

# MUSLIM POLITICS

( 1906 – 1942 )

BY HUMAYUN KABIR

AUGUST, 1943



*(To the memory of Allah Bux Muhammad Umar Soomro)*

Reproduced by

**Sani H. Panhwar**

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ALLAH BAKHSH



## INTRODUCTION

THE whole world is in ferment today. Mighty convulsions are changing the destinies of men and transforming out of all recognition old familiar landmarks. Not only political but social and economic ideas also are being revolutionized. In the midst of these changes, India cannot remain unchanged. When humanity is on the march, Indians cannot stay at home. India too is at the crossroad of her destiny.

As one of the most important constituents of Indian life, Moslems also are deeply stirred by the happenings all around. As elsewhere, rival claims distract the Muslim mind. Religious, political and economic forces and factors are pulling simultaneously, and not always in the same direction or with the same force. To understand the situation today, one must go back to past history and discover the origin of present problems and current attempts at their solution. In the present article, an attempt is made to describe some phases of Muslim politics as affected by the rise, maturity and – might one say? – disintegration of the Muslim League.

## ONE

ONE of the most interesting phenomenon in India in the last decade has been the fluctuations in the fortunes of the Muslim League. Founded in 1906 by a group of well-to-do and aristocratic Mussalmans, it was intended to keep the Moslem intelligentsia and middle classes away from the dangerous politics into which the Indian National Congress was just then embarking. It raised the cry of special Moslem interests and pleaded that these could not be safeguarded except by cooperation with the British, as in its opinion, Mussalmans were as yet educationally, economically and politically incapable of defending their own interests. Hardly more than a dignified debating club, it pursued the even tenor of its politics till 1916 when it entered into a formal alliance with the Congress which also had by this time reverted to the path of respectable constitutional politics.

Soon there was a revolutionary change in the Indian political scene. The stress of the War and its repercussions on the country raised the tempo of Indian politics. Even the age old fatalism of the Indian masses could not withstand the shock of hunger and nakedness brought in the trail of the war. The shouldering discontent flamed up after the tragedy of Jallianwala Bagh which deeply stirred the mind of the people at large. The dismemberment of Turkey excited and angered Indian Moslems and brought them into line with the other dissatisfied elements. The pent up discontent burst out in the Non-cooperation Movement of 1920 and shook British rule in India to its very foundations. The Muslim League had formally been a party to the launching of the struggle, but it was by its character and composition incapable of taking part in direct action. The struggle on behalf of the Mussalmans was carried on by the Central Khilafat Committee and the Muslim League slowly faded out of the picture. Many of its members sought and found government patronage and basked in the official favor extended to those who cooperated with the Indian Reforms Act of 1919.

The abolition of the Khilafat by Kemal Ataturk and the sudden suspension of the Non-cooperation Movement by Gandhiji after the Chaurichaura incident knocked the bottom out of the Khilafat Committee. After the excitement of the fight, reaction set in. Defeated in the political objective, national energy frittered itself in communal frictions and there were occasional riots. With the relapse to constitutionalism, the Muslim League came back to prominence. Relations with the Congress were restored and there were attempts to frame a future constitution for India acceptable to all parties. There were, however, basic differences, for the Congress was beginning to think in terms of complete independence while the League still clung to the idea of British wardenship. The Congress conception of independence also suffered from lack of clarity and definiteness. It thought in terms of a homogeneity of interests which did not exist, and it overlooked economic and geographical differences that were fundamental and served as the basis of cultural differences as well.

The world economic crisis hit India harder than most of the other countries. The already low standard of life was further depressed and economic distress brought to a head the political discontent. The Civil Disobedience movement of 1930 supervened and the League again went into voluntary retirement. It is true that Moslem participation was not on such an extensive scale as in the Non-cooperation cum Khilafat days, but on the other hand, the quality of response this time was specifically political. The leadership was supplied by the Red-shirts of Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, better known as Khudai Khidmatgars or Servants of God, a volunteer corps of frontier Pathans organized on the basis of non-violence and passive resistance.

Never were the fortunes of the Muslim League so low as about the year 1932. The Moslem Conference had grown up in rivalry with the League and for a little while there were two Leagues functioning side by side. In the Round Table Conferences held in London to discuss the constitutional future of India, the League had no official representation as such. Mr. Jinnah was originally violently opposed to the League, but in 1913 he joined it and gradually came to be regarded as its spokesman. He had been invited to the first Round Table Conference in London but was not invited to its later sessions. The real reason was Mr. Jinnah's demand for transfer of all power to Indian hands, but the ostensible ground advanced by British politicians was that Mr. Jinnah was unrepresentative and had no following in the community. Even at the time of the first Round Table Conference, the *London Times* wrote that Mr. Jinnah's was the only discordant voice. Nor was this surprising, for the Conference was boycotted by the Congress most of whose leaders were in jail. The delegates were moderates and by contrast, Mr. Jinnah seemed to be a red-hot revolutionary!

At this period, political activity of Indian Moslems flowed in three distinct channels. There was first of all the group of vested interests who looked as before to the British for their power and prestige. Under the leadership of Sir Fazli Hussain and Sir Muhammad Shaffi, they held all the positions of vantage in the administration. Without any contact with the masses, they could still command a fair amount of support through the patronage they had at their disposal. In the second group were the nationalist Moslems who belonged to the Congress. Though they counted among their number a large proportion of able men, the slump in Congress politics which was soon after followed by the Communal Award of the British Premier made their position somewhat weak. A further reason of their weakness was the Congress's lack of mass support except in the United Provinces, Bihar and Gujrat and its dependence on sentiment for its strength. There is however danger in mere emotional support, for strong emotions are likely to provoke equally strong reactions. With the Hindu masses this did not matter much, for their middle classes were definitely Congress-minded and would stand by it. With the Moslems it was otherwise. Indian Moslems have not yet fully recovered from the setback they suffered after their failure to recapture power in 1857. Sir Syed tried to reconcile them to their fate and restore their fortunes through

cooperation with the Government. The foundation of the League marked another stage in the same process. This explains why large sections of the Moslem intelligentsia and middle "classes are even today averse to any struggle with the established powers. They do not as yet feel strong enough to stand on their own legs and look up to the British for making lost ground. As such, they have not taken to the Congress unreservedly and here the lack of mass support is telling.

