.

²⁶Entry for Nov. 28, 1857, Greville, Memoirs: A Journal of the Reigns of King George IV, William IV, and Queen Victoria, ed. Henry Reeve (8 vols.; London, 1911), VIII, 138-139; Fitzmaurice, Life of Granville, pp. 262-265; entry for March 12, 1858, Greville, Diary, II, 564-565.

CHAPTER II.

PARLIAMENTARY REACTION, PART I:

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

Palmerston answered the public demand for reform of the Indian government by promising to abolish the East India Company's rule, a measure whose consequences for England were no less economic than political. As Sir Spencer Walpole observed, "India attracted a stream of gold to the East, which in ordinary years flowed from the East," but her real value to Britain exceeded her commercial worth. By providing jobs for a large number of British subjects, she added to the general wealth of England, and her strategic and political significance inspired the Whig Westminster Review to declare:

The political worth of India is like proving greatness to be great, or power, powerful. An empire larger and more populous than France, Austria, Spain and Prussia put together--with a revenue of twenty-seven millions--with full means within itself of defense and offense--situated so as to command all Asia and the whole ocean from the African Continent to the Malayan peninsula.¹

India, in short, played the role of the goose that laid the golden egg, and John Bull could not afford to lose her.

Lord Palmerston considered the issue of Indian reform so important that he gave it preference over that of increasing

¹"English Rule in India," Westminster Review, LXIX (1858), 111-112.



"IT WILL SOON BOIL!"

The constituencies at this time were apathetic on the Reform Question. Mr. Bright had been addressing numerous Meetings to elicit popular support.—1838.

Fig. 2--Punch cartoon on reform question

the British electorate. On February 12, 1858, he called upon the Commons to reorganize the government of India. The Company's rule in that land, he emphasized, had fallen prey to corrupt and unjust officials. Its structure, moreover, allowed a system of "double government," composed of a minister from Britain and a Court of Directors from India. According to the India Act of 1784, the minister (who was appointed by the crown, but was responsible to Parliament) headed a Board of Control, selected from the Parliamentary membership. It and the minister represented Britain's interests in the East India Company and Indian politics. The Court of Directors, an independent body which functioned as an administrative council, was composed of long-time British residents of India. Its interests, therefore, differed from those of the Board of Control. The result was confusion, for under the double government system the jurisdiction of the two councils frequently overlapped. During the debates of 1858 on the last India Bill, Benjamin Disraeli, conservative M. P. from Buckinghamshire, emphasized this problem when he said who was the government of India and to whom was he to look for the authority needed to administer that great empire.² This compound government was supposed to provide a system of checks and balances, but the two councils never

²Palmerston's speech, February 12, 1858, *Parl. Debates*, CXLVIII, 1279; Disraeli in the Commons, February 12, 1858, *ibid.*, col. 1392; William Nassau Molesworth, *History of England, from the Year 1832-1874* (London, 1878), 421.

were able to define clearly their respective duties nor to establish uniform administrative procedures. Thus the whole system resulted in confusion, inefficiency, and inconsistency.³

The Company's dual function as a commercial and political agency also prevented it from governing well. In the ensuing conflict of interest, honest and impartial administration was sacrificed to commercial privilege and profit, a situation which became worse after the establishment of the Board of Control. Aware of the problem, Palmerston called for legislation which would limit the political functions of the East India Company and reduce its commercial activities. He denied that he was prejudiced against the Company and insisted that his only aim was to correct existing inequities and redress grievances. To achieve this purpose, India, he promised, "shall be placed under the authority of the Crown, to be governed in the name of the Crown by responsible Ministers of the Crown, sitting in Parliament."⁴

Before Palmerston could introduce his India bill, however, Thomas Baring, a British financier and M. P., presented to the House a petition on behalf of the East India Company. He appealed to his colleagues not to change the Indian

³Palmerston's speech, February 12, 1858, *ibid.*, 1280; entry for Feb. 12, 1858, George Mifflin Dallas, *Diary of George Mifflin Dallas at the Court of St. James*, ed. Susan Dallas (Philadelphia, 1892), pp. 237-238.

⁴Palmerston's speech, February 12, 1858, *Parl. Debates*, CXLVIII, 1278; 1282; *Annual Register*, C (1858), 17.

constitution, denied the alleged evils of the double government, and contended that the Company's rule was efficient. A change, he argued, would be inexpedient.⁵

On February 18, 1858, Lord Palmerston introduced a bill to transfer the authority of the Company to the crown. The bill provided that

Instead of the Court of Directors and Court of Proprietors [Board of Control], there will be a President and a Council with a secretary, capable of sitting in a Parliament. The President will be a member of the Cabinet, and the organ of the government. The members of Council will be eight in number, nominated for eight years; they must either have served or resided in India a certain number of years. They will go out of office in rotation, two every second year.⁶

The bill, as expected, touched off debate on the issue of reforming the government of India. Colonel William Henry Sykes, a Tory M. P., soldier, and one of the directors of the East India Company, rose to defend the status quo. The Company's government, he contended, did not stand in the way of England's mission to convert the natives, as some people had charged. The bill, moreover, would make the crown's minister the despot of India, who could fill all the important state offices and reward indiscriminately both capable and incapable persons with positions of power. The President of the Board of Control, he observed, would also have the

⁵Thomas Baring speech, February 13, 1858, *Ibid.*, 1408.

⁶*Annual Register*, C (1858), 17; Monypenny and Buckle, *Life of Disraeli*, IV, 106; Justin McCarthy, *A History of Our Own Times*, (3 vols.; New York, 1901), II, 36.

power to veto any name proposed for the ministerial post, thereby securing the acceptance of a party man.

