

PAKISTAN AND NATIONAL UNITY

(Report by G. Adhikari on the foregoing Resolution before the Enlarged Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India in September 1942.)

I. THREE PERIODS—THREE APPROACHES

The question of national unity, of Hindu-Muslim unity, has evolved and gone through different phases of development, side by side with, and as part of, the different phases through which our national movement itself has passed. The problem, therefore, has to be studied in a historical way if we are to understand it properly in its present phase.

Failure to study the problem in this historical-dynamical way leads to old ways of looking at it; old solutions continue to persist in our understanding long after they have become outmoded. Such tendencies, and such modes of thinking, which are really derived from a past phase of our national movement, and no more correspond to the present phase, have to be nailed down not only in terms of principle, but also in terms of historical evolution; otherwise, their sources cannot be properly grasped and they cannot be completely rooted out.

That is why a historical-political review is necessary here, a review of how the question of Hindu-Muslim unity has developed from the past to to-day. Only in this way can we understand the significance of Pakistan and of the demand for the self-determination of nationalities; only in this way can we understand exactly why these demands have arisen now at this time and not before.

If we look back and examine the evolution of the problem, we find three distinct approaches to the problem in three distinct periods, each one corresponding to a particular phase of our national movement.

In the first and earliest period, it was the fundamental axiom of the national movement (which was itself in its earliest period) that India is one nation; "the difference between the Hindus and the Muslims is only one of religion; the stronger the nationalist urge among the masses of both religions grows, the sooner this difference will go off, and Hindus and Muslims will grow together as one"—this is

1934
how the Liberals, who were the earliest nationalists, argued.

At this period, propaganda for unity on the basis of nationalism against imperialism, propaganda for social reform as a means of doing away with "religious backwardness," was considered an adequate solution of the problem. Such propaganda was carried on by the Liberals in the earliest period of the national movement and the Liberals at that period were the leaders of the incipient national movement. Their simple argument was: "What is needed to solve the problem is nationalist consciousness."

The second period which lasts upto about 1934, brings the further development of the nationalist movement, and with it a further development of the Hindu-Muslim problem too, side by side with, and as an integral part of, the former. In this period, the nationalist bourgeoisie grows, gets consolidated as the leader of the nationalist movement, in place of the earlier loyalists and Liberal reformists. Alongside with this growth, we find, on the one hand, clashes and conflicts between the bourgeoisie of the two sections; on the other, side by side with this, as the other side of the very same process, the united class movement of the workers and the kisans grow up. Thus we have two simultaneous aspects: one—clashes and conflicts among the vested interests; the other—growing unity among the rising movement of the kisans and the working class.

The problem of Hindu-Muslim unity was, therefore, posed by the Leftists in this period thus:

"The whole conflict between the two sections is confined to the bourgeoisie and the vested interests; the masses of either section have nothing to do with this conflict. Unite the masses of both sections on economic issues, on common struggles for economic demands; side by side, grant the Muslims their cultural rights—and the problem will be solved."

The third period begins from about 1934, from the time of the advent of the New Constitution. In this period, two things take place simultaneously. On the one hand, the nationalist movement takes the biggest sweep forward and penetrates into the Indian countryside far and wide. On the other hand, with the developing offensive of Fascism on a world scale, with the sharpening of the war crisis and of the crisis of World Imperialism, the question of winning power from Imperialism comes to the forefront. The problem of Hindu-Muslim unity, under the influence of these two factors, sharply comes on the agenda, but in a new form. At this time, the demand of the national movement no more becomes one for constitutional concessions, or for communal versus joint electorates, etc., but

one for power. The war-crisis poses sharply before the Indian people the problem of winning power.

It is at this time that the Muslim League comes out with its demand for a separate State or States for Muslims. The grievances and demands of the Muslims as an "oppressed nationalities" are brought more and more into political controversies. The Hindu-Muslim problem appears in this new form now, the demand of the Muslims for their own State. With the outbreak of war, the Congress demands independence, the League demands Pakistan. The controversy of "Pakistan versus the Unity and Independence of India" begins.

It is in this period, as we shall see in detail subsequently, that the real nature of the communal problem becomes clear—as a problem of growing nationalities.

It is when we see the problem in such a historical-political perspective that we are able to distinguish three different approaches to the problem, corresponding to three different phases of our national movement. Thus only can we see how each of these three approaches arises from, and fits, a particular phase of development of our national movement. We are able to understand the significance of the new development of the present period and the corresponding necessity for the working-class Party to make a new approach to the problem to suit this development.

Let us now take each of these periods separately and in detail.

II. THE EVOLUTION OF THE COMMUNAL QUESTION

The first period is the one in which our national movement is set the lowest phase of its development. The upper layers of the "intellectuals" and the professional middle class are alone in the movement and are its leaders. These Liberal intellectuals, who drank deep at the fountain of Victorian Liberalism, see in Britain an example for India to emulate. For them the ideal becomes: "India must unite and be a nation like Great Britain." They do not see the specific differences between Great Britain and India, they do not see the different features that characterise Indian development. They see religious differences in India, they regard these differences as the only obstacle standing in the path of India's developing into a single nation just like Britain. Their propaganda, therefore, is for social reform, in order to convince people that religion is an "irrelevant" issue, as far as "politics" is concerned. The whole problem is looked upon as one of chucking out religion from politics. "Religion does not bother the Bri-

lish people, why should it bother us?"—this is how they argue.

This is how the problem is seen by the narrow politics of the Liberals of those days, who see in British development the "ideal" path of development for India too.

As the nationalist movement develops, two things emerge. The one is the rising imperialist challenge which says: "India is not even a nation, how can she govern herself?" As against this, as an answer to this insolent challenge, the new nationalist movement of 1906-18 asserts that India is a nation, and, therefore, can govern herself.

This assertion becomes the banner of the rising nationalist movement at this period. "We are a nation exactly as much as Great Britain is," so declares the nationalist of this period. The demands of the national movement at this period, correspondingly, are for the same parliamentary democratic institutions that Britain has, because "India is a nation as much as Britain is." The basis of the national movement at that time, as opposed to the imperialist challenge, is the assertion that India is a nation.

In this period, also with the rising nationalist movement, grow up certain prejudices, arising from the historical fact that the nationalist movement grew up among the educated Hindu middle-class first. It is these prejudices which, carried over into the further period, act as a hindrance to the development of national unity. The national movement at that time was dominantly Hindu in colour, it was led by the Hindu middle class leaders. The nationalism of that period, therefore, expressed itself in the garb of Hindu ideology. The idea that India is one nation thus became inextricably interwoven with ideas depicting the one-ness of India in Hindu religious and cultural imagery.

Born thus, this religious imagery and these associations remain in popular consciousness long after that stage is passed. The dominance of Hindu leadership at this earliest period of the national movement, left a special Hindu cultural impress upon the nationalist movement. The idea that India is one became connected with the idea that the cultural unity of India is a Hindu cultural unity—an association that becomes a great drag and hindrance later on, as we shall see.

In 1920-21, the industrial bourgeoisie, consolidated and strengthened during the war, begins to come to the forefront of the nationalist movement. The question of Hindu-Muslim unity, which was till then purely one of joining together for "petitioning" the British Government (the Lucknow Pact of 1916) appears in the new form. The Hindu

and Muslim masses are stirred up by the post-war upsurge. It was a time when the Muslim masses were rising up. The Muslim countries of the Middle East were rising against British imperialism, the dismemberment of the old Turkish Empire by British Imperialism stirs up Muslims throughout the world.