In the third group were those who sympathized with the political aspirations of the Congress but looked at its economic programme as too halting and half-hearted. Among them the most important were the Ahrar party of the Punjab and the Proja party of Bengal. Based on the well-to-do peasantry and the lower middle classes, the Ahrars confined their membership to Moslems alone and combined economic grievances and religious passion to formulate their militant political policy. The Proja party based its policy on the needs of the local peasantry but it would be a mistake to regard it as an instrument for fighting for merely their economic rights. Economic questions naturally dominated the platform of the party but it had also a definite political outlook and programme. Peasant agitation has a long history in Bengal as elsewhere but the Party was born out of the questionings that arose in the minds of conscious Muslim workers after the failure of the Civil Disobedience movement of 1930. Bengal shows perhaps more clearly than elsewhere the consequences of Congress dependence on sentiment rather than organization, on middle class allegiance than awakened mass consciousness. The middle classes in Bengal till very recently have been – and perhaps still are – overwhelmingly Hindu. Congress which captured their imagination was powerful, active and strong even without any large scale mass support so long as its activities were agitational or terroristic. The majority of the people of Bengal are however Moslem, and hence when Congress attempted mass action on a large scale, the response was not fully satisfactory except in a few isolated places like Midnapur, Hooghly or Tippera. The success in these areas was also largely due to the fact that the middle classes and the masses in these areas were homogeneous and not divided by any social gulf. In major portions of Bengal, such social differences exist and are aggravated by the effects of the Permanent Settlement. Landlordism hides from the peasantry the conflict of interest between the destitute masses and the foreign imperialist power. In his daily experience of the oppressions of the landlord and the moneylender, the peasant forgets the constant drain upon the country's wealth by foreign capitalism. The history of the foundation of British power in India has made it inevitable that the Hindus should be the propertied class in Bengal and the vast majority of Moslems peasants and laborers. This fact made it possible to give to conflicts in social and economic interest a communal turn. In consequence, the masses have failed to realize the degree and extent of imperialist exploitation and have wasted their energies in undefined and aimless communal clashes. Moslem political thinkers and workers realized that the elimination of landlordism which acts as a buffer between the people and the imperialist power was essential for the evocation of the political consciousness of the masses. Though dominantly Moslem in composition and



leadership, the Proja Party was therefore non-communal in its conception and approach and promised a field of activity for the peasantry of all communities.

The Muslim League seemed to be nowhere in the picture and after a few attempts at revivifying it, Mr. Jinnah decided to retire from Indian politics and devote himself to legal practice in England. This was not surprising in the circumstances, for Mr. Jinnah was at this time playing almost a lone hand. He could not fit in with the Moslem moderates, for politically he was too much influenced by Congress ideology. Nor could he merge with the Progressives among Muslims, for with his orthodox and conservative economic views, they seemed to him rank revolutionaries. And then happened one those sudden transformations which make prophecies in the political sphere such a dangerous pastime. Faced with political extinction, the League was, through a series of unforeseen events, lifted to a position of eminence and power it had never occupied before.

There was a sudden epidemic of death among Moslem leaders of an all-India stature. In 1928, the death of Hakim Ajmal Khan had removed one of the most respected and powerful of the Moslem leaders of the Congress. The death of Maulana Muhammad Ali was another great loss. Soon after followed the death of Dr. Ansari, perhaps the strongest bulwark of Moslem nationalism against the forces of reaction. No doubt Maulana Abul Kalam Azad remained. He is the man who gave a new orientation to Muslim politics in India but he is by nature a savant and recluse who avoids the turmoils of party and partisan politics. The moderate groups lost in succession Sir Muhammad Shaffi and Sir Fazli Hussain, the ablest and best known leaders belonging to the group of vested interests. The leadership devolved on Sir Sikander Hyat Khan, now Premier of the Punjab, but at that time a comparatively unknown factor incapable of rising to all-India status. The young Ahrar and Proja movements had not yet thrown up any figure comparable to these, though the latter had in Mr. Fazlul Huq, now Premier of Bengal, a first class orator and able political tactician capable of capturing all-India leadership. For all practical purposes, Mr. Jinnah was left without a rival and quick to seize his opportunity, he returned to India and set about reorganizing the League.

The inauguration of Provincial Autonomy under the India Act of 1935 seemed to offer the opportunity for which Mr. Jinnah was waiting. The Muslim League decided to fight the elections and under his leadership adopted a forward programme and policy. He is however conservative by nature and temperament, and hence what appeared forward to him could not satisfy the progressive elements among the Moslems. Nor did he sympathize with the changes in Indian political consciousness in the last twenty years. The innate conservatism of a lawyer made him averse to accept any radical change. In the Muslim majority provinces the majority of Moslems belong to the rank of have-nots. Their only hope lies in a reconstruction of society which would secure to them a more human standard of life. Thus in Bengal, the conflict between the League and the Proja

Party centered round the question of abolition of Permanent Settlement. The main plank of the Proja Party was the abolition of landlordism while the League which shuddered at anything that savored of expropriation stood for maintenance of the *status quo*. It was not surprising that the politically conscious and progressive section among the Bengal Moslems should shun Mr. Jinnah and his League. It was otherwise in the minority provinces. In Bihar or the United Provinces, Moslems are a minority but on the whole they are better-off than the Hindu majority. To them the maintenance of the *status quo* had an appeal which it could not possibly have to the Moslems of the majority provinces; It was therefore natural that except in provinces like Bihar or the United Provinces, the progressive elements shunned the League. It was equally natural that everywhere its membership was drawn mainly from the groups representing vested interests.

The elections proved a great educative force and the results at first looked extremely hopeful. When one looked at the alignment of forces on India's parliamentary map, it seemed that the forces of progress had triumphed everywhere. Among Hindus, Congress swept the polls and stalwarts of the past regime were overwhelmed. Among Mussalmans also, the reactionary elements were discredited if not destroyed. In Bengal, the League representing the vested interests was demoralized by Mr. Fazlul Huq's victory on a Proja ticket over the Bengal leader of the League. In the Punjab, the League standing for communal exclusiveness and reaction was routed by Sir Sikander's combination of the moderates among Hindus and Mussalmans. In the United Provinces, the League which represented a relatively progressive force triumphed over the vested interests organized by the Nawab of Chatari and his group. In the North Western Frontier Province, Congress trounced the League which fared hardly any better in Sindh. In a word, all over India, the stage seemed set for a move forward in which the best elements among the Mussalmans and the Hindus could cooperate.

This was, however, not yet to be. The Congress was reluctant to accept office under the new constitution, for it was little enough that it offered. The prospect of responsibility without power opened up by the new regime had little to attract and provincial autonomy seemed a mockery. And yet it was a mistake to hesitate. Even as a party pledged to wreck the new constitution, it was obviously real politics to capture every vantage ground and use it for a further forward urge. The only alternative to that was total abstinence from all parliamentary activities and concentration upon agitational and organizational work. The policy actually followed by the Congress combined the disadvantages of both the alternatives without the advantages of either. It attempted to wrest from the Governors an assurance of non-interference in the daily administration of affairs, but it must be admitted that the controversy over assurances achieved little. In spite of elaborately courteous and diplomatic phraseology, the substance of the Congress demand was not conceded. Nevertheless, after a good deal of hesitation and controversy, Congress decided to accept office. At first it did so in the provinces where it had a parliamentary majority, then in the provinces where it was the single largest

party in the Legislature and still later wherever it could. From acceptance of office under no conditions and in no circumstances, to acceptance where ever and however possible, the wheel revolved a full circle, but in the meantime a golden opportunity had been lost.