Sykes believed military reform, rather than the proposed political reorganization of India, would be more effective in settling the Indian problem. With the causes of the Sepoy Mutiny in mind, Sykes proposed that officers should have some knowledge of Indian civilization in order to prevent misunderstandings which could lead to a clash of eastern and western cultures.⁷ Sykes introduced a resolution which not only opposed any reform of the East India Company, but condemned the proposed transfer of authority to the crown as fraught with danger to the constitutional interests of England and perilous to the security of the Indian empire. In conclusion, he suggested that reform be postponed indefinitely, because it would be easier to accomplish at some future time, when passions had subsided.⁸

Sir Charles Wood, a Whig, replied for the minister and argued cogently for transferring the independent authority of the Court of Directors to the sole and exclusive authority of the crown's minister. He berated the double government system and urged that it be replaced by one; that the Indian government should be composed of a responsible minister of

⁷Sykes' speech of February 18, 1858, Parl. Debates, CXLVIII, 1623-1630; Annual Register, C (1858), 26.

⁸Sykes' speech of February 18, 1858, Parl. Debates, CXLVIII, 1153, later Sykes speech, 1635-1636, 1638; Annual Register, C (1858), 27.

the crown and a council consisting of experienced and knowledgeable persons. Sir Charles tactfully refrained from accusing anyone of creating the Indian problem, but he emphasized the need for reform:

I impute no blame to the government at home or in India for what has happened. A great crisis has occurred by which a serious "shake" has been given to the government of that country. It is necessary therefore, that in looking forward, we should, to use an old expression, set our houses in order, and put the government on such a footing as may insure the best administration of affairs.⁹

Sir Henry Willoughby, a Whig M. P., supported Wood's resolution, but with some reservations. After reviewing the history of governmental errors and misjudgment, which had pervaded all Parliamentary debate on Indian problems, he admitted the existence of an anomaly in the Indian government, but like many Englishmen, he questioned whether that was sufficient reason for abolishing a long established system like the government of India. Willoughby asked, Is the anomaly of double government without compensating advantages? Are its checks against rash innovations only crude legislation?¹⁰ When he voiced doubts about the efficacy of the reform measure, the Opposition cheered, but the Commons passed the India bill on first reading by the substantial

⁹Speech of Sir Wood, February 18, 1858, Parl. Debates, CXLVIII (1858), 1643-1645.

¹⁰Annual Register, C (1858), 28; speech of February 18, 1858, Parl. Debates, CXLVIII (1858), 1651-1654.

majority of 145 votes (318-173).¹¹ The bill died, however, with the fall of the Palmerston ministry on February 21, 1858, an event brought about by general dissatisfaction with the prime minister's abrasive personality, high-handed methods, and foreign policy. Notwithstanding the claim of Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, the introduction of the India Bill had nothing to do with his forced resignation.¹²

The Palmerston cabinet was replaced by Lord Derby's Tory ministry. Benjamin Disraeli, the most prominent figure of the Conservative party, became Chancellor of Exchequer, and

¹¹Knight, Popular History of England, IX, 252; McCarthy, History of Our Times, II, 87; Ashley, Life of Lord Palmerston, p. 142; entry for March 7, 1858, Dallas, Diary, p. 255, J. Frank Bright, History of England (4 vols.; London, 1907), IV, 330; speech of Feb. 18, 1858, Parl. Debates, CXLIII, 1715.

¹²Speech of Palmerston, February 21, 1858, Parl. Debates, CXLVIII, 1757, 1758; William Robertson, Life and Times of the Right Hon. John Bright (London, 1877), p. 330; R. J. Evans, The Victorian Age, 1815-1915 (London, 1957), p. 154; Charles C. F. Greville, ed., Great World Portraits and Scenes from the Greville Memoirs, ed. Louis Kronenberger (New York, 1963), pp. 331-332; W. Baring Pemberton, Lord Palmerston (London, 1954), pp. 252-253; D. C. Somervell, Disraeli and Gladstone (New York, 1926), p. 166. "John Company to John Bull," Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, LXXXII (January-June, 1858), 491; cf. The Spectator, February 27, 1857; "Palmerston Out," Little Living Age, LVII (June, 1858), 227-288; Wood, Nineteenth Century Britain, p. 230; They Saw it Happen, T. Charles Edwards and B. Richardson (Oxford, 1858), p. 268; Robert Blake, Disraeli (New York, 1967), pp. 379, 381; Cline Bigham, The Prime Ministers of Britain, 1721-1921 (London, 1923), p. 279.

James Howard Harris, the third Earl of Malmesbury, held the office of foreign secretary.¹³

Since the new government agreed with the policy set forth in the first India bill, Disraeli, who was also leader of the House, introduced on March 26, 1858, a second East India bill, which the Earl of Ellenborough, President of the Board of Control, had drafted. After paying a tribute to the Company for its historic services to Great Britain and India, he outlined the structure of the proposed government of India: executive authority would be vested in a minister of the crown, who would be styled, President of the Council of India; his council would consist of eighteen persons, nine nominated by the crown, and the other half chosen by popular election in England. Of the second group of nine, four would be elected by a constituency of persons who either had seen service in India or possessed financial interests there. The remaining five members of the council would be chosen by the principal seats of trade and industry in England: London, Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow, and Belfast. Disraeli claimed that this "splendid" arrangement would give a

¹³Speech of Palmerston, February 21, 1858, *Parl. Debates*, CXLIX, 818; Monypenny and Buckle, *Life of Disraeli*, IV, 128; McCarthy, *History of Our Times*, II, 87; Knight *Popular History of England*, IX, 353; Law and Sanders, *History of England*, XI, 165; *Annual Register*, C (1858), 69-70. Edward Stanley, fourteenth Earl of Derby (1799-1869), entered Parliament in 1827, and in 1833, held his first cabinet post. In 1846 he broke with Peel and joined the Tories. Subsequently, he became their leader. In 1851, he became the Earl of Derby upon his father's death.

democratic flavor to the council and preserve its independence from the ministry.¹⁴

The bill, nonetheless, met an unfavorable reception in the Commons, which defeated it on first reading. One of the reasons for its defeat was the Gladstone-Disraeli feud, so manifest in the debates on this issue. Commenting on the animosity which each displayed toward the other, The Observer noted that "language almost transgressing the bounds of decency was used and it seemed at times as if the men would . . . come to blows."¹⁵ Another factor was the opposition of Lord Palmerston, who aspired to return to office. Disraeli, of course, understood his motives, but lacked the votes to save the India bill from another defeat on its second reading (April 19).¹⁶

In their bid to return to power, the Liberals (Whigs) received assistance from an unexpected source--Ellenborough--who committed a glaring indiscretion that embarrassed the Tories. At the beginning of May, a proclamation issued by Lord Charles Canning, the Governor General of India, was

¹⁴Speech of the Chancellor of Exchequer, March 26, 1858, Parl. Debates, CXLIX (1858), 824-825; Monypenny and Buckle, Life of Disraeli, IV, 128-129.

