THE MONTAGU-CHELMSFORD REFORMS & THE ROWLATT ACT

- In 1914, even the most extreme nationalists relaxed their campaign (Tilak)
- By 1916, Congress was reunited and calling for Dominion Status (self-gov within the Empire, like Australia etc)
- Congress and the Muslim League had started cooperating (very worrying for the Raj).
- Home-Rule Leagues were springing up all over Bombay and Madras
- And the Ghadr Movement was frightening the authorities
The British felt they needed to appease the nationalists in order to secure the support of the moderates (it had worked in 1909).

Viceroy Chelmsford felt that a bold statement was the only way forward, sending a memo to London suggesting "the endowment of British India, as an integral part of the Empire, with self-government"

When the new Secretary of State for India Edwin Montagu joined the India Office in July 1917, London finally relented.
THE MONTAGU-CHELMSFORD REFORMS & THE ROWLATT ACT

- Montagu persuaded the Cabinet to listen to Chelmsford and (despite Foreign Secretary Curzon's meddling) made a declaration in August 1917 promising moves to **responsible government** in the near future.

- In 1919, this promise took its first step as the Government of India Act (Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms)
THE MONTAGU-CHELMSFORD REFORMS & THE ROWLATT ACT

- The 1919 Act set up
  - a new 200 seat legislature in Delhi (to advise the Viceroy)
  - Expanded the provincial legislatures which gained control over
    - Education
    - Health
    - Local gov
    - Public works
  - 6 million more Indians were enfranchised (10%) even some women got the vote!
THE MONTAGU-CHELMSFORD REFORMS & THE ROWLATT ACT

BUT:

- The Viceroy and the Lieutenant Governors could still veto local legislation
- The Viceroy could pass and enforce laws even if his council rejected them
- The British retained control over Military, Foreign, Financial and Criminal affairs (as well as transport and communications)
- There were still 'reserved seats' for minority groups (including landowners)
- The system became known as DYARCHY because responsibility was divided between Delhi and the 8 provinces
THE MONTAGU-CHELMSFORD REFORMS & THE ROWLATT ACT

- BTW – There was a clause in the Act which stated that the question of the Constitution had to be revisited by 1929 (it will be important later on)

- The Act caused a lot of debate
  - The right felt it was a betrayal, the left that it was a pathetic gesture
  - The issue of separate electorates was unpopular with all the major players but the Muslim League
  - The INC boycotted the 1919 elections in protest that the reforms did not go far enough (there was even more rioting in the Punjab)
THE MONTAGU-CHELMSFORD REFORMS & THE ROWLATT ACT

- During WWI Judge S.A.T Rowlatt wrote a report on the dangers of 'sedition' in India and how the Raj should face up to the problem. (One of the main fears was the development of the Khilafat Movement)

- On the strength of the report, New Delhi introduced a bill to prolong indefinitely the life of the draconian regulations that were in place to crush wartime dissent.
  - Imprisonment without trial
  - Judicial trial
  - Censorship
  - House arrest of suspects (not tried yet)
THE MONTAGU-CHELMSFORD REFORMS & THE ROWLATT ACT

- Montagu and Chelmsford both stated their reluctance to pass the Rowlatt Act, but both felt it was necessary given the nature of the threat.
- The Act destroyed any (small) hope that the 1919 reforms had been a step in the right direction.
- Clearly the British were still going to rely on coercion rather than debate and concessions.
- Opposition to the Act spread, particularly in the Punjab where a number of Hartals were arranged in the spring of 1919.