## TWO

CONGRESS indecision about acceptance of office not only indicated divisions of opinion within its ranks, but what is worse, it let slip the opportunity of capturing power in some of the provinces where through coalition with other groups, it might have formed the Government. In Bengal, Mr. Fazlul Huq pleaded and pleaded in vain for active cooperation or even tacit support. Forced into the arms of the Muslim League, he did perhaps more than anybody else in India to restore the prestige of the League and win for it support among the masses of the land. Sir Sikander also helped in this strengthening of the forces under the banner of the League, for a moderate occupying a position in the centre, opposition from the left gradually forced him to move further right. The alignment of forces emerging out of the general elections of 1937 was disturbed and the reactionary elements found a breathing space and fresh rallying grounds.

This setback of the progressive forces had its reaction in those provinces as well in which Congress decided to accept office. The reactionary forces had got over the shock of defeat and started to retrieve lost ground. The League wanted to share in the power which Congress had won, but after the League's discomfiture in the general elections and the reactionary character it revealed, Congress refused to form coalition ministries with members of the League. This caused great resentment among Leaguers and they took every possible step to discredit the Congress among Moslems. This did not prove difficult, for many of the Congress ministers were inexperienced men and in any case they were human. Through lack of experience as well as for personal faults, they made mistakes in handling some of the problems that generally cause communal friction.

The charges of the Muslim League against Congress ministers may be enumerated under the following heads; (a) interference with religious rights, (b) tampering with cultural traditions, (c) attempts to curtail share in services and representation and (d) social snobbery. Congress ministers have denied all these charges and issued plausible explanation of actions that might at first sight seem to justify them. Their good faith need not be questioned and yet it must be realized that the agitation and discontent among large sections of Moslems cannot be dismissed as merely the work of an interested clique. Even cliques require some genuine grievance to work up feeling among the masses. The agitation in the minority provinces could not continue unless there was real discontent or sense of injury behind it. The ground may have been imaginary but the discontent was real.

The playing of music before mosques and the right of killing cows turned out to be the most contentious in respect of interference with religious rights. Juridically, Hindus have as much right to play music on the public road as Moslems have the right to kill

cows on their own grounds. Congress attitude on these questions was not sufficiently strong and definite, and differences among its own followers made matters worse. The use of the criminal law for the prevention of cow slaughter was a definite mistake, for this was a real restriction on the civil liberties of a community. The same thing applies to the question of music before mosques. If the criminal law were to be used at all, it should have been used to restrict those who sought to curtail the civil liberties of others.

The Wardha scheme of education sponsored by Congress governments under the inspiration of Mahatma Gandhi was another source of Moslem resentment. Intrinsically, there is nothing wrong in the scheme and it must be remembered that its details were worked out by a committee presided over by a well-known Moslem educationist, while an Indian Christian played an almost equally important part in giving final shape to its recommendations. It also exhibits striking similarities with the scheme of education drawn up by the late Dr. Iqbal. It sought to combine manual with mental training and shift the emphasis from mere literacy to vocational efficacy. As such it pointed the way to a necessary educational reform and it was unfortunate that confusion between renaissance and revivalism – which is rampant in the Indian mind today – should mar a scheme which otherwise had many things to recommend it. Some Hindu supporters tried to give the scheme a religious tone and this the Moslems vehemently opposed. They objected, and rightly, to the introduction of a religious coloring into educational institutions. In the prevalent state of development of this country and the general outlook of the people, it was inevitable that if religious associations are once allowed, they are bound to reflect the tone and temper of the majority community. It thus seemed a surreptitious attempt to impose the peculiarities in the culture of one community on members of the other and as such it provoked blind opposition. The result was that the Moslems lost sight of even the real merits of the scheme and along with the bathwater wanted to throw out the baby as well. In a state composed of different religious denominations, education can best thrive by secularizing it. The necessary corollary to the demand for separation of politics and religion is to keep public education free from the religious setting of any community. That is why Kemal Ataturk made education in Turkey completely secular and a religious. Indian Moslems swear by the name of Kemal Ataturk but when it comes to applying his principles to the solution of our problems, they have hardly ever the courage to do so.

The question of a common language for India also proved a cause of dissension; for here also the Moslems scented an attempt to impose Hindu culture upon them. Urdu and Hindi are basically the same language and differ only in their scripts and the proportion of Sanskritic to Saracenic words. Many Congressmen saw that the only solution was to adopt a neutral script, the Roman, and facilitate communication between the two communities. The revivalist elements in the Congress would not however accept such a modernist solution. The result was that Congress hesitated between two scripts, Nagri to please the Hindu and Persian to satisfy the Moslem, but

the hesitation itself proved a matter of concern to the Mussalmans. Orthodox Moslem Congressmen have complained that the proposal of giving equal status to the two scripts generally remained a pious resolution. In effect, the Nagri is slowly but steadily crowding out the Urdu script. Nor can this always be prevented, for in areas where Moslems form a negligible minority, they are gradually forced\* by circumstances to adopt the Nagri script.

The attitude of the Hindu in social matters towards all non-Hindus in general and the Moslem in particular has been one of the most potent causes of Hindu-Muslim misunderstanding and ill-feeling. Social disabilities obtrude themselves upon the consciousness in a way in which economic or even political ones do not, though social disabilities are in the end only symptoms which express a deeper malaise and this will be found to lie in economic and political iniquities. Moslem resentment at Hindu orthodoxy, which is often indistinguishable from snobbery, is natural, but the forces of the modern world are here working in cooperation to break down the barriers of caste and untouchability. Growing industrialization and the country bus are solvents too powerful for the intransigence of obsolete customs and old beliefs, but till they actually break, they are bound to act as irritants.

The most important cause of conflict between the two communities is however based upon the question of ratio in services and representation. In the circumstances of the foundation of British power in India, Hindus naturally received larger patronage in both governmental and commercial establishments. They soon achieved in this way an economic and political superiority which Moslems have been challenging ever since they took to English education. The de-industrialization of the country further enhanced the importance of services and today ratio in services has become a veritable apple of discord among the communities. Larger representation is desired because of the power it gives to control ratios in service and influence political and economic policy, so that the communal conflict in India is ultimately seen as a struggle between the middle classes of the two communities to share in the good things of life. In Bengal, it is the struggle of the Moslem middle class to have a share in what has so long been the monopoly of the Hindu middle class, while in provinces like the United Provinces or Bihar, it represents their attempt to preserve the privileged position they have till now enjoyed. Mass energy is used only to further that end, and once there is a satisfactory solution of the problem of power, the causes of friction will automatically disappear.