The Khilafat movement was a reflection of this upsurge of the Muslim nationalities in the East. The Khilafat movement and the rising nationalist wave in India join hands. Both the sections—Hindus and Muslims—unite for struggle against British Imperialism. But even in this struggle, the issues are not yet clarified and sharpened. Though the struggle is a mass struggle, the basis of the demands is yet liberal, it is only the form that is revolutionary.

The whole question of unity is posed as unity on the basis of nationalist sentiment of asserting national freedom, against British imperialism. The whole movement is yet restricted to the middle classes. The issues have not yet gone down to the masses. The demands are not clarified as their demands. On the part of Muslim masses, their participation in the struggle expresses the freedom urge of Muslim nationalities which was given a religious turn. The concrete democratic demands of the masses were not brought forward to unite the Hindu and Muslim masses in the struggle. It was a pure top agreement between the Khilafatists and the Swarajists, based on the demands of the top leaderships. The unity thus achieved had no solid foundation in the masses and therefore collapsed as soon as the struggle collapsed, as soon as the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms came.

The collapse of this unity marks a definite watershed demarcating the period before from the one after. From this time on, we see on the one hand the slow, though thwarted and distorted, development of the industrial bourgeoisie, in conflict with imperialism and the conflict within its own ranks amongst its own different sections; on the other hand, the rising working-class movement, through which the Hindu and Muslim masses united together.

Under the impact of the characteristics of the period there was a strong tendency to look upon the communal problem as a mere middle-class problem of conflict between the two bourgeoisies. "Only the workers can come together in common struggle. And the basis of this common struggle can only be economic"—so runs the argument. The communal problem was sought to be solved through the economic end.

The defect with this view point is not that it is com-

pletely wrong, but that it represents only a partial aspect of the matter—that the solution to the problem of the conflict of the bourgeoisie is to be found in the coming together of the masses of the proletarians and the semi-proletarians. This "class" explanation is put in a vulgar economic way—that the problem is merely one of middle class rivalry and the solution to it is common economic struggles of the masses. It is this outlook which made the Leftists put forward the "practical" solution of the communal problem—"Give cultural rights to the Muslims and the problem will be solved"—this "practical" solution amounted to the "practical" policy of the dominant section of the bourgeoisie itself.

The latter part of this second period, which followed the collapse of the glorious unity of 1920-22, was marked by bitter clash and conflict between the two sections of our people. The days of joint struggle were followed by days of tug-of-war in the Montford Councils. There was no effective joint front between the Congress and the League against the Simon Commission. Later in 1923 (December) when the All-Parties' Convention met to deliver India's counter-challenge to the imperialist challenge of Simon Commission and attempted to put forth an agreed constitution, it was a failure. The constitution was rejected by the Muslim League because the National Congress and the other parties, notably Hindu Sabha, refused to concede the League demand that the federation of free India should be such that the residual powers should not be vested in the Centre but in the federating units; thus ensuring them the largest measure of autonomy.

The result was that when the Congress started the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930-32, the League did not join it. A section of Muslim leadership joined but the bulk of the Muslim masses were not drawn into the struggle as in 1920-22. The League itself disintegrated and continued to be weak during the years of 1924-36. At the Round Table Conference too, there was no settlement between the Congress and the League.

The period of disunity was marked by the bloody trail of communal riots. These were engineered by goondas in the pay of the dark forces of reaction which wanted to take advantage of the disunity to destroy the militant national movement and the growing workers' and peasants' movement.

The weakening of the League during this period, which was due partly to the splitting away of a section of the patriotic Muslim leaders, and to the influx of opportunist feudal leaders, created the illusion in the ranks of the

National Congress that Hindu-Muslim unity could be achieved by crushing the League and by ensuring the protection of cultural and religious demands of the Muslims. The Leftists made this illusion into a theory: the Muslim League is a communal and reactionary organisation. When the Congress begins to fight for the economic demands of the masses and guarantees protection of cultural and religious demands of the Muslims, the Muslim masses will all leave the League and join the Congress and thus the communal problem will be solved.

The collapse of the second Civil Disobedience movement was followed by a new upsurge of the working class and kisan movement, a resurgence of the national movement. The developments which came in the wake of this upsurge, proved not only the bankruptcy of this disastrous theory but also shed light on the real nature of the communal problem and its solution.

The rise of the organised working-class and kisan movements, the sweeping political activity and upsurge that takes place all over the country preparatory to, and following upon, the Congress elections—these mark off the beginning of this period.

Three things happen now.

1 Firstly, the spurt of industrial development which followed the end of the first World War and which was mainly restricted to centres in advanced provinces now begins to spread to the other parts of the country. After the crisis and depression of the years 1926-32 capital from older centres of industry begins to flow and penetrate into backward regions and provinces. New industries like sugar and cement flower forth. The spread of industries to backward provinces, creation of new centres of industries in them brings in questions of acute competition and rivalries between different sections of the Indian bourgeoisie. These get accentuated in the period of ministries under 1935 constitution.

2 Secondly, comes the fact that the nationalist movement penetrates into the countryside, it enters the kisan masses all over the land, at a rate and tempo never seen before. The masses of the working class and the peasantry, in the hitherto "advanced" as in the hitherto "backward" provinces, are swept into the current of the nationalist movement.

3 Thirdly, with the coming into operation of the New Constitution, the various political parties and bourgeois sections are called upon to take up clear political positions vis-a-vis the question of power, the question of independence and democracy.

Let us take each of these features in turn.

For the first time during the time of the Congress elections of 1937 and during the period of the Congress Ministries, we find inter provincial "jealousies" beginning to appear on the scene—frictions, competitions, etc., between different sections of the bourgeoisie between the bourgeoisies of the different provinces, of different parts of India. Where industrial development spreads to provinces, which till then were relatively "backward" there arises competition between the bourgeoisie of these provinces and the bourgeoisie of the "advanced" provinces who are economically and politically more powerful.

The Karnataki-Maharashtrian rivalry and the demand of the Karnatakis for a "Samyukta Karnatak"; the Tamil-Andhra rivalries and the demand of the Andhras for a separate province; the demand of the Oriyas for their rights; the friction between the Bengalis and the Beharis—all these began to come to the fore.

So deep is this friction that it finds reflection inside the Congress organisation itself. In the Karnatak Congress, for instance, the factional dispute between Kannad Lingayat and Maharashtra Brahmins sharpened and assumed a very acute form during the elections of 1937 and after. This division reflected in fact the conflict between the Maharashtrian Brahmin (landlord) money-lending group which had dominated the political and economic life of Karnatak till then and the rising Kannad middle-class (merchants) and the bulk of the Kannad peasantry both of which belonged to the Lingayat community, and who had begun awakening to political consciousness especially after the second phase of national struggle of 1930-32.

But the basis behind all these conflicts and demands is much deeper than mere top rivalry between sections of the bourgeoisie. The conflict among the bourgeoisie is only one aspect of the matter. There is another aspect of it, an aspect formed by the second characteristic of this period mentioned in the foregoing.