¹⁵Monypenny and Buckle, Life of Disraeli, IV, 128-129.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 141; Disraeli's speech, April 19, 1858, Parl. Debates, CXLIX, 1348-1349; entry for May 10, 1858; Thomas Richard Metcalf, "Victorian Liberalism and the Indian Empire: The Impact of 1857 on British Policy in India," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1959), pp. 185-187; Greville, Journal, VIII, 191.

published in England. Addressed to the chiefs and inhabitants of Oude after the fall of Lucknow, it declared that the property of rebels would be confiscated and their lives forfeited, but that those who surrendered immediately would be spared and their land protected.¹⁷ Lord Ellenborough and Disraeli, repelled by what they considered the severity of Canning's policy, condemned his Oude proclamation. Ellenborough informed Canning.

We desire that you will mitigate, in practice, the stringent severity of the decree of confiscation you have issued against the landowners of Oude. We desire to see the British authority in India rest upon the willing obedience of a contented people. There cannot be contentment where there is general confiscation.¹⁸

This incident instigated a House debate over the legality of Lord Ellenborough's dispatch to Canning. The liberal opposition contended that, since neither the queen nor the cabinet had approved the document, it was null and void. Ellenborough, of course, affirmed that his instructions were perfectly legal. To justify his action he published the Oude dispatch and sent copies immediately to Lord Granville (the leader of the Opposition in the House of Lords) and John Bright, the principal radical critic of the Indian government in the Commons. A public airing of this issue in Parliament was inevitable.

¹⁷Annual Register, C (1858), 83-84; Speech of Palmerston, April 19, 1858, Parl. Debates, CXLIX, 1923.

¹⁸Ellenborough's speech, April 19, 1858, Parl. Debates, CL (1858), 932-322.

On May 20, 1858, Disraeli supported Ellenborough in the House by denouncing Canning's proclamation. But Viscount Goderich (John Fredrick Robinson, first Earl of Ripon) defended the governor general's policy. It was not cruel, he argued, but merciful.¹⁹ Had not Lord Dalhousie, the previous governor general, established confiscation as the punishment for revolt? Canning's proclamation, therefore, was only the consequence of Dalhousie's policy.²⁰ The liberal defense of Canning was so persuasive that the public in general came to view the attacks upon him as unjust. The fall of the government appeared imminent.

On May 14, Edward Cardwell, Liberal M. P., moved for a resolution condemning Ellenborough and supporting Canning. (Lord Shaftesbury introduced a similar resolution in the Lords, where it was defeated by a majority of nine.) The debate in the Commons lasted four nights, and during that interval, Ellenborough resigned and Lord Edward Stanley, Derby's son, assumed his office. Cardwell then withdrew his motion, and the attack on the government collapsed.²¹

¹⁹Speech of Viscount Goderich, May 20, 1858, *ibid.*, 934; Albert H. Imlah, Lord Ellenborough (Harvard, 1939), pp. 257-258; Monypenny and Buckle, Life of Disraeli, IV, 142-143; Illustrated London News, May 29, 1858.

²⁰Monypenny and Buckle, Life of Disraeli, IV, 136-137, 164; Annual Register, C (1858), 114; Elit, Palmerston, pp. 190-192. Lord Shaftesbury, though a member of the Conservative party, frequently supported Palmerston.

²¹Annual Register, C (1858), 115.

Stanley and Disraeli were determined to get the third India bill passed by the House, but William Gladstone was equally determined to defeat it, partly to spite Disraeli and partly to support Palmerston's efforts to unseat the Tories. On June 7, 1858, Gladstone introduced a resolution designed to delay its passage. Gladstone suggested the council be chosen from the Court of Directors in order to take advantage of their experience at this critical moment in the history of India. In his opinion, this new council of directors should govern India in the name of Her Majesty, under the superintendence of a responsible minister until the end of the next session of Parliament.²²

Gladstone, however, emphasized the two necessary elements of India reform: the transfer of governmental functions from the Company to the crown and the appointment of a responsible minister to govern the state. He also proposed the removal of the ambivalent double government system by making the present minister of the crown (the President of the Board of Control) responsible for Indian affairs. Lord Stanley replied that he was fully aware of the problem of legislating for India at this crucial time, but considered further delay an obstacle to the creation of a just and efficient government in India. He objected, too, to reconstituting the Court of Directors as a provisional council. He considered this

²²Speech of June 7, 1858, *Parl. Debates*, CL, 1613; *Annual Register*, C (1858), 114.

provision a strange combination of weakness and incapacity when the interest of all England had been aroused for twelve months. After a long debate on the same day, the House defeated Gladstone's amendment by a vote of 285 to 110.²³

The Commons now considered the creation of a council to assist the "Secretary of State for India," as the third bill proposed to call the royal governor. A. J. Roebuck, a Whig M. P., inquired how responsibilities would be divided between the Secretary of State and his council. Assuming that the council would have few duties, Roebuck moved to delete the word "council" from the India bill. Lord Stanley answered that only two objections could be made to the ministry's India bill; either that the council or the crown minister had too much power, but good relations between the two, he observed, would provide a peaceful solution to the problem of assigning responsibility. Roebuck withdrew his amendment, and the House took up such questions as the size of the council, the qualifications of its members, and their appointment, removal, salaries, and privileges.²⁴

The next day (June 24), the House continued its debate. Lord Stanley opened the proceedings with a defense of the basic reforms which the bill provided: the transfer of the government of India to the crown and the administration of

²³Stanley in the Commons, June 7, 1858, *Parl. Debates*, CL, 1957-1961; Monypenny and Buckle, *Life of Disraeli*, IV, 165-166.

