

# FREEDOM FOR INDIA

LENNOX A. MILLS

"THE Indian people should have their freedom." There is general agreement that this is the ideal solution, but the difficulty is to work it out in practice.

## I

Freedom for India is one of the most complicated problems of constitution-building which believers in democracy have ever had to face. Instinctively we base our judgment on our own experience, or on that of the western world with which we are familiar, and we assume that the Asiatic world will conform to the same pattern. Setting up democratic government in the West has been a comparatively simple process. Usually it took place in a country with a single dominant nationality, like France. Apart from Switzerland, there have been very few instances where there has been more than one nationality included in the same state. Where this did occur, there has usually been serious trouble, as with Czechoslovakia or Ireland. Usually, too, the number of people involved has been moderate—47,000,000 in Great Britain, and 41,000,000 in France. The limited scale of the problem has made it far easier to solve. The one democracy which has a size, population and mixture of racial stocks upon a continental scale has been the United States. Success here has been very greatly helped by the fact that the inhabitants came in gradually over a period of several generations, so that existing Americans were able to assimilate them to the national American pattern. Moreover, the immigrants arrived eager to be Americanized, so that they themselves co-operated with the assimilators. The result is the single American people, essentially one and united, in spite of their diversity of racial origins.

India, however, is in a totally different situation. It has an area of 1,808,000 square miles, as large as Europe without Russia, and about two-thirds the size of the United States. It has roughly three times the population of the United States, and differs sharply in the existing diversity of its peoples. One can speak of the Indian people in the same way in which one can speak of the European people: an Englishman and a French-

man, for instance, are more similar to each other than either is to a Chinaman. In the same way, Indians have more in common in cultural background, historic past and general way of looking at things, than any of them have with Europeans. Between themselves, however, the peoples of India differ as sharply and as widely as, say, Norwegians and Italians. An Indian national patriotism has begun to appear during the past two generations; but it is not yet strong enough to bind the different peoples firmly together.

The most serious disunion with which India has to cope is that which is based upon religious differences. The two principal faiths are Hinduism with 239,000,000 adherents or 70% of the population, and Mohammedanism with 78,000,000 or 20%. There are signs that some of the younger Moslems are beginning to put nationalism before religion; but on the whole it is still true that the hostility which exists between the two faiths is utterly unlike anything which we know of in the United States. To find a parallel, one must go back to sixteenth century Europe, and try to imagine what a Lutheran or a Calvinist felt towards a Roman Catholic. The Moslems first entered India about the year 1000 A.D., when the Afghan Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni began his devastating invasions. Hindu kingdoms of the plains were unable to defend themselves, and for over 700 years Moslem conquerors plundered and ruled India. The decay in the eighteenth century of the last conquering dynasty, that of the Great Mogul, led to a period of anarchic confusion, which ended in the establishment of British rule. Moslem conquerors were often ruthless in their methods, and the centuries of their rule have left a legacy of hostility which is very much alive at the present day. The present Moslem population of India are the descendants partly of soldiers in the invading armies who were given grants of land, and in large part of Hindus who were converted to Mohammedanism.

Economics and education still further divided the two faiths. A very large part of the Moslems are small cultivators and, like farmers the world over, they need credit. A Moslem may not be a moneylender, for the *Koran* forbids charging interest on borrowed money. Therefore all the moneylenders are Hindus; and since the rates of interest are often extortionate, the final result is that a large part of the Moslem farmers are head over heels in debt to the Hindu moneylenders. Western education, which the British introduced in the nineteenth century, brought a fresh cause of cleavage. The British Govern-

ment allowed no religious instruction in the schools, in order that no one might accuse them of favouring one faith above another. Hindus flocked to the schools, but for a long time the Moslems held back, regarding them as godless institutions owing to the lack of all religious training. Eventually they came around, but they have never been able to make up the lost ground; and now far more Hindus than Moslems have a western education. Appointment to government positions, particularly to the higher posts, is based upon a western education, and Moslems see with dismay that the bulk of the officials are likely to be *Hindus*. They have been demanding that a percentage of positions equal to their proportion of the total population shall be reserved for them.

The progressive establishment of democratic government had the unexpected effect of still further intensifying the hostility between the two religions. Until 1920 the British controlled every phase of Indian government—legislative, financial and executive. The presence of British officials in the key positions gave the Moslems assurance that India would continue to be administered with absolute impartiality towards both religions. In 1917, however, the British Government had announced that it intended to give up its authority, and that its goal was the gradual establishment of self-government in India as an integral part of the British Empire. This was followed in 1920 by the first instalment of democratic government, the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms. Later came the policy of Indianization, under which the number of Indian officials in the key positions was steadily increased, and that of British officials diminished. The Governor-General, the present Lord Halifax, announced that the constitutional goal was Dominion status, or, in other words, that India was to receive exactly the same complete powers of self-government as Canada. This was followed in the early 'thirties by the three Round Table Conferences in London, where representatives of all the Indian and United Kingdom political parties met to draw up the plan for the next stage of democratic advance. The new constitution was passed by the British Parliament in 1935, and the first elections under it were held in 1937. In less than twenty years, Indians had secured substantial control of the eleven provincial governments, partial control of the central government at Delhi, and about 50% of the key positions in the administrative civil service. The significance of this development to the Moslems was perfectly plain: the old régime of autocratic but impartial control was

passing, and in a few years Moslems and Hindus would be left alone to work out the future between them.

## II

The Moslems began to reflect that they had a majority in only four provinces of India, and that in the other seven they made up anywhere from 6% to 28% of the population. They began to fear that Home Rule meant Hindu rule, and they made it clear that they had no intention of submitting to the rule of the Hindu majority of the electorate. The Moslems were not in favour of the retention of British control; they were as anxious as the Hindus to see India governed by Indians. But they remembered that they had ruled India for 700 years, and they were determined that they would not consent to the establishment of democratic government until they had amply safeguarded their rights. Their principal demand was that Hindu and Moslem voters should continue to be registered on separate communal electoral rolls as they had been since 1910, and not on a single voters' list. They also insisted that in each legislature they must be guaranteed a somewhat higher percentage of the seats than the proportion of Moslem voters to the total number of voters in the area. The reason for the demands was that, although the Moslems were 20% of the whole population, in many constituencies they were so few that they would never be able to elect a representative. Normal democratic practice, of a single list of all voters, meant that their representatives in the legislatures would be less than their percentage of the whole population of the country. The Moslems refused to agree to any constitution which did not include these and other safeguards for the position they held as a minority. If their demands were ignored, they threatened civil war; and they provided over a third of the best soldiers in the Indian army. They further pointed out that the warlike Afghans and the Pathans, the hill tribes of the North-West Frontier, were also Moslems, and had displayed for centuries a marked taste for invading India. Democratic theory might be all against minority rights; but the Moslems had the hard, practical arguments of a civil war, a very possible mutiny in the army, and the threat of a foreign invasion. This might lead to trouble with the Moslems of Iraq, Palestine and Egypt, for something of the old international solidarity of the Moslem religion still survived, even in the twentieth century Asiatic world of nationalism. The British

Empire was the leading Moslem power of the world—it contained more Mohammedans than Christians—and it was not going to run the risk of internal convulsion simply to compel the Indian Moslems to submit to the majority rule of the Hindus. So the Moslems received their minority safeguards in the present constitution of 1935, as they had in the earlier ones of 1919 and 1910.

The Moslem demands were strenuously opposed by the Hindus, and particularly by Gandhi and his party, the Indian National Congress. They demanded the abolition of all the above safeguards, and expressed the conviction that Hindu-Moslem problems would solve themselves, once the British gave India independence and withdrew. They agreed that if this optimism should prove misplaced, the question would have to be settled by civil war. The British showed a total lack of enthusiasm for this suggestion. They pointed out that China had used this method to settle her constitutional differences after the fall of the Manchu dynasty in 1911. Its result had been over twenty years of fighting, which weakened and impoverished the country, and played into the hands of Japan. The British tried to persuade Hindus and Moslems to compromise their differences; but while numerous conferences have been held during the past twenty years, the result has been an eternal deadlock. Hostility between the two religions has increased, and this has shown itself in a growing number of communal riots. They have often been accompanied by heavy loss of life, the worst being the outbreak at Cawnpore in 1931 when several hundred were killed and a good part of the town was burnt down. The bulk of the Moslems combined in the Moslem League under the leadership of Mr. Jinnah. A minority of the Moslems supported the Hindu Congress Party; but the large majority were unyielding in their demand for minority rights.

Trouble arose also with the Indian Native States. When the present constitution was enacted in 1935, the intention was to set up a federal government comprising the eleven provinces which together make up British India, and also the quarter of the country which is under the rule of the Indian native princes. They had agreed to federation in principle; but the more they saw of the policy of the Congress Party, the more reluctant they became. They were determined to limit the power of the federal government to the utmost degree possible, in order to safeguard their authority within their own states. Equally, Congress was determined to destroy the autoeratic

power of the princes. The princes had stipulated that they were to appoint the states' delegates to the new federal legislature, but the Congress Party insisted that they must be elected. If this change were made, Congress had good hopes of winning the elections, since it had established branches of the party inside the native states. If the states elected Congress representatives, then they *plus* the party's members from British India would form a majority in the federal legislature. Otherwise Congress could be outvoted by a combination of the Moslem members, other minority representatives and the princes' delegates. Congress became more and more insistent, and began to stir up agitation in some of the Native States. This made the princes still more unwilling to join the federation, and every effort of the Governor-General to arrange a compromise failed. When the war broke out, the princes were still refusing to join, and it was not yet possible to bring the federal government into existence. Pending the solution of the deadlock, the British continued temporarily the old central government which had been set up by the constitution of 1919. This controls only British India, and has no authority over the Native States. The legislature is composed of two houses, the large majority of the members being popularly elected on separate communal voters' lists, so that all important minorities and economic interests have an assured number of seats. The legislature has substantial power over legislation, and partial control over finance. It has no *legal* authority over the executive, but in practice it has had a large measure of control over it for the past twenty years. The executive, the Governor-General's Executive Council, had a minority of Indian and a majority of British members.

The British Government decided to bring into force the part of the new constitution of 1935 relating to the eleven provinces of British India. In each there was an elected legislature, the electorate being divided into communal electoral rolls. This legislature controlled legislation, finance, and also the executive. The British Cabinet System was introduced, the leaders of the majority party in the legislature being at the same time the Premier and his colleagues in the Ministry. A British Governor in each province held certain emergency powers, which he was strictly ordered to use only if their exercise were unavoidable. One example was that he was ordered to overrule the policy of his Indian Ministers if this were necessary to protect the rights of any minority. He also had power to take over

the whole government of the province if the constitutional machinery broke down. This constitution placed about 90% of the work of government under the control of Indian popularly elected legislatures and ministries. The central government dealt only with All-India subjects, such as defence, foreign policy, tariffs, railways and the national debt. India had taken a long step forward towards complete self-government.

The Congress Party won the elections in eight and the Moslem League in three provinces. Congress claims to speak in the name of the whole people of India; but this claim is vehemently denied by the Moslems, the Sikhs, the Untouchables, and also by the Hindu Moderate Liberals. The Congress Party, however, does represent many of the most powerful Hindu interests. It is supported, for example, by the Indian manufacturers, and their contributions to the party funds place it in a far more powerful position financially than that occupied by any of its rivals. Other great assets are that it has the support of the bulk of the Indian press, and that it is the only Indian political party which has a well organized party machine modelled upon those in western countries. Gandhi is another electoral asset of immense value, because of his very wide influence over the Hindu electorate. Nehru, the most prominent leader next to Gandhi, is the leader of the more Left Wing groups.

The Congress ministries in the provinces appear to have been surprised to discover that the governors' emergency powers were for use in extreme emergencies only, and that the British officials co-operated cordially with them. Leaders of the party seem to have tried to govern impartially, but patronage and preferment in the provinces were largely in Hindu hands. Some at least of the members of the party took advantage of their victory to inflict injustice upon Moslems. The Moslem League asserted that "their liberty, persons, property and honour were in danger, and even their elementary rights were trampled upon". So the League began to turn against federation, and to put forward instead a plan of secession. It suggested that the British attempt to perpetuate Indian unity in a federal government should be abandoned, and that instead the country should be broken up into separate Moslem and Hindu states.

### III

When war was declared in 1939, the Governor-General appealed for Indian support in the struggle against Naziism. He reaffirmed that Dominion status remained the constitutional

goal, and that at the end of the war the British would willingly enter into negotiation with the Indian leaders to modify the constitution of 1935 by general agreement. Until then, the matter must be postponed: there was no time for months of deliberation while the government was absorbed in a life and death struggle. As a temporary war measure, he asked the Indian leaders to serve on his Executive Council and share in the control of the central government. He also proposed to set up a National Defence Council composed of representatives of all interests and parties in India, to assist in co-ordinating the war effort. Neither Congress nor the Moslem League was willing to serve on these bodies; and in 1941 the Governor General appointed in their stead prominent Indians who were willing to collaborate. The enlarged Executive Council of the central government was composed of eight Indians and four Europeans. In practice its decisions are usually made by a majority vote, so that there is Indian control of the central executive in actuality although not in constitutional theory. The National Defence Council was an advisory body of thirty members, all save two being Indians. It included representatives of the Native States, British India, the Hindus, Moslem and other minorities, industry and labour. For the first time in the whole history of India, a body had been created which brought together representatives of every section and interest in the sub-continent. The Indians who accepted appointment could be genuinely described as outstanding men whose leadership in the country was recognised.

In 1940 Mr. Amery, the Secretary of State for India, repeated the Governor-General's offer in an expanded form. He emphasized that the post-war reform of the constitution which the Governor-General had promised would not be a dictated settlement imposed by the British. "They will most readily assent to the setting up, after the conclusion of the war, with the least possible delay, of a body representative of the principal elements in India's national life, in order to devise the framework of the new constitution, and they will lend every aid in their power to hasten decisions." At the same time the British "could not transfer their responsibilities for the peace and welfare of India to any system of government whose authority is directly denied by large and powerful elements in India's national life, nor could they be parties to the coercion of such elements into submission." Put into a nutshell, here was the vital difference between the Government and Congress.



The British regarded Congress as the most powerful single party in India, but they refused to treat it as the only party. They insisted that an agreement between Congress and the minorities must precede the setting up of complete self-government. Congress, on the other hand, insisted that its political strength entitled it to be regarded as the voice of the Indian people, and that the promise of independence must precede a settlement between it and the minorities.

Congress rejected the proposals, and the Congress ministries in the eight provinces resigned. Since the other political parties were not strong enough to form governments, the Governors had to take over the administration. Some members of the Congress Party asked for Dominion status at once; but a large part declared that it was not enough, and that they would be satisfied only with complete independence of the British Empire. The party demanded that a National Government responsible to the people should be set up at once. It denied the British claim to have an important voice in framing the new constitution, and insisted that the grant of independence must precede a settlement with the minorities. The new constitution must be drawn up by a constituent assembly composed of elected Indians; and the Moslems and other minorities would be assured of such rights as were compatible with democratic, majority rule. An elected constituent assembly would have a Hindu majority, and owing to the strength of the Congress Party the bulk of the delegates would be Congress representatives.

The gulf which separated Congress and the Moslem League was shown by the very different reply which the latter made to the Government's announcement. It came to the conclusion that the statement was satisfactory inasmuch as it met the League's demand that no new constitution should be adopted without its consent and approval. At the same time, it refused to be represented on the Executive and the National Defence Councils. The League sought independence of the British as much as Congress, but it sought even more emphatically independence of Hindu domination. Congress stood for a united India based on the rule of the majority. There would be assurances for minorities, but the Hindus or, more accurately, the Congress Party would control the central and most of the provincial governments. The League was becoming more and more hostile to any form of federal government, and was moving towards the division of India into entirely separate Moslem and Hindu states.

Thus deadlock between Congress and the Moslem League was complete, and the British Government felt that no advance was possible as long as a settlement which was accepted by one party would at once be repudiated by the other. This was one reason why the Governor-General had asked the leaders of all parties to serve on his Executive Council. He had hoped that, as a result of co-operating on war-measures, they would form the habit and would co-operate permanently after the peace. He worked hard to bring them together, and arranged a series of conferences between the opposing leaders. These meetings had absolutely no result, and the breach between Congress and the League grew steadily wider. The more Congress declared that it was the voice of the Indian people, the more angrily the Moslem League denied the claim. It began to frame a constitution for the division of the country into Hindu India and "Pakistan". This last was the name given to the proposed independent Moslem states, which were to comprise the present provinces of the Punjab, Sind, the North-West Frontier and Bengal. The Moslem states were to be completely sovereign, exercising full control over their foreign policy, defence, customs, currency and communications. There must be no connection whatsoever with any All-India government. Pakistan was to have close relations with the independent Moslem states of Afghanistan, Persia, Iraq and Turkey. The Moslem minorities in Hindu India, and the Hindu and Sikh minorities in Moslem India, were to be protected by adequate guarantees.

Congress strenuously opposed the proposal, as well it might. The plan meant that Moslem India would be, roughly, the poorer but militarily stronger part of the country, while Hindu India would be the richer and more indefensible. Throughout the whole of India from South to North there is no good military line of defence until one reaches the Himalays Mountains, and practically every land invasion has come by way of Afghanistan, through the Khyber and the other passes of the North-West Frontier Province. Once that line is forced, there is no position which has ever been held successfully. Under the Pakistan scheme, the Moslems would control the frontier defences, and to the north of them would be their co-religionists and allies, the Afghans and Pathans. These have been amongst the most persistent of the historic invaders of India, and they share in an aggravated form the Indian Moslems' hostility to the Hindus. The Moslem minorities, which were

scattered throughout every province of Hindu India, would be only too likely to provide justifications for intervention.

Pakistan also includes a large part of the best soldiers in India. Most of the rest come from certain of the native states, particularly Nepal, Rajputana and Kashmir. Moslem and Indian India together normally provide about 77% of the troops, and roughly a third of the army is Moslem. Since 1939, voluntary recruitment has expanded the Indian army from 160,000 to 1,000,000. Exact figures are not available for the race and religion of recruits; but what evidence has appeared shows that the majority come from these same areas, just as they did in the last war. For seventy or eighty years the British have recruited more and more of their troops from these areas, and for a long time past Hindu India has provided only a small fraction of the army. Congress declares that the only reason has been the determination to hold down the Hindus by depriving them of training in arms. The facts do not sustain this charge: a study of the military history of India shows that the army's recruiting ground was shifted from South to North by sheer necessity. A century ago, the bulk of the army came from South and Central India; but the wars with the Afghans and Pathans showed that the southerners stood up badly to the northerners. So the British did what their predecessors in the government of India had done before them: they ceased recruiting in the South, and drew more and more of their soldiers from the hereditary martial races of the North. There is a European parallel to this marked difference in fighting quality between the peoples of India. No government of All-Europe would draw many of its troops from Italy or Rumania. The political result is that if the British Government should give in to the Congress demands, the effect upon the *morale* of a very large part of the army might be most serious. No government dare take the risk in face of a Japanese attack. It was therefore significant that Sir Stafford Cripps was to consult General Wavell as well as the Governor-General and the Indian political leaders.

#### IV

After the war broke out, the army was increased from 160,000 to 1,000,000, and the Royal Indian Air Force was built up. The lack of collaboration by the political leaders had no counterpart in the rank and file of Indians, particularly amongst the martial races. Volunteers came in faster than they could be equipped, and waiting lists had to be drawn up of men anxious

to enlist. The shortage of arms was due to lack of factories, and above all to inability to obtain machine tools. The strength of the pre-war Indian army had been cut down to the barest minimum—several battalions were disbanded as late as 1935—in order to release more money for education and other social services. Moreover, the army was very weak in planes, tanks and mechanized equipment, partly because there was no money to pay for them, and partly because they were of little use in the peculiar type of warfare in which Indian troops have normally been engaged. Their usual field of operation has been the mountains of the North-West Frontier, preventing attacks by the Moslem hill tribes upon the settled country in the plains below. The government arsenals were equipped to turn out rifles, machine guns, light artillery and mountain guns. Shortly before the war, the Government decided on partial mechanization, and the British Government made a gift of about \$150,000,000 to defray part of the cost. The expansion of the arms factories began about the time the war broke out. Unfortunately the steel industry was small, the total annual output being slightly more than 1,250,000 tons, or about the same as that of Australia. Factory production was of recent date in India, and as in other young industrial countries the development has been principally in cotton textiles and other consumers' goods. The reserves of coal, iron and other minerals were large, but the production of steel goods amounted to less than half the country's limited requirements. All types of machinery had to be imported. When the war came, it was easy enough to build factories, but it proved impossible to import sufficient machine tools to turn out equipment. Purchases were made from the United States, but the American factories were swamped with orders from Japan, Great Britain, Russia, France, the Dutch East Indies and other countries. India had to take what she could get, and although she can now manufacture about 90% of her own equipment, the missing 10% includes such vital items as planes and tanks. The bottleneck of lack of machine tools still restricts the size of the army: it is impossible to train tank corps or air force troops when the arms cannot be got. If Sir Stafford Cripps's offer had been accepted, it might have led to more enthusiasm for production amongst industrialists and workmen, and a fuller use of the tools which were available; but it would have been some time before the material effects showed themselves in the shape of a better equipped army. By then, the impending Japanese attack

would have been decided one way or the other. The Indian army must confront its dire emergency with what equipment it has already, or with whatever reaches it in the near future.

Japanese conquests brought India into the forefront of the war, and Mr. Churchill made a renewed attempt to settle the constitutional issue. He showed acumen in his choice of an envoy: Sir Stafford Cripps was known to favour the grant of complete self-government, and his position in the War Cabinet enabled him to speak with authority. He had visited India about 1938, and established friendly relations with Mr. Nehru and other Indian leaders. One of the chief obstacles to settlement of the Indian problem has been the intense distrust which political leaders have shown of the good faith of any British proposal. If anyone could have commanded their confidence, it would have been Sir Stafford Cripps; but the same attitude of hostility and distrust again showed itself, and was one reason for the failure of the mission.

The British Government proposed that the Indian political leaders should immediately be appointed to the Governor-General's Executive Council. Apparently the only British members retained upon it would have been the Governor-General himself and the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Archibald Wavell. At the insistence of the Congress Party, the British Government agreed to create a new Indian Minister of Defence, and to transfer to him part of the functions previously exercised by the Commander-in-Chief. General Wavell would retain complete control over the technical disposition of the troops to meet the expected Japanese invasion. The central executive might still have remained theoretically responsible to the Government of Great Britain, but in actual practice it would have come very largely under Indian control. The Governor-General would have been very unlikely indeed to disregard the policy of the leaders of the principal Indian political parties. India would also be represented in the Imperial War Cabinet, and the inter-allied war committees. After the war, India would receive Dominion status, and two additional proposals were made which went far beyond all previous promises.

The first was the right to secede from the Empire, whereas all previous offers had explicitly stated that India would remain as a self-governing Dominion within the British Commonwealth of Nations. The power to secede has for long been implicit in Dominion status, since it has been clear that Great Britain would not use force to compel an unwilling Dominion to retain

its membership in the Commonwealth. Until Mr. Churchill's pronouncement, however, the British Government had always refused to concede a *legal* right of secession. The second innovation, and a very striking one, was that the post-war constitution would be drawn up by an Indian constituent assembly. All previous proposals had stipulated that the constitution must be negotiated by a conference of British and Indian delegates, as that of 1935 had been. After the constitution had been drawn up, the Government of Great Britain would negotiate a treaty with India which would safeguard British interests and obligations. The delegates to the constituent assembly from British India were to be elected by the lower houses of the provincial legislatures on the basis of proportional representation. This ensured that the Moslems and other minorities would have their just quota of representatives. The delegates from the native states were to be appointed by the princes.

Rights of minorities were to be safeguarded by constitutional guarantees modelled on those worked out by the League of Nations for the protection of minorities in Europe. The principal safeguard, however, was the right of contracting out after the constitution had been drawn up, and before the new All-India government had been established. Any province of British India which disapproved the terms could vote to remain outside the scope of the proposed federation, and could by negotiation with the Government of Great Britain receive the same grant of Dominion status as the part of India which decided to join the new union. The Indian native princes were offered the same alternatives. This right of contracting out was likely to have a moderating influence upon the Hindus, who would form the majority of the delegates to the constituent assembly. The bulk of them would be the members of the Congress Party, which was determined to preserve the political unity of India. Knowledge that the Moslems and the princes could refuse to join the All-India government unless their apprehensions were removed would probably make the Congress Party more conciliatory. Right to contract out might well have been the best guarantee that it would not be exercised.

The proposals of the British Government went as far as was possible. With a Japanese invasion imminent, the control of the army must remain in the hands of the Commander-in-Chief, and only those functions could be transferred to the newly created Indian Minister which would not jeopardize the defence of the country. None of the leaders of the Congress Party

had had any experience in military affairs, and furthermore, the appointment of a Hindu to control the army would have been likely to antagonize the Moslems. Equally, the appointment of a Moslem would have alienated the Congress Party. As regards the post-war settlement, Indians themselves were to draw up their own constitution without British intervention, and the acknowledgment of the right of secession would enable the Congress Party to attain its aim of complete independence from the Empire, if it could command a majority in the new All-India legislature. Mr. Churchill made it clear that the various Indian interests must come to an agreement among themselves, and that he had no intention of imposing a settlement which ignored the reasonable demands of either side. In other words, he rejected the Congress claim that it spoke for the whole people of India, and indicated that the new constitution must be based upon compromise. Clearly he had no liking for the Pakistan scheme: the British proposal emphasized the creation of a single political unit, and admitted contracting out only as an alternative if the attempt to secure unity should fail. At the same time, he recognised that coercion of the provinces with a Moslem majority was impracticable as well as unjust, and announced that if the Moslems insisted on setting up Pakistan, the new state would receive Dominion status. A revealing commentary on the wisdom of this decision was given in a speech made by Mr. Jinnah about the date that Sir Stafford Cripps left for India. He threatened "revolt against any decision which recognises India as being a single national unit, since for all practical purposes this would mean establishing Hindu dominion".

The British concessions to the princes were dictated both by justice and by expediency. Relations between them and the Government of Great Britain were based upon the treaties negotiated a century or more ago. They called for mutual aid against invasion or civil war, and the princes have gone even beyond their legal obligations in the loyal and generous help which they have given in money and troops, both in this war and in the last. Now they are demanding that the British Government fulfil its treaty obligation to protect their thrones and lawful authority. The Government has made it clear that the princes must move with the times, and modernize their administration, and that a ruler who gets into trouble from die-hard conservatism must not expect to be rescued from the effects of his obstinacy. Where a prince has been proved guilty of misrule, the Govern-

ment has imposed reforms, and in flagrant cases has dethroned the offender. The trouble has been that Congress has made no distinction between enlightened and progressive states and the survivals of mediaevalism which still exist in some of the smaller and more conservative Courts. It has tried to undermine the power of the ruler in both alike, and to substitute its own authority.

The Government could not break its treaty promise to rulers who have done nothing to invite attack except that they have opposed the Congress Party. There was also the counsel of prudence: the greater princes represented power, undemocratic it is true, but, all the same, power. Many of them could count upon the loyalty of the vast majority of their subjects; they had small but well-trained modern armies, and they had the wealth which is the sinews of war. They provided many of the best troops in the Indian army, such as the Gurkhas and Rajputs, and for some years they have been drawing closer together in defence of their threatened interests. They will not submit meekly to political extinction, and India has enough trouble on her hands already with the Japanese without adding to her difficulties. The British Government refused to coerce the princes; the only way to get them to join an All-India government was by conciliation and compromise. Hence the permission to appoint the states' delegates to the constituent assembly, and to contract out of the proposed new government.

## V

Hope of success for Sir Stafford Cripps's mission lay in the chance that the Japanese threat might make the various Indian interests more ready to compromise with one another than they had ever been in the past. The British proposals were rejected by the Congress Party, the Moslem League, the Hindu Mahasabha, the Sikhs and the Untouchables. "Mahasabha", which represents the politically more intransigent Hindus, was the first in the field. It condemned the offer because of the concessions to the Moslems. The Sikhs rejected it because they believed that they would come under Moslem control, and they put no faith in the proposed guarantees for minority rights. The Sikhs were a minority in the predominantly Moslem province of the Punjab, and they took it for granted that it would contract out and join Pakistan. Sikh opposition was formidable because this small sect provided a large number of the best battalions in the army. Dr. Ambedkar, the leader of the Hindu



Untouchables or Depressed Classes, condemned the proposals because they would place his people at the mercy of the caste Hindus. The Untouchables number about 43,600,000 and are scattered throughout the whole of India. They would be unable to take advantage of the permission to contract out, and they had no faith in the observance of minority rights.

The Moslem League also distrusted the efficacy of the guarantees for the Moslem minorities who would be included in the new Hindu Dominion; but the principal reason for rejection was that it did not consider that the right to contract out was sufficiently definite. Mr. Jinnah expressed the fear that the Punjab, for example, would be unable to exercise this right despite its Moslem majority, owing to the constitutional forms which had to be observed before a province could break away from the proposed All-India government. Some of Mr. Jinnah's followers were opposed to his Pakistan scheme, and were prepared to accept some form of federation providing that they were not placed under Hindu control. Not for the first time, however, Mr. Jinnah successfully maintained his control over his own party.

The Congress Party rejected the proposals for precisely the opposite reason to that of the Moslem League. It held that the right to contract out was altogether too definite. Going still farther, it objected to the Moslems or the princes being allowed any right whatever to remain outside the new government, and it insisted that the political unity of India must be preserved intact. Another reason for its attitude was the right accorded to the princes to appoint their delegates to the constituent assembly. Congress also insisted that the Indian Minister for Defence must have far wider powers than the British would agree to, on the ground that India would not be truly self-governing if a British general controlled the army. The constitutional validity of this argument was unassailable; but it completely ignored the fact that to give effect to it at the present time would disorganize the whole machinery of Indian defence.

Sir Stafford Cripps delivered a farewell radio broadcast to the peoples of India before his departure. He began by pointing out that the Congress Party had repeatedly demanded two essentials in return for its support of the war. One was for a declaration of Indian independence, and the other for an Indian constituent assembly to frame the new constitution. Both demands had been acceded to by the Government of Great Britain, but it absolutely refused to coerce the large minorities

who refused to accept Congress control. Sir Stafford warned the Indian political parties that some day, somehow, they would have to agree upon a method of framing their own constitution. None of them could hope to impose its will completely upon the others, and "compromise there must be if a strong and free India is to come into being". Unfortunately, compromise is a quality which has been notably absent from Indian political life, and not even the danger from Japan has been able to break the deadlock which has existed for years between the different parties. For the moment there does not seem to be very much that non-Indians can do. They can attempt to mediate, and can urge moderation; but the compromise which is the only possible solution will have to be worked out by the Indian leaders themselves.

Fortunately, the immediate effects of Sir Stafford Cripps's failure upon India's war effort are not likely to be very serious. The Congress Party has announced that it will conduct an independent campaign of resistance to the Japanese attack. Refusal to co-ordinate it with the Government's war effort will, of course, somewhat weaken the efforts of both. The non-co-operation is not likely however to affect the *morale* of the army, any more than it has impeded the flow of recruits during the past two years. They have been volunteering at the rate of 50,000 a month. The real weakness now, as in the past, is lack of aeroplanes and of heavy equipment. These and the machine tools to make them will have to be supplied by the United States and Great Britain. The most pressing concern of India in the next few months is not a solution of the deadlock between the political parties, but the problem of production and transport.