Take the Karnatak example above. Behind it, in addition to the Maharashtra-Karnatak rivalry, was the fact that the Lingayat (Kannad) peasantry was, for the first time, roused to political life and entered the national movement—and this peasantry with this newly roused political consciousness, supported the Lingayat candidate as against the Maharashtrian candidate in the 1937 elections. The same way, we find that in the Andhra Tamil instance, in the Bengali-Behari instance, etc., among the newly political-awakened peasantry and masses of the

people of Behar, Andhra, etc., this movement for a separate province and rights, etc., finds eager response. Movements like the Samyukta Karnatak or, the one for a separate Andhra province, etc., become deeply rooted in the masses of the peasantry and the people—and this at a time when the peasantry is being roused to political consciousness by the spread of the national movement.

It is this latter aspect that assumes greater and greater importance during this period and gives a radically revolutionary turn to the whole problem of communal unity and national unity. And it is to this aspect that we have now to devote detailed attention.

As the national movement grows wider, the conflict between the top sections of the bourgeoisie begins to assume new forms. What are these new forms, what is their content? It is this which needs investigation, if one is to grasp the essence of the problem of national unity in this period.

III. A PROBLEM OF GROWING NATIONALITIES

As the national movement spreads from the lower middle class to the peasantry, the national question which till then was a simple question of conflict between the Indian people as a whole and British Imperialism, now becomes more complicated and takes on new forms. The broad framework of this fundamental conflict, of course, remains. But within this framework arise problems of various dormant nationalities for the first time waking up to life, problems that demand urgent solution as a preparatory step to the winning of Indian freedom from British Imperialism.

During the 1935-39 period, the national movement really becomes broader and sweeps over every nook and corner of the country hitherto left comparatively untouched. It goes deep down into the masses; the broad masses of the peasantry and the people for the first time wake up to active political and national consciousness. The peasantry in most provinces advance from their own narrow sectional consciousness to all-India consciousness, but they make this advance to all-India consciousness in terms of their own newly-awakened national consciousness.

For example, taking the Karnatak example given above, the Lingayat peasantry really achieve all-India anti-imperialist consciousness, but they proceed to, and understand, this all India consciousness through, in terms of, their own Kannad language and Kannad national consciousness. The idea of a Free India for them becomes concrete as "Samyukta Karnatak"—a united and free Karnatak.

The Indian National Congress itself recognised this basic feature in the step it took of forming linguistic provinces.

What happens, therefore, during this period is this. The national movement, led by the Congress, as it spreads over each province, takes on the national colour of that particular province. To put it in a picturesque though rough way, the all-India national movement resembles a stream which while it flows through the soil of each nationality naturally takes on the colour of the soil of that nationality. The stream becomes a multi-colour stream though it still remains one stream flowing in one direction.

The problem of achieving National Unity in this period becomes complex. It becomes a problem of achieving multi-national unity. In other words, in order to unite the entire people of India for the common task for achieving independence, the democracy, it becomes necessary to take into account the pride and love the different sections of the people have for their own language and their own homeland, to take into account their aspiration to build and live their own free life in their own homeland. To ignore this pride and love, this aspiration, of the various sections of our people, to brush them aside saying these are provincial prejudices or communal demands, is to ignore a growing reality. To ignore these sentiments is to repudiate the task of building National Unity.

These sentiments about a homeland and about language—these aspirations, are not reactionary. They are not, they need not be, in conflict with the sentiments of All-India National movement. On the other hand, the growth of these sentiments and aspirations of the people belonging to different Nationalities has followed in the wake of the spread of the anti-imperialist consciousness among the masses. In actual fact, as we have seen, this takes place as the anti-imperialist, i.e., nationalist, movement spreads and penetrates deep into the peasant masses.

The peasant wakes up to general anti-imperialist consciousness—to the yearning for freedom and democracy for the whole of India. But this awakening takes the form of the yearning for freedom and democracy in terms of his own homeland, his own language, etc. Anti-imperialist consciousness awakens "national" consciousness—national in the specific sense of the nationalities that make up India. You cannot separate the one from the other.

Such a development takes place only when the anti-imperialist movement goes down to the peasant masses. That is why Stalin says: "The national problem is dominantly a peasant problem."

This close interlinking between the rising all-India political consciousness of the masses on the one hand and the waking up to life of a multi-national pattern on the other, each reacting on, and in its turn helping, the other—it is this which forms the progressive content of the rivalries and conflicts of this period. The other part of it, the husk, is of course manifested in competitions among the top bourgeoisie, such as the Bengal Behar competition, etc.

This shows the real maturity of the national movement, the real maturity of this multi-national consciousness. It is this same maturity which brings out into the forefront the fact that the problem is no more a mere problem of cultural separation and cultural freedom. The real basis is the full-throated urge of every nationality within this multi-national pattern for its fullest and freest development, free from all oppression and hindrances. The demand is for full and unfettered political and economic existence, as the only way of full and free development under the new conditions. The demand for freedom from British imperialism gets crystallised in the case of each waking nationality. In this demand for full and unfettered political and economic existence, the former problem cannot be solved separate from, in opposition to, the latter. It can only be solved through the latter.

This is the demand which we call: the demand of every nationality for self-determination. This demand becomes the progressive lever by means of which alone the various nationalities can be rallied and mobilised to fight shoulder to shoulder, for India's freedom. This demand becomes the progressive lever for the richest and the highest flowering and development of every individual nationality itself. Diversity becomes the lever for strengthening unity, for enriching and developing that very unity.

To the Communists, this development is already becoming quite clear. But to the ordinary patriot, this new aspect of the communal problem, as a problem of multi-national consciousness, has not yet become patent. We, the Communists, are able to see our way into the future by means of our theory and our ideology. By means of this, we are able to quickly see these elements in the present which are bound to develop in the future. The slogans of our national movement should not be slogans which are counterposed to, which stand in the way of the stages of future development but should be such as will take us on along with the stream of future historical development and will assist such development.

That is why we say that a basic understanding of this

new turn in the development of the "communal problem," of this new phase, is urgent and vital.

The Party itself has been groping its way towards this new understanding for a long period. Our resolution at Mantanavaripallam (1938) took the first step forward in this direction. We were the only people at that time to see that Congress-League unity is the key to national unity. We were the only people at that time to urge negotiations between the Congress and the League. We were the only people at that time to see the transformation and change coming over the Muslim masses. The C. S. P. and other parties did not recognise any new turn in the situation; they still saw the problem in the old way—"the Muslim masses will come over to us and the League leadership will get isolated."

What are the developments in the Muslim League during this time? At the time of the Congress elections, a section of the Muslim intelligentsia came over to the Congress and supported it. The radical election platform of the Congress was the main reason. The League leadership, however, put its own house in order and consolidated its strength to fight the elections. The League's opposition to the Muslim Congress candidates however was not very successful.

But after the elections, the failure of the Congress to forge coalition ministries, the acts of commission and omission of the Congress Ministries in some of the provinces, created a resentment among the Muslim masses. This was seized upon by the League leadership to give an anti-Congress twist to the rising anti-imperialist upsurge among the Muslim masses, who were now rallying in ever-growing numbers round the Muslim League. The most radical section of the national leadership, was blind to the new developments spreading among the Muslim masses. It saw in the growing League influence only the rise of "communalism." They explained that the "reactionary" League leadership was exploiting the "backwardness" of the Muslim masses. As a solution they put forward the programme of "Muslim mass contact"—which was rightly considered by the Muslim Leaguers as a move to destroy their organisation.

