

HE MOST LIVES
WHO THINKS
MOST, FEELS
NOBLEST, ACTS
THE BEST.

'''
P- J- BAILEY.

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World Struggle & India

UNDER the auspices of the Left Book Club there was a great "Rally" at the Queens Hall, London, on the 6th of July, 1938. Mr. Victor Gollancz, the famous radical publisher, presided and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was the sole speaker. Pandit Nehru made a great speech—great in that it revealed in a simple but striking manner the inwardness of the Indian struggle and its significance as a part of the World struggle against poverty and exploitation. It was a clarion call for better co-ordination of the anti-Imperialist and anti-Fascist forces throughout the world. Pandit Nehru spoke as follows:

Mr. Chairman and Comrades;

FOR some years past I have heard of the Left Book Club, mostly only heard of it, because perhaps many of you are not aware that wide as is the scope of the Left Book Club, it does not wholly include India in its dominion. Not that that affects so much the financial income of the Left Book Club, at least so far as I am concerned, because I used to get regularly from my book-seller bills for books supplied which never came to me. They were stopped by the censorship, or by that extraordinary provision of the law in India, the Sea Customs Act, which empowers Customs officers to stop any books they do not like. And apparently Mr. Gollancz's name is not liked by the Customs officials in India.

It is, therefore, a peculiar satisfaction to me to come here and speak to you under the auspices of the Left Book Club. I have heard with admiration of the growth of this Left Book Club movement, because it is a movement and something much more than the printing and publishing of books, and how it is spreading all over, not only England but other countries, of certain types of book, serious books, which more and more people read. After all, in considering the problems of to-day, the more thought we give to them, the more we study them, the more we will be in a position to solve them.

I am somewhat embarrassed by the remarks of our Chairman to-day. Like him I am a modest person. But perhaps you might be led to expect from what he has said that perhaps I might say something in the heroic vein. I am incapable of feeling heroic or of speaking heroic. Also after the last 10 or 12 days in London, during which period I have addressed a large number of big and small audiences, I do not feel exactly fresh, and it is hardly a suitable preparation for addressing this large audience. Still, as you have done me the honour of coming here, I shall endeavour to place before you the problem of India as I see it.

Comrades !

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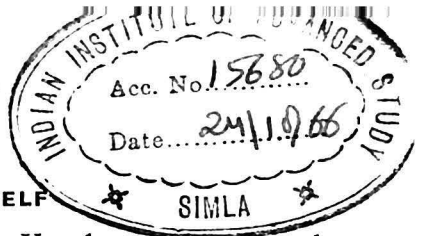
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INDIA—A PROBLEM IN ITSELF

What exactly is this problem of India about? You have a large number of problems to face; domestic problems, international problems, European problems, the problems of China, Spain, etc. You are full of them. You gather here to-day to hear about India, and I take it that many of you do not usually have the opportunity either to hear about India or to read about India. Because the newspapers here are not usually full of India. In fact it is seldom mentioned, the fact that there is an Indian problem may have escaped many readers of the newspapers. But because this is so, it does not do away with the problem. The problem becomes bigger.

Now India is obviously a problem in itself, but the way you would like to consider it, and the way I would like to consider it, is more in relation to the other problems of the world, to the international situation. Personally I have always tried to look upon it in that way, and I think that it is not really possible to understand any one of these problems that face us unless we have that larger picture of the world as it is to-day before us. Of course, if I function in India as I must, I function largely on an Indian plane and I have to face the various difficulties peculiar to India that are always there. But even those difficulties I can understand and can only function effectively in India, I think, if I know the larger picture of the world also and can fit India into it somewhere. Therefore it is desirable that we should look upon these problems in that way. And if we really feel that the Indian problem is part of the world problem then we cannot ignore it, because if we do, we will do something which will come in the way of our understanding of the larger problem.

CONSIDERING INDIA AS PART OF WORLD PROBLEM

It is surprising how people sometimes discuss things and do things as if they were not related in any way to a larger whole and come to strange conclusions. The world is a very strange place to live in, but stranger still is the fact that intelligent individuals can take these little problems separately and discuss them without relation to the larger whole. I think we in India will not go far in the solution of our problem unless we see it in relation to the larger whole, and I do not think you will go far unless you know something about India and can fit it into the picture. Therefore let us consider this question of India from that point of view.

FAILURE OF PAST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

It is quite extraordinary how in the course of the last 20 years, since the war, how repeated attempts have been made—over 100 international conferences have been held in various parts of the world, in Europe and America—to consider and solve the various political and economic problems. Leading statesmen, Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers have gathered together, and after weeks of discussion have gone home again without solving anything. Before the Conferences they have threatened us that if the Conference does not succeed,

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the world will be faced with disaster. I suppose that most of the people who went to the Conferences desired some kind of solution, both for personal reasons because of their reputation as statesmen, and for wider reasons. And yet despite that they utterly failed to do it. And as we see it, there is a continuous deterioration, and now we have arrived at this mess. What a strange thing it is that these statesmen continue to function in the same old way and do not try to find out what the roots of the problem are. I do not suppose you can say they are not intelligent but there must be something lacking, because they do not desire to look at the roots of the problem. They avoid them. Because they have been functioning on a different plane, they think to touch the roots will change the whole structure, affect interests which they do not want to be affected and the result is that they function superficially and ineffectively and their efforts are a failure.

INDIA'S IMMEDIATE PROBLEM

In India the immediate problem before us, call it a national problem if you like, is the problem of gaining our national freedom. That is to say, it is an anti-imperialist problem, the problem of ridding India of the dominion of the British Empire. Now to-day a very large number of people in England do not like Fascism. They attack it and condemn it. And yet many of them who do so get very irritated if you talk about the British Empire functioning in India or other colonial parts of the Empire. They try to separate these two things. Of course one can find fine points of distinction. But because they try to think that the imperialist system is something different and because they seek to preserve it in a way, while attacking Fascism, their attack loses all real effectiveness. There is no logic behind it. You know how in the past repeatedly the Fascist leaders of Italy have taunted the British people and said, 'We are only doing what you have done in the past.' And it is a common taunt in Europe when the question of bombing comes up in connection with China or Spain, that the British people are continuously doing it on the North-West Frontier of India.

BRITISH EMPIRE COMMITTING "HARI-KARI"

So in considering these questions you have to understand the roots of them to be logical—not try to preserve your interests and condemn somebody else's although yours may be of the same kind. And we find to-day what is happening to the British Empire.

Obviously I am no lover of the British Empire, but the astounding thing is that the British Government to-day is conducting a foreign policy which seems to me inevitably must tend to the elimination of this Empire. Now we seem to be actual witnesses of the fading of the British Empire. It may take a little time, and perhaps the reason for this, is this. When a thing has had its day, whether it is an Empire, or group or class, it begins to function most foolishly and virtually ends by committing what may be called 'hari-kari'. And that is what we are seeing to-day. And while I have no objection to

the British Empire committing hari-kari, it is interesting to me how this kind of thing occurs—looking at it even from the point of view of an imperialist group of statesmen, it astounds me why they function like they are functioning at the present time.

The fact is that this whole imperialist system has tied itself up in such enormous knots, it is meeting its own nemesis, and it is not likely to get out of it except by the people who run it, themselves realising that they cannot continue it. But unhappily such people seldom have that vision or courage and so conflicts come and the end is the same, except that it is an end brought about after conflict, and much bitterness and much suffering. It is unfortunate, but usually that has taken place in history.

ENVISAGE INDIVIDUAL SOLUTION AS PART OF WORLD SOLUTION

I do not know if those progressive peoples in various parts of the world will be able in future to exert such an influence as to bring about this change without any major conflict or not. No doubt it is a curious state of affairs—we see all these contradictions everywhere, both within nations and certainly in the international sphere. And it seems to me that we are not going to get rid of any of these problems ultimately unless there is an effective world solution of them. That, of course, does not mean that those of us who function in India should wait patiently for a world solution. We have to carry on and to seek a solution in our own particular area or country we live in, but at the same time we must envisage that solution as part of the world solution, otherwise we would be functioning less effectively than we might.

Therefore again we come back to this: that we must see the problems in relation to the whole, and while we push our own struggle it must not run counter to the large world struggle. If it does it cannot get the benefit of the great world process going on so clearly to-day.

We are in a tremendous revolutionary period—a period of transition which will lead us somewhere. Where exactly, we are not able to say, but we can say that an enormous change will take place in the not distant future.

NATIONALIST MOVEMENT IN INDIA

In India there is a nationalist movement. There is also a social movement. The two react on each other, and although the freedom movement in India was for long years essentially a nationalist movement (as it was bound to be because the first reaction to foreign domination is to create nationalism and a desire for political freedom) but as that movement grew and as it got into touch with the masses, and the masses came into it, the masses influenced it, and their influence went on growing, and the mass influence is always in the direction of social change, so that inevitably this movement in India was forced by circumstances to think about social change.

WHY MASSES SIDE WITH CONGRESS

And even behind that nationalist movement, what was ultimately the urge? Why did this vast crowd of peasants side with the Indian National Congress?

Surely because they saw in the Congress an organisation which promised relief to them. When we talk about Swaraj (which means independence) they take the word to mean in their own sense something which would rid them of their burdens, because if Swaraj comes which does not rid them of their burdens it would be a poor relief and certainly not worthwhile. So they came. Therefore behind this political movement which to begin with did not consciously express the real urge behind it, was ultimately the urge to remove the poverty and misery of India. After all, the fundamental problem is the problem of poverty.

It is an astounding problem, and you who know something of the distress in England, of unemployment in England, you can have no conception of what Indian poverty is. It is something astounding. It is true that those of us who live there get used to it. We are not shocked as we might be, as human beings have an infinite capacity to get used to anything. The mere fact that human beings put up with the sorry mess of this world is surprising enough. It was astounding in Barcelona to see human beings carrying on in spite of nightly and daily air raids. So we see one gets used to it—but still it is an astounding thing—the state of the Indian people.

FAILURE OF BRITISH RULE

We talk sometimes of this long period of British rule in India, 150—160—170 years—it is a tremendous period, and sometimes when you talk to an audience, which perhaps is very different from this Left Book Club audience, the people in the audience ask, can you not find any good in British rule in India? Of course I could make a list of good things that have been done. Railways, Post Offices, Telegraphs, telephones, canals and the like.

But the real thing is this: after this 150—160 years of British rule, when you see the condition of India to-day, the astounding poverty and misery, while it does not speak well for the 160 years of British rule, all the railways, telegraph and telephone services, do not do away with that major fact, and indeed if you analyse this problem you will see (and I do not mean to say that there was no poverty in India before the British came) but remember that a great change has taken place in the world since the days when the British came to India. When they came it was the first days of the industrial revolution, and since then industrialisation has taken place in the world. In the early days there were famines in certain places in India when there was a failure of the rains—there were food famines. There was then no means of getting food in one particular area from elsewhere, but during the later British period there were still food famines in India. And they were worse—they were famines of money, because food could be brought by train, but people did not have the wherewithal to buy it. So that you must not compare the old poverty due to feebler methods of production, bad transport, to the new condition of things which has grown up in the world and made the western countries, America and the European countries, more prosperous. We have functioned under this new system and yet our poverty has gone on increasing. Because obviously, the political and economic system was the system which drained her, and because whatever wealth India produce ultimately went to somebody else.

THIS PICTURE AND THAT

In Britain as you became industrialised great cities grew up and the villages became deserted. Whether that was good or bad I am not going into. All over the more or less civilised parts of the world you saw a progressive urbanisation which meant the development of industry. In India you have seen there this last 100 years or so a progressive ruralisation. Now do not get confused by the fact that you see cities like Bombay and Calcutta growing up. Great centers of what? Fundamentally centres of emporium of foreign goods which come to be distributed all over India. And in these cities built up at the expense of the smaller towns and even the villages—we have seen a great stream of people going from these former towns to the villages. Why? Because they had no occupation or business in the towns, no openings. Because their old occupations had gone, and the millions of people who followed these occupations, handicrafts and the like, could not pursue them. Originally they were stopped by various legal enactments which the East Indian Company enforced. Latterly by the direction of economic forces they could not compete with the products of the factories from the West.

But ordinarily this would have resulted in the building up of industrialism in India, because, remember, India was a country highly developed so far as manufacture was concerned when the British came. Indeed, when the British, and before them others went there, they went in search of Indian manufactures to sell to the West. So that it was in a stage when the next step might have been the development of industry. *That was stopped deliberately, and at the same time the old manufactures and small industries were crushed. The result—scores of millions of people had nothing to do, and this process went on for over one hundred years.*

HOW INDIA HAS BEEN PROGRESSIVELY RUINED

To begin with it was a big process. It came with a sudden bang, and affected millions, causing famines of a tremendous extent when, for instance, one third of the population of Bengal perished in the early days of British rule. Yet strangely enough, the British revenue officials proudly declared, "we have collected the full revenues here." This process continued right through the hundred years—as railways developed, as foreign manufactured goods went into the country and wherever they went the petty industries could not compete with them, and as the people had no occupations left to them, they left the towns and went to the villages thinking in terms of getting work on the land.

They became a burden on the land, because where a tract of land provided work for half a dozen persons, there were 20 or 30, which the land could not support. So the level of the people went down and down. That is the fundamental problem of Indian poverty—how it has grown in the last hundred years. British rule there dictated the policy of preventing industrialism to grow up. Machinery coming into India was heavily taxed. It was a far more costly

undertaking to build a factory in India than in England, although labour was so much cheaper in India.

THE NEW PHASE

It was only more or less during the last war that, and that of course in spite of British policy, industrialisation gradually grew among certain classes in Bombay and other centres on a very small scale. During the war there was a new phase because then British and other foreign goods could not come in easily and for war purposes the British Government had to encourage industries to grow in India. And after the war the situation arose when, first of all Indian nationalism was growing strong and secondly Indian industry was also not so weak, and the British Government did not want Indian industry to ally itself with the more revolutionary elements in Indian nationalism—they wanted to give it some kind of bribe.

But more important still, ever since the war they, the British Government, thought in terms of future wars, and they felt that from the point of view of future wars it was necessary for them to develop some kind of industry in India. It may be of a peculiar kind—for their own purposes—but still they allowed it to develop to some extent. So some of the old restrictions were removed. But peculiarly the Indian industry developed with British capital and under British control and the profit largely going outside India. This is curious. We talk of swadeshi, which means home made goods, but relatively few Indian industries profit through it because all the bigger concerns have grown up under British capital. Big concerns are going out there adding 'India' after their names (for instance, Imperial Chemical Industries India Ltd.) and they take leases on enormous areas, and the curious thing is that the Government has refused to publish the terms of the lease.

In this way great British combines are digging themselves in since the war while you have been talking so much of constitutional changes and discussing them at length in Parliament and elsewhere. All the time the combines are digging themselves in and creating enormous vested interests, creating fresh vested interests and making it extraordinarily difficult for us to get a move on when we have the chance, unless we dig them out completely.

WHY INDEPENDENCE?

So behind this political problem you see the complexities of this economic problem and how it is intimately related to the poverty of India. You will ask vaguely, "Why do you object to dominion status—why talk in terms of independence?" I do so realising that independence might be a mere word as we have seen in the case of Egypt and other places, but about one thing we are clear—that we are going to rid India of this tremendous economic control,—imperialist economic and financial control. And we do not there want to think in terms of a political constitution giving us what might be considered political freedom with no real economic freedom. We feel we can only solve

the problem of Indian poverty by making great inroads in the economic system and we cannot do this unless we are free from the control of the City of London and their financial interests. Therefore we must think in terms of independence.

Also of course we think in terms of independence for other reasons. I shan't go into them now—for the present moment I will refer to foreign policy. No, India will not submit to be dragged about at the heels of British foreign policy. I can very well understand and should personally welcome the co-operation of India and Britain, but that co-operation first of all must inevitably be the co-operation of a free India secondly it must be co-operation based on the elimination of imperialism.

OUR GROWING STRENGTH

We have tried in India during these past years to develop and strengthen, and our strength has grown great. It is great enough for the British Government to think seriously before inviting a conflict. On two or three occasions during the past few months there was the possibility of a conflict because of a different opinion between the British Government (or the Governors representing them) and the Congress Ministries, and the British Government had to give in on all these issues. This shows that the strength of the movement is such that the British Government is not easily prepared to invite conflict. I do not mean that no conflict will ever take place. Occasions may arise when there is conflict, when they do not give way and when we do not give way. But still the movement is developing and becoming very strong, and largely because it has become more and more associated with the social problem.

THE TWO STRUGGLES—THE POLITICAL AND THE SOCIAL

Therefore, this is the fundamental problem for us—how to integrate the political struggle with the social struggle. Sometimes, of course, there is a slight conflict between the two in the sense that the political struggle being in the main the national struggle comprises all manner of people of differing views. In regard to political matters it draws all manner of classes who may be in conflict with each other, but function together against the common foe, imperialism. But as soon as we begin to consider social problems, these classes get into conflict with each other, so that there is that inevitable conflict. At the same time everybody realises in India that before any solution of the social problem comes, there must be the power to solve it, and that means political independence. Therefore, inevitably the political question takes precedence, and even those who are keenest about social change insist on the political change coming.

Still difficulties arise because even the approach to the political question can be of various kinds. What kind of political freedom are we going to get? We may be free from British imperialism, but after all, who is going to have the power in India afterwards; what will be the method of fighting; and the approach to it will be governed by what kind of freedom we have in our minds.

At present I will talk only in terms of political freedom. It should be at least a kind of freedom which itself becomes a bulwark of reaction.

JOINING THE TWO STRUGGLES

Therefore the question becomes one of joining these two movements for social and political freedom and making them function together. That is to say, the whole urge for social freedom must throw its weight into the struggle for political freedom and influence it in its direction. I cannot say exactly how this will turn out—but on the whole in India the tendency has been very marked towards the political struggle assuming a social aspect, and generally speaking Congress to-day is definitely committed to social change on a fairly radical scale. I do not mean to say that the Congress as a whole has turned socialist. There are socialist wings, and there are right wings which disapprove of socialism, and there is a large central bloc which vaguely approves of socialism, which is radical and which generally speaking will probably vote for a socialistic proposal, but which is not consciously and definitely socialist, because this nationalist urge has been so great that it is moved by that more than by any other thing.

CONGRESS AND THE PEASANTRY

But in fact the real thing is that so many of the peasantry have come into this nationalist movement that we cannot now function at all without giving consideration to the peasant problems. So that as soon as the Congress Ministries came into existence, the first thing they had to do was to take up the agrarian problem. They cannot change fundamentally the land system any more than the present law allowed them to do, and they had to do something fairly soon to lighten the burden. So they took the matter up, and something has been done, and at the present moment big measures of land reform are being discussed. What will happen to them I do not know. They will be passed by the Legislative Assemblies. But then we have been presented in the Government of India Act with Second Chambers in the Provinces which are elected by strict franchise and the majority of the members are big landlords, with the result that there are likely to be big conflicts between the second chambers representing the landlord interests and the other house representing the peasant interests.

I do not quite know how this conflict will shape itself, but it does not worry me so very much. Because we are not concerned with a constitutional difficulty, but we are concerned in the ultimate analysis with sufficient power in the Indian people to be able to exercise sufficient pressure on the British Government to liquidate British Imperialism in India.

INDIA MUST FRAME ITS OWN CONSTITUTION

Now, take this Government of India Act—the Federation, Provincial autonomy, how far the Act is working—these questions I am endeavouring to answer. But I consider the matter in its wider aspects.

And that is this, that the whole conception of any Constitution being drawn up and imposed on the Indian people is an absurd conception from the point of view of solving the Indian problem. It won't solve it. And the only possibility of solving it is for it to be recognised that the people of India must take the matter into their own hands and must determine their own Constitution. After that, the question may arise as to what the relations between India and England are going to be, and if the former question is solved in the proper spirit then the proper psychological background is created for a friendly solution of the latter. If not, and the first problem is solved after a big conflict, another psychological background is created when we do not approach each other in a friendly manner.

The Congress is a powerful organisation, and democratic. It might well have drawn up a Constitution. It has adopted another course by saying that a Constituent Assembly elected by adult franchise should draw up this Constitution. That is surely the only democratic method to do it. And I cannot conceive of any person who believes in democracy opposing this method. Anything that may come between can only be looked upon from this point of view. It will be disapproved of. It will irritate.

Take "Provincial Autonomy." We do not like it, under it we cannot do much, still we are working it. Because we came to the conclusion that we might be able to strengthen ourselves for the next conflict. That was the sole reason why we did it. And I think that last year has strengthened us enormously. We have been able to do some pretty good work, passing legislation which has done some good. But the important thing was how we could strengthen ourselves for the future, and we have done that to a large extent.

INDIA WILL PLAY ITS PART IN WORLD AFFAIRS

Therefore, we can look upon the future with a large measure of confidence. The world to-day is full of crises, the possibility of war and many people feel rather distressed about it, but still because of the new strength which has developed in us, we are singularly optimistic about the future of India, and more and more we are thinking in terms of taking part not only in freeing India—we feel that will come before very long—but of playing some part in international affairs.

Already I think most far-seeing statesmen feel that Indian independence is not far distant, and their attitude to India is rapidly changing because they want to make friends with a free India, because of its enormous potentialities it is bound to play an important part in the world, and it is already thinking in terms of that and preparing itself for that date.

A SPANISH LESSON

Now I want to put before you one fact which is an interesting fact, and which makes us think furiously. You know of this tragedy in Spain: you remember in the early days of this revolt Moroccan troops were brought over to

Spain by Franco. An extraordinary thing that Franco representing a peculiar type of fascism and militarism should make use of Moroccan people to suppress the Republic of Spain. But why did that happen? Why was it allowed to happen? The Republic of Spain, if it functioned properly, should have taken the earliest steps to deal with its colonial problem. For various reasons it did not do so, and has suffered for it. Its enemies took advantage of this. Nobody can believe that General Franco believes in the freedom of the various nationalities in the colonies.

Although I understand he has declared he is going not only to grant autonomy to Spanish Morocco, but will help them to build up some kind of Moroccan Empire. Of course such promises are cheap, but the point is how the false step on the part of the Republican Government of Spain affected their own future so tremendously.

A DISTRESSFUL ANOMALY

I do not know whether it is an absolute fact, but it very well might be, that the Spanish Government did intend doing something, and made some proposals for reducing the burdens on their colonial population, and relieving their agricultural distress. But the people in French Morocco thought that if this was done in Spanish Morocco their own position would become very difficult because their people would demand similar relief. So the French Governors in French Morocco pressed the French Government to intervene and prevent the Spanish Government doing such a thing. The French Government pointed this out to the Spanish Government, and the Spanish Government, which did not want to do anything to irritate the French Government, did not act. Now observe how one thing leads to another. The French Government at that time was a Popular Front Government. One of the first functions of a Popular Front Government should have been to deal or begin to deal with its colonial problem. It did not do at all. I may refer here also to the tiny passage of territory in Pondicherry in India belonging to France. I was astonished on a visit to see the conditions there where trade unions were not permitted. Here, this Popular Front Government functioning in Paris would not allow trade unions to be formed in Pondicherry in India.

ANTI-FASCISTS MUST BE ANTI-IMPERIALISTS TOO

There are two points I wish you to consider in this respect. One is this—how a Government which may function democratically at home, unless it properly tackles its colonial problem, ultimately falls in its home territory too. It must have a logical policy for both, and so we had the tragic fact in Spain that the people who ought to have been behind the Republican Government actually were made to attack it. It is no good blaming them, they were misled, they were probably made all manner of promises; they were poverty-stricken—but it is well for the British, for those people who are interested in the British Empire, and more especially those who talk in terms of democracy and in terms of opposition to Fascism, to realize that they cannot ultimately be anti-Fascist or go far in their fight against Fascism, unless they are also anti-Imperialist.

So if you want to solve this problem you must look at it from this broader anti-imperialist aspect and think with this lining up of forces you see in the world to-day. You see so obviously Fascism attempting to advance on the one side, and the forces opposed trying to counter it—You must also see that these forces opposed to Fascism will always be ineffective unless they are also opposed to Imperialism.

INDIA STILL UNDER REPRESSION

In India to-day there is much talk about "Provincial Autonomy," Congress Ministries and the like, but I want you to remember first of all that the Government of India functions as irresponsibly as it has even done. We still have the various press laws functioning, the Communist Party is still illegal, because it is the Government of India which is responsible for that declaration. I told you at the beginning of the Sea Customs Act (we do not get most of the advanced books published in England), and in provinces like Bengal and the Punjab, we have still more or less the old system of repression so far as civil liberties and the rest goes. We have still in Bengal a fair number of detenus, people kept in jail without trial.

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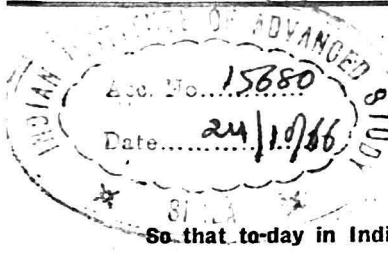
THE INDIAN STATES MOSTLY CREATED BY BRITISH POWER

And of course our old friends, the Indian Princes, function still in India. These Indian Princes are perhaps remarkable examples of the old system which has vanished from the rest of the world, of the purest autocracy (subject of course to British suzerainty). Now the Indian Princes talk a great deal of their independence, their treaty rights and the like. Who are these Indian Princes? Most of them are the creation of British Power. Most of them, the very great majority, are not princes at all—I mean to say in the technical and legal sense. They were when the British came, you may say barons or such, some of them viceroys of the Mogol Emperor, some just tax collectors. But there was a period in India then when the destruction of the Mogol Empire came, a period of chaos and disorder, and that is why it was easy for invaders from abroad (and all manner of them did come from abroad, even before the British armies) so they came, swept down and tried to get what they could. When the British came and found these people functioning as big estate owners, it was easier for the British to deal with them than to deal with the population at large. So they made treaties with them and left them more firmly in their positions. Since then these people began calling themselves Princes—they had no such positions previously. And in all these transactions the people of India were not consulted. These treaties were made at the beginning of the 19th Century, 120—130 years ago. During this period Europe and the world has changed enormously. Quite a number of big revolutions have taken place. The land system has changed.

All the petty princes and others in Central Europe have gone. But in India the system that existed 130 years ago has not changed. Why, ordinarily it would have changed, because as new events take place, as the situation develops, changes and revolutions would have come to India, but the British power was there to perpetuate this feudal system. And the people who might otherwise have removed them, or kept them under control, could do nothing because it was the British power which protected them.

INDIA IS INDIVISIBLE

Obviously India is not and cannot be split up into the Indian States and the rest of India. India must be an indivisible whole; it may of course ultimately be a Federation—that I don't know but I see no harm in the Federation—but it must be one unit, and if you know anything about the history of India, you would mark the strange fact that India has been a kind of unit for thousands of years until it has been divided up politically. So this States problem is often brought before us. I do not think it is really a difficult problem because so much pressure is growing in the Indian States from the people, that they cannot resist it. And they will come to terms and have to ally themselves with us. And suppose we had a Constituent Assembly, I think many of them would have to join it sooner or later—later of course all of them would have to join it.



(14)

OUR IDEAL

So that to-day in India the situation is full of difficulty, no doubt as in the rest of the world, but it is full of optimism also because we feel that we are moving ahead; that we have strength, and we feel that it is a question of power-politics in the world. If I may put it bluntly, we shall develop our power and exercise it in the right direction.

So far as our larger ideals are concerned, this is an ideal. It is not a narrow nationalistic ideal of an isolated India cut off from the rest of the world. We believe in a world order, but this must obviously be based on freedom and justice, otherwise there can be no world order. We believe in collective security. But remember this, any attempt to have collective security on an unjust status quo cannot possibly last. The basis must be freedom and justice. Granted that, we are entirely in favour of it. You cannot expect us in India to-day to accept the present status quo and talk in terms of preserving it by collective security. Otherwise, we do believe in this doctrine of collective security and the development of a world order.

I have tried to deal with this problem of India from the larger perspective than the Indian nationalist movement. There is a great socialist movement which forms part of the larger movement. Personally I look forward to the realisation of socialism in India, but I wanted to place this problem before you not from the point of view only of the socialist but from the points of view, more or less common to all sections in India, at any rate in the Congress, of the advanced sections.

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