

## PART III. THE INDIAN NATION

### X. Is There a People of India?

*"The political unity of all India, although never attained perfectly in fact, always was the ideal of the people throughout the centuries...."*

*"India beyond all doubt possesses a deep underlying fundamental unity, far more profound than that produced either by geographical isolation or by political suzerainty. That unity transcends the innumerable diversities of blood, color, language, dress, manners and sect."—Vincent A. Smith, *The Oxford History of India*, 1919, Introduction, pp. ix-x.*

#### I. THE UNITY OF INDIA

At the outset we are faced with a "subtle" question, which is still frequently raised by the apologists of imperialism, though it used to be more fashionable a generation ago than it is today, when the force of facts and events has largely destroyed its basis.

Is there a people of India? Can the diversified assembly of races and religions, with the barriers and divisions of caste, of language and other differences, and with the widely varying range of social and cultural levels, inhabiting the vast subcontinental expanse of India, be considered a "nation" or ever become a "nation"? Is not this a false transposition of Western conceptions to entirely different conditions? Is not the only unity in India the unity imposed by British rule?

The answer of the older school of imperialists, before the advancing strength of the nationalist movement had sicklied o'er their naïve self-confidence with doubt, used to be very downright.

"There is not and never was an India," was the firm declaration of Sir John Strachey in 1888, in the spirit of the farmer at the zoo stoutly confronting the giraffe.

Sir John Seeley was no less definite in his view:

"The notion that India is a nationality rests upon that vulgar error which political science principally aims at eradicating. India is not a political name, but only a geographical expression like Europe or Africa. It does not mark the territory of a nation and a language, but the ter-

ritory of many nations and many languages." (Sir John Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, 1883, pp. 254-57.)

"What is honor?" asked Sir John Falstaff, and answered. "A word. What is in that word honor; what is that honor? Air." In the same spirit of profound realism the struggle of the millions of India for freedom from foreign rule is proved by our modern Sir Johns a "vulgar error." So also the theorists of the Austrian Empire proved to their own satisfaction that Italy was "a geographical expression."

The argument from diversity, by implication either inferring the denial of Indian nationality, or intended to justify extreme slowness in its recognition, is still widely current. It is still to be found in all its glory in the principal propaganda piece of modern British imperialism about India, the "Survey Volume" of the Simon Report, which was produced in 1930 for wholesale circulation as a supposed information document for the general public on Indian questions. This memorable document of State begins by coolly declaring that "what is called the 'Indian Nationalist Movement'" in reality "directly affects the hopes of a very small fraction of the teeming peoples of India." Thereafter the Report proceeds to endeavor to terrorize the reader with the customary picture of the "immensity and difficulty" of the Indian "problem," the "immensity of area and population," the "complication of language" with no less than "222 vernaculars," the "rigid complication of innumerable castes," the "almost infinite diversity in its religious aspect," the "basic opposition" of Hindus and Moslems, this "variegated assemblage of races and creeds," this "conglomeration of races and religions," this "congeries of heterogeneous masses," and similar polite expressions in abundance.

A citizen of the United States would be undoubtedly astonished if he were to read in a British *Blue Book* the following impartial survey of the condition of his country:

"The sub-continent of the United States is characterized by the greatest diversity of climate and geographical features, while its inhabitants exhibit a similar diversity of race and religion. The customary talk of the United States as a single entity tends to obscure, to the casual British observer, the variegated assemblage of races and creeds which make up the whole. In the City of New

York alone there are to be found nearly a hundred different nationalities, some of which are in such great numbers that New York is at once the largest Italian city, the largest Jewish city and the largest Negro city in the world. The contiguity of such diverse elements has been a fruitful cause of the most bitter communal conflicts. In the Southern States especially, this has led to inter-racial riots and murders which are only prevented from recurring by the presence of an external impartial power able to enforce law and order. The notoriety of the rival gangs of Chicago gunmen and of the Chinese tongs in New York have diverted attention from the not less pressing problems presented to the Paramount Power by the separate existence of the Mormons in Utah, the Finns in Minnesota, the Mexican immigration up the Mississippi and the Japanese on the West Coast: not to speak of the survival in considerable numbers of the aboriginal inhabitants."\*

Yet this is the spirit in which the Simon Report approached its task of the survey of the condition of India.

Indeed, it is worth noting that similar profound analyses and "proofs" of the impossibility of unity of the American people were equally current in English expression on the very eve of the American Revolution. Lecky records in his history:

"Great bodies of Dutch, Germans, French, Swedes, Scotch and Irish, scattered among the descendants of the English, contributed to the heterogeneous character of the colonies, and they comprised so many varieties of government, religious belief, commercial interest and social type, that their union appeared to many incredible on the very eve of the Revolution." (W. E. H. Lecky, *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, Vol. IV, p. 12.)

Burnaby, who traveled in the North American colonies in 1759 and 1760, wrote:

"Fire and water are not more heterogeneous than the different colonies in North America. . . . Such is the difference of character, of manners, of religion, of interest,

\* This admirable parody is from the pen of R. Page Arnot, in his article on "The Simon Commission Report" in the *Labor Monthly* of July, 1930, which is worth consulting.

of the different colonies, that I think, if I am not wholly ignorant of the human mind, were they left to themselves, there would soon be a civil war from one end of the continent to the other."

The democrat will accordingly be on his guard against these *interested* prophecies and presentations of facts on the part of the rulers of an empire on the eve of the victory of a national liberation movement.

Undoubtedly the Indian people has a heavy heritage of burdens, survivals from the past, divisions and inequalities to overcome, as every people has its own inheritance and special problems. One of the strongest reasons for the necessity of self-government is in order that the progressive leaders of the people of India shall have the opportunity to tackle and solve these problems and carry forward the Indian people along the path of democratic and social advance. For the experience of the past half-century especially has already shown that, in the modern phase of imperialist decay, the offensive against these evils, such as untouchability, caste restrictions, communal divisions, illiteracy and the like, is more and more actively led by the representatives of the Indian national movement, while imperialism has maintained an obstructive role against innumerable projects of reform, pressed and demanded by India's representatives, and has worked in such a way as to sustain and even intensify these evils.

The fight against untouchability has been led, not by the British Government, but by Gandhi and the national movement. Indeed, the incident will be recalled when certain famous temples in Southern India which had been traditionally closed to the untouchables were, under the inspiration of Gandhi's crusade, thrown open to them; and police were thereupon dispatched to prevent access of the untouchables, on the grounds that such access would be offensive to the religious sentiments of the population, which it was the sacred duty of the Government to protect.

The British Government has certainly been concerned to organize a separate electoral roll of the untouchables or depressed classes, with guaranteed separate representation, in order to introduce a new element of division and weaken the National Congress. In this way the "Scheduled Castes" have been added to the long list of special electorates.

But for the opinion of the untouchables themselves on this loving care, the evidence of their officially recognized leader, Dr. Ambedkar, who is accepted by the Government as their leader and spokesman, may be taken, as given in his Presidential Address to the All-India Depressed Classes Congress in 1930:

"I am afraid that the British choose to advertise our unfortunate conditions, not with the object of removing them, but only because such a course serves well as an excuse for retarding the political progress of India." (Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Presidential Address to the All-India Depressed Classes Congress, August, 1930.)

The crippling institutions of caste will only be overcome, not by preaching and denunciation, but by the advance of modern industry and political democracy, as new social ties and common interest replace the old bonds.

"In places like Jamshedpur where work is done under modern conditions, men of all castes and races work side by side in the mill without any misgivings regarding the caste of their neighbors." (Bihar and Orissa Census Report, 1921.)

With regard to the division of languages, and the famous "222 separate languages," once again the hand of imperialist propaganda is visible in the fantastic exaggeration of this difficulty and in the character of the statistics provided for misleading the innocent. Different estimates can be provided from different authorities, ranging from 16 to 300. This variation already betrays the political interest behind the estimates. The 1901 Census reached a total of 147 languages. If we compare this with the 1921 Census, used by the Simon Report, we reach the interesting result that, whereas the population increased from 292 millions in 1901 to 316 millions in 1921 (without any influx of new foreign populations), the number of languages spoken increased from 147 in 1901 to 222 in 1921 (without the addition of any new or polyglot territory). Truly an amazing capacity of this Indian population to proliferate new languages in scores in a single generation.

A detailed examination, which is only of value for exposing this type of imperialist propaganda, reveals (1) that the number of "languages" of the so-called Indo-Chinese family rose from

92 in 1901 to 145 in 1921; (2) that these "languages" are not spoken in India at all, but in outlying districts in the Himalayas and the Burmo-Chinese frontier; (3) that the vast majority of these are not languages at all, but either very minor dialects or names of tribes; (4) that out of the 103 "languages" included in the group, 17 are spoken by less than 100 persons (in one case the total "number of speakers" of the given "language" is solemnly recorded as one person, in another case as two persons, in another case as four persons!); 39 by less than 1,000; 65 by less than 10,000; 83 by less than 50,000; 97 by less than 200,000. The only *language* in the group is Burmese.

Yet out of such materials is constructed the imposing total of "222 separate languages" which is trotted out on every imperialist platform, in every newspaper and in every parliamentary debate.

Since then the 1931 Census has reduced the total to 203. It is evident that some of the speakers of the languages spoken by one, two or four persons have unfortunately died in the interval, thus weakening by their thoughtless action the imperialist case against Indian self-government.

The problem of a common language for India is already on the way to solution on the basis of Hindustani (Hindi or Urdu according to the script), the official national language of the Congress, which is already either spoken or understood by the majority of the Indian people. "Hindu preachers and Mahomedan Moulvis," notes Gandhi (*Speeches and Writings*, p. 398), "deliver their religious discourses throughout India in Hindi and Urdu, and even the illiterate masses follow them." Similarly in the Indian army, where there is no room for nonsense about "222 separate languages," military orders are given in Hindustani. The conception, often spread, of English as the supposed common language or *lingua franca* for India is a myth; after a century of English "education" only 1 per cent of the population can read and write English (3½ millions out of 350 millions). As against this, "Hindustani with its various dialects accounts for over 120 million of people, and is spreading" (J. Nehru, *India and the World*, p. 188). The problem of languages in India is in practice a problem of some twelve or thirteen languages. The Census Report of 1921 noted:

"There is no doubt that there is a common element in the main languages of Northern and Central India which renders their speakers without any great conscious change in their speech mutually intelligible to one another, and this common basis already forms an approach to a *lingua franca* over a large part of India." (Census of India, 1921, Vol. I, Part I, p. 199.)

As in the case of every reactionary rule, and especially of alien rule, the division of the people is the necessary law of the rulers' statecraft.

The total numbers of the British in India, according to the Simon Report, came to 156,000 (registered as Europeans, but mainly British); the 1931 Census showed a total of 168,000. Of these, 60,000 were in the army; 21,000 were in business or private occupations; and 12,000 were in the civilian government services. This makes an effective total of less than 100,000 occupied adults directly representing the imperialist domination over the country, or 1 per 4,000 of the Indian population. It is obvious that, even after every precaution has been taken to disarm the Indian population, and especially to maintain all heavy arms, artillery and air-power in exclusively British hands, such a force could not hope to maintain continuous domination over the 400 millions of India by power alone. A social basis within the Indian population is indispensable.

But such a social basis cannot be found in the progressive elements which are straining against imperialism. It can only be found in the reactionary elements whose interests are opposed to those of the people. We have already seen how British rule has consciously built on the basis of the landlord class, which it has largely brought into existence by its own decrees as an act of State policy. Along with these are various trading interests and money-lending interests closely allied with the imperialist system of exploitation, and looking to imperialism for protection, as well as the subordinate official strata. But nowhere is this policy more signally demonstrated than in two spheres which have come into special prominence in the recent period, the question of the Indian Princes or so-called "Indian States," and the question of communal divisions, especially in the form of Hindu-Moslem antagonisms.



## 2. COMMUNAL DIVISIONS

With regard to the communal or religious divisions, which constitute one of the most serious and urgent problems before the Indian people, it will be seen that in fact—in spite of official denials—this division has been undoubtedly fostered under British rule as a conscious act of policy. Indeed, the Simon Report itself was compelled to admit that the Hindu-Moslem antagonism is a special feature of the territories under direct British rule (“the comparative absence of communal strife in the Indian States today,” p. 29), and has increased under British rule (“in British India a generation ago... communal tension as a threat to civil peace was at a minimum.”)

The question of the relations between the different religious “communities,” mainly the Hindus, representing a little under two-thirds of the population, the Moslems, representing nearly one-quarter of the population, and other minor religious groupings, totaling one-tenth of the population, has special features in India, and is a serious issue for the national movement. But it is by no means a type of question peculiar to India.

Under certain conditions the mingling of divers races or religions in a single country can give rise to acute difficulties, sometimes even riots and bloodshed. Orangemen and Catholics in Northern Ireland; Arabs and Jews in Palestine under the Mandate; Slavs and Jews in Tsarist Russia; so-called “Aryans” and Jews in Nazi Germany; these are familiar issues of the twentieth-century world, without needing to go back to earlier examples. Anti-Semitism in Europe is today the sharpest expression of this type of racial-religious division and antagonism.

Historical experience makes it possible to define very precisely the conditions under which this type of problem arises.

In Tsarist Russia, especially during the later years of the decline and impending fall of Tsarism, pogroms of the Jews blackened the pages of its history and sickened the conscience of the world. These pogroms were widely regarded as uncontrollable outbreaks of the ignorant and savage Russian masses. Only the subsequent publication of the secret-police records finally proved, what had long been a matter of accusation, and had been sufficiently visible from the peculiar relations of the Government with the “Black Hundreds” or hooligan “patriotic”

organization, that the pogroms were directly inspired, initiated and controlled by the Government. From the day that the Russian people won power over their own country, the pogroms completely ceased. In the Union of Soviet Republics the most divers races and religions live happily together.

In Germany under the Weimar Republic Germans and Jews lived peacefully together. Under Nazi Germany the pogrom regime has transferred its old base from Tsarist Russia to Central Europe.

There is thus no natural inevitable difficulty from the cohabitation of differing races or religions in one country. The difficulties arise from social-political conditions. They arise, in particular, wherever a reactionary regime is endeavoring to maintain itself against the popular movement.

In India we are confronted with a similar type of problem.

There are in India, according to the preliminary results of the 1941 Census, 255 million Hindus, representing 65.6 per cent of the population, and 94 million Moslems or 23.6 per cent of the population. The difference is mainly religious, not racial, as the majority of Indian Moslems are descended from converted Hindus.

Prior to British rule there is no trace of the type of Hindu-Moslem conflicts associated with British rule, and especially with the latest period of British rule. There were wars between States which might have Hindu or Moslem rulers; but these wars at no time took on the character of a Hindu-Moslem antagonism. Moslem rulers employed Hindus freely in the highest positions, and vice versa.

The survival of this traditional character of pre-British India may still be traced to a certain extent in the Indian States, where the Simon Report had occasion to refer to “the comparative absence of communal strife in the Indian States today.”

The suggestion that British rule holds the primary responsibility (which is not to say that there are not also other responsibilities) for promoting communal strife in India commonly arouses shocked indignation in official quarters. Yet the facts are inescapable, alike in the testimony of witnesses and in the historical record. The shocked indignation is no argument; for imperialism is far from being Caesar’s wife; and the records of imperialist duplicity are far too abundant for world opinion to

be convinced by sanctimonious posing in denial of obvious facts.

In the earlier period the principle of "Divide and Rule" used to be more openly proclaimed than in the more careful later days. In the early nineteenth century a British officer, writing under the name of "Carnaticus" in the *Asiatic Review* of May, 1821, declared that "*Divide et impera* should be the motto of our Indian administration, whether political, civil or military." Lieutenant-Colonel Coke, Commandant of Moradabad, laid down the principle in the middle of the nineteenth century:

"Our endeavor should be to uphold in full force the (for us fortunate) separation which exists between the different religions and races, not to endeavor to amalgamate them. *Divide et impera* should be the principle of Indian government."

In 1859 Lord Elphinstone recorded in an official minute: "*Divide et impera* was the old Roman motto, and it should be ours." (Lord Elphinstone, Governor of Bombay, minute of May 14, 1859.)

In 1888, Sir John Strachey, leading authority on India, wrote: "The truth plainly is that the existence side by side of these hostile creeds is one of the strong points in our political position in India." (Sir John Strachey, *India*, 1888, p. 255.)\*

In 1910 J. Ramsay MacDonald wrote with reference to the foundation of the Moslem League:

"The All-Indian Moslem League was formed on December 30, 1906. The political successes which have rewarded the efforts of the League... have been so signal as to give support to a suspicion that sinister influences have been at work, that the Mohammedan leaders were inspired by certain Anglo-Indian officials, and that these officials pulled wires at Simla and in London and of malice aforethought sowed discord between the Hindu and the Mohammedan communities by showing the Mohammedans special favor." (J. R. MacDonald, *The Awakening of India*, 1910, pp. 283-84.)

\* In modern times the same basic outlook is expressed in more subtle form. Thus *The Times* in 1941: "To emphasize the essential importance of Hindu-Moslem agreement does not imply that the British are pursuing a policy of 'divide and rule.' The divisions exist, and British rule is certain as long as they do."—(*Times*, January 21, 1941.)

Subsequent evidence has become available which has more than confirmed the "suspicion."

In 1926 Lord Olivier, after he had held office as Secretary of State for India, and had had access to all the records, wrote in a letter to *The Times*:

"No one with a close acquaintance with Indian affairs will be prepared to deny that on the whole there is a predominant bias in British officialism in India in favor of the Moslem community, partly on the ground of closer sympathy, but more largely as a makeweight against Hindu nationalism." (Lord Olivier, letter in *The Times*, July 10, 1926.)

The evidence for the official policy is thus based on very authoritative statements of leading official representatives.

It is in the modern period, however, that this general policy has been turned into an administrative system. Parallel with the advance of the national struggle and the successive stages of constitutional reforms has gone the process of promoting communal divisions through the peculiar electoral system adopted in connection with the reforms. This new departure was initiated in 1906—that is, exactly at the time of the first wave of national unrest and advance.

The British Government, in face of the first widespread popular national movement in India, took the responsibility of inaugurating a policy which was indeed destined (in the words of the leading Moslem organ's warning against such a policy a quarter of a century earlier) to "poison the social life of districts and villages and make a hell of India." A Moslem deputation presented themselves to the Viceroy and demanded separate and privileged representation in any electoral system that might be set up. The Viceroy, Lord Minto, immediately announced his acceptance of the demand. It was subsequently revealed by the Moslem leader, Mohamed Ali, in the course of his Presidential Address to the 1923 National Congress, that this Moslem deputation was "a command performance," arranged by the Government. That the scheme originated with the Government authorities was indicated by Lord Morley's letter to Lord Minto at the end of 1906:

"I won't follow you again into our Mahometan dispute. Only I respectfully remind you once more that it

was your early speech about their extra claims that first started the M. (Moslem) hare." (Lord Morley, letter to Lord Minto, December 6, 1909: Morley, *Recollections*, Vol. II, p. 325.)

In this way the system of communal electorates and representation was inaugurated, striking at the roots of any democratic electoral system. To imagine a parallel it would be necessary to imagine that in Northern Ireland Catholics and Protestants should be placed on separate electoral registers and given separate representation, so that the members returned should be members, not even with any formal obligation to the electorate as a whole, but members for the Catholics and members for the Protestants. It would be difficult to imagine a device more calculated to promote separatist communal organization and antagonism. And, indeed, the organization of the separate Moslem League dates from December, 1906.

The plea has been put forward that such separate electorates and representation were indispensable in order to prevent the Moslems being swamped by the Hindu majority. The falsity of this plea was sufficiently shown in the local government elections in the same period, where these were still conducted on the old basis of joint electorates. Thus in the United Provinces in 1910 the joint electorates, with the Moslems forming but one-seventh part of the population, returned 189 Moslems and 445 Hindus to the District Boards, and 310 Moslems and 562 Hindus to the Municipalities.

The purpose of driving a wedge between the two communities was most sharply shown, not only by the establishment of separate electorates and representation, but by giving specially privileged representation to the Moslems. A most elaborate system of weighting was devised. Thus, to become an elector under the Morley-Minto Reforms, the Moslem had to pay income tax on an income of 3,000 rupees a year, the non-Moslem on an income of 300,000 rupees; or the Moslem graduate was required to have three years' standing, the non-Moslem to have thirty years' standing. The volume of representation showed a similar method of weighting. By this means it was hoped to secure the support of a privileged minority, and to turn the anger of the majority against the privileged minority, instead of against the Government.

This system has been successively extended and elaborated in

the subsequent constitutional schemes, and reaches a climax in the present Constitution. In the most modern stage of the 1935 Act separate representation is provided, not only for the Moslems, but for the Sikhs, the Anglo-Indians, the Indian Christians,\* and the Depressed Classes, as well as for Europeans, Landholders, Commerce and Industry, etc.

The effect of this electoral policy, expressing a corresponding policy in the whole administrative field, has been to give the sharpest possible stimulus to communal antagonism. "The coming of the Reforms, and the anticipation of what may follow them, have given new point to Hindu-Moslem competition." (Simon Report, p. 29.)

The Moslem League was founded at the end of 1906 under governmental inspiration, as described. The strength of the national movement was such, however, that by 1913 the Moslem League entered into negotiations for unity with the National Congress, and by the end of 1916 this unity was sealed in the Congress-League scheme. During the post-war national wave enthusiastic crowds demonstrated in the streets hailing Hindu-Moslem Unity. The official government report for "India in 1919" was compelled to record the "unprecedented fraternization between the Hindus and the Moslems... extraordinary scenes of fraternization." This great advance, however, received a check through the collapse of the non-co-operation movement and the Khilafat agitation; the deeper mass unity had not been reflected in the organized leadership, which had come together,

\* It is worth noting that the Indian Christian leaders have strongly protested against the system of separate electorate which has been imposed on them by the Government for its own purposes and not to meet their wishes. Thus the Presidential Address of the All-India Christian Conference in 1938 declared:

"My greatest objection to separate electorates is that it prevents us from coming into close contact with other communities. Under the guidance of our old leaders, some of whom have left us, we as a community have always opposed special electorates which were forced on us against our wishes. The existing system of communal electorates has turned India into a house divided against itself. My predecessors have pointed out year after year to what extent our community has been a loser by the adoption of this system of separate electorates. I think it desirable that we should go on appealing repeatedly to the leaders of all communities to put forth strenuous and united efforts to remove this blot on the fair name of the country at the very next opportunity."—(Dr. H. C. Mukherjee, President of the All-India Christian Conference, Madras, December 1938.)



but still on a partially communal basis. The Moslem League drifted away again from the Congress and returned to the old separatist tendencies. Favored and encouraged by the Government, the dominant reactionary leaders of the Moslem League (supplemented in the modern period by a seceding Congress politician, M. A. Jinnah) have played a disruptive role, to block any democratic advance and inflame antagonisms against the National Congress.

In opposition to the Moslem League there also developed into a certain prominence the Hindu Mahasabha (first organized on an all-India basis, under the presidency of Lajpat Rai, in 1925), devoted to pressing Hindu claims, and pursuing a similar communal policy.

The national movement has conducted an active and progressive fight against communal separatism and for national unity. The Declaration of Rights of the National Congress represents the most enlightened and consistent democratic affirmation of universal rights of equal citizenship, irrespective of caste, creed or sex, together with provision for full freedom of conscience and protection of cultural rights of minorities. The best progressive Moslems are in the National Congress; and leaders of the type of Maulana Azad, President of the Congress, Dr. Ansari, who has pursued the strongest fight for complete unity, or Abdul Ghaffar Khan of the Northwest Frontier Red Shirts, have played a prominent part in the national movement.

The communal issue is grossly misrepresented in the official press, and has given rise to genuine misconceptions on the part of progressive and sympathetic elements in Britain, largely because the impression has been spread that the Moslem League, the organization of a tiny minority of reactionary upper-class Moslems under the ex-Congress politician, Mr. Jinnah, may be regarded as representing the 94 million Moslems of India. The claim is fictitious and has only to be tested by the evidence to be exploded. In the 1937 elections, the only elections so far held under the new franchise, despite the existence of separate Moslem electorates to stimulate Moslem communal consciousness, the Moslem League was only able to obtain 4.6 per cent of the total Moslem votes (total Moslem votes, 7,319,445; Moslem League votes, 321,772). In five of the Provinces the Moslem League was not able to get one representative elected. The Northwest

Frontier Province, with an overwhelming Moslem majority of the population, rejected all Moslem League candidates, is a Congress stronghold, and had a Congress Government. In Sind, where also Moslems are in a majority, all Moslem League candidates were rejected, and a Congress-Coalition Government was formed.

Of 94 million Moslems in India, 20 per cent are Shias; the Shias have their own organization, and have also disowned the Moslem League and support the Congress. The Momins, who number about 45 millions, have their All-India Momin Conference, which repudiates the claim of the League to represent the Moslems and cabled in this sense to Mr. Churchill in 1942 (a cable which, needless to say, received no publicity in the official British press). Nor can the League lay claim to undivided religious backing; for the Jamiat-ul-Ulema, the recognized most authoritative organization of Moslem divines in India, supports the Congress. The Congress itself claims a much larger Moslem membership than the entire Moslem League. It is worth noting that the Moslem League publishes no figures of membership; the Congress has a registered dues-paying membership which has reached to over five million.\*

At the present date (1942) there are three Moslem Premiers—in Bengal, Sind and Punjab.† The Moslem Premiers of Bengal and Sind have repudiated the Moslem League; the Moslem Premier of Punjab, though a member of the League, is in opposition to the policy of Mr. Jinnah. The Moslem Premier of Bengal issued a statement in June, 1942, denouncing the Moslem League as “a coterie of politicians... the whole atmosphere is un-Islamic and undemocratic... the Moslem League has for-

\* The phantasies of the B.B.C., in persisting in describing the National Congress, in accordance with the official myth, as the “Hindu” organization in India (the Hindu organization is the Hindu Mahasabha), reached comic heights in 1942, when the President of the Congress, the Moslem divine, Maulana Azad, and the Secretary, the socialist agnostic, Jawaharlal Nehru, were repeatedly referred to as “the two Hindu leaders.”

† On October 10, 1942, the Moslem Premier of Sind, who in the preceding month had renounced his British decorations as a protest against the British Government's policy in India and against Mr. Churchill's speech of September 10, was removed from office by the British Governor. The official announcement explained that he was dismissed, not because he had forfeited the confidence of the Legislature, but because he “no longer held the confidence of the Governor.”



feited its claim to be considered such an organization (representing Moslems). . . . Unity between Moslems and other communities has got to be regarded as a fundamental necessity for the political advancement of India."

This repudiation of the Moslem League by the majority of Moslem opinion is especially important at the present time, when the Moslem League, since 1940, under the leadership of Mr. Jinnah, has declared for the policy of "Pakistan," or the partition of India into a series of separate independent States, with Moslem States comprising the North-West Frontier Province, the Punjab and Sind on one side of India, and Bengal on the other, and with no united Indian Government. This policy for the artificial creation of a whole series of Ulsters in India (in glaring contradiction to the real intermingling of the population in all Provinces, no less than to economic and political necessities) has aroused intense opposition from all Indian national opinion, including responsible Moslem opinion.

Behind the communal antagonisms, which have been promoted to protect the system of exploitation and imperialist rule, lie social and economic questions. This is obvious in the case of the middle-class communalists competing for positions and jobs. It is no less true where communal difficulties reach the masses. In Bengal and the Punjab the Hindus include the richer landlord, trading and money-lending interests; the Moslems are more often the poorer peasants and debtors. In other cases big Moslem landlords will be found among Hindu peasants. Again and again what is reported as a "communal" struggle or rising conceals a struggle of Moslem peasants against Hindu landlords, Moslem debtors against Hindu money-lenders, or Hindu workers against imported Pathan strikebreakers.

In so far as the communal antagonisms reflect social and economic issues the final solution of the communal question lies along the lines of social and economic advance. In the trade unions and the peasants' unions Hindus and Moslems unite without distinction or difference (and without feeling the need of separate electorates). The common bonds of class solidarity, of common social and economic needs, shatter the artificial barriers of communal, as of caste divisions. Herein lies the positive path of advance to the solution of the communal question.

The attempted artificial division of the Indian people into two

"nations" on the basis of religion can never be and never will be accepted by the national movement. On the other hand, what is often presented as a communal issue in many cases reflects the genuine and healthy development of special forms of national consciousness within the wider unity of India. Such a development is in no contradiction to the interests of unity of the Indian national struggle for freedom. The solution here lies along similar lines with those already demonstrated in the treatment of the national question within the multi-national Soviet Union. Every section of the Indian people which has a contiguous territory as its home land, common historical tradition, common language, culture, psychological makeup, and common economic life has a just claim to recognition within a free India as a distinct nationality with the right to exist as an autonomous state if it so wishes within the free Indian union or federation (including the right to secede). Thus, the free India of tomorrow might take the form of a federation or union of autonomous states of the various nationalities such as the Pathans, western Punjabis (dominantly Moslems), Sikhs, Sindhis, Hindusthanis, Rajasthanis, Gujeratis, Bengalis, Assamese, Beharis, Oriyas, Andhras, Tamils, Karnatikis, Maharashtrians, etc. Where there are interspersed minorities in the new states thus formed, their rights regarding their culture, language, education, and so on, would be guaranteed by statute and their infringement would be punishable by law. All disabilities, privileges, and discriminations based on caste, race, or community would be abolished by statute and their infringement would be punishable by law.

Such a declaration of rights would carry to completion the democratic principles already implicit in the Declaration of Rights adopted by the National Congress in 1931 and further carried forward in the Congress Working Committee resolution of April, 1942, that "the Committee cannot think in terms of compelling the people of any territorial unit to remain in an Indian union against their will." Such a declaration of rights resolving the question of national self-determination within a free India, which is often confusedly presented as a communal issue would already today assist in the removal of unnecessary barriers and grounds of conflict, and provide the basis for unity of the Indian national front in the present critical situation.

## 3. THE PRINCES

Imperialism has divided India into unequal segments—British India and the so-called “Indian States.” The fantastic and irrational character of this division, which is far more than an administrative division, and extends deeply into social, economic and political conditions, can only be appreciated by an examination of the map. Pre-nineteenth century Germany was an orderly system by comparison with the anarchic riot of confusion and petty “States” which is the map of India under British rule.

From west to east, from north to south, from the 200 States of Kathiawar or the score of States of Rajputana in the west to Manipur and the score of Khasi chieftainships in the extreme east, from Kashmir and the minute Simla Hill States in the north to Mysore and the Madras States in the south, the limitless miscellany of hundreds of States of every shape and size extend over two-fifths to nearly half of India (45 per cent now that Burma is separated from India), with boundaries which defy the cartographer. There are 563 States with a total area of 712,000 square miles and a population of 81 million (in the 1931 census) or nearly one-quarter (24 per cent) of the Indian population. They range from States like Hyderabad, as large as Italy, with 14 millions of population, to petty States like Lawa, with an area of nineteen square miles, or the Simla Hill States, which are little more than holdings. The variety of their status and jurisdiction defies any generalized description. There are 108 major States whose rulers are directly included in the Chamber of Princes. There are 127 minor States which indirectly return twelve representatives to the Chamber of Princes. The remaining 328 States are in practice special forms of landholding, with certain feudal rights, but with very limited jurisdiction. In the more important States a British Resident holds the decisive power; the lesser States are grouped under British Political Agents, who manage bunches of them in different geographical regions.

To call them “States” is really a misnomer; for they are, rather, artificially maintained ghosts or preserved ruins of former States, whose puppet Princes are maintained for political reasons by an entirely different ruling Power. While plenty of petty despotism, tyranny and arbitrary lawlessness is freely allowed, all decisive political power is in British hands.

Why did British rule, which in general sought to replace the motley disarray of India on the eve of the conquest, and has freely boasted of so doing, by a uniform political and administrative system, nevertheless retain and zealously preserve right up to the present day this phantasmagoria of tottering States, whose existence defeats all administrative uniformity, all uniformity of legislation or maintenance of the most elementary minimum standards, or even statistical uniformity?

This policy of assiduous preservation of the Princes as puppets was by no means consistently followed until the modern period. In the first half of the nineteenth century, while the British domination was still vigorous and confidently advancing, a policy of expanding absorption of the decaying States into British territory, under any and every pretext, was actively followed. But the turning-point came with the Revolt of 1857. The Revolt of 1857 was the last attempt of the decaying feudal forces, of the former rulers of the country, to turn back the tide of foreign domination. The progressive forces of the time, of the educated class representing the nascent bourgeoisie, supported British rule against the revolt. The revolt was crushed; but the lesson was learned. From this point the feudal forces no longer presented the main potential menace and rival to British rule, but the main barrier against the advance of the awakening masses. The progressive elements, which had formerly been treated with special favor, were now regarded with increasing suspicion as the potential new leadership of the awakening masses. The policy was consciously adopted of building more and more decisively on the feudal elements, on the preservation of the Princes and their States, as the bulwark of British rule.

The Queen's Proclamation of 1857 proclaimed the new policy: “We shall respect the rights, dignity and honor of the Native Princes as our own.” The purpose of the policy was frankly described by Lord Canning, the Governor-General who succeeded Dalhousie, in 1860:

“It was long ago said by Sir John Malcolm that if we made all India into Zillahs (or British Districts) it was not in the nature of things that our Empire should last fifty years; but that if we could keep up a number of Native States without political power, but as royal instruments, we should exist in India as long as our naval

supremacy was maintained. Of the substantial truth of this opinion I have no doubt; and the recent events have made it more deserving of our attention than ever." (Lord Canning, April 30, 1860.)

The preservation of the Indian States from the dissolution which would have been sooner or later their fate is thus an instrument of modern British policy, and by no means an expression of the survival of ancient institutions and traditions in India. As Professor Rushbrook Williams, the principal Government propagandist on behalf of the Princes (former Joint Director of the Indian Princes' Special Organization, Adviser to the Indian States Delegation at the Round Table Conference, and also Director of Public Information of the Government of India up to 1925), declared in 1930:

"The rulers of the Native States are very loyal to their British connection. Many of them owe their very existence to British justice and arms. Many of them would not be in existence today had not British power supported them during the struggles of the latter part of the eighteenth and the early part of the nineteenth century. Their affection and loyalty are important assets for Britain in the present troubles and in the readjustments which must come. . . .

"The situation of these feudatory States, checkerboarding all India as they do, is a great safeguard. It is like establishing a vast network of friendly fortresses in debatable territory. It would be difficult for a general rebellion against the British to sweep India because of this network of powerful loyal Native States." (L. F. Rushbrook Williams, in the *Evening Standard*, May 28, 1930.)

What sort of regime is thus maintained by British power? Jawaharlal Nehru describes in his autobiography his feeling of the general atmosphere of an Indian State:

"A sense of oppression comes; it is stifling and difficult to breathe, and below the still or slow-moving waters there is stagnation and putrefaction. One feels hedged, circumscribed, bound down in mind and body. And one sees the utter backwardness and misery of the people, contrasting vividly with the glaring ostentation of the

prince's palace. How much of the wealth of the State flows into that palace for the personal needs and luxuries of the prince, how little goes back to the people in the form of any service. . . .

"A veil of mystery surrounds these States. Newspapers are not encouraged there, and at the most a literary or semi-official weekly might flourish. Outside newspapers are often barred. Literacy is very low, except in some of the Southern States—Travancore, Cochin, etc.—where it is far higher than in British India. The principal news that comes from the States is of a viceregal visit with all its pomp and ceremonial and mutually complimentary speeches, or of an extravagantly celebrated marriage or birthday of the Ruler, or an agrarian rising. Special laws protect the princes from criticism, even in British India, and within the States the mildest criticism is rigorously suppressed. Public meetings are almost unknown, and even meetings for social purposes are often banned." (Jawaharlal Nehru, *Autobiography*, p. 531.)

It is doubtful whether there has been any regime in history to parallel that of the Indian puppet Princes under British protection. There are a few of the Indian States which have been administered on levels above the low levels of British India, and which have even carried out partially realized schemes of compulsory education or established very rudimentary forms of restricted advisory representative bodies. But these are exceptions. In the majority the servitude, despotism and oppression exceed description.

The Indian States represent the most backward agrarian economy of a feudal type. In only a few is there any industrial development. Slavery is rampant in many; forced labor, which may be imposed for any of a variety of services, with no remuneration other than food, is the regular rule. Taxes are imposed at will, to grind even the poorest in order to meet the insatiable demands of the palace. There are no civil rights.

The declaration of the States Peoples' Conference (the organ of the popular democratic movement in the States) in 1939 summed up the character of the regime of these Princes:

"In these States, big or small, with very few exceptions, personal, autocratic rule prevails. There is no rule



of law and taxation is excessive and unbearable. Civil liberties are crushed. The privy purse of the Rulers is usually not fixed, and even where it is fixed this is not adhered to. On the one hand there is the extravagance and luxury of the Princes, on the other the extreme poverty of the people.

"With the hard-earned money of the poverty-stricken and miserable people, enjoyment is bought and luxury is flaunted by their Rulers in foreign countries and in India. This system cannot continue. No civilized people can tolerate it. The whole argument of history is against it; the temper of the Indian people cannot submit to it." (Statement of the Standing Committee of the All-India States Peoples' Conference, June, 1939.)

This is the regime which British rule has not only preserved and artificially perpetuated over two-fifths of India, but in the modern period brings increasingly into the forefront and seeks to give added weight and prominence in the affairs of India as a whole. In 1921 the Chamber of Princes was instituted. The role of the Princes is the cornerstone of the Federal Constitution projected by the Act of 1935. The Princes are given over two-fifths of the representation in the Upper House, and one-third of the representation in the Lower House. The purpose was very clearly stated by Lord Reading in the Parliamentary debates:

"If the Princes come into a Federation of All India . . . there will always be a steadying influence. . . . What is it we have most to fear? There are those who agitate for independence for India, for the right to secede from the Empire altogether. I believe myself that it is an insignificant minority that is in favor, but it is an articulate minority and it has behind it the organization of the Congress. It becomes important, therefore, that we should get what steadying influence we can against this view. . . . There will be approximately 33 per cent of the Princes who will be members of the Legislature with 40 per cent in the Upper Chamber. There are of course large bodies of Indians who do not take the view of the Congress. So that with that influence in the federal Legislature I am not afraid in the slightest degree of anything

that may happen, even if Congress managed to get the largest proportion of votes."

In the most recent period the advance of the national democratic movement is more and more powerfully sweeping past the rotten barriers of the puppet States. The States Peoples' Conference, which organizes the popular movement in the States, has rapidly grown in strength. Active struggles for elementary civil rights have developed in a whole series of States.

This advance of the popular movement in the States has also been reflected in the policy of the National Congress. The Haripura Session of the National Congress in 1938 declared the general principles of Congress policy in relation to the States:

"The Congress stands for the same political, social and economic freedom in the States as in the rest of India and considers the States as an integral part of India which cannot be separated. The Purna Swaraj or complete independence which is the objective of Congress is for the whole of India, inclusive of the States, for the integrity and unity of India must be maintained in freedom as it has been maintained in subjection.

"The only kind of federation that can be acceptable to Congress is one in which the States participate as free units enjoying the same measure of democracy and freedom as in the rest of India.

"The Congress therefore stands for full responsible Government and the guarantee of civil liberties in the States and deplors the present backward conditions and utter lack of freedom and the suppression of civil liberties in many of the States."