²⁴Speech of June 24, 1858, *Parl. Debates*, CL, 2007, 2191-2192.

Indian affairs by a responsible minister, entitled the Secretary of State for India, who would be assisted by a council of fifteen. These councillors, he recommended should hold life appointments, the Court of Directors to elect seven from persons now in the service of the East India Company, and Her Majesty to nominate the remaining eight. In the ensuing debate, John Bright criticized the composition of the council, but announced that his desire to reform the government of India so exceeded his dislike of this particular measure that he would support it. When no further amendments were offered the bill was read a second time. After several committees were established to discuss the controversial issues, a vote was taken. The bill passed its second reading by a comfortable margin: 227 to 165.²⁵

When the Commons considered the third India bill for the third time on July 8, 1858, Gladstone suggested the addition of a limiting clause which declared that "Her Majesty's forces in the East Indies shall not be employed in any military operation beyond the external frontier of Her Majesty's Indian possession without the consent of Parliament to the purpose thereof." Lord Stanley accepted the amendment, despite Palmerston's objections to it. Lord John Russell that the provision should read, "Her Majesty's forces maintained out of the revenue of India." The House approved

²⁵Speech of June 24, 1858, *ibid.*, CLI, 315, 367-369, 338, 370; Annual Register, C (1858), 121.

this revised amendment by a vote of 152 to 46. The House of Lords subsequently offered several amendments and on July 29 returned the bill to the Commons. The next day Sir James Graham criticized the Lords for reducing the life tenure of Councillors to a ten-year-term. Palmerston, too, attacked the leaders of the Commons (Disraeli and Stanley) and argued that both should resign as they had promised to do if the Lords amended the bill. The Commons criticized all the Lords' amendments, but especially those which changed the tenure of Councillors and eliminated the use of competitive examinations for military cadets in the Indian army. That same day (July 30), the House rejected these amendments by a vote of 98-53 and restored the language of its original version.²⁶

Lord Stanley, in résumé, played the leading role in securing House passage of the India bill, the nucleus of the Indian Reform Act of 1858. Though it was Palmerston's brain child, Stanley had adopted it as his own and pushed it through the Commons. Another factor which led to the passage of the India bill was the determination of the House to put an end to the double government. The will of Parliament was to make the governor of India responsible, and put an end to the Court of Directors. As the Annual

²⁶Graham in the Commons, July 30, 1858, *ibid.*, col. 2336; Palmerston's speech, *ibid.*, cols. 2338-2340, 2347.

Register observed after the bill's passage, it was "more the Bill of the House of Commons than that of the Ministry."²⁷ Some credit, of course, goes to the Lords for their constructive amendments, the subject of the next chapter.

²⁷Annual Register, C (1858), 130.

CHAPTER III

PARLIAMENTARY REACTION, PART II:

THE HOUSE OF LORDS

The Sepoy Mutiny aroused the Lords, like the Commons, to grant the queen's request of December 3, 1857, for a "bill to transfer the government of India from the East India Company to the crown." While the upper house had nothing to do with formulating its original text, the Lords played an important role in drafting its final version.

Before Prime Minister Palmerston could submit his India bill, the Company petitioned the Lords, as it had the House, not to molest its control of India. On February 11, 1858, Earl Grey,¹ introduced the petition, signed by all of the directors, describing the Company's services to India and England. Contending that its contributions were indisputable, Grey opposed the ministry on this issue, though he himself was a Liberal (Whig) and a former cabinet minister. Grey argued that since the Sepoy Mutiny was a military uprising, the political policies of the Company could not have caused it. The Company, he admitted, had faults, but Parliament should correct them, not abolish the Company's rule. The

¹Henry George Grey, third Earl Grey (1802-1894)--whose father had directed the passage of the Reform Bill of 1832--had been secretary of war and the colonies in the Melbourne and Russell cabinets.

Lords, however, ignored his petition and waited for Palmerston to introduce his India bill.

On February 12, it will be recalled, the prime minister introduced his India bill in the Commons, where it passed its first reading, but died ten days later when Palmerston met defeat on the Conspiracy bill. The Lords, of course, had no opportunity to study this measure.

After Lord Derby had formed his second ministry (February 25), Disraeli and Ellenborough drafted a second Indian bill, which they presented to the House on March 26. In April, the Lords, no less than the Commons, became involved in the acrimonious debate over Canning's Oude proclamation and Ellenborough's dispatch to the governor general. The Whigs, of course, hoped to generate enough criticism of the government to overthrow the Derby ministry.²

On May 14, the Lords debated Ellenborough's dispatch. In defense of Canning, the Earl of Shaftesbury argued that

Lord Canning has been acting all along in a spirit of kindness, mercy and patriotism. . . . Why, my Lords, to publish such a dispatch at such a time was little better than madness. I believe that it may have the effect of encouraging those already in arms against us to a protracted resistance, if even it may not excite others to rebel. . . .³

²William Robertson, *Life of John Bright*, pp. 350-351; C.H.B.F.P., II, 401; Ashley, *Life and Corresp. of Palmerston*, II, 352-353; Monypenny and Buckle, *Life of Disraeli*, IV, 111-113; *Annual Register*, C (1858), 33-45;

³Speech of May 12, 1858, *Parl. Debates*, CL, 596-598.