In the light of the above analysis, one can understand the meaning of the charges made by the Muslim League and the replies of the Congress Premiers to these charges. On the side of the Muslim League, there has been a tendency to exaggerate the least slight and give a communal turn to incidents which were originally quite neutral. On the Congress side there has equally been the tendency to take the line of least resistance and let matters take their course. It was inevitable that in a vast country like India, there should

be occasional cases of nepotism. Since the majority of Congress ministers were Hindus, it was easy for the Muslim League to represent them as cases of rank communal injustice. They conveniently forgot that similar things were happening on an equally large scale in provinces like the Punjab and Bengal. It was inevitable that in the first flush of victory, many in the rank and following of the Congress should occasionally go beyond the limits set by their leaders. It was easy for the League to represent them as attacks on Moslem interests. It was also inevitable that Congress ministers, raw and inexperienced to their jobs, should commit mistakes. The League naturally fastened on them, amplified them and tried to make political capital out of them. It is enough to remember that cow killing was prohibited in many places in Bengal under a Moslem Premier but hardly raised a ripple of protest. On the other hand, Hindus in Bengal agitated vehemently against curtailment of vested interests while similar or greater curtailments in Madras or Orissa under a Congress Premier have passed almost unnoticed. A terrible evidence of the political character of these conflicts occurred in March, 1940 when over thirty Moslems died as a result of firing by the Police in the Punjab, and yet the outcry against this outrage was far less than that provoked by trivial incidents in other provinces during the regime of the Congress ministries.

### THREE

An awakened mass consciousness among Indian Mussalmans has also contributed to the growth in popularity of the League. The vicissitudes in the fortunes of Moslems abroad made them more sensitive to their own plight. The struggles of their Hindu neighbors for political rights since the beginning of the century also served as a constant reminder and challenge. There can be little doubt that the Congress has till now failed to canalize the energies so released and use them for constructive political purposes. A newly awakened consciousness easily responds to semi-religious calls and the League is using an appeal which the Congress has used in the past. The result has been not only a phenomenal development in the influence of the League but also an amazing transformation in its composition and temperament. The more Congress seemed to grow shy of direct action and violent remedies, the louder grew the protests of the League against its programme and policy. The League gained immensely in prestige and power, and if critics say that there has been no corresponding increase in dignity, this only brings out the character of the revolutionary change it has undergone. From a highly respectable and somewhat sedate body of aristocratic and well connected gentlemen for whom politics was a polite diversion from the urgencies of official or professional life, the League has changed into a proletarian gathering of impassioned and fervent men who throw balance and moderation to the winds for what they regard to be a righteous cause.

The irony of the situation lies in the role of Mr. Jinnah who retired from the Congress during the Non-cooperation days when that body adopted a programme of direct and if necessary unconstitutional action. His fate pursued him and made him the instrument through which the League was transformed into a body advocating direct and if necessary unconstitutional action just when the Congress seemed to be sliding back to respectability and constitutionalism. But Mr. Jinnah is essentially a lawyer, and like all lawyers essentially conservative. Given a constitutional forum, he delights in exploiting every advantage that opportunity gives and his ingenuity creates. Where parliamentary methods fail and political problems resolve into the naked struggle for power, Mr. Jinnah also feels entirely lost. When after the resignation of the Congress ministries and the disappearance of the prospect of any settlement with the British Government, Congress began to think once more in terms of direct action and civil disobedience, the League reverted to the constitutionalism of former days and directed all its energies to winning the support and patronage of local Governor's for obtaining with their help the ministries which Congress had discarded in the provinces.

Like the Congress, the Muslim League has adopted complete independence of India as its goal. In its session of 1937, it proclaimed as its objective an independent Indian Federation of democratic republican units, but it did not even then agree with the



Congress conception of a federal India achieved through a constituent assembly. It protested that this would lead to a tyranny of the majority over Moslems and other minorities. There have also been various suggestions for the division of India into Hindu and Moslem zones, but till 1940, the League refused to accept such division as its official policy. It was only after the resignation of the Congress ministries that the League suddenly discovered that the only solution of the problem of Indian freedom lay in the achievement of separate federations for the Moslem and the Hindu majority provinces with adequate religious, cultural, economic, political, constitutional and other safeguards for the various minorities in each.

The Congress and the Azad Conference, the League and the Mahasabha – in a word all political and economic movements in India thus proclaim independent federated India as the goal, but here their agreement ends. Congress aims at a federation of autonomous units in which defence, external affairs, communications and customs shall be subject to the unitary control of the federation. The League wants a confederacy of two federations where also these shall be subject to the control of each of the federations but there must be no single directing agency over them. The conception of the Hindu Mahasabha is diametrically opposed to that of the League, for it aims at a central government which should be so powerful that the constituent units are reduced to the status of mere subordinate provinces. The Azad Conference has adopted the scheme formulated by the Jamiat-ul-Ulema and holds that there can be only one Indian federation but its federating units should be conceived as independent sovereign states rather than mere autonomous provinces. The Proja Party accepts this general scheme but believes that the federating units as well as the federal centre must be republics organized and controlled by the workers and the peasants of India.

Apprehensions of cultural submergence supply the plausible ground for the League's plea of two federations, but the real motive must be sought in its unhappy experience in the squabble for power which resulted from the introduction of provincial autonomy. The apprehensions however derive color from the militant Hinduism of a considerable section of Hindus who tend to identify Indian renascence with Hindu revivalism. As a corrective against such domineering centralism, the League's plea for two federations is intelligible, but it has hardly any value on merits. It is for one thing no remedy at all, for under it, just as at present, Hindus will remain minorities in certain areas and Moslems in others. If a federal state cannot solve the problem of minority safeguards within its component autonomous units, what guarantee is there that two independent federations will succeed any better in solving them? On the contrary, with powerful minorities in each, the risk of constant friction between the two federations cannot be ruled out. This is bound not only to lead to undesirable repercussions within each of the two federations but also to provide cause to powerful foreign States for intervention in the internal affairs of the federations as well as their component units.

That India shall be a federated state composed of autonomous republican units must seem inevitable to anybody who approaches the question with intellectual detachment and honesty. The agreement disappears when we try to define the basis of the units and the nature and functions of the federation or confederacy. The policy of the League is undefined and vague on both these points. Beyond insisting that there shall be two federations, it says nothing about their constitution or function or their relation to one another or to their component units. It is also silent on the question of the boundary, organization and political status of the federating units. The Congress insists that these questions should be decided by a constituent assembly elected on adult franchise. To this the League refuses to agree. It argues that a constituent assembly before the achievement of independence is not only unprecedented and impossible, but would be detrimental to Moslem interests even if it could be formed. In such an assembly, Moslem opinion would be ineffective on constitutional matters whenever it differed from the opinion of the Hindu majority. The assumption underlying the League attitude seems to be that all who belong to a religious group, whether by the accident of birth or by the fact of choice, must because of their common religious faith also hold the same political opinions about the form of government or structure of society.

The assumption has only to be formulated to show its utter absurdity. It is common experience that religious agreement is accompanied by the widest differences in political and economic outlook and policy. Almost all the peoples of Europe are Christian in faith, but political and economic conflicts there are perhaps more virulent than in any other continent. Arabs are Moslems like the Turks, but they did not hesitate for a second to cooperate with Britishers who are Christian to throw off the Turkish yoke. Religious conformity is one thing, identity of economic and political interests another. Besides, Mahatma Gandhi, who is virtually the dictator of the Congress, has definitely said that the Mussalmans shall, if they want, return their representatives to such constituent assembly through their own separate electorates. He has further declared that while it is his hope that such representatives will not want to divide India into two federations, he would accept their demand and agree to two federations should they so desire.

It is difficult to see how Moslem interests can, in these circumstances, be injured through the constituent assembly demanded by the Congress. Moslem public opinion will be fully and freely expressed through such constituent assembly, but perhaps that is precisely what the League has so long feared. The power of the League is directed towards the advancement of the interests of the Moslem aristocracy and the middle classes, and even the incursion of the masses into its fold in recent years has been under the hegemony of these interests. The religious appeal has been successful in preventing attention being directed to the specific demands and grievances of the proletariat and the peasantry, but the demand of adult franchise for the constituent assembly might easily raise such issues and thus destroy the very basis of the power of the League.

Nor was this the only reason of the objection of the League to the constituent assembly. The Muslim League claims that it is the only representative organization of Indian Moslems. There has no doubt been a phenomenal development in the strength and popularity of the League, but older Moslem organizations have persisted and new ones have grown. In the Punjab, the Ahrar Party is still powerful. Combining economic grievances with religious passion, its militant policy attracted and still attracts some of the finest fighters among Moslem political workers. It accepts the political objective of the Congress and wants to extend still further its economic implications. Deeply suspicious of the League as an organization of reactionaries and the bourgeoisie, any extension of the franchise is bound to increase its strength at the cost of the League.

The Jamiat-ul-Ulema-Hind, an organization of Muslim divines and religious teachers, exercises great influence on the masses. It has always supported the political programme of the Congress. It is a supporter of independence on religious grounds and has shared with the Congress the honors of the political struggle till now. The members of the Jamiat have suffered in consequence but this has only served to increase its prestige in the eyes of the people. Though it is not very powerful in Bengal, its influence in the United Provinces, Delhi and the Punjab cannot be gainsaid. With its strong religious appeal, its hold on the masses is easy to understand and there is not the least doubt that notwithstanding the League and its fantastic claims, the Jamiat will find powerful representation in the constituent assembly if it is elected by the people on adult franchise.

The Congress still counts thousands of Moslems among its members. Sometime ago, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru made the claim that the Congress had more Mussalmans on its rolls than the League. This may well be true, for unlike the Congress which has millions of subscribing members, the League has no system of regular subscribing membership. It would however be idle to doubt that sentiment for the League is very strong. Besides, the League has been gaining strength in recent years and whatever may have been the case a decade ago, there is no denying that today it is far more powerful among the Moslems than the Congress. In fact, there is no comparing in their respective strength today. Nevertheless, it remains true that a considerable section of the ablest and most politically conscious Moslems are still in the Congress. It is also significant that its influence has been steadily increasing among the peasantry, though the urban lower middle classes are still deeply suspicious of it.

The Proja Party has already been mentioned as a party with a future. Though non-communal in aim and objective, the Party is dominantly Moslem in composition and leadership and is continually trying to organize the masses on the basis of an economic programme. The conviction that political democracy cannot be made real and effective without a fundamental reconstruction in the economic framework of society serves as the cornerstone of the Proja movement and organization. Aiming at agrarian revolution through parliamentary and constitutional methods, it has grown out of the peasantry's

fight for rights and is bound to increase in strength with the growth of political consciousness among the masses.

Bodies like the Khudai Khidmatgars have already been mentioned. They flourish in the North Western Frontier Province where the Moslem majority is most pronounced. Significantly enough, this is also the province where the League has made least headway. Till very recently, the League had hardly any footing there, but since the resignation of the Congress ministry, the League has been attempting to gain a foothold with the patronage and support of the Government.

One must also mention the name of the Shia Political Conference among the organizations that repudiate the claim of the League to be the sole guardian of Moslem interests in India. In education, wealth and social status, Shias constitute the most important minority among the Indian Moslems. Generally a supporter of the Congress in its political demands, the existence of the Shia Political Conference is proof that the smaller groups and sections within the Moslem community are not prepared to trust the League to secure and safeguard their specific interests. In a sense, even more significant is the growth of the Momin Ansar Conference, for it is attempting to use against the League precisely the weapons which the League has employed against the Congress. The Momins constitute a very large proportion of Indian Moslems, but are educationally, economically and politically the most backward section of the community. They are today demanding from the League precisely those safeguards which the League demands from the Congress on behalf of the Moslems generally.

It is difficult to estimate the strength of these various parties with absolute accuracy, but perhaps an opinion may be hazarded. Membership is fluid, the same man often belonging to two or more organizations with incompatible programmes and objectives. Sentiment for the League is strong and it is undoubtedly the single largest organization of Indian Moslems. Survival or emergence of other parties is however clear indication that its claim of being the only organization of Indian Moslems is hardly tenable. Even as a sentiment, the League is strongest in the provinces where Moslems are a minority but economically fairly strong. Where Moslems are in a majority, the differences in economic interest of the various Moslem groups cannot be long concealed, and this has actually happened in Bengal and the Punjab, in Sindh and the Frontier. It is significant that in the Punjab and Bengal, where Moslems constitute the backbone of the peasantry while the landlords and capitalists belong to other communities, there should be such strength of the Ahrar and the Proja parties. It is equally significant that the Momins and the Shias, the most backward and the most prosperous sections of the Indian Mussalmans should be sympathetic to the political objective of the Congress. A combination of the other groups would therefore prove a serious rival to the League, challenge its claim to be the only organization of Indian Moslems and may even turn out to be more truly representative of them. The League, in spite of the influx of proletarian elements in recent times, remains an organization of aristocratic and

bourgeoisie Moslems and shapes its programme and policy in their interest. League leaders are therefore afraid that an extension of the franchise would militate against the League by making the masses more conscious of their own rights and needs. Herein lies the explanation of the insistence of the Congress for a constituent assembly and the League's opposition to it.

## FOUR

WE have till now discussed the fortunes of parties and organizations which are predominantly or even exclusively political. There is however another organization of recent growth which deserves more than a mere passing notice. The Khaksar movement cannot boast of a long history and is at present attempting to eschew all politics.

Allama Mashriqi, the founder and leader of the movement has recently directed all his followers to devote themselves exclusively to social work and the betterment of the relations between the communities. A study of his thought, activity and programme leaves however no scope for doubt that the Khaksar movement is concentrating on regeneration of national character through social service only because it is convinced that such regeneration alone can lead to the political salvation of the nation. He has more than once stated in clear and unequivocal terms that if on the one hand political freedom cannot be achieved without an improvement in national character, resurgent nationalism cannot on the other hand be long suppressed. A degenerate nation can no more win or maintain its freedom than an awakened nationhood be kept in chains. Energy and mental integrity cannot coexist with slavery just as their disappearance is incompatible with national freedom.

The Khaksar organization counts in its following men of all communities, though it at first started work among the Mussalmans and its membership is even today mainly derived from them. Based on an approach to Indian problems through social service, it seeks to improve the human material among men of all communities. Also, it attempts to work in cooperation with other political and communal organizations in India. At the time of Sir Stafford Cripps's ill-fated mission, Allama Mashriqi was among those who worked for a rapprochement between the Congress on the one hand and the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League on the other. He also helped to expose the subterfuge in the Cripps proposal which promised complete liberation to Indians after the War, while refusing them the opportunity of defending the country against the attack of a powerful foreign State.

Nevertheless, the main emphasis of the Khaksar movement is on social work and a Khaksar volunteer must perform everyday his allotted social task. Before the organization was declared illegal, Khaksar volunteers used to hold parades and military

drills. It was stated that the main objective of the movement was to instill the principle of activity and life into the inert and passive masses of India. Military exercises not only helped to achieve this end but also developed the people's capacity for organized and united action. Their uniform was the same and they all carried as their insignia a *belcha* or spade. This stood for the dignity of labor and was also meant to mark them out as

social laborers. The adoption of a common uniform and military exercises in unison by all members of the organization was intended to plane down distinctions between the rich and the poor and develop in them a spirit of equality and democracy. According to Allama Mashriqi, activity, democracy and organization are the three principles most needed for the achievement of Indian independence.

The Khaksar movement is not directly opposed to the Muslim League, but its recognition of and readiness to cooperate with other political organizations is a tacit repudiation of the League's claim to be the sole guardian of the interests of Indian Moslems. The social and political conception of the Khaksars differs from that of the League in other respects as well. The membership of the League is confined to Moslems alone and it is its constant endeavor to make Leaguers and Mussalmans co-extensive terms. This exclusiveness is carried to absurd lengths and Leaguers have at times tried to ostracize socially Mussalmans who refuse to join the League. The Khaksar organization on the other hand welcomes non-Moslems to its ranks and recognizes that differences in political opinion are as likely to occur among Moslems as among members of other communities. The contrast is in a sense full of paradox. Though the League is a purely political organization and many of its leaders are flagrantly indifferent to religious faith and practice, its emphasis is on the religious unity of all members of the community. The Khaksar movement is based on religion and members are required to conform to the institutions and practices of their own faith and yet there is no suggestion of such militant religiosity in its creed or programme. For these reasons the leaders of the League look askance at the Khaksar organization and movement. They made several attempts to incorporate it as an element in the League but this was resisted by the Khaksar leader. There is thus no love lost between them and in fact they look upon one another as potential rivals. There has yet been no external manifestation of their silent struggle for leadership, but the trend of events leaves little doubt that conflict is not only inevitable but perhaps also imminent.

There is still another reason why the League looks at the Khaksar movement with a feeling of apprehension. We have already noticed that it at first attempted to assimilate the movement to itself. Even when that attempt failed, it did not at first attack the Khaksar organization till the tragedy of Shahidganj precipitated a conflict between them. In 1940, the Khaksars launched a movement of direct action which led to the death of more than thirty men but the Khaksar volunteers stood the test and did not flinch. Their strength, courage and sacrifice evoked admiration and support all over India. The leaders of the League grew nervous about the maintenance of their hold on the community, especially as one of them was the head of the government in the Punjab at the time of the tragedy. Besides, they also feared that the negative and reactionary programme of the League would fail to hold the field against the active and progressive forces released by the Khaksar movement.

Their nervousness was further aggravated by the establishment of the Azad Muslim Conference during that very year. We have already seen that in spite of the growth in the strength and influence of the League, other political groups and organizations among the Moslems did not disappear. They were all weaker than the League as separate entities, but the position could well be reversed if they combined. So long as they remained separate, the League no doubt attacked them but did not regard any one of them as a serious rival. When however they combined to form the Azad Muslim Conference in 1940, the League became seriously concerned and attacked it from the day of its inception. Its attitude towards the Khaksar movement also hardened. Like the Azad Muslim Conference, the Khaksar organization also welcomes to its ranks men of different political persuasions. The League became afraid that this union of men of different political and religious faiths on the basis of a programme of social service and personal culture might easily be transformed into a political platform that would rival and perhaps overshadow the League.

The chief credit for the establishment and increase in strength of the Azad Muslim Conference must go to Mr. Allah Bakhsh. His emergence into Indian politics is remarkable in more than one way. It has rarely fallen to a political leader to achieve such quick position and fame and yet in his case, they were fully deserved. He was almost unknown in the political world before 1937 and yet between the years 1938 and 1940, he achieved for himself a unique position among the political personalities of India. He first attracted notice in 1938 by becoming Premier of Sindh in defiance of the League, but his premiership was only the occasion and not the cause of his present political status. There have been other premiers in other provinces but hardly anyone has won the same position in the heart of the Indian people.

Mr. Allah Bakhsh's position and popularity can be explained only by his courage and strength of character. 1940 was in many ways the high-water mark in the fortunes of the League. We have already pointed to its surprising resurrection within a year of its defeat in the general elections of 1936-37. Some of the causes of its revival have already been discussed, but there is little doubt that the apprehensions of British imperialism at the resounding victory of the Congress at the polls in 1937 was one of the main factors in the change. We have seen how unceremoniously Mr. Jinnah, for whom the British had till now little love, was treated by them before and during the Round Table Conferences. As a potential counterpoise to the growing strength of the Congress, the imperialists discovered new virtues in him. It is an open secret that the Punjab Premier, Sir Sikander, enjoys the confidence of the bureaucracy. In return, he hardly ever takes a decision on any fundamental issue without first taking into consideration bureaucratic susceptibilities. In the Punjab, he and the Unionist party had given the League an even more severe trouncing than it had received at the hands of Mr. Fazlul Huq in Bengal. That they should both in these circumstances surrender to Mr. Jinnah at the Lucknow session of the League is a cause for surprise even to the casual observer. There may be some explanation of Mr. Fazlul Huq's anxiety to go back into the folds of the League. He



was associated with it from almost the day of its inception. Without the help of the League's communal cry, it was also difficult for him to withstand the opposition he had to face in Bengal. Sir Sikander's surrender is more surprising, for these factors did not apply in his case. Besides, his political career and principles were built up on the basis of official support and patronage. Sir Sikander's surrender proved that the British attitude to Mr. Jinnah had changed and they no longer looked upon him as an undesirable. From a hostile opponent he had now been transformed into a potential ally and friend.

The hesitancy of the Congress and the mistakes of its ministers on the one hand, and on the other, the exuberant enthusiasm and at times excesses of its followers combined with the favor and support of the ruling power to enhance the strength and prestige of the League. Mr. Allah Bakhsh achieved his political status because of his stand against the rising fortunes of the League. The Moslem majority in Sindh is more pronounced than in any other province but the Frontier. In Bengal, the majority is hardly more than nominal, for Mussalmans are just a little over and the non-Moslem just a little below thirty millions while all the advantage in wealth, education and position lies with the minorities. Even in the Punjab, the non-Moslems constitute about forty-five percent of the total population. In the provinces where the Moslems constitute a minority, the position is quite otherwise, for they are ten, fifteen or at best twenty-five percent of the total population. Mr. Allah Bakhsh realized that the militant communalism of the League is not only detrimental to the welfare of India as a whole but also harmful to the interests of the Moslems themselves. A minority weakens its position by advertising its character as a minority. The less the emphasis on the fixation of ratios, the more the minority gains by the transference of attention to questions affecting general social welfare. Otherwise, such topics tend to be ignored in the squabble for jobs and the thought, time and energy of the communities are exhausted in the fruitless struggle over ratios and percentages in service and representation.

It is evidence of Mr. Allah Bakhsh's vision and genius that at the very outset of his political life, he realized the futility of exalting the communal problem to the exclusion of everything else. Perhaps this realization was easier for him as a member of one of the majority provinces. Where Moslems are in a minority, it is inevitable that they should develop a merely negative and defensive outlook. Mr. Jinnah knows that so long as present conditions continue, he can never aspire to the premiership of even Bombay and in spite of all his gifts and abilities must be content to play a minor role. As one who has to seek protection, he can never exhibit the generosity and imaginative breadth of one who is accustomed to offer protection to others. The asperity and pettiness which characterizes his conduct at times can be explained only as the manifestations of an inferiority complex. Because of this sense of frustration, he even fails to understand that these exhibitions of temper further diminish his hopes of achieving the leadership of all Indian communities. Mr. Allah Bakhsh saw that pettiness could never capture the imagination of a vast subcontinent. He also realized that there is no hope for the

solution of our basic problems without first shifting the emphasis from religious and communal differences to problems affecting political thought and action. In consequence he built up his political career on the repudiation of the narrow and militant communalism of the League.

Mr. Allah Bakhsh proved his political ability also through his capacity for organization. He was one of the first to realize that in spite of the growth in the strength of the League, the other Moslem organizations and groups could if they combined prove a formidable rival. He therefore set himself the task of establishing contacts between them and the building of a federal organization on the basis of a programme common to them. That he made no attempt at the unification of the various groups and parties is also evidence of his insight, for there were real differences in programme and attitude that could not be glossed over. In fact, the main criticism against the League is its attempt to force all Mussalmans into the same political mould. Mr. Allah Bakhsh realized that such procrustean solutions are no solution at all. The Azad Muslim Conference therefore recognized the differences in ideology and entity between the different groups and aimed only at evolving a common platform where all could meet for joint and united action. The Conference attracted wide notice from its very foundation, but could not for obvious reasons achieve success commensurate with its promise. When different institutions seek to work together while maintaining their separate entity, differences in programme and outlook must necessarily reveal themselves and hamper progress. Compromises are inevitable and compromises always lack the force and intensity of single minded and unitary action. In spite of this inevitable weakness, it cannot be denied that the Conference achieved two things. Its establishment was itself a challenge to the League and threatened the position of Mr. Jinnah and his satellites. It also checked the lying propaganda of British imperialists who sought to represent to the world outside the opinion of the League as the voice of the Mussalmans of India. For both these achievements, the main credit belongs to Mr. Allah Bakhsh.

## FIVE

THE beginning of the War saw a complete reversal in the roles of the League and the Congress. The Congress adopted a militant and in many respects a revolutionary programme while the League tended to drift back to constitutional politics. The old constitutionalism could not however be revived. For one thing, Mr. Jinnah in spite of his proclaimed differences with the Congress was still too deeply impregnated with the Congress mentality to fit into the grooves of moderate liberalism that attract official patronage and support. For another, twenty years of steady propaganda had created in the public mind a spirit of resistance which could not be easily forgotten or subverted. Thus, like the Congress, the League also came to harbor different ideologies and schools of political thought, though the preponderance of vested interests made the League far more moderate in its demands and programme than the Congress.

One curious feature in the programme of the League in recent years may hence be noted. Since the beginning of the war, the League has at every step followed the Congress in its programme and decisions, though generally with a time-lag and for apparently different reasons. Thus, while the League on the one hand abused the Congress for real or supposed wrongs, it had no option but to follow its lead in the actual decisions that have been taken in recent years. Like the Congress, the League rejected the August offer of the Viceroy for the settlement of the constitutional question. Like the Congress, the League refused to participate in the soi-disant Defence Council. Finally, like the Congress, the League rejected the offer of Churchillian independence for India brought out by Sir Stafford Cripps. It is true that on every occasion the League gave reasons different from those of the Congress, but it is equally true, that whatever be the ostensible reasons, the result in every case was the same.

The only difference between the League and the Congress has thus been in their methods for realizing their ends. While the Congress was prepared to force issues and, if need be, resort to direct action for achieving the independence of India, the League was content to sit on the fence and await events in the hope that out of the conflict of forces so created, it would be able to reach its objective without effort or sacrifice. The constitution of the Moslem League with a dominance of vested interests was the chief factor for this hesitancy. With large stakes in the country, the propertied classes tend to become conscious or unconscious supporters of the *status quo*. Mr. Jinnah's personal character and his past were also partially responsible for this. A lawyer, he has always

been shy of direct action and depended more on the finesses of diplomacy than the exhibition of naked force.

Such diplomatic pusillanimity has however caused a permanent injury to the Indian Moslems. Constant harping on their numerical weakness has created in many an attitude of dependence on the British power. Emphasis on the sharp difference of their interests from those of other Indians has tended to alienate feelings between the communities and simultaneously created in Moslem minds a defence-reaction that is inimical to the free expansion of the mind and its energies. The gravest charge against Mr. Jinnah's leadership – when the time for an impartial historical survey comes – will be that he tried to instill into the minds of nine crores of Moslems a weakness and inferiority that, had he succeeded, would have made them unable to maintain themselves on equal terms against the competition of other communities and groups. Fortunately for Indian Moslems, Mr. Jinnah has failed in his attempt. Groups which stand out against him may be weaker than the League individually, but collectively they represent a wider section of the Moslem mind than the League.

Nor is this surprising. For the whole history of Moslems has been a story of expansion and colonization, physical as well as cultural. There is a fine poem of Iqbal in which Tarik the conqueror of Spain rebukes worldly-wise counselors who plead for retreat from a foreign land on account of their numerical weakness. "Foreign land?" retorts Tarik, "where can we find a land that is foreign to God, Whom as Moslems we must serve?" The contrast of this attitude with that of Mr. Jinnah and his League is too glaring to require comment.

Pakistan which is today declared to be the goal of the Muslim League is thus against the teachings of Moslem history. It is in fact against the teaching of history in every land. No race or people has ever prospered by seeking to conserve itself. Nations as well as individuals have triumphed only when they have sought to expand themselves in all directions. Cultures live by expansion. The attempt to withdraw within narrow shelters and maintain purity or integrity has invariably resulted in decay and death. Indian Moslems can also survive only by a spirit of expansion and growth.

The acceptance of Pakistan as its goal marks however an important change in the programme and policy of the League. In a sense, it has destroyed the very basis of the League. So long the League has stressed the identity of interest of all Moslems in India irrespective of their economic, political or geographical differences. Pakistan marks a belated recognition that such interests are in fact different. Programmes and policies for Moslems in areas where they are in a majority will be different from those in areas where they are the minority. In the one case, they must undertake the responsibility of administration and offer safeguards and protection to the minorities in their charge. In the other, they must themselves seek safeguards against possible oppression by a hostile majority. The League has thus abjured, by implication if not directly, its accepted

creed till now that Moslem interests are indivisible and identical for the whole of India. Once however it is conceded that Moslem politics cannot be identical in majority and minority provinces, there is no way of denying that they will be different in the case of different economic and political groups as well.

We have noted earlier that the Muslim League has never achieved the same hold over the majority provinces that it had in the minority areas. The North Western Frontier Province has never acknowledged the leadership of Mr. Jinnah and Punjab is with him only in a very half-hearted and perfunctory way. This applies to Bengal and Sindh as well. Though the patronage and influence of the ministers created a feeling for the League in Bengal and Sindh, this was confined mainly to the town-dwelling middle classes and left unaffected the masses in the rural areas. Recently, at first Sindh and later Bengal moved out of its orbit and all attempts of the League to recapture them have so far failed. This is not accidental and it is also perhaps noteworthy that these secessions from the League have taken place after the adoption of Pakistan as its official programme. In a sense one might even say that these developments mark a historical ratification of the revolution effected in the structural idea of the League by the adoption of the goal of Pakistan. If Moslems in majority provinces have different tasks and different problems, it is natural that they should try to create their own leadership and refuse to follow the lead of one whose mentality is colored by the fact that he will always be the protected and never the protector. We have always held that the leadership of Indian Moslems ought to and must sooner or later come from one of the majority provinces. The negative mentality developed in the minority areas hardly offers the proper atmosphere for the development of imaginative courage and wise statesmanship.

The idea of Pakistan has thus in one sense destroyed the very basis of the League, and we already see signs of disintegration in spite of an imposing facade of unity. Externally, the League is more powerful than perhaps at any time in its history, but its internal strength is hardly in keeping with external appearances. For one thing, all its strength is derived from its condemnation of the actions and policies of the Congress and the community is bound to tire of this unceasing litany of hate. For another, the survival of old parties, the emergence of new ones and the appearance of fissures within the structure of the League itself will divert the energies of the community from mere negative condemnation to positive programmes for social amelioration and welfare.

The demand of the Muslim League for Pakistan has however made one notable contribution to Indian political life. It has compelled Congress and other organizations to think afresh on the problem of minorities and the extent and degree of self-determination for different territorial units. So far as the scheme of Pakistan stands for territorial self-determination of homogeneous racial and cultural groups or peoples, it marks an immense step forward in the evolution of Indian political ideas, difficulties

arise when the emphasis shifts from the demand of self-determination to one for division of India. It is noteworthy that the League which till recently has been opposed to the idea of a constituent assembly has now indirectly conceded it by its own demand for a plebiscite on the question of Pakistan. Of course, it even now speaks of a plebiscite of Moslems alone, but it was not prepared for even this in 1940. Its position then was that the political parties and the British must concede the demand simply because the League makes it. On the other hand, the Congress in its last A. I. C. C. resolution conceded the substance of the Moslem demand for territorial self-determination by its acceptance of the principle of all residuary powers for the provinces. This is a long step forward from all previous Congress resolutions and marks a close approximation to the scheme formulated by the Jamiat and approved by the Azad Muslim Conference. There has also been a considerable change in the attitude of the Mahasabha. Thus the margin of difference between these organizations has narrowed down, and narrowed down by the impact of political and economic forces which have proved more powerful than past prejudices or theories. If a settlement is still not possible, there can be no words to condemn sufficiently the actions of those who prevent it.

*September, 1942*

## POSTSCRIPT

SINCE the above was written, revolutionary changes have transformed the Indian scene. The All India Congress Committee adopted in August 1942 a resolution demanding the immediate withdrawal of British rule over India and the establishment of an Independent Indian Federation. The British Government struck with unexpected quickness and hardly before the resolution was passed, almost all Congress leaders – big and small – found themselves landed in prison. The arrest of the Congress leaders was followed by a spontaneous and unprecedented upheaval which for a time paralyzed government over large areas of the country. There were some who hoped that with the Congress out of the picture, the League would come forward to attempt a solution of the deadlock. They however counted without Mr. Jinnah who was content to force through the League a merely negative resolution condemning the attitude of the Congress. The stalemate in political life that set in after the arrest of the Congress leaders continued till February when the Indian scene was once more thrilled by the fast undertaken by Gandhiji from inside the gaol. All political parties except the League united in presenting a demand for his unconditional release and a solution of the deadlock but the British, whose attitude had stiffened as the result of recent successes in North Africa and elsewhere, remained obdurate. It was perhaps not without significance that on this as also on many previous occasions, there was a strange agreement in the attitude and pronouncement of Messrs. Jinnah and Savarkar.

There has been a further deterioration in the Indian political scene after the death of Sir Sikander and the cowardly murder of Mr. Allah Bakhsh. Political morality seems to have touched a new depth perhaps unequalled since the days of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. There has also been a revolting transformation in the programme and policy of the League. It has thrown off all pretence of working for the welfare of Indian Moslems or the independence of India and stands revealed as a coterie of vested interests who are prepared to serve the behests of British imperialism for personal or party gains. Provincial Governors have been exhibiting an unseemly anxiety for installing League ministers into office in the Muslim majority provinces that cannot be explained on any hypothesis other than a secret understanding between the bureaucracy and the League. The change in Mr. Jinnah's political role has also come as an unpleasant surprise, for till now even non-Leaguers regarded him as an honest if misdirected worker in the cause of India's freedom. The sordid conspiracy between the bureaucracy and the League has culminated in the disgraceful events which led to the substitution of Mr. Fazlul Huq by the Bengal leader of the League in the office of the Chief Minister of that province and the installation, for the first time in its history, of a

League ministry in the Frontier. These events are however so recent and still so charged with passion and partisanship that it is difficult to disentangle the conflicting tendencies and attempt a detached historical survey. This alone can perhaps be said. Scarcity of food and other essentials, the growing hardship and bitterness of life and dangers of foreign attack have, against the background of a war-tossed world, created a temper which makes explosion inevitable unless there is rapid and material improvement of conditions. Communal issues have receded in the background in the struggle for bare existence and the only demand of the people – irrespective of community or creed – is for food, freedom and peace.

*June, 1943*