We, Communists, saw in this development not only the growing rivalry between the bourgeoisie of both the sections but also the other, the progressive development too. We saw in the situation, looking forward to the future, not the "backwardness" of the Muslim masses, but their forwardness, their advancing political consciousness. We saw in the growth of the Muslim League not the growth

of communalism but the rise of anti-imperialist nationalist consciousness among the Muslim masses. We saw this as a forward step. By bringing together the Congress and the League and joining them on common democratic demands, we knew that we could give a progressive expression to this upsurge of the Muslim masses and of the Muslim nationalities, we could weld this into firm anti-imperialist unity.

We put forward the slogan of Congress-League unity. We saw that the League leadership was playing the same 'oppositional' role vis-a-vis British Imperialism as the Congress leadership was doing. We saw that the unity of both on the basis of a United National Front programme of democratic demands had to be forged to further Indian struggle for freedom. But we did not then discover the real democratic basis for Congress-League unity, for a lasting unity of Hindu and Muslim masses.

Congress was opposed to imperialist federation as the 1935 constitution offered. So was the Muslim League! But united front to oppose the imperialist federation could be forged only when the two organisations agreed on the shape of the federation of independent India. The Congress conception of federation was defined in Nehru Constitution (in 1928) as one in which the residual powers were vested in the Centre and not in the federating units. Muslim League had opposed this conception vigorously then. Their conception of the federation for free India was a federation of autonomous and sovereign states. Why? Because the Muslim League wanted autonomy for regions in which Muslim nationalities like Sindhis, Pathans, Punjabis, Eastern Bengal Muslims lived. It was a just democratic demand. This really is the crux and kernel of all the various so-called "communal" demands raised by the Muslim League right from its inception upto the present time when they have been finally crystallised into the demand for Pakistan.

In 1938 we did not understand the real nature of the communal problem which was becoming clear in the process of national, political and economic development. We were groping towards it. It became crystal clear to us when in March 1940, the Muslim League adopted the Pakistan Resolution. In 1938, we were yet wrapped up in the theory, like the rest of the nationalists, that India was one nation and that the Muslims were just a religious cultural minority and that Congress-League united front could be forged by conceding "protection of cultural and religious rights and demands." We stood on the same basis as the Congress leadership, and were guilty of the charge of

denying the peoples of the Muslim nationalities their just right to autonomy in free India.

Since 1940 the Party began to see that the so-called communal problem—especially Hindu-Muslim problem in India was really a problem of growing nationalities and that it could only be solved on the basis of the recognition of the right of self-determination, to the point of political secession, of the Muslim nationalities, as in fact of all nationalities which have India as their common motherland. In these days many comrades were shocked by the formulation that India was not one nation and its development was in the direction of a multi-national unity. Some of these doubts were cleared in the Party Letter of May 1941.

IV. MARXIST-LENINIST TEACHING ON THE NATIONAL QUESTION

From what has been said so far it is clear that the communal problem in India has entered a new phase. It is no more a problem of racial and religious differences. It is emerging as a problem of many nationalities that are growing in India. The question of uniting the people of India in a single camp for achieving independence and democracy, cannot be solved unless we take note of the just and the democratic aspirations of the peoples of these nationalities to build their own free life in a free India, unless these demands and aspirations find place in our platform for United National Front. For the solution of the communal problem in India therefore we must turn to the Marxist-Leninist teaching on the national question, to its Stalinist application to Russia.

Stalin has given a pithy but pregnant definition of a Nation:

"A nation is a historically evolved stable community of language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture."

But this definition must not be understood as a static enumeration of a number of features, the co-existence of which determines whether a given group of people are a nation or not. This definition in fact describes the process of a people growing into a nation. In order to apply Stalin's teaching to India we must understand this process of growth of nations and then apply that knowledge to our country.

A nation is not a static entity which has been in existence from time immemorial. Nations and national consciousness arise at a definite stage of social development. This is what Marxism-Leninism teaches us. This is how Comrade Stalin puts it—

"Modern nations are a product of a definite epoch, of rising capitalism. The process of the abolition of feudalism and the development of capitalism was also the process of the development of peoples into nations. The British, the French, the Germans and the Italians formed into nations during the victorious march of capitalism and its triumph over feudal disunity."

There were feudal kingdoms and empires before the birth of capitalism. Some of them consisted of peoples speaking a single language, having the same culture. Others consisted of peoples or tribes speaking different languages and having different cultures. But these kingdoms and empires could not be called nations. Their transformation to nationhood, to national states, came about with the break-up of feudalism and the rise of capitalism. It came about when decentralised feudal economy based on village communities broke down, when its place was taken by commodity economy, when capitalist market and manufacture of goods for this market began to unify whole areas under one common economy. Formation of such national states furthered capitalist development and capitalist development in its turn promoted the formation of national states.

The earliest and the most classic examples of the formation of peoples into nations are to be seen in the cases of Great Britain, France, Italy and Germany. In all these cases, the unification of people into a nation resulted in a homogeneous unit with a single language, and with common historical and cultural traditions. Our liberal forefathers of the last century admired the process of the unification of England, Scotland and Wales into a single nation—Great Britain—which took place in the hey day of bourgeois revolution in the first half of the last century. They fondly imagined that the unification of the Indian people into a free national state would follow the same pattern. Since then this idea has become deeply rooted in the nationalist mind and is today the cause of a lot of confusion on the question of national unity.

But apart from this classic pattern of unification of peoples into nations, there is another pattern. During the second period of rising capitalism another type of national state arose in Eastern Europe. Here for historical reasons, a centralised state had already come into existence before the elimination of feudal disunity, before the rise of capitalism. "Mixed states made up of several nationalities which had not yet formed themselves into nations were already united into a common state"—this is how Stalin described such a centralised state. The Austro-

Hungarian Empire and the Czarist empire were examples of such feudal centralised states.

With the development of capitalism these mixed states developed into "multi-national states with the more developed nation at the head and the remaining less developed nations in a state of political and economic subjection to the dominant nation" (Stalin.) For instance in the pre-war Czarist empire, it was the Great-Russian nation, the bourgeoisie of which was powerful in the Czarist state, which dominated and oppressed the less developed nationalities such as the Ukrainians, Georgians, Letts, Poles and Finns, etc. These nationalities too were developing towards nationhood but their growth was being thwarted, giving rise to the national movement and the national problem in Russia.

The Russian movement which was heading the struggle for democracy and Socialism had to tackle this problem. We have to learn a great deal from the manner in which the Russian Bolsheviks solved the question of uniting the people of different nationalities in a common struggle for democracy.

In Russia of the pre-revolutionary days we have a classical example of what happens inside a multi-national state—as capitalist development spreads and national unrest grows up among the people of the suppressed nationalities. Rapid industrial development took place in Russia between the years 1908 and 1917.

The Great Russian bourgeoisie acquired hold over the markets and the raw materials of the border regions. Growth of market and trade in these border regions gave birth to the national bourgeoisie in these regions whose interest thus came into conflict with those of the dominant Russian bourgeoisie.

At the same time a vast popular democratic upsurge was beginning to spread from one end of the Czarist empire to another. People throughout Russia including the border regions were demanding the end of Czarist autocracy, the abolition of landlordism, a democratic republic and an 8-hour day.

In this situation, separatist movements arose in the border regions, led by the national bourgeoisie of those respective regions. These raised the slogan of independence and separation from the Czarist empire—and sought to take advantage of the democratic national sentiment that was growing among the people of the respective nationalities. But they refused to organise and unite the people of their nationality for their own democratic demands in common with the rest of the Russian people.

The result of such movements was in practice to disrupt the unity of the peoples of Russia as a whole against Czarism, to take the masses of the people of that nationality away from the common struggle, to divide the ranks of the working class and peasantry. The slogan of independence and separatism in the mouth of the national bourgeoisie of the border regions did not create conditions for the real liberation of the peoples of these regions from the Czarist yoke but was for them a means of bargaining with the great Russian bourgeoisie for a share of power.

The political parties of the Great Russian bourgeoisie raised the slogan of "Russia one and indivisible" and played a lip sympathy to the democratic demands of the surging popular movement. Their "Russia one and indivisible" did not mean revolutionary unification of the democratic popular movement for the overthrow of Czarism. Their lip sympathy to democratisation did not include even complete political autonomy to the peoples of the border regions. In essence their policy amounted to imperialist domination of the Russian bourgeoisie over the economy of the whole of Russia including the border regions.

How did the Russian Bolsheviks go about to solve the problem of nationalities? The corner stone of their policy was the drawing together of the toiling people of all nationalities and races in a joint revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of the Czarist autocracy and of the bourgeoisie. In uniting the people of entire Russia for the common struggle against Czarist-imperialist autocracy, the Bolsheviks clearly defined the common objective.

This was "a consistently democratic republican structure"—in which "the right of all the nations forming part of Russia to freely secede and form independent states" was to be recognised. Thus the two key slogans of the national policy of the Bolsheviks were:

- (1) Unity of the workers and peasants, of the common people, for revolutionary struggle for democracy.
- (2) Recognition of the right of all nationalities to self-determination—to the point of secession.

The Bolsheviks were able to unite the overwhelming majority of the Russian peoples for the struggle against Czarism because they were the revolutionary party of the working class and thus proved themselves in practice the most implacable champions in the fight for democracy, for the abolition of landlordism, for a democratic republic, for the 8-hour day. They were able to smash the separatist moves of the bourgeoisie because they came out as the best champions of the oppressed nationalities in their fight for equality and self-determination.

The policy which the Mensheviks, the reformist leadership in the Russian labour movement, pursued, failed on both these points. In their struggle for democracy they relied upon the Russian bourgeoisie and not on the proletariat with the result that they capitulated at every stage to the former and betrayed the revolutionary struggle. Secondly, they refused to recognise the right of self-determination of the nationalities. They repeated the bourgeois slogan—Russia one and indivisible—and offered to the nationalities only cultural rights. Their policy in practice amounted to supporting the oppression of the people of the border regions by the dominant Great Russian nationality. Their policy thus played into the hands of the bourgeois separatists of the border nationalities and only led to disruption of the joint people's front against Czarism.

The Russian toiling masses rejected the policy of the Mensheviks and rallied round the slogans of the Bolsheviks. We see the result in the Soviet Union, a shining example for us of a model solution of the problem of nationalities in a country with some 200 nationalities.

V. APPLICATION TO INDIA

Let us now apply these principles to the new phase of the communal problem in our country. To begin with it is quite clear that India was not a nation in the modern sense from times immemorial, from the days of Ashoka and Akbar. Nation building in India begins as in the case of all countries, with the advent of capitalism. This takes place in India with the British conquest. It is true that even before the British conquest, large feudal imperial states had come into existence which extended their sway over almost the whole of India. But these states did not develop into multi-national states as in the case of the Eastern European states. They had already disappeared before the advent of capitalism. The process of nation-building in India begins under the British state in India, under conditions of struggle against imperialist exploitation. What form does it take?

Our nineteenth and early twentieth century liberal forefathers thought that the British conquest had laid the basis for the unification of India into a single nation and that the process had begun. All what was needed was effort to speed up political education and social reform among the people. India would then become a full-fledged single unified nation and be thus fit for self-government. In those days imperialists and their apologists based their denial of self-rule to India on the ground that India was not unified as a nation. While the liberals however, look-

ed up to the imperialists to weld India into a nation, the militant nationalists of 1907-8 asserted that India was a nation, that she had been a nation since times immemorial—from the times of Ashoka and Akbar. This was their answer to the imperialist challenge.

They said self-rule was India's birth right, as a nation. 'India is a nation', this slogan became the banner of the rising tide of the patriotic middle class movement of those days. From the Himalayas to Kanya Kumari, one people, one nation, one language, one state. These became the slogans which inspired and unified the nationalist movement. Who said that India was not a single nation, that it could not have a single language, that it could not build its own free state? Only the imperialists. Thus ran the nationalist argument. Since those days India, a single nation, has become a tacitly accepted axiom of the nationalist movement.

Not only this. The nationalist movement of the early days was restricted to the advanced provinces of Bengal, Maharashtra, Punjab and Gujerat—Hindu provinces with a common language, Hindi. The result was that the one nation idea got draped in Hindu cultural imagery with Hindi as the national language.

This one nation—one language idea, draped in Hindu imagery, has been carried over from the past into the consciousness of our modern nationalist movement. It persists even today at a time when the reality of our national development has become quite different; at a time when this development is taking the form more and more clearly of a multi-national pattern.

This conflict between an old and wrong conception still prevailing among the bulk of our nationalist movement and the unfolding reality of a multi-national development is one of the biggest hindrances to the solution of the communal problem. Marxist-Leninist teaching as applied to this reality enables us not only to understand it but to solve the problem as well. The proletariat armed with this advanced theory knows that within the womb of the Indian national movement now preparing the ground for a free and democratic India, are throbbing not one but many baby nations. Comrade Stalin spoke of such a development as early as 1925:

"Who could have imagined that old Czarist Russia consisted of no less than fifty nationalities and ethnic groups? However, by breaking old chains and bringing a number of forgotten peoples and nationalities on the scene, the October Revolution gave them new life and new development. Now-a-days India is spoken

of as a single whole. Yet there can be hardly any doubt that in the case of a revolutionary upheaval in India many hitherto unknown nationalities each with its own language and its own distinctive culture will emerge on the scene."

In 1925 when this was written, it was a brilliant prophecy, proving the remarkable acumen of vision that Marxism alone can give. Today when the whole world including India is on the threshold of a great upheaval, this has become a growing reality. In spite of all the hindrances which imperialism places in the way of the normal development of India, in spite of the fact that the homeland areas of the different nationalities are cut up by arbitrary boundaries of states and provinces, these units are growing as nations economically and politically.

Each of these areas is now having its own Chamber of Commerce—for instance, Andhra, Karnatak, Maharashtra, Bengal, Punjab, etc. What does this show? It shows that the indigenous bourgeoisie in each area is attempting to consolidate its own market in its own homeland. Besides, in each of these areas there is development of their own language, culture and literature. Not only this; in some of these areas where one nation has been cut up into different provinces, the demand for unification of the nation into a single province has been put forward as a democratic demand. As mentioned above there is the demand for Samyukta Karnatak, for separation of Andhra, for united Maharashtra. The demand for Pakistan, if we look at its progressive essence, is in reality the demand for the self-determination and separation of the areas of Muslim nationalities of the Punjab, Pathans, Sind, Baluchistan and of the eastern provinces of Bengal.

It is this development which gives a new turn in this period to the communal and the national problem. The problem of communal and national unity thus becomes a problem of uniting all these nationalities for the common task of defending the country against fascist aggression, for winning freedom.

VI. SELF-DETERMINATION AND SEPARATION

The starting point of the solution of the communal problem put forward by our Party is the urgent need for revolutionary unity of the peoples of our land to win national government and to defend the land from fascism. Our Party keeps in the forefront of our attention the fact that no nationality can have freedom and scope for free development until and unless all imperialist and feudal fetters

are shattered, until and unless fascism is beaten back from the borders of our land and crushed.

We explain to the people two things:

(1) The problem of nationalities can only be solved in a firm and lasting manner under Socialism when the disuniting factor of the bourgeoisie disappears:

(2) But at the same time, a partial solution is possible under capitalism, but only under conditions of complete and full democracy.

The solution which the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (C.P.S.U.), put forward in 1917 was one of a radical democratic revolution, of attaining complete democracy.

This is what demarcates our policy, as a revolutionary policy, from the constitutional and administrative 'scheme-making' in which Liberals and bourgeois-reformists indulge under the plea of solving the problem of Pakistan. To wander off into such constitution-mongering and boundary making pastimes is to stray from the revolutionary path into the path of reformism. The problem before us today is not one of drawing maps and boundaries, of trying to partition India off under British rule—but of forging the revolutionary unity of action of all sections of our people to win national government, to win the common war of liberation against fascism and to secure the common freedom of all. This and this alone is the precondition to our people being able to remake boundaries in a democratic way, freed from all imperialist-feudal fetters.

This is what is stressed in para 1 of our Party's resolution on "Pakistan and National Unity". There we underline the point that the cornerstone of our policy is the unity of the masses as the vanguard of the national movement.

But developments have to be taken into account in their actual reality, not in abstraction. Hence the nationalities and their national urges have to be taken as they are; this should be the starting point. How can we unify these various nationalist strivings in terms of our all-India national struggle? How can we give these various nationalist urges the dominant impress of all-India national consciousness? This is the problem.

All the present and past historical forms of oppression of the masses of the various nationalities have to be concretely taken into account. The imminent danger threatening all our peoples from the Fascist menace must be concretely stressed. Our national movement has to place before all our peoples a concrete, real picture of what

it means to get rid of all this imperialist-feudal oppression and of what it means to win National Government and successfully crush the fascists. It is such a picture which should inspire them for united action today.

To bring together all the peoples, to bring together the urge of the various nationalities for freedom, on to a common platform, the platform of the United National Front—this is our task.

Our policy with respect to the comunal problem fits into this general framework. The granting of the right of self-determination (including the right of secession) to all nationalities, including the Muslim nationalities, would forge revolutionary Hindu-Muslim unity as the core of national unity.

It must be clearly recognised, as has been pointed out in the foregoing, that uneven development under Imperialist rule has created a basis in our political life for inequality and the fear of domination as between various nationalities.

In our land, the dominant national oppression is, of course, the imperialist oppression. But inside the national movement itself, because of the unequal development of the various nationalities, certain sections are more developed and more powerful, certain others less developed and weaker. This factor breeds mutual distrust and suspicion inside the national movement.

The Muslim masses fear that they will be oppressed and exploited by "Hindu India." Has this fear and suspicion any basis? To find an answer to this, we have to look not into the subjective intentions of parties and groups, but into objective developing reality. The uneven bourgeois development itself creates conditions wherein one dominant nationality may be in a position to stifle the growth of less developed and weaker nationalities in a free India. We saw tiny germs of this even during the period of the Congress Ministries. That is why we say that such a fear is quite an understandable fear.

Conditions must be created so that this inequality and uneven development should be used not against the people, but in favour of the people. The inequality should not become a factor retarding unity against imperialism and fascist invasion. The bourgeoisie uses it for disunity. The proletariat, on the other hand, (as in the case of the Soviet Union) uses the advanced technique of the forward nationalities to help the backward nationalities and to bring them up, quicker and more easily, to the level of the advanced ones.

Thus the demand for self-determination of the na-

tionalties has to be looked upon as a just demand. The essence of this demand is equality and freedom from oppression. To refuse this demand means to sanction national inequality and oppression.

To the Congress patriot, who looks back upon our entire past national movement and its achievements in unifying the Indian people, we have to explain that still greater and more glorious unity will result from the grant of self-determination to all nationalities. We have to explain to him how this policy creates revolutionary national unity today for national defence and national government; how the experience of common struggle in defending the country from the fascists will be the biggest cementing bond; how the removal of all causes of mutual distrust and suspicion alone will ensure the free and voluntary co-operation of all the nationalities in a free Indian Union; how the need for winning freedom, as well as the need to defend that freedom after it is won, will both act as a mighty unifying factor, once the fear of mutual domination is removed.

We have to put before him a picture of a multi-national India in which the problem of Indian unity is solved in a higher and more lasting manner. We have to show him concretely that we Communists are not dividers, but unifiers; that our solution leads to a higher unity on a higher plane, a unity the like of which India has not seen in her history.

We have to explain to him how the National Congress itself in its resolution passed by the Working Committee at its Delhi Session (March, 1942) did recognise a diversity inside India's unity and did declare that no territorial unit would be coerced into joining the Indian Union against its will. This together with Congress formation of provinces on a linguistic basis, national songs like Tagore's well-known song, etc., show that in the mind of the Congress patriot itself, the idea of a multi-national pattern in our land is not foreign.

Only by convincing the Congress patriot that the grant of self-determination really leads to unity can we isolate the influence of the Hindu-minded communal reactionary, who under the garb of "Akhand Hindustan" fans the flames of distrust and hatred between the Hindus and Muslims and really supports national inequality and oppression. His slogan of "Akhand Hindustan" leads in fact not to unity, but to disunity and disruption.

It was in March, 1940, that the Muslim League put forward its slogan of Pakistan. The Congress had put forward non-co-operation as an oppositional weapon to

extort power from Imperialism. In exactly the same way, the Muslim League too, realising the anti war and anti-imperialist sentiments of the Muslim masses put forward a parallel slogan to that of the Congress, in order to share power, at the same time get the backing of the Muslim masses. The Congress declared: "If we are given independence, we shall support the war." The League declared: "If we are given Pakistan, we shall support the war."

But there was more in the slogan of Pakistan than this. And that is the fact that within the slogan was included, in a distorted form, the rising national urge of the Muslim nationalities which had awakened to life with the spreading of political consciousness during this period. It is to this urge of the Muslim nationalities that the slogan of Pakistan with its talk of "our homeland," etc., appealed.

That is why this slogan has gripped the minds of the Muslim masses so strongly and is doing so more and more strongly day after day. This is what explains the rapidly growing influence of the Muslim League among the Muslim masses.

Since 1940 till today, this influence has been rising steadily, the popularity of the slogan of Pakistan among the Muslim masses has been rising steadily.

This is how the slogan of Pakistan has to be assessed. To forget that the democratic core within the Pakistan demand, the core which the Muslim masses really demand, is the right of Muslim nationalities to self-determination, is to remain blind to realities. Such blindness will lead us all to common disaster. It is this democratic core, which has a basis in actual life, which explains the rapidly growing influence of the Muslim League and of the Pakistan slogan among Muslim masses.

We have, therefore, to put our policy of self-determination to the Muslim peoples concretely in such a manner that appeals to their national consciousness. We must make real to them the patriotic national consciousness that binds each Muslim nationality to its homeland and that finds expression in its attachment to the Pakistan slogan. We must put before each Muslim nationalist a picture of free life in his homeland, in the land of his forefathers, among his fellow-nationalists.

This is the real need and urge of the Muslim masses, to concede it will inspire and enthuse them for the common struggle, shoulder to shoulder with his Hindu brethren, for National Government, defence and freedom. It is the only way of forging Hindu-Muslim unity to win Indian freedom first and afterwards to defend that free-

dom. It is the only way of weaning them away from separatist and disruptive slogans.

In this sense alone is the urge for Pakistan among the Muslim peoples real. In the religious sense, it is unreal. Only so long as their real democratic rights are not granted will they cling to Pakistan in the religious sense—in the hope that Pakistan will satisfy their national urge for self-determination.

The grant of self-determination to the Muslim nationalities has nothing to do with reactionary separatist theories like Pan-Islamism. The Pan-Islamic theory in fact played a prominent part in discussions in the Soviet Union too on the National Question in the immediate post-war period. The Bolsheviks, of course, would have no truck with it; their policy of self-determination, in fact, removed the ground right from under the feet of the Pan-Islamists as of every other bourgeois-separatist group.

Pan-Islamism is in fact a weapon of disunity. By putting the slogan of "extra-territorial loyalty" in the forefront, it prevents national unity for the freedom struggle. It will not bring freedom to the Muslim peoples.

It is well to remember that Pan-Islamic propaganda has never taken root in India. From 1931 or 32, the idea of Pakistan has been there vaguely in the minds of sections of the Muslim intelligentsia. But it was never brought out till a decisive stage was reached—till 1940, when war is declared, the Congress demands a declaration of independence from the British Government. And at this time, the slogan of Pakistan rests upon the democratic urge among the newly-awakened Muslim nationalities for self-determination.

It must be stressed very sharply that our Party's solution does not amount to: "Give the Muslim League leaders what they want. They want Pakistan. It is true that this is an evil, but compared to what will happen if we don't achieve communal unity, it is a lesser evil."

Such a solution is essentially a bourgeois-reformist solution, its root is the conception of unity as a mere "top unity" between "leaders". This approach does not think of unity in terms of a developing people's movement; it does not think in terms of uniting the Hindu and Muslim masses by granting a democratic demand that is just and that will unite them.

On the contrary, this approach is a bourgeois approach, which depends for unity purely on the subjective goodwill of individual leaders. Such an approach naturally leads

only to defeatism and demoralisation—to cursing this or that leader as “impossible”!

The right of Muslim nationalities to self-determination is not a “lesser evil”; it is a just right. Our Party’s solution is not:

“Give the League leaders what they want; it does not matter if it means partition of India.”

On the other hand, what we say is:

“Concede to the Muslim peoples their just democratic demands and thus lay the basis for unbreakable unity between the Hindu and Muslim masses, unity to achieve National Government, unity to defend our common land from the fascists.”

The grant of the right of self-determination to all the nationalities of our land will in fact lead to a greater and more glorious unity of India than we have ever had till now. National unity that is forged on this basis will let loose such a flood of popular energy and initiative that our land has never seen since the glorious days of Congress-Khilafat unity. The Free India that will emerge as the result of this will be an India where all disruptive feudal-imperialist influences are destroyed, where the utmost democracy prevails, where the people have come into their own in every national state. Under such conditions, the interests of the people in every national state, that make up the Indian Union, are identical; they have everything in common, nothing in conflict. They gain everything by sticking to each other; they only stand to lose by breaking away.

The denial of the right of self-determination means denial of equality and freedom to every nationality in a free India. It means supporting the domination of weaker nationalities by stronger ones. It means denying to our own peoples the freedom which all of us, in common, are demanding from the British—and to secure which, all of us have to fight in common.

It is the denial of the right of self-determination which will disunite and disrupt India. It will increase mutual distrust and suspicion, it will play into the hands of the separatists. It will keep our peoples divided, it will keep the Congress and the League divided, at a time when the price of such disunity is the death and destruction of all we hold dear in common.

Does it help the cause of India’s unity, to keep up Congress-League disunity? Does it help the cause of India’s unity, to have Amery sit on our necks tighter, to lay our people helpless and prostrate before the Jap invader?

Does denial of the right of self-determination help us to go forward to a free India—without which all the “Unity” we shall have is the “unity of slavery?” Does coercion of any nationality into remaining inside the free Indian Union make the unity of that Indian Union firmer? Does it help us to defend our newly-won freedom better?

Every Congress patriot must see that it is the grant of the right of self-determination that leads to the greater unity and freedom of the peoples of India. It is its denial which leads to the exact opposite.

The Soviet Union gives us a glorious example today of such unity achieved through the free and voluntary co-operation of equal nationalities.

To the Muslim patriot we declare:

The granting of the right of self-determination recognises the patriotic national consciousness that binds each Muslim nationality to its homeland. It gives to every such nationality the freedom to take its destiny into its own hands and build up its own political and economic life in its homeland, in a free Indian Union. In a free India, the Pathan will have his own national state, with the right to secede; the Punjabi Muslim will have his own national state with the right to secede; and so on.

This together with guarantee of the cultural rights of the Muslims in provinces where they form a minority will remove all possibility of national or communal oppression. It will assure the Muslims of India a free and equal place in the future Union of Free India.

This is what the Muslim peoples really want today. This is why they so enthusiastically support the Pakistan slogan of the Muslim League.

But today the Muslim peoples together with all their other brother peoples of India are under the same feudal-imperialist fetters; they are both menaced by the same fascist invader. Their freedom cannot be won separately from each other; the League can no more win self-determination for the Muslim peoples apart from the Congress than the Congress can win freedom for India apart from the League.

The Muslim peoples of India have to stand shoulder to shoulder with all their brother peoples, the League has to stand shoulder to shoulder with the Congress, to win National Government of National Defence. Only through such united action can a free democratic India emerge and conditions be created in which all the peoples of India can enjoy their freedom.

And once the common freedom of all the Indian peoples has been won, the Muslim peoples will be able to defend

their newly-won freedom in their homeland best by free and voluntary co-operation with their brother-peoples of India in a free Indian Union. In the free and voluntary co-operation of all the brother-peoples of India, Hindu and Muslim alike, lies best security for each. Those who won their freedom by standing shoulder to shoulder with each other can best defend that freedom also by standing shoulder to shoulder with each other.

That is why the interests of the Muslim peoples, today as in the future, lie in unity and close co-operation with their other brother-peoples of India. That is why the guarantee by the Congress of the right of self-determination of Muslim nationalities and the cultural rights of the Muslim minorities should mean for the Muslim peoples not separation from the rest of India, but a more glorious and more lasting unity within a free Indian Union, in which all, Muslim and non-Muslim alike—are equal partners.

VII. CONCRETE SOLUTION

It now remains to concretise our solution to show how our policy is going to be applied to Muslim nationalities.