George Leveson Gower, second Earl of Granville, a Whig, argued that the government, by not giving Canning the opportunity to defend his actions, had increased the difficulty of governing India.⁴ Subsequently, Shaftesbury charged the Tory ministry that

By publishing this dispatch, you have left the Governor General the externals of power, but you have taken away from him the whole essence of power. You must not wonder if these same people turn round and refuse to reverence that puppet that you yourself have taught them to insult. Something must be done, and that speedily, to restore the dignity and position of Her Majesty's representative in India. And that which must be done is this--without delay, there must go out a manifestation to the Governor General and to the people of India that this conduct is not sanctioned by the voice of Parliament any more than it is sanctioned by the voice of a generous and grateful people.⁵

Shaftesbury also accused the Tory ministry of having treated the British public shabbily and called for its resignation. He informed Cardwell in the House that he, too, regarded Ellenborough's dispatch as a blunder, which threatened to undermine the authority of the British government and thereby increase the difficulty of governing India at this time.⁶

Faced by hostile motions in both houses, Lord Ellenborough resigned to save the government from almost certain

⁴Annual Register, C (1858), 57-58.

⁵Speech of May 14, 1858, Parl. Debates, CL, 599; cf. Fitzmaurice, Life of Granville, I, 304-306.

⁶Speech of May 14, 1858, Parl. Debates, CL, 599-600; Fitzmaurice, Life of Granville, I, 306.

defeat. In the Lords, Shaftesbury's resolution lost by only nine votes, a division which indicated the strength of the Opposition.⁷

After Cardwell had withdrawn his motion of censure, the Whigs in the upper house disagreed over what course of action they should take next. Some thought that the Indian bill was so detestable it should be opposed at all cost, while others (including Lansdowne and Granville) questioned the wisdom of opposition, unless a majority--which would force Derby's resignation--appeared certain.⁸ Lord Ellenborough, realizing that his party's ascendancy was at stake, took the blame for the dispatch and resigned. But the Whigs' hope to bring down the Derby cabinet was premature. The second India bill, the brainchild of Ellenborough, died in the House with his resignation (May, 1858). After Ellenborough's resignation, Lord Edward Stanley, Earl Derby's son, became President of the Board of Control and sponsored the third India bill in the Commons.

On June 18, 1858, Henry Petty Fitzmaurice, the Marquess of Lansdowne, asked their lordships why the Indian question had not come in the upper house weeks ago. He proposed to his colleagues that the resolutions already approved by the

⁷Charles C. F. Greville, Greville Memoirs, ed. Henry Reeve (8 vols.; New York, 1911), VIII, 202.

⁸Entry for March 29, 1858, Argyll, Memoirs, II, 112-113. Henry Thomas Petty Fitzmaurice, was the Fourth Marquis of Lansdowne (1816-1888). He was Under Secretary of State of Foreign Affairs under Palmerston from 1856-1858.

Commons should be communicated to the Lords without waiting for the passage of the bill. James Howard Harris, the Earl of Malmesbury, foreign secretary, requested Lansdowne to hold his question until Lord Derby, the prime minister, was present in the House.⁹

The Lords received the Indian bill on July 9, 1858, and Derby proposed to proceed at once to consider it in committee, and set July 15 as the date of its second reading.¹⁰ Shaftesbury, meanwhile presented another petition from the East India Company, opposing the third Indian bill. He denied having any sympathy with the petition but contended that the Lords should hear the Company's case. Although the petition eloquently described the services of the Company to England the Lords let it lie on the table.¹¹

On July 15, Derby opened the debate on the Indian bill's second reading. In urging its passage, he identified Ellenborough as the bill's chief architect and cited his earlier services as governor general of India. The Lords referred the bill to committee on the following day.¹² On July 16, the Lords, sitting as a committee of the whole, discussed the bill. Lord Broughton, a Whig, bitterly criticized the

⁹Speech of June 18, 1858, Parl. Debates, CLI, 1-2; Malmesbury in the Lords, June 18, 1858, ibid., cols. 2-3.

¹⁰Derby speaking in the Lords, July 9, 1858, ibid., col. 1146.

¹¹Shaftesbury's speech, July 15, 1858, ibid., col. 1447; "Petition of East India Company," Journals of the House of Commons and Lords, CXII, 405.

¹²Speech of July 15, 1858, ibid., cols. 1447-1448.

creation of the council, which would, he thought, increase administrative problems rather than lessen them. Alleging that the Council was calculated to ensure the greatest quantity of strife and difference of opinion, Broughton appealed to the Lords not to pass the bill until his duties and those of the council were clearly defined. He declared that he had no fear of trusting one man with the government of 180,000,000 people, since one man--the prime minister--was responsible for governing a great many more than that.¹³ He would rather intrust the management of affairs, to one intelligent and honest person that he knew, than he would to half a dozen men with whom he was unfamiliar.

Derby replied that the council was constitutional and its powers and duties were clearly indicated in the bill. The proposed Council of India was established on a basis totally different from that of any of the existing governing boards of that colony. The secretary of state assigned duties to the council's members according to his judgment of what was beneficial to the public service. He had the authority to divide the council into committees to oversee the details of administration and to obtain the assistance and advice of competent persons. Derby contended that the proposed offices of secretary of state and council member

¹³Lord Broughton speaking in the Lords, July 16, 1858, *ibid.*, 1561-1566; *Illustrated London News*, July 17, 1858; "Lords Summoned and House in Committee," *Journal of Commons and Lords*, CXII, 417.

paralleled those of the existing minister of India and his councillors, created by Ellenborough. The secretary of state had the privilege of using persons who had experience in Indian affairs. Derby, therefore, appealed to the Lords to follow the lead of the Commons in creating the Office of Secretary of State and an advisory council. He explained that the size of the council--fifteen--had been determined without the slightest desire to provide places for specific individuals, but because that many was thought to be necessary for the efficient discharge of the council's duties. The Marquess of Clanricade suggested the insertion of the words, "not more than" before fifteen (members). Derby replied that Ellenborough believed that at least fifteen members were necessary for the council to discharge efficiently its functions. At his request, the Lords rejected Clanricade's amendment and approved a council of fifteen members.¹⁴

