

**STATEMENT OF THE  
CIRCUMSTANCES CONNECTED  
WITH HIS RECALL FROM THE  
GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS**

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Statement of the circumstances connected with his recall from the government of Madras by  
Sir Charles Trevelyan

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**SIR CHARLES TREVELYAN**

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BY

**SIR CHARLES TREVELYAN**

OF THE

CIRCUMSTANCES CONNECTED WITH HIS RECALL

FROM THE

**GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS.**

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## STATEMENT.

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I wish to explain, in as few words as possible, the reasons of the opposition which I felt it my duty to offer to some of the financial arrangements proposed to be made in India. As the people of England have thought right to take the government of India out of the hands of those who so long administered it, they are bound to make themselves acquainted with the interests of their important charge. When it was announced that great and hazardous changes were to be made in the short space of two months, I saw that, at all risks to myself, and at any amount of personal sacrifice, I ought to secure for the Government and Parliament of England time to consider and express their opinion upon the proposed taxes before they became law. Nor can I regret what has passed, for, although my view was not adopted, the delay has led to very important modifications. Much of what I shall say will be found in Blue Books; but my reason for making this statement is, that Blue Books are seldom read. Soon after I was recalled, Mr. Wilson died nobly at his post in the devoted discharge of his important public duties. I shall, therefore, avoid as far as possible controverted topics, and confine myself to such plain and undoubted facts as are necessary for my justification.

Our financial difficulties in India have always been connected with military affairs, and the remedy for them is to be found in the reorganization of our military system.

While we were acting in the face of several powerful Native military monarchies, it was necessary to supplement our expensive European Force by a large Native Army; and when war broke out, the Native Army was again supplemented by swarms of Native Irregular Levies. This practice was carried to an extreme during the Mutiny, when levies were raised almost at discretion by every local officer. There was, first, the remnant of the old Native Army; then there was a large newly raised Irregular Force under the Commander-in-chief; then another large Irregular Force under the civil authorities; and, lastly, an inordinate European Force, required partly to put down the Mutiny and partly to keep the great Native Army in check.

This state of things had, however, no foundation in the permanent conditions of Indian administration; and many circumstances concurred to show that the time had arrived for modifying our system to suit the altered nature of our position.

The people of India are, in general, remarkably docile and easily governed. The apathy with which they submit to any pretender who claims their allegiance has often excited the wonder of those who do not understand their character. If ever there was an occasion likely to bring them out against us, it was the opportunity afforded by the great Mutiny; but the force then opposed to us was, not the people, but the military body, which we had ourselves formed, armed, and disciplined from among the people. The best administered Native Governments have always acted upon a principle suited to the character of the people. They have maintained a moderate force composed of their own natural adherents, and have had a surplus revenue which has been systematically laid up against the time of need.

Our own finances have been twice restored within the memory of the present generation by acting to a limited extent on this principle. The large levies raised

by Lord Hastings to carry on the Mahratta and Nepal wars were disbanded by Lord Amherst; and the levies made by Lord Amherst during the first Burmese war were discharged by Lord William Bentinck. On both these occasions a surplus revenue was established, and the balance of the finances was restored a third time before the Mutiny.\* Deficit is, therefore, not the normal state of Anglo-Indian administration. As a general proposition, a state of peace in India is a state of financial prosperity, and the finances are deranged only by war.

The suppression of the Mutiny placed us in a position to remodel our system, and to make reductions far exceeding any that had taken place on any former occasion. No Native power remained, either in the interior or on the frontier, which could cause us the slightest anxiety. The still existing Native chiefs had loyally adhered to us; the great Bengal Native Army had collapsed; a general disarmament was in progress; and the efficacy of our military force was increased by the rapidly advancing state of the railways. The new levies expected, according to all former precedent, to be disbanded as soon as the emergency was over; and, owing to the great demand for labour caused by the railway works and by the high prices of produce, their absorption into the body of the community would have been unattended with any difficulty or danger, besides being extremely conducive to the increase of the resources of the country.

