

# NATIONAL UNITY NOW!

(Article from "People's War," 8th August 1942, by G. Adhikari)

"Pakistan," according to him (Jinnah), "in a nutshell, is a demand for carving out of India a portion to be wholly treated as an independent and sovereign state . . ."

"If Pakistan as defined above is an article of faith with him, indivisible India is equally an article of faith with me. Hence there is a stalemate."

—Gandhiji in *Harijan*, 26-7-1942.

"I am told there is going to be a 'big move.' This threat and intimidation is intended to coerce a distressed and shaken Britain to accede to Gandhi's demand. I can only say that Britain will be making the greatest blunder if she surrenders to the Congress in any manner which would be detrimental to the interests of Muslim India."

—M. A. Jinnah in a press statement issued on 22-6-1942.

In these two recent utterances of the leaders of the two great parties of our country, the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League, is summed up the deadlock that faces us on the issue of national unity. Without national unity, without the broad unity of the masses—both Hindu and Muslim—freedom cannot be won, that was always axiomatic in our independence movement. It is more so to-day when the Japanese and German aggressors are preparing to pounce upon our Motherland. We need national unity not only to organise a national people's resistance but also to win National Government, enjoying the confidence of the people and power to make that resistance really effective. This is, of course, self-evident. Unity was the first pre-requisite for striking for freedom. The imperialists knew it as well. That is just the reason why they always sought to disrupt that unity, to spread distrust between community and community. Did that, however, mean that unity could not be achieved before imperialist rule was ended? Not in the least. To say that, is to deny the possibility of freedom itself. We can and have to unite, despite imperialist rule, to defend our country and to win National Government. But this is just the truth which our

national leadership has ceased to believe. This is the root cause of the deadlock. In other words, our national leaders admit defeat before the imperialist bureaucracy: we are powerless to unite our own people in the face of your disruptive influence. This is an admission of bankruptcy, of a complete lack of faith in the people and their healthy patriotic instincts.

At one time, with Gandhiji, communal unity was one of the four pillars of Swaraj. To-day he says communal unity will only come after the third party is removed. "Unity will not precede but succeed freedom." (*Harijan*, 7-6-42). The Wardha Resolution reiterates the same thought:

"The Congress representatives have tried their utmost to bring about a solution of the communal tangle. But this has been made impossible by the presence of the foreign power whose long record has been to pursue relentlessly the policy of divide-and-rule."

If you are incapable of counteracting the imperialist policy of divide and rule among your own people, you are obviously incapable of winning freedom. The policy implicit in the Wardha Resolution is based on such a bankrupt supposition. For, it amounts to begging of the British Government to give you freedom first so that you may be able to unite and then form a National Government to defend your country and the world cause of freedom, in alliance with the United Nations, afterwards. If this is denied to you, you propose to launch a "struggle," which in the present situation, is National Harakiri. All this arises from the bankrupt thesis that communal unity is impossible until the British voluntarily withdraw.

How does it come about that the leadership of a national movement which has to its credit the achievement of the largest measure of unity of the Indian people during the last 20 years or so, now stands helpless before the question of Hindu-Muslim unity? How does it happen that Gandhiji says "India indivisible" is an article of faith with him and Jinnah says "Pakistan" is an article of faith with him, and there is stalemate and gaping disunity among our people? The Indian National Congress stands and has stood consistently for the complete independence of the country and for the democratic rights and liberties of the people. In the free India of Congress conception there will be religious freedom, the protection of culture for every section of the people. Why should not the Congress programme, which visualises free and democratic India, united and indivisible, attract the Muslims? Or rather, if it was adequate for so many years to unite the Hindus and Mus-

lims in the common struggle for freedom, why does it appear to fail in recent years? In the mass nationalist upsurge which began with 1935 and continued to rise upto 1940, the Muslim masses too were drawn into the common flood. But how did it happen that the awakened Muslim masses, especially, during the period of Congress Ministries rallied to the banner of the Muslim League which now became a powerful Muslim organization? Why did the Hindu-Muslim tension begin to rise during this period? How did it happen that the breach between the Muslim masses and the national movement seemed to widen reaching its climax in the Pakistan Resolution passed by the Muslim League in March 1940? Also during this period, there has been a certain growth of Hindu Sabha influence inside the Congress. Unless we understand the peculiar nature of this accentuation of the communal problem and tension during the recent five years, we will not be able to see why the national leadership has failed to solve it, and why its failure has culminated in the bankruptcy which seeks to reverse the fundamental axiom of our national movement, viz., national unity for national freedom.

Why has there been an accentuation of the communal tension in the years that followed 1937? Apart from a general sharpening of Hindu-Muslim relations, there has been also a cropping-up of provincial jealousies and frictions, such as the Bengal-Bihar controversy, the question of a separate Andhra province and the question of "Samyukta" Karnatak and so on. The explanation is given that this is due to the competition between the bourgeoisie of these various communities and provinces for jobs and power which was brought to the surface by the new constitution. This is, of course, part of the truth. The cleavage brought about between the bourgeois sections of the various communities and provinces is only one aspect of the question. It is often stated that the masses have no communalism or provincialism. This is true in so far as the interests of the toiling masses all over the world and in the country are identical. But in actual practice, as the general national anti-imperialist upsurge spreads deeper into the masses, it finds an echo in the growing up of sectional, communal, and provincial patriotism, which may not necessarily weaken or conflict with the larger national patriotism, but which is often used by the bourgeois leadership for accentuating national disunity.

The growing communal tension (Hindu-Muslim) as well as provincial jealousies and frictions which arose during the election period and in the period of the Congress Ministries were therefore a distorted expression of an other-

wise healthy growth, viz., the masses of the individual nationalities awakening to all-India anti-imperialist national consciousness. Let us look at these two aspects more carefully.

Firstly, in spite of imperialist hindrances, bourgeois economic (industrial) development of our country is proceeding apace horizontally if not vertically. The level of industrialisation is not rising but the same low level of industrialisation is spreading to every nook and corner of India. As a result there is a growing competition between the bourgeoisie of the different individual nationalities. The provincial autonomy under the new constitution tended to accentuate these frictions and we have in this period the Bengali-Behari, Marathi-Karnataki, Andhra-Tamilnad questions, the Hindu-Muslim question in Bengal, in the U.P. and in the Punjab, cropping up. This is one aspect of the question—the bourgeois aspect—the disruptive aspect, which imperialism and its agents use for their policy of divide and rule. This creates and mystifies the problem.

Secondly, we have the healthier aspect of the question. Side by side with the bourgeois development, the all-India national anti-imperialist movement is spreading to every nook and corner of India and bringing the peasant masses of the most backward nationalities and communities into its vortex. The All-India national movement for the country's emancipation is growing into a rich pattern of a multi-national movement. The common goal of India's political and economic emancipation is being seen through the waking eyes of individual national consciousness. The Lingayat peasantry of Karnatak for instance, wakes up to anti-imperialist consciousness and develops a natural yearning for a free Karnatak in a free India. So it is with the Andhra, Tamils and with the Sindhis, Punjabis and Pathans. Here is the progressive aspect of the accentuation of the communal and provincial jealousies, which our growing national democratic movement itself brings to the surface. Herein lies the key to the solution of the communal conflict in its new form which our national movement has to perceive and grasp as we shall presently show.

Here it will be asked: what has the Hindu-Muslim problem to do with this cropping up of provincial jealousies on the one hand, and the awakening of individual national consciousness? The Hindu-Muslim conflict arises out of the economic and other competition between the bourgeoisie or the upper class of the two communities while the imperialists are using the same to successfully divide the masses. If the Muslim masses are following the Muslim League in larger numbers, that has nothing to do with their

growing nationalist sentiments either in the broad all-India sense or in the restricted sense of individual nationalities. It is just due to the spread of the influence of reactionary communalism among them, arising out of their political backwardness, and is due to nothing else. Such an analysis would not correspond to facts. It would mean that during 1936-42 when there was a general anti-imperialist mass upsurge, the Muslim masses remained unaffected by it and the hold upon them of the so-called pro-imperialist reactionary leadership of the Muslim League increased. The reality is that the Muslim masses too shared in the general anti-imperialist upsurge; but this expressed itself in the bulk of the Muslim petty-bourgeois masses going under the influence of the League. There was also a rise in the Muslim followers of the Congress but not as sharp and striking as in the case of the Muslim League. The growing anti-imperialist sentiment among the Muslims expressed itself in the pressure it exerted on the Muslim League leadership. In 1938 the Muslim League accepted the complete independence of India as its goal. The Muslim League leadership can be said to have undergone a transformation during this period. It is no longer feudal-reactionary, no longer just a willing tool of imperialism. It is now an industrial bourgeois leadership, which is no more just an adjunct of imperialism but one which plays an oppositional role vis-a-vis imperialism.

In fact, the Muslim League is to the Muslim petty-bourgeois mass what the Indian National Congress is to the Indian masses in general. This became quite clear in the imperialist phase of the war. The leadership of the Congress took to passive opposition to war and demanded recognition of complete independence and such present freedom which would give the Indian people effective power in the government of the country immediately. The Muslim League leadership too adopted the attitude of passive non-co-operation with the war and demanded Pakistan, which is complete independence to such territorial units in which the Muslims predominate. Immediately, they demanded political equality with the Congress in any settlement at the Centre or effective power at the Centre for the League, in case the Congress refused to accept the settlement. To the Muslim masses, therefore, it appears that the Muslim League leadership is fighting not only for the complete independence of India from imperialist rule but also for freedom and equality to territorial units which are predominantly Muslim and for the protection of the rights of Muslim minorities in other provinces in relation to culture, edu-

cation and language. Thus the rise of the Muslim League influence cannot be regarded as a reactionary phenomenon. On the other hand, it is the expression of the growing anti-imperialist upsurge among the Muslim masses, of the growth of the individual national consciousness of the Sindhis, of Punjabi Muslims, of the Pathans and so on within the framework of the broader all-India nationalism.

To be able to arrive at a correct solution of the problem of Hindu-Muslim unity which is to-day urgently demanded by the perilous national situation, two things must be grasped: the character of the Muslim League leadership and the basis of its mass influence. To see nothing in the problem but religious and cultural differences, to ascribe the deadlock in Congress-Muslim League relations to some irrational, obscurantist and fanatical element in the Muslims, which Mr. Jinnah is in a position to exploit for opportunist ends, because of the presence of the British Power, is not to understand the problem at all. In short, such an understanding leads to the bankrupt position that nothing could be done, no unity can be achieved until imperialist power disappears. But as soon as we realise that the leadership of the Muslim League is bourgeois in character and is playing an oppositional role vis-a-vis imperialism in a somewhat analogous way to the leadership of the Indian National Congress itself, as soon as we see the anti-imperialist base of the rise of the Muslim League influence, as soon as we grasp that behind the demand for Pakistan is the justified desire of the people of Muslim nationalities such as Sindhis, Baluchis, Punjabis (Muslims), Pathans to build their free national life within the greater unity of the all-Indian national freedom, we at once see there is a very simple solution to the communal problem in its new phase. There is no reason to give up the sound slogan of national unity first to achieve freedom. If we grasp the recent developments in national policies correctly, we can at once see the basis for achieving national unity.

It is the historic task and responsibility of the Indian National Congress, which has achieved such a large measure of national unity thus far, for achieving national freedom, to take the next forward step towards unity, which the new phase of the communal problem demands, at this most critical turning point of our nation. In uniting the various sections of the people for national freedom, that freedom itself has to be defined in terms of a programme of democratic rights and liberties. The Indian National Congress has to a large extent succeeded in putting such a programme

before the nation and has achieved on the basis of that programme a very large measure of national unity. But that programme is no longer sufficient to solve the communal problem in its present form and to achieve Hindu-Muslim unity. It certainly says that in a free India there will be freedom of worship for every one and that the religious and cultural rights of minorities would be guaranteed. It pledges itself to abolish all inequalities based on caste, creed and origin (such as untouchability, etc.). But these declarations, essential as they are, for securing unity, are no longer enough.

