

# INDIA

## **The Indian Mohammedans and the Revolutionary Movement.**

Von V. Chattopadhyaya.

The imperialist press agencies have been busy, ever since the beginning of the present revolutionary wave, in creating the impression that the Mussulmans in India are keeping aloof from the movement for independence. And they are spreading statements to this effect in order to counteract the growing anti-British movement in the Arabian and other Muslim countries. But all the evidence that has been accumulating during the last six weeks goes to show the extraordinary solidarity that has characterised the mass movement of revolt.

During the last few years the Government of India had succeeded in creating Hindu-Mohammedan riots in almost all parts of the country, through the instrumentality of communal leaders who are fighting one another for obtaining more posts in the Imperialist Administration. That conflict has suddenly disappeared since the movement has been taken up by the masses. In other words, with the emergence of the class line in the struggle, the religious differences that had been skilfully exploited for years together by the feudal and bourgeois leaders in their own interests and in the service of imperialism have ceased to be any longer effective.

We now find that in the present phase of the movement, the Hindu and Mohammedan landlords are completely united in supporting the Government against the growing agrarian movement, the Hindu and Mohammedan industrial and commercial bourgeoisie are united in the suppression of the revolutionary movement of the workers and on the other hand, that the workers, peasants, and the city poor, without any distinction of their inherited or nominal religious beliefs, are united in the widespread revolt against imperialism.

Nearly all the conflicts that took place in former years between the two communities, the Hindus and the Mohammedans, were located in the provinces of the **Punjab** and **Bengal**, where the Mussulman population is slightly in excess of the Hindu. In most cases the fights were engineered by feudal and clerical reactionaries whose religion was only a cover for the protection of their landed interests. But it is exactly from these two provinces that reports keep pouring in of the soli-

ilarity between the **Hindu, Sikh and Muslim** masses. The recent events in **Peshawar** have given conclusive proofs of the facts that the economic factors that bind the **peasants and the workers** are stronger than their traditional allegiance to their feudal and clerical chiefs. The whole country round **Peshawar** is mostly **Mohammedan**, and in the revolutionary organisations such as the "**Red Shirts**" of the Frontier and the **Naujawan Bharat Sabha (Revolutionary Youth League)**, the membership is predominantly **Mohammedan**.

The "**Times**" correspondent speaks of "the artificial nature of the agitation stirred up among the **Muslims of the North** by walking delegates from **Bombay or Bengal**" (by which is insinuated that the delegates are **Hindu agitators**), and the Government of India's communiqué of May 5th condemns "the vain and criminal attempts to stir up trouble on the Frontier and to embroil **Muslims** in a movement opposed to their true interests"! But the "**Times**" special correspondent from **Peshawar** cannot conceal the growing agrarian revolt among the peasantry which is the true cause of the mass solidarity that has been so remarkable a feature of the events of the last few weeks. He admits that propagandists "have found ready soil for their seed in districts which are suffering from poor agricultural seasons, failure of crops, and a certain amount of unrest consequent on the systems of revenue and land tenancy".

The organisation of the "**Red Shirts**" which has its headquarters at **Utmanzai** is a good illustration of the new forces that are stirring among the **Pathans** (the **Mussulmans** of the North West). The **Pathans** are a fighting race and supply a number of regiments to the Imperialist Army. Their "fanatical devotion" to their religion was generally accepted as a fact, and they were often easily roused by their religious leaders against the **Sikhs** and the **Hindus**, when it suited the Government (though their religion did not prevent them from fighting against the **Türks** for the British Government). It was believed that even revolutionary propaganda among the **Pathans** should be based on their religion.

This seems to have been the case also with the "**Red Shirts**", who call themselves "**Servants of God**". Recruits are sworn in on the **Koran** to follow the teachings of **Islam**, to live a pure and righteous life, and to refrain from violent resistance if persecuted. These objects are anything but revolutionary. But the terrible economic conditions in the **Pathan** villages have forced them into the anti-imperialist struggle, and the well-disciplined "**Red Shirts**" are now marching from village to village with the war-cry of "**Inkilab zindabad**" (Long live the Revolution) and creating organisations in every village. Their leader **Abdul Ghaffar Khan** has been arrested, and their allies from the other side of the Frontier — the **Haji of Turangzai, Fazli Wahid**, and his son **Badshah Gul** — who came to their support with an army, — have been forced to retire under bombardment by **MacDonald's** airplanes to the mountain fastnesses of **Ghulanai** and the village of **Matta Mughal Khel**, from where the "**Red Shirts**" are continuing their revolutionary activities in the surrounding areas.

These activities of the "**Red Shirts**" will have a far-reaching effect upon the peasantry and the **Pathan** regiments. When we consider that former areas of religious conflicts, such as **Multan, Dera Ismail Khan**, etc., have become centres of mass demonstrations in which all religious denominations have participated, that the efforts of the landlords to keep the **Muslim** peasants away from the struggle have completely failed, and that **Hindu** regiments have refused to fire upon **Muslim** demonstrators, we realise that in the **Punjab** we have come one step nearer to the agrarian revolution.

The active participation of the youth and poorer middle-class intellectuals of the **Punjab** in the anti-imperialist struggle is shown by the activities of the Congress committees and youth organisations. The most active and determined leaders of the Congress committees and of the so called "**War Council**" are **Mohammedans** like **Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew** and **Dr. Mohammed Ali**, whose arrests led to violent mass demonstrations. In **Amritsar**, the **Sikh** centre, the **Muslim** Youth Association resolved unanimously to call upon all **Muslims** to participate actively in the struggle for national independence. On **May Day** all the branches of the **Naujawan Bharat Sabha (Revolutionary Youth League)**, of which the membership is largely **Mohammedan**, took part in the celebrations and hoisted the **Red Flag** over the offices of the **Sabha**.

Similar is the position in **Bengal**. The **Bengal Muslim Political Conference** held at **Chittagong** unanimously passed a

resolution identifying the Conference fully and whole-heartedly with the present revolt and with the goal of complete national independence. The police have been doing their best to provoke religious feuds, as is proved by the fight provoked in **Dacca** on May 24th. But such instances of successful provocation have been rare, although the danger still remains and may prove a hindrance to the movement.

The resolution of the Bengal Conference was in full accordance with the resolution passed by the **Jamiyat-el-Ulema-i-Hind** (All-India Association of Muslim Scholars and Theologians) who issued a **fatwa** (religious ordinance) calling upon all Muslims to join the independence movement. The **fatwa** does not indicate that the **ulemas** have become revolutionary, but only that they have, in order to preserve their own position as religious leaders, given expression to the irresistible sentiment of the Muslim masses.

How strong the class-line has developed is shown by the movement in the province of **Sind** where the Muslims constitute 90 Prozent of the whole population.

The British Government has been arranging "**Muslim Conferences**" against the revolutionary movement. It is obvious that the lackeys who do this work are landed proprietors. On May 22nd Sir **Shah Nawaz Khan Bhutto** (whose title explains itself) presided over a meeting of Muslims of the Three Upper Sind Districts held at **Sukkur**, and advised his colleagues — all landowners and upper middle-class gentry — "not to fall a prey to the Hindu schemes". But the answer to the gentlemen was given at a mass meeting of the Muslims held at **Karachi** on May 23rd, that endorsed the resolution of the **Jamiyat-el-Ulema-i-Hind** urging Muslims to take part in the movement for the independence of India and to carry out the programme of the **Jamiyar** which includes the publication of proscribed literature etc. In a conflict with the police next morning the masses shouted revolutionary war-cries.

The treacherous role that is being played by **Mohammed Ali** and **Shaukat Ali** cannot sufficiently often be exposed. Through their **Khilafat** agitation they have acquired a certain position in the Muslim world and while they are anxious to retain this popularity in the Arabian countries for whose independence they are agitating in India, they are afraid of the revolutionary mass movement which is developing in their own country. The recent mass meetings organised by them in **Bombay** and **Madras** and attended by over 100 000 Muslims passed resolutions in favour of **Arab** and **Egyptian** independence only, but also afforded a clear proof of fact that the Muslim masses in the cities are just as much in favour of **India's** independence.

The question of Muslims as a separate community does not arise in the case of the **industrial workers**, among whom economic and political factors alone count. The attempt to create "muslim" unions has failed. It is these industrial workers that are playing an important role in the destruction of the religious illusions that are still strong among the peasantry.