It is not our purpose here to attempt any detailed ethnographic surveys. This is neither politically necessary nor practically feasible. The idea is to attempt a rough concretisation of our policy so as to see (1) how closely our solution satisfies the democratic essence contained in the Pakistan demand, and (2) how far our solution offers a basis for negotiations between the Congress and the League for unity.

It is not a question of mechanically applying rigid pre-conceived notions to actual life, but one of genuinely looking for national urge and national consciousness wherever they exist in actual life.

Our solution should neither lead to hair-splitting ethnographic discussions on the one hand, nor should it be a mere fig-leaf to trick the Muslim peoples into unity!

Take Baluchistan. The Baluchis who are Muslims, speaking the Baluchi language, form 98—99% of the population of Baluchistan and the States of Kalat. They form a distinct nationality. So in the case of Baluchistan no difficulty arises.

Take the Pathans next. They are Muslims. They form more than 90% of the population of N.W.F. Province. So strong is the urge among the Pathan nationality for self-determination that even though the N.W.F. Province is one of the strongest Congress provinces, the Pathan delegation at the Allahabad A.I.C.C. (1942) would not vote against Rajaji's Resolution on Pakistan. To avoid being

forced to vote against Rajaji's resolution, they absented themselves at the time of voting. They appreciated the stand of our Party on self-determination.

The example of the Pathans clearly shows the correctness of our policy.

In the Punjab, the Muslims of Western Punjab (beyond the River Sutlej) bear the distinct impress of a nationality with a contiguous territory, language, culture, economic life and psychological make-up. These Western districts have a Muslim population of over 60% on an average, in many cases this percentage exceeds 70 or 80. But the question is not one of religion or of numerical preponderance. The dominant impress of the particular nationality is there on the life of this whole region.

This is why we grant the right of self-determination to this Muslim nationality of Western Punjab. The Sikhs and the Hindus in the eastern districts of the Punjab can easily come to a settlement with Muslims of the western districts on the basis of self-determination and guarantee of cultural rights. They can thus form a united autonomous Punjab, with the right to secede from the rest of India.

Take Sind next. The question here arises: Do the Sindhi Muslims form a nationality or do the Sindhis as a whole form a nationality? This question, of course, has to be answered not by a priori arguments, but by actually examining the life and consciousness of the people in Sind itself. And judged by this criterion, I think that the Sindhis as a whole form a distinct nationality. Granting the Sindhis the right of self-determination would, of course, satisfy the national aspirations of the Sindhi Muslims who form part of the Sindhi nationality.

Ticklish questions which may be raised in this connection such as: "When a plebiscite comes up to decide the issue of separation, do the Sindhis as a whole vote or do only the Sindhi Muslims vote," have to be settled by negotiation. Our Party's stand, of course, is that the entire people belonging to the nationality will decide the issue of separation. But the main point here is that the grant of self-determination to the Sindhis is enough to settle the problem of unity and united struggle today; it is enough to serve as a basis for negotiations between the Congress and the League.

Then comes the question of Bengal. Firstly, the Bengalis form a distinct nationality and so should be given the right of self-determination. There is much more in common between the Bengali Hindu and the Bengali

Muslim than between the Bengali Muslim and say, the Pathan.

But in this case over and above this fact, Eastern Bengal forms a special problem. Here generally speaking there is a Muslim population of more than 60%. Within the framework of a common nationality, the Muslim peasantry of Eastern Bengal has a distinct cultural complex of its own which has made its impress on Eastern Bengal as a separate entity. We have to recognise this. In the case of nationalities too, there are such things as transitional forms, and we have to recognise in Eastern Bengal precisely such a transitional stage of development.

The crux of the matter is:

How best can we unite the oppressed peasantry of Eastern Bengal for the common struggle, recognising their special position?

The solution put forward in our Party resolution, on the one hand, enables the peasantry of East Bengal to share and enrich the common national heritage of Bengal; on the other hand, it enables us to unite them and to convince them that they would be better off if they remained within the Bengali State. It satisfies their urge and by this very means, paves the way for their remaining inside the Bengali state. Such a solution alone will enable us to isolate the separatists and pave the way for a political-revolutionary unity of the Bengali people.

The Muslims in the other provinces (including Eastern Punjab) form interspersed minorities. Their cultural rights will be guaranteed. It is these very rights (question of education, text-books, etc., in the Urdu language and such other demands) that formed the bone of contention between the Congress and the League during the Congress Ministry period in the U.P. The U.P. example already showed that in such cases the demands of the minorities no more rested on hazy religious ground, but had already been shifted to the modern political plane. That is why the guarantee of cultural rights, etc., is sufficient in these cases.

The question of the other nationalities cannot be dealt with in minute detail here. The general principles however are clear and are laid down in the Party Resolution.

One more point. Does all this really correspond to the essence of the demand of the Muslim League? It surely does. The famous Lahore Resolution of the Muslim League states the following basic principle of its Pakistan demand:

"That geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be so constituted

with such territorial re-adjustments as may be necessary, that the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority as in the North-Western and Eastern zones of India should be grouped to constitute "Independent State" in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign".

Our solution concedes to the "constituent units" of the zones specified in this resolution—namely to Sind, N.W.F. Province, Punjab and Eastern districts of Bengal, the right of self-determination to the point of secession. This means these states, whose exact boundaries could be determined by the people later, can be autonomous and sovereign and form the federation within an Indian Union or they may secede and form their federation without.

The National Congress must recognise this right of these Muslim nationalities as of the other nationalities of which India is composed. Why? Because free India must be based on the principle of equality of the various nationalities. That alone would guarantee a united India—a voluntary federation of autonomous national states. Muslim peoples and their leaders are not bent upon separation. Grant them the right of equality and you create the basis for national unity today, and for the greater and more glorious unity of India tomorrow.

It is necessary in closing to stress once again a point, which is really the crux of Communist policy. That is, the question of the self-determination of nationalities is to be looked upon as a political-revolutionary question, not a constitutional question.

It is the constitutional reformist who begins with the question: whether to separate or not. We look upon the right of self-determination as the hallmark of sovereignty, and of equality. The grant of this right, including the right of separation, dispels distrust and acts as the strongest unifying bond here and now. The object is to unite, not to partition off.

In our practical application of our policy, the way in which we demarcate the nationalities is judged by: How shall we define the nationalities in such a way as to create conditions where there will be the fullest and freest flowering and development of national characteristics?

It follows from the above that the question of when, whether, how (etc.) to separate, cannot and must not be decided today. The grant of the right of separation should not be confused with the actual exercise of this right, it should not be confused with the actual expediency of the exercise of this right in this or that particular case. This latter question can only be decided in any particular case.

at any particular time in terms of whole social development. Every case would be concretely judged on the basis of whether separation serves the interests of social and political development taken as a whole.

Unite all the nationalities for freedom, for national defence—this is our fundamental aim. Do we get a weapon in our hands in order to unite the Hindu and Muslim masses here and now and isolate the separatists? Do we define nationalities in such a manner that in a federated democratic India every nationality will be able to develop fully and freely?—These are the two fundamental criteria of the practical application of our policy.

The entire destiny of our nation today depends on national unity, on Congress-League unity. Whether we win National Government and go forward to a free India—or whether we pass helplessly into the arms of the Japs; this is the issue. No longer can the solution of the problem of Congress-League unity be delayed. And there is no other way of forging such unity except by conceding the right of self-determination to all the nationalities of India, including the Muslim nationalities.