The conception of India's unity was never a static one. It is a living and growing reality which is developing within its womb a host of individual nationalities which lived together on the Indian soil through centuries, and are now waking to new consciousness. Unequal economic development leads to friction and conflicts between communities and different national units. The growing sweep of the All-India people's movement tends to unite these communities and national units into one united national front for freedom. But imperialism deliberately promotes and fosters separatist tendencies to disrupt and paralyse the unity of national forces which is advancing towards freedom. The leadership of the National Congress instead of playing into the hands of the imperialist reactionaries by refusing to see the developing multi-national pattern of our national unity, has to recognise the just claim of the peoples of these individual nationalities to autonomous state existence within the framework of a free Indian union, and their right to secession from the union, if they so desired. The National Congress, of course, dimly sees that the free India of the future would be a family of a number of nationalities, each having a territorial unit to which it is attached by historic tradition as its homeland, each having its own language, culture, common economic life, etc. The division of Congress Provinces linguistically reflects this realisation. In the resolution of the Working Committee on the rejection of the Cripps proposals, this idea was expressed more explicitly. The Congress came very near to recognising the right of self-determination of such national territorial units. But in the Allahabad A.I.C.C. there was a relapse again. Lala Jagat Narain's resolution was passed, by which the Congress virtually denied the right of self-determination to any nationality inasmuch as it refused to recognise the right of separation to any territorial unit. The result is that in the name of unity and indivisibility of India, separatist disruptionism of the communalists gains

strength. The party that profits by it is that of the imperialist bureaucrats.

Thus the National Congress has so far failed to discharge its historic responsibility of coming forward as the unifier of the country on the basis of a programme guaranteeing self-determination, equality and freedom from oppression to every individual nationality in free India. The guaranteeing of autonomous state existence, with the right of political separation, to individual nationalities having their own territorial units to which they are bound by history, having a common language, culture, economic life and psychological make-up, can never lead to the vivisection of the motherland. On the other hand, by dispelling the distrust and suspicions which exist to-day among the people of the various nationalities, the Congress would be laying the foundation of a greater unity of action now and a greater unity of India visualised as a fraternal union of free nationalities, afterwards. Those who say recognition of the right of separation for individual nationalities would lead to the disintegration of the country, really lack faith in their own people. A clear-throated declaration of the type we have printed elsewhere, if made by the Congress will provide a real basis for Congress-League unity just because it clearly grants the rational kernel of the Pakistan demand. For according to it, nationalities such as Sindhis, Baluchis, Pathans and Punjabi Muslims will have the right to secede if they so desire. But it must be borne in mind that the recognition of the right of nationalities to separation, (is the recognition of their equality and freedom from oppression in a free India.) This would lay the basis not for separation but for joint fight for freedom against the aggressors and for the creation of an Indian Union based on voluntary co-operation of free nationalities.

By taking such a position, the National Congress would be building unity rather than encouraging separatist forces for it would be conceding straightaway what is just and right in the Pakistan demand. Wherever people of Muslim faith living together in a territorial unit, form a nationality in the sense defined above, they certainly have the right to autonomous state existence, just like the other nationalities in India, like the Andhras, Kannadis, Marathis, Bengalis, etc. Wherever there are interspersed Muslim minorities within other autonomous states, their rights regarding culture, education and language would be guaranteed. Such a position would fully satisfy the demands of the awakened Muslim masses and guarantee them com-

plete equality and freedom from oppression in a free India. If the Congress makes such a declaration, proclaims it as a part of its own programme of freedom, and calls upon the Muslim masses and the League to join with the Congress in a joint effort to win National Government, Jinnah's last argument against unity would have been knocked out. He will have to agree to unite. What would result then would be a period of the most gigantic joint effort of the Indian people for the defence of this country and for their freedom, under the leadership of their National Government. Out of this joint effort of the united people of India, no separate Pakistan and no Hinducom can ever rise but a happy family of free and autonomous states of various nationalities united in an Indian Union.