The other provision of the bill against which Ellenborough protested was that which conferred life appointments on members of the council. He preferred the provision of Palmerston's bill, which stipulated tenure for a term of years only, since there was no guarantee that an individual would remain fit throughout his entire life. A term of five years, he thought, would be more satisfactory, because it

¹⁴Speech of July 16, 1858, *ibid.*, cols. 1577-1579; Clanricade's speech, July 16, 1858, *ibid.*, col. 1578.

would enable the government and the council to eliminate three members each year. Ellenborough concluded his speech by moving that members of the council be appointed for five-year terms. Lord Derby agreed with Ellenborough that it was impossible for fifteen councillors to serve for life, no matter how capable and vigorous each was, but he preferred ten terms, since the longer tenure assured a more independent council than the shorter one. Lord Granville thought that the difference of five years was of no great importance, so long as there were some restrictions, a contention that Derby denied. When the Lords divided on this issue (July 16, 1858) they defeated Ellenborough's amendment by a vote of 50 to 35, and approved that of Derby, establishing ten-year terms.¹⁵

The Lords next debated the issue of conflict of interest of the councillors. Derby insisted that the council's business must be the primary concern of its members and must take precedence over all other matters. The Earl of Clarendon, who had held the office of foreign secretary in the Aberdeen and Palmerston cabinets, asked the prime minister if he thought persons elected to the council should give up their banking or trading interests. Derby answered that if their personal attention were required to operate such a business,

¹⁵Ellenborough's speech, July 16, 1858, *ibid.*, cols. 1580-1581; Granville's speech, July 16, 1858, *ibid.*, col. 1582; Derby in the Lords, July 16, 1858, *ibid.*

the work of the council, indeed, would suffer. In such a case, the individual should be disqualified from membership on the council. Lord Stanley of Alderly supported Lord Derby's view that men engaged in commercial transactions ought not to have seats on the council. Lord Chelmsford, the Lord Chancellor, objected:

Persons in trade might be the best members of the Council. At all events they ought not to disqualify persons who might be otherwise qualified for the duties of the office.

The Lords, however, supported the prime minister and voted 50 to 35 to exclude persons with time consuming business interests from serving on the council.¹⁶

The other important issue debated in the House of Lords concerned Derby's amendment which would invest the crown with the civil service patronage. Granville opposed the motion and advocated instead the maintenance of the competitive examination system established in 1853. Derby explained that the proposed alternation would not affect the competitive system, but only corrected an administrative infringement of the royal prerogative. When the Lords divided on July 16, the prime minister's proposal passed in the committee-of-the-whole. It read:

All appointments to cadetship, naval and military, and all admissions to service not herein expressly provided for, shall be vested in Her Majesty; and the names of the persons to be from

¹⁶Lord Stanley of Alderly's speech, July 16, 1858, *ibid.*, col. 1585; Lord Chancellor's speech, July 16, 1858, *ibid.*

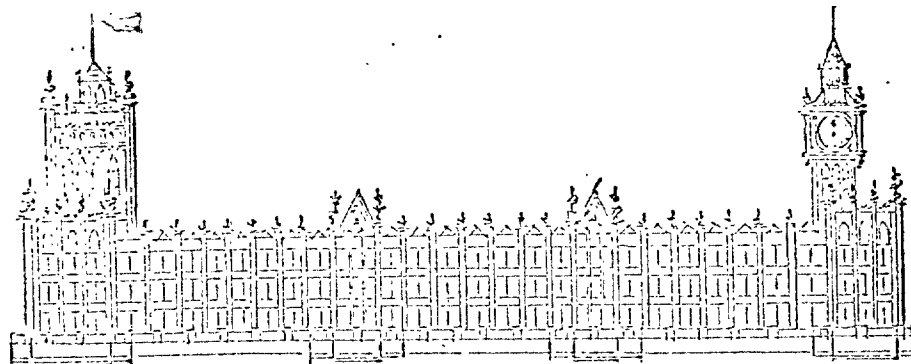
time to time recommended for such cadetships and service shall be submitted to Her Majesty by the Secretary of State.¹⁷

When the Lords again considered amendments to the India bill, on July 19, Ellenborough called for the abolition of the use of competitive examinations in the selection of officers for the Indian Army, denouncing the practice as the most dangerous and democratic of all modern innovations. By the narrow margin of only seven votes (41 to 34), the Lords approved the amendment which authorized the secretary in state in council to nominate all candidates for military cadetship in India. The Lords also debated fixing the number of the Council at seventeen--two for the secretary of state and one for every member of his council--but that each nominee must be approved by the secretary in council.¹⁸ The Earl of Albemarle opposed this amendment. The British public, he asserted, would not allow Parliament to hand over the patronage of India to the secretary in council.¹⁹ At this, Derby proposed that the patronage be given to a board consisting of not less than three members selected by the Council of India. One-eighth of the patronage was to be exercised by the secretary of state and seven-eighths by this board. Despite Granville's protests, the Lords approved Derby's

