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SOURCE THREE

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A speech made by Winston Churchill in 1931
(G Bennett, The Concept of Empire, 1953)

At present the Government of India is responsible to the British Parliament, which is the oldest, the least unwise and the most democratic parliament in the world. To transfer that responsibility to this highly artificial and restricted oligarchy of Indian politicians would be a retrograde act. It would be a shameful act. It would be an act of cowardice, desertion and dishonour. It would bring grave material evils, both upon India and Great Britain; but it would bring upon Great Britain a moral shame which would challenge for ever the reputation of the British Empire as a valiant and benignant force in the history of mankind.

The faithful discharge of our duty in India is not only a cause, but a symbol. It is the touchstone of our fortunes in the present difficult time. If we cannot do our duty in India, be sure we shall have shown ourselves unworthy to preserve the vast Empire which still centres upon this small island. The same spirit of unimaginative incompetence and weak compromise and supine drift will paralyse trade and business and prevent either financial reorganisation or economic resurgence. What we require to do now is to stand erect and look the world in the face, and do our duty without fear or favour.

How to use this source

1 Study this source carefully. Ask yourself whether the source supports or contradicts the view that:

- The British left India as soon as the people wanted them to
- The British left because of the actions of important individuals
- The British were forced out by peaceful political protests
- The British were forced out by armed resistance
- The British wanted to leave because the area was causing them problems

2 If you were an **admirer** of the British empire, explain whether you would be able to use this source to support your viewpoint.

3 If you were a **critic** of the British empire, explain whether you would be able to use this source to support your viewpoint.

4 What are the main arguments Churchill puts forward against Indian independence?

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