Where do we differ from Sjt. Rajagopalachari's proposal for Congress-Muslim League unity for achieving National Government by conceding Pakistan as Jinnah demands it? Sjt. C. Rajagopalachari turns to the Muslim League leadership and concedes to them their demand for Pakistan as a political expediency. By taking this position, Rajaji concedes the "two nations" theory of Jinnah and appears to nourish instead of laying the ghost of separatism. He, of course, does not mean it. But by the fact that he has chosen the diplomatic short-cut of just accepting Jinnah's Pakistan as a lesser evil, he is taken by Congressmen as an advocate of separation rather than of higher unity. Rajaji being the first big Congress leader to have the boldness and the vision to go in wholeheartedly for Congress-League unity, evokes a lot of support among the Muslim masses. But just for that reason, he is looked upon by the bulk of the Congressmen as an advocate of separatism. The Gandhi-ites and the Hindu Mahasabhaites attack him as such and condemn his bold and well-meant campaign for Congress-League unity as disruptionist. The weakness of Rajaji's position on Pakistan is that it is in the nature of a top settlement—which does not show to the bulk of Congress rank and file how justice to the Muslim masses is combined with the preservation and strengthening of Indian unity and integrity.

Our position on the other hand, is based on the just right of nationalities to equality and freedom within a free India, and therefore, concedes to the Muslims the essence of the Pakistan demand. On this basis, Jinnah cannot refuse to unite. Similarly, the bulk of Congressmen can be made to see in the proposals a bid for all-round unity and not a move for disintegration. To the Muslim masses, we would point out that the Congress stands for the freedom, equality and autonomous state existence of every nation-

ality as defined above. Thus autonomous state existence of Muslim nationalities and rights of Muslims in other provinces regarding culture, language and education would be guaranteed. But the free India which guarantees you all that can only be won by a joint fight, through Congress-League unity. Hence get the League to unite with the Congress, on the basis of this general right of self-determination to all nationalities so that the nation may march towards freedom. To the Hindus, we would say: the Congress stands for unity and the territorial integrity of India. But this can be secured and India freed only on the basis of free and voluntary co-operation of the peoples of all nationalities and communities in common struggle. The freedom and unity of India can be won and preserved only by recognising the freedom and equality of the various nationalities of which India is composed. Hence, let us generously recognise this right and build a stable unity based on goodwill and mutual co-operation. Sound political instinct and patriotism led Rajaji to see the urgency and importance of Congress-League unity. The same good qualities will lead him sooner or later to base his advocacy on the above principles.

Gandhiji says that the unity and indivisibility of India is an article of faith with him. How does he defend this article of faith of his? How does he propose to fight Pakistan? By ignoring the just demand that is behind it, by denying to the Muslim nationalities the right of autonomous state existence. This will lead only to further bitterness and conflict. How does Jinnah propose to fight for his Pakistan? How does he propose to fight for Muslim independence? By inculcating separatism among the Muslim masses and by driving the wedge firmer between the Congress and the League. This too only leads to further bitterness and further conflict.

Neither the path of Gandhiji nor that of Jinnah can lead the nation forward at this critical juncture. A brutal enemy threatens our land. The bureaucracy sits tight on top of our nation and holds the people down, prevents them from putting up a total people's resistance which alone can save us from the fate of Burma. Our national leaders blamed the bureaucrats and sat quiet. Now as a result of the obduracy of the bureaucrats and of national frustration born of inactivity, they are proceeding to take the blind step of launching a non-violent "struggle" to force the British Government to concede them that present freedom which would render successful people's resistance against the aggressor possible. The aim is sound but the path chosen does not lead to it but away from it.

"Non-violent struggle" in the given situation is not a weapon of bringing the bureaucracy to its senses, but a wedge which divides our nation still further, which cuts us off from the support of the progressive forces of the world. This path leads the nation not to unity but to disruption, not to forcing the bureaucrats but to their strengthening vis-a-vis the nation. It is the interests of the British and the Indian peoples which are being sacrificed while the fascists smile on.

The calamity can yet be averted, if the Congress forges national unity, i.e., a Congress-League agreement by adopting, even at this eleventh hour, the Declaration on Pakistan and Unity of India. National Unity is realisable on the basis of this declaration. It is the only path which will take our nation forward to freedom, in alliance with the freedom loving peoples of the world. There is no other way.