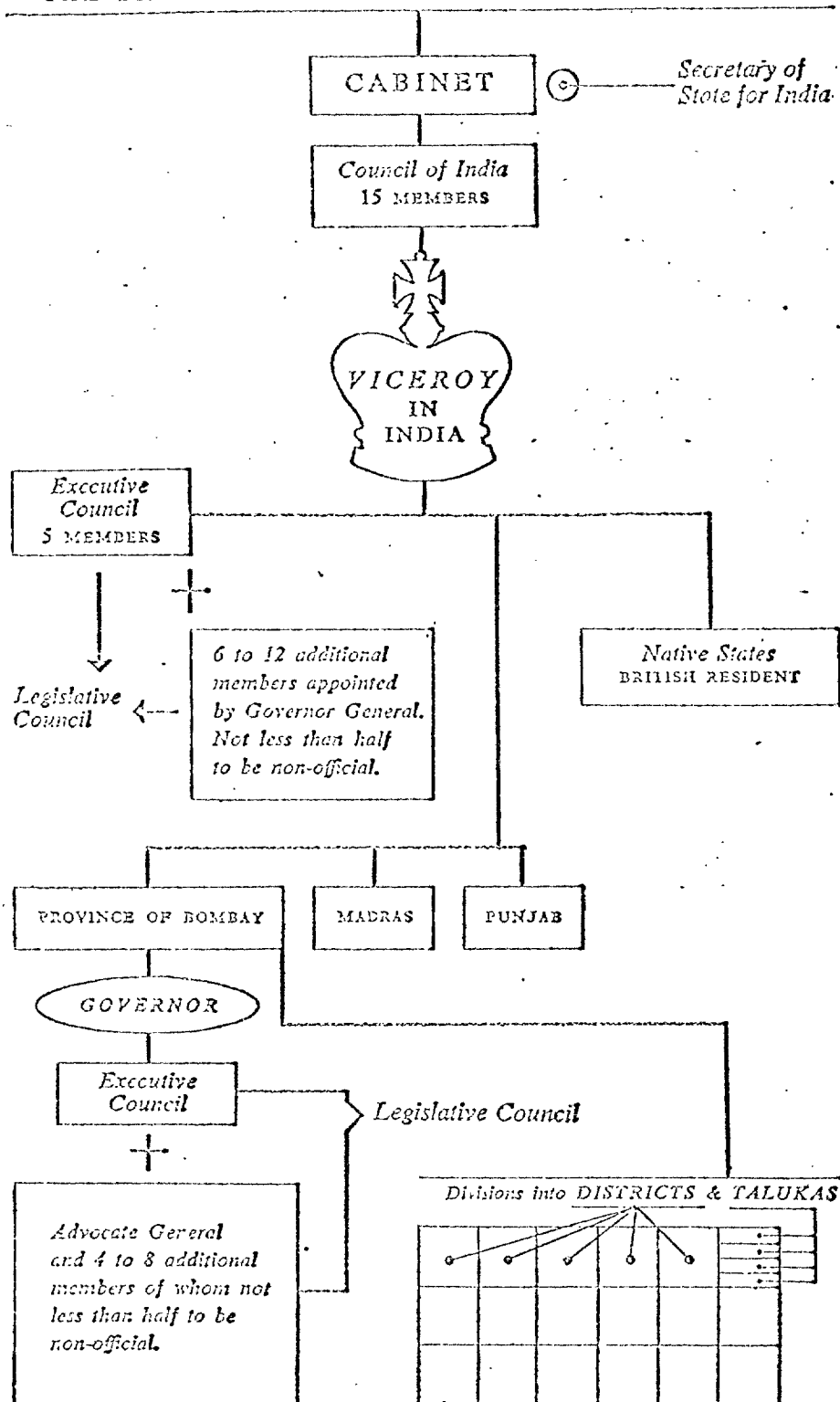
¹⁷Lord Derby in the Lords, July 16, 1858, *ibid.*, cols. 1588-1589.

¹⁸Ellenborough's speech, July 18, 1858, *ibid.*, col. 1688.

¹⁹Albemarle's speech, *ibid.*, cols. 1689-1690.



THE BRITISH PARLIAMENT IN LONDON, ENGLAND



The Structure of British Rule after 1857

board. Despite Granville's protests, the Lords approved Derby's amendment.²⁰

The same day (July 19), the prime minister moved that

Except for preventing or repealing actual invasion of Her Majesty's Indian possession, as under other sudden and urgent necessity, the revenues of India shall not, without the consent of Parliament, be applicable to defray the expenses of a military operation carried on beyond the . . . frontiers of . . . [India] by Her Majesty's forces charged upon such revenues.²¹

Again Granville opposed the change, arguing that the Indian army should not be used beyond the frontiers of India without the consent of Parliament. Derby replied that the real issue, was whether Indian troops should be used only for Indian interests or for imperial interests. His amendment would not prevent the crown from using Indian troops, but would require Her Majesty to obtain Parliamentary approval of the expense involved. The question called, the Lords-in-committee approved the prime minister's motion, 52 to 36.²²

On July 23, the Indian bill had its third reading in the Lords, who again offered amendments. Lord John Wrottesley, moved that the councillors not be required to have served or resided in India for a specified length of time. This

²⁰Derby's speech in the Lords, July 19, 1858, ibid., cols. 1690-1691; Granville's speech, ibid.

²¹"Bill to be printed or amended," Journal of Commons and Lords, CXII, 414.

²²Derby's speech, July 19, 1858, ibid., CLI, 1696-98; Granville's speech, ibid., cols. 1896-1897.

provision, he protested, hampered freedom of election by disqualifying many competent and qualified persons. Lord Albemarle, George Thomas Ceppel, M.P., supported Wrottesby's amendment, but the Earl of Shaftesbury insisted on the residence requirement in the bill. The clause he contended, would assure the election of experienced persons to the council, while the remaining six members need not have lived in India at all. The Lords rejected Wrottesby's amendment.²³

Derby also moved on the 23rd that the phrase--"with the concurrence of a majority of the council"--be added to the provision which regulated the filling of vacancies on the Council of India. The amendment was necessary, he argued, in order to make the secretary of state responsible to the council. Despite Ellenborough's opposition, the Lords approved the amendment and that same day passed the India bill as amended, and returned it to the Commons.²⁴

Only July 30, 1858, the Commons, despite misgivings, approved the amended India bill and sent it to the queen for her approval.²⁵ Victoria gave her assent on August 2, 1858. Speaking to Parliament on her behalf, the Lord Chancellor declared:

²³Albemarle-Shaftesbury debate, July 23, 1858, ibid., cols. 2007-2009.

²⁴Debate on India bill, July 23, 1858, ibid., cols. 2008-2019.

²⁵Bill returned from the Commons, Journal of the Commons and Lords, CXII, 463.

Her Majesty has given Her willing assent to the Act which you have passed for transferring to Her the Indian Dominions; and Her Majesty hopes to be enabled so to discharge the high functions which she has assumed, as, by a just and impartial administration of the law, . . . to establish and strengthen Her empire in India.²⁶

Both houses of Parliament reacted responsibly to the Sepoy Mutiny; when the Lords finally got the opportunity to act, they improved the House-passed measure by adding several amendments which made it more effective. The India Act of August 2, 1858, transferred government from the East India Company to the crown, and a secretary of state replaced the President of the Board of Control. The new secretary of state got assistance from the "Council of India," consisting of fifteen members, of whom the crown appointed eight and the directors of the East Indian Company elected seven. The new council combined the functions of the old Board of Control and Court of Directors. The majority of the persons appointed to the council had served or resided in India for ten years before the appointment. No member of the council could sit or vote in Parliament. All councillors would hold office "during good behavior [i.e., for life], and could be removed only on petition by both houses of Parliament."²⁷

²⁶Ibid., 502-503; Lord Chancellor in the Lords, August 2, 1858, ibid., col. 2370.

²⁷Government of India Act, BFSP, XLIX (1858), 744-745; c.f., CHBE, V, 208.

CHAPTER IV

A RETROSPECT

The Spoy Mutiny of 1857-1858 constitutes a turning point in Anglo-Indian relations. Its most important fundamental cause was British interference in native religious beliefs and customs. But, if the British were intolerant of non-Christian religions and the practice of Suttee and infanticide, Hindus and Muslims were equally intolerant of English efforts at reform or conversion. The Company's mismanagement of political and economic affairs also contributed to Indian dissatisfaction with British rule.

The Mutiny was not a national uprising, and only a few provinces were affected by it. Few civilians participated in the insurrection, and warrior tribes like the Sikhs and Gurkhas even helped quell it. The Mutiny, therefore, was a military, not a national, revolt.

The reports of mutiny and murder first stunned Englishmen and then incited them to demand vengeance, and relief for the victims. Later they blamed the Company and its "double-government" system for provoking the Mutiny and demanded reform to prevent the recurrence of revolt. Even an undemocratic Parliament was sensitive to public opinion, and both Liberals and Conservatives were quick to take up the cry for Indian reform. Queen Victoria and her Liberal

(Whig) prime minister, Palmerston, promised that the government of India would be transferred to the crown.

On February 12, 1858, Palmerston introduced the first India bill which received a favorable reception in the Commons but died in that house when the Whig ministry met defeat on the Conspiracy bill and resigned.

Lord Derby's Tory cabinet soon submitted its own India bill to the House, but its author, Lord Ellenborough, President of the Board of Control, became involved in an embarrassing dispute with Lord Canning, the popular Governor General of India. To save the ministry, Ellenborough resigned, and Derby withdrew the second India bill. Lord Stanley, Ellenborough's successor, immediately shouldered the responsibility for Indian reform and introduced the third bill which he and Disraeli guided through the House to its final passage. After being denied the opportunity to debate the first two India bills, an impatient House of Lords received the third on July 10, 1858. The Lords approved it on July 23 and returned it to the Commons, which on July 30 concurred with the Lords' amendments. On August 2, the bill received the royal assent and became law as the India Act.

The Act provided few changes in the central administration of India; for the most part, the machinery of government worked as it had under Company rule and remained under the direction of the same individuals. There were, however, some slight changes in titles. The governor general, for example,

added to his title that of viceroy to signify that he represented the crown.¹ The President of the Board of Control became the Secretary of State for India.

The Act, of course, did not satisfy everyone. The Times (London), for example, criticized it for not going far enough, but it pleased the queen and most of her British subjects.² Queen Victoria, indeed, in her message to Parliament on the India Act, affirmed that it had given Indians equality with British subjects and that the people of that subcontinent would enjoy that prosperity which is the blessing of civilization. "In their prosperity," she declared, "will be our strength, in their contentment, our security, and in their gratitude, our best reward."³

A foreign observer, the New York Times, apparently agreed. On December 30, 1858, it editorialized:

A more liberal programme of Government, it is impossible to imagine, and there is in the antecedents of England--the pledges of whose Government have this advantage over those of our Cabinets, that they mean what they say--every reason to believe that the engagements so made will be loyally adhered to. The result must be beneficial in the highest degree to India, and therefore cannot fail to be

¹The term Viceroy is nowhere used in the India Act but is employed in Queen Victoria's proclamation. India Act, Aug. 2, 1858, BFSP, XLIX, 744-745.

²The Times (London), June 17, 1858); cf. H. R. Trevor-Roper, Essays in British History (London, 1964), p. 273.

³P. Spear, Oxford History of India (Oxford, 1958), p. 676; Ramsey Muir, Short History of the British Commonwealth (New York, 1923), pp. 554-555.

advantageous to Great Britain. It must consolidate her power in the East, and make the British Empire in India more than a mere tradition of Clive, or a confused dream after a Leaden-Hall-street dinner. The blood spilt and the treasure expended in suppressing the Indian Rebellion would have been merely a precious waste had they failed to convey to the people of England this great lesson of adversity. They will, on the contrary, have been gloriously expended, if they result in accomplishing the civil and religious freedom of so many millions of men.⁴

This study, in retrospect, concludes that (1) the British press and public exaggerated Indian discontent with Company rule; (2) British interference in Indian religious and social customs, symbolized by the cartridge issue, was more important in provoking the uprising than the Company's mismanagement of government; (3) the popular belief that the revolt stemmed from Indian dissatisfaction with the "double-government" system and Company corruption is erroneous; (4) neither Whigs nor Tories could ignore British public opinion, even in an undemocratic Parliament, and each party wanted to capitalize on the popular demand for reform in India; (5) M. P.'s supported or attacked a particular bill, depending on which party held power at the time, and changed positions on this issue less out of concern for effective reform than for reasons of political expedience; (6) the 1858 Act marked England's growing awareness of the political and strategic value of India; and (7) the new India Act was designed to placate the British electorate more than Indian subjects. It

⁴New York Times, Dec. 30, 1858.

satisfied the English but could not reconcile the Indians to foreign rule for long.

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