This reduction should have been accompanied by a reform which was equally necessary in a civil and

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\* There was a surplus in each of the four years from 1850 to 1853 inclusive; and in 1856-7, the year before the Mutiny, the deficit was only 143,000*L*, which is practically a balanced state of the finances



military point of view. Owing to the inefficient state of the police, the military force had been diverted to a great extent from its proper employment to the performance of civil duties. Military guards were furnished to treasuries, gaols, and civil offices; military posts were scattered over the country in support of the police; and a large force was perpetually circulating in small detachments on the duty of escorting treasure and public stores. The Native Army, therefore, had to be maintained at a much higher standard than would otherwise have been necessary; it was unduly harassed, and its discipline was seriously interfered with. In Upper India the matter took another turn, especially after the breaking up of the Bengal Army. A third description of force, unknown to any other system of government, was introduced between the army and the police, under the name of "military police." This was neither mobilised, disciplined, nor commanded like the army; nor was it employed in direct communication with the people, in the streets and highways, like an ordinary police. The necessary result followed, of waste of force and a low standard of efficiency. The obvious remedy was to form out of the existing materials a real police, under the superintendence of European officers, to which the civil duties discharged by the army and the military police might have been transferred; and the Native Army might then have been reduced, concentrated, and brought into a proper state of discipline, in subordination to the European Force, and the military police might have been entirely disbanded.

Whatever conduces to direct the activity of the people into the channels of peaceful industry, to give to the most influential classes a stake in the permanence of the existing Government, and to create a general impression of justice and security, has the double effect of increasing the productiveness of the public revenue and of diminishing the military and police expenditure. The

settlement of the inám question in the Madras Presidency, whereby upwards of 300,000 small landed properties\* will be converted from a state of insecurity, which made them the habitual prey of corrupt Native officers, into the highest description of freehold tenure, is alone worth half a dozen regiments. The extension of freehold tenure to building and coffee lands was another step in the same direction, which will, I hope, be soon followed by declaring the land tax perpetual at the present reduced rates. The abolition of the master evil of the impressment of labour and carriage, has put heart into the trade and agriculture of the Southern Presidency. But the great measure for the whole of India is the reconstitution of the police and the improvement of the courts of justice. While we have been occupied with war and annexation and the collection of revenue, we have neglected the simple primary duty of the protection of life and property. A police can hardly be said to exist in many parts of British India. What is now taking place in Bengal is an instance in point. Troops are poured into districts where it used to be our boast that the presence of a military force was never required, and the production of one of our most valuable staples is seriously checked. An efficient police and a prompt administration of justice would restore mutual confidence, the beneficial influence of which would be immediately felt on the public income and expenditure. European interests should be secured by the supervision of a strong united High Court, by throwing open the bar and bench of the provincial courts to English barristers qualified in the languages and legal system, and by a suitable appli-

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\* There are 300,000 personal ináms only, besides the two large classes of religious and service ináms.

cation of trial by jury. But I will not multiply instances. It is impossible to govern a distrustful hostile people either economically or well. The loss of our American Colonies,—the happy change which took place in our relations with Ireland after ages of antagonism, when a policy of justice and conciliation was at last adopted,—the present state of Venetia, are full of instruction. With a population of only 30 millions, we cannot afford to hold command of 200 millions of subjects and dependent allies in India on the high-pressure principle of military force, and at the same time to extend our influence in all directions, as we are doing. A sufficient military force must be maintained in India in the highest state of efficiency; but the policy of Lord Cornwallis and Lord William Bentinck, as it has been illustrated and finally sanctioned by Her Majesty's Proclamation, should be our leading principle; and the fruit will be reaped, not only in financial prosperity, but also in the increase of every beneficial influence which a Christian Government should exercise over a heathen people.

This is the policy which I have always advocated since the real character of the crisis arising out of the great Mutiny became apparent. The first financial arrangement proposed by the Government of India was a tax upon tobacco and an increase of the salt tax. In a Minute dated the 10th June 1859 (Appendix, page 33) I recorded my opinion that the objections which had been made by the Madras Board of Revenue and by my colleagues in Council to the scheme for a tax upon tobacco were "so grave and decisive that it would be a waste of time to discuss them;" and that more would be gained by properly enforcing the collection of the salt tax at the existing rates, than by increasing those rates. Then followed—

"Moreover, I am convinced, from a long and large experience of Indian affairs, including a close obser-