CONWAY MEMORIAL LECTURE

THE RESURGENCE OF ASIA

BY

S. K. RATCLIFFE

Delivered at Conway Hall
on May 15, 1946

LONDON:
WATTS & CO.,
S COURT, FLEET STREET, E.C.4

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THE RESURGENCE OF ASIA

DELIVERED AT CONWAY HALL, RED LION SQUARE, W.C.1,
ON MAY 15, 1946

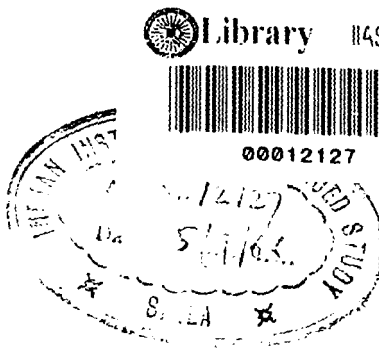
BY

S. K. RATCLIFFE

(Sir Frederick Whyte, K.C.S.I., in the Chair)

LONDON:
WATTS & CO.,
5 & 6 JOHNSON'S COURT, FLEET STREET, E.C.4

First published 1946



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Printed and Published in Great Britain by C. A. Watts & Co. Limited,
3 & 6 Johnson's Court, Fleet Street, London, E.C.4.

THE CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS

THE Conway Memorial Lecture Committee have made a good choice for the thirty-seventh lecture in this series: a good choice both of subject and of interpreter. The subject—*The Resurgence of Asia*—is second to none in its claim on our attentive interest; and the interpreter, my old friend Samuel Kerkham Ratcliffe, is second to none in his own field. Those of you who know your Ben Jonson will remember that, in his critical approach to literature, he was always seeking for a writer of balanced knowledge and acumen whom he described as the "Understander." Well, in S. K. Ratcliffe you have the man sought by Ben Jonson; and if any of his listeners to-night go home without a clearer understanding of those essential things from which the Resurgence of Asia has sprung, the fault will not be his.

In all the thirty-six subjects that precede ours of to-night on the Conway list, some may have probed deeper into the essential mind of man, but none has a wider sweep over the activities of the different races of mankind, nor a greater pertinence for those who seek the way through the labyrinth of the world's problems. The resurgence of Asia is a phenomenon of many facets. As we look at it from the British Isles, it is in the nature of things, and politically appropriate, that we should take India as the great exemplar of Asia. Thus, as you will hear from Mr. Ratcliffe, India stands in the forefront of our vision; and it may be said that by the manner in which the relations of East and West in

India are treated to-day, much—perhaps the greater part—of those relations will turn to favour, or to bitterness, in time to come.

Mr. Ratcliffe will show you, in his own masterly way, the main issues involved in India, as they arise from that renascence which so fascinates us to-day. And I think he will not find fault with me if I turn your attention for a moment to the whole Asiatic setting in which the drama of this renascence now runs its vital course. For this purpose we may place the three great representatives of the world's greatest continent in a posture of contrast, each presenting a different face to the onlooker: India, China, and Japan. The expressions on these three faces are not the same; but all three are the outward manifestation of a deep inward movement of the mind which arises from one and the same source—namely, from the stirring and disturbing impact of the West upon the East. The contrast lies in the difference between the problem thus posed for each of the three and in the variations of their response to the intrusion of Western ideas.

The Chinese were the latest to show their response; for, while India had created the instrument of her own nationalism in the National Congress founded in 1884, and Japan had already embarked on her new course in 1868, yet it was not till 1911 that the hour of decision struck in China; and in that year the Manchu Dynasty fell before the republican onslaught of Sun Yat-Sen and his Kuo Min-tang. There is significance in this time-table. The delayed Chinese response to our impact was due mainly to the conviction that their

way of life was not only appropriate to their needs, but inherently superior to ours; so much so that when the Emperor Chien Lung in 1793 commended " the humble desire of King George the Third of England to partake of the benefits of our civilization " he was expressing an authentic Chinese conviction of superiority. And out of it arose the dogged, obstinate resistance to the foreigner which was maintained till our own time.

This long rear-guard action of conservative China resulted in a reverse and an overthrow which was catastrophic when it came; and we can take some measure of the resultant task of renovation and reconstruction by remembering that in the thirty-five years that have elapsed China has not by any means completed it. Some observers will say that the aggression of Japan is the main cause of China's failure to fulfil more quickly the promise of her Revolution. The observation is pertinent and partly true; but, even if Japan had never intervened to prevent China from putting her house in order, the undertaking must have been long. It was no small task even to clear the bombed site of the fallen Ching Dynasty; nor could it be a short or easy enterprise to raise a wholly new political structure on the ground thus cleared. Sun Yat-sen knew this; and we can see in the three divisions of his time-table of reconstruction his own forecast of the character and length of the whole period. Dr. Sun died in 1925; and here we are, twenty-one years later, still witnessing the strenuous but unfinished endeavour of his heirs to fulfil the constitutional task which he bequeathed to them.

Moreover, while the Chinese still lack the complete political machinery by which we conduct our national business, they are summoned to make vital decisions upon their whole social and economic future. Controversies arising from this two-fold task account for the tension between Right and Left in China to-day; and if the threat of civil war still hangs over the country, it is because the Chinese do not yet possess the competent institutions of self-government by which alone great decisions can be made without resort to force. When Nationalist and Communist meet in council in Chungking—as they have met thrice in one year—they may leave their arms outside the door; but hitherto both parties have known that failure within the chamber might mean, and in certain circumstances must mean, that both sides would be in arms once more. *We* possess the means of peaceful decision in our General Election, and our arena of peaceful fulfilment in the House of Commons. The *Chinese* do not, at least not yet. Hence the threat of force which has flickered like ominous lightning round the horizon of China. I believe that the threat is receding, and I hope that the natural Chinese genius for compromise will remove it. But it has not yet disappeared; and only statesmanship on both sides can avert it.

But I am already trespassing on Mr. Ratcliffe's ground and stealing his time. So I withdraw to the proper silence of the Chair, presenting him to you as the Conway Memorial Lecturer of 1946.

A. FREDERICK WHYTE.

THE RESURGENCE OF ASIA

A TRAVELLER making the long voyage to the East at any time in the Victorian age, or even later, could not fail to be impressed by one feature of the Oriental scene. Having passed through the Suez Canal, he would note that from Aden onwards the ports of call were nearly all British, the harbour and surroundings showing certain characteristics which, we may assume, the folk of other races had learned to look for in our fellow-countrymen and their ways of doing business. There was always a minimum of fuss. In that remote period, so halcyon in retrospect, few men and women of the West had ever handled a passport. Personal identification was a casual affair. We went and came without thought of permits. Nothing was easier than to go ashore, whether to remain on land or return to the liner. And when, amid the bustle of the waterside or elsewhere, a word of authority was needed, it would probably come from a youngish Englishman in a pith helmet, so completely assured that he did not trouble to raise his voice. And there was one circumstance in particular which was always registered with delighted surprise. An English name on a *chit* was, roughly speaking, honoured as security in any bank or store between Port Said and the China Sea. Your modest private signature,

that is to say, was the common symbol of our nation's good repute over half the globe.

From the Levant to the Western Pacific the might of Great Britain had established itself as an indefinable reality which—amazingly, as we may now feel—was everywhere recognized and accepted. By myriads of Asiatics it was submitted to as a law of life, a fact of destiny. Governments, great and small, acknowledged Britain's command of the seas, altogether without question until the Kaiser's first expansion of the German Navy. One fact, however, was not to be overlooked or misinterpreted. Apart from India and Burma, which, as John Morley used to say, were the only real Empire, there was no broad territory under British rule east of the Gulf of Suez. Malaya did not approach in area the Dutch Indies or French Indo-China. Colombo and Shanghai marked the bounds of a commercial domain—an empire of trade routes—which was not measured in terms of land. Its key points were the small leased area and the strategic seaport, while a naval base here and there made known the vigil of a great supporting Power. Most impressively throughout the Eastern seas Europe operated by means of a range of cities, more than one of which could claim to be superior in some essentials of civic pride to the richest centres of England and Scotland. They flourished during a century or more of marvellously advancing trade and then, barely four years ago, they fell before the Far-Eastern aggressor, one after another, as it seemed almost overnight. To a Japanese ear, beyond all question, the roll of their names must have sounded like seven trumpets

of the so-called East-Asia Co-prosperity Sphere: Shanghai, the most significant of international settlements; Hong Kong, which, in Mr. Churchill's phrase, was the world's greatest mart; Batavia, Penang, Singapore, Rangoon, together with Manila, outpost of the United States, a remarkably effective blend of Spanish history and American enterprise, of old and new in Oriental city-building.

Forty years ago the European in Asia, whether journeying overland or enjoying an ocean passage by one of the famous lines that had made luxury on board ship proverbial, was convinced that the East was doomed to remain locked in the sleep which had endured for ages. Historic Asia, if present to his mind, was a vast sepulchre of empires and civilizations. The coastal cities, of course, were vigorously alive; but what of those lands which in the far past had been so wondrously rich and renowned? Who could deny that the picture they presented was an overwhelming demonstration of decline and fall?

From the Black Sea to the Persian Gulf the Sultan of Turkey held sway. In the Balkans he was the obstinate Sick Man of Europe, but not the most hopeful advocate of the subject peoples could discern evidence of any loosening of the grip on his Asiatic dominions, despite the railway to Baghdad or the Hedjaz. A break-up of the Ottoman Empire seemed a most unlikely event of the new century. As for a modernized Turkey, it looked in advance like an utter contradiction in terms. Persia was a diplomatic problem because so perilously near to the boundary of the Tsardom, but what rebirth was possible for the descen-

dants of a race which had once led the world in culture and arms? Central Asia was indescribably dead.

Needless to say, the exceptions to this summary judgment were conspicuous and challenging. The modernization of Japan was the enterprise of a ruling class without parallel in history. India was not only an inexhaustible reservoir of life and labour, but also a great and expanding market. No natural calamities availed to stem the flood of its population, and it bore the whole burden of a vast administrative system. The Dutch East Indies, sole example of a prosperous empire owned by a little Power, were under a tight colonial regime whose officials turned with envy towards the potent bureaucracy of British India. Behind the treaty ports, opened to Western commerce after two distressing wars, lay the continental bulk of China, containing one-fourth of the human family, seemingly unstirred by Western influences: the oldest social system on earth, more resistant even than that of India, because rooted in an unchanging tradition of family solidarity and fortified by climate and soil. In 1900 the Boxer rebellion in the North had sounded a warning, particularly sharp in the fury of its anti-foreign temper, and the Manchu dynasty was plainly tottering. By Europeans in the Far East, however, these signs were tragically misread. A rarely observant Englishman such as Sir Robert Hart, builder of the remarkable Chinese Customs Service, was able to estimate the gathering of forces which must mean in the end " China for the Chinese, and out with the

foreigner"; but at that time and for years to come the Shanghai mind showed itself to be almost impenetrable. It saw the map of China merely in European spheres of influence, made inevitable by internal anarchy. Chinese nationalism was utterly beyond its ken. Sun Yat-Sen, perhaps sketchily just known by name, could be no more than a wandering firebrand. Naturally enough, a European merchant community in the Far East demanded first and last the actuality of purposeful efficiency and strong government—in one word, Japan. And from 1902 Japan was Britain's ally.

My own first experience of the East came from an editorial office in Calcutta during the later years of a strenuous viceroyalty. Lord Curzon was the last of the imperial Governors-General. He was masterful and widely informed, exercising an abundant gift of expression, genuinely devoted to the ideal of public service, and given to the magnifying of his office. He was possessed by a religious belief in the mission of the ruling race and had no thought of a developing India. He was concerned above all with administrative reform. Had his understanding of the East been less superficial, he might have built a bridge between the old and the new, instead of being himself the last of a line. All the same, by reason of his energy and self-confidence, he played the part of a powerful irritant. When he retired India was aroused, and it did not afterwards subside into apathy. One trait of Curzon's was not rightly appraised by the educated classes, for whom he had little respect. He was indifferent to agitation. He

left Press and platform remarkably free. Nationalism passed through a vigorous adolescence in Curzonian India; and in no other Asiatic country at that time did any popular movement of protest or positive aspiration exist.

It could hardly have been apparent, even to the most prescient European mind, that the master movements of Asia throughout the first half of the twentieth century would be nationalist, and that their most vital springs were in India. None the less, may we not ask to-day whether any phenomenon of social upheaval could be cited as more truly inevitable than this? India is the home of the keenest and most sensitive of the Oriental peoples, who throughout the last age were subjected in ever-widening circles to the disruptive forces of the West, material and spiritual—to commerce and industry and applied science; to literature and political philosophy; to the unremitting stimulus and provocation of British government. Schools and colleges were steadily multiplied; missionary activity was widespread and unceasing. And, above all, there was the all-pervading power of the English language, for which no form of measurement could be adequate. Macaulay, in a famous speech (1833) which forecast the victorious march of English education and ideas, imagined a future day when India, having learnt the value of our main institutions, might attain the desire and capacity for self-government and demand it in set terms. That, said he, would be the proudest day in England's history. The historian who saw this one thing with his customary lucidity had no eye for the

East outside India. Nor in India, unhappily, has the course of events in these latter years tended to the fulfilment of his vision.

It happened that, shortly before I went to India forty-five years ago, a book of unusual quality challenged many of the orthodox notions concerning the then slowly changing East. I refer to *Asia and Europe*, by Meredith Townsend. It was especially interesting to myself for a personal reason. The author, at that time joint-editor of *The Spectator*, had conducted in Bengal a missionary journal, *The Friend of India*, which was merged in the Calcutta daily I was about to join. He was a scholarly and acute writer, given to predictions of a positive kind. His principal points are well worth recalling to-day.

Townsend was mistaken in his major assumption—namely, that Europe was moving towards a ruinous scheme of Eastern conquest, an enterprise going far beyond the existing policy of economic penetration. Asia, he feared, like Africa, would be partitioned. By the year 2000, provided that war in the West were avoided, Europe would be mistress of all the East. And yet, as though in contradiction of his own forecast, Townsend asserted that Asia would be Asia to the end, overcoming every invader. He believed in the separateness of the East as absolute and final.

Race and colour made an insuperable barrier. The civilizations of the two continents were eternally opposed. China and Japan were self-germinated, and India (as Lowes Dickinson, some years later, was to argue in a suggestive essay) must be understood as a

world apart. Religion and philosophy, furthermore, confirmed the basic antagonism. The great religions were all born in Asia. The faith which became the master force of the West was, strangely, the least Asiatic in creed and had been cast out from its homelands. Asiatics as a whole disliked Christianity, while Islam, on the contrary, offered them a monotheism and a social pattern which multitudes were able to accept and adapt. Nor in the sphere of government, it was contended, could West and East hope to co-operate, for Asia had never conceived of authority in any other guise than that of the despot's arbitrary will.

Townsend's conclusions in respect of India were the outcome of his own experience. He had lived through the Mutiny, weighing the portent of its terrific flow of hatred for the European. He was of opinion that, if the crisis of 1857-8 had produced a forceful Indian leader, British power would have been doomed, since it rested upon " a non-existent loyalty." He observed that British rule, with a singular frankness, proclaimed itself transient as well as alien. The earlier conquerors of India had remained to govern, and generally to oppress; but no Briton stayed beyond his term of service. Soldier and civil officer, merchant and teacher, even the missionary, went home, none staying " to help or live." What could such evidences as these indicate if not that " the Empire which came in a day would disappear in a night " ? To Meredith Townsend the broad results appeared inescapable. Asia would regain her own, and all the work of the British conquest would be undone.

Within a hundred years its very memory would be extinct. I ask you to note that it was a very conservative English Liberal who wrote in this strain, and that his views took shape as the nineteenth century was drawing to a close. Look, first, roughly over the Continent.

Very slowly, we may say, the British and American peoples have come to realize that the insurgent movements of Asia have, within a very short period, attained a magnitude and importance going beyond all other human phenomena of the modern age. They have nothing whatever in common with the recurrent westward sweep of the conquering Asiatic hordes which furnished Gibbon with some of his most impressive themes. They belong entirely to this age of ours. Along with the swift transformation of Russia, they must be regarded as an overwhelming revelation of world democracy, a global uprising of the common people, embodying the semi-conscious demand of mankind in the mass for a complete and final removal of the stigma of race inequality, for the right to live and, somehow, to enjoy a share in the abundance of Nature.

The staggering nature of the uprising cannot be unknown to Europeans in general. Yet it is undeniable that the average educated Englishman has remained ignorant of, and indifferent to, the significance of the Asiatic revolution for his own country, its political system, and its standing among the Powers. Our habit is to make use of the greater events and movements of European history since the fall of Rome as a more or less accurate

measure of what can happen in the world. We cite the passing of the Middle Ages, the Thirty Years' War, the French Revolution. But has it not become manifest that, by comparison with the happenings of our day in Asia, the most momentous convulsions of the European past will, to our successors, seem limited and merely episodic?

More than one-half of the world's inhabitants dwell in the countries east of the Persian Gulf and the central table-lands. Their total cannot be less than 1,200 millions. Their tribes and nations cover almost the entire range of civilization from the most primitive to the most formal and elaborate. And if the spectacle of Europe is bewildering when we strive to get it into focus, what is to be said of the Eastern continent with its myriads of brown folk, its endless variety of race and culture and speech? We all grew up in the belief that these multitudes were to be envisaged in one form alone—as a mass of humanity subject to no known processes of change. We supposed them to be static, and, as the earlier H. G. Wells declared, to be people merely of the Abyss. We have lived to witness the breaking-up of the great deep, and to know that this terrific upheaval was produced under the stimulus of knowledge, thought, and desire coming wholly out of the West. The overturn is marvellous beyond description and all the more momentous because it is driving everywhere towards national or communal expression, political emancipation, and economic security. Nor, moreover, may we overlook the certainty that the evidences of Asia in revolution presage the

dethronement of Europe, the end of a very great age.

Until a generation ago, and even less, the question was continually raised whether it would be possible at any time for an Asiatic people to be shaken out of its antique mould and made responsive to anything like political or agrarian agitation. This doubt was expressed in particular with reference to those races which were held in the bonds of a still dominant religion, an elaborate ritual, an unbroken priesthood, and a rigid social scheme. The answer to all such queries is written to-day over the whole hemisphere. In India it had taken shape long before the advent of Gandhi and Nehru. In Burma the streams of influence from India found a counter-irritant in the racial antagonism to China, the country's ancient overlord. In Malaya and the Dutch Indies the stimulus was directly from nationalist India until the time came for the Indonesians to be malignantly played upon for obvious reasons by the Japanese.

Outside these races and territories there existed a kindred problem touching especially the Semitic races of the Moslem world. Theologically and ethically Islam is a great brotherhood, built upon the doctrine of equality in the Faith, and affording throughout its wide dominions a demonstration that belief and action can be unified to a far higher degree than they have ever been in Christendom. Islam, nevertheless, enjoins submission to absolute authority, and in all the lands which were over-run by Mohammed and his successors the will of the Khalif was acknowledged

as supreme. The communion of the Faith, the Pan-Islamic dream, or the definite and more manageable idea of the new Nationalism —which of these would prove to be the motive-force among the Moslem peoples when their long-deferred awakening should begin? The reply became quickly legible from the time of Allenby's liberating campaigns, the results arising from the Arabian exploits of T. E. Lawrence, and the defiant creation of the new Turkey. Britain was responsible for the making of the Arab kingdoms, and it will not be denied that the upshot in many ways was unforeseen. From Cairo to Baghdad qualified autonomy has been disguised as independence, and this has undoubtedly wrought an important change in the temper and attitude of the people. They have become assertive, pugnacious, and anti-British where British authority is still operative: witness the anger and persistence of student mobs in Egypt. Islamic religion, clearly, has not impeded the growth of Nationalism in the Middle East, but the facts of the Arab political movement so far do not throw much light upon certain matters that are of exceptional interest to the Western inquirer. The Indian Moslems, for example, have responded to a powerful sectional appeal in a manner which has disconcerted the Hindus. If they should succeed in achieving Pakistan, how long might it take for the Indian North-West to come into line with Ankara, or is a *rapprochement* of that kind to be deemed an impossibility, say, within the present century? Saudi Arabia, again, is a closely-guarded Moslem State, in the sharpest possible contrast to the Turkey so

ruthlessly hammered out by Mustapha Kemal. That country would seem to have discarded nearly all the manners and customs hitherto accepted as essentials of Islam: which lead, then, is to be followed? Before Asia was aroused there was a common assumption that Islam, for all its scope and power, was by nature stagnant. As compared with Hinduism, immobile yet ever flexible, it was believed to be sternly opposed to the modern mind. Are we, however, now to infer that Moslem Nationalism is a force working progressively towards a weakening of the religion of the Prophet? Or, as one British observer asks, is Mohammed to suffer final defeat because he set his authority against the invincible power of woman and the ineradicable craving for alcoholic drink?

I come now to what is surely a crucial difficulty of Nationalism in Asia. It is made, or greatly intensified, by the insistent demand of every people for independence. This word—endowed by the American revolution 150 years ago with a dynamic virtue which it has never lost—is used without definition and as implying sovereignty. In India it was adopted by the National Congress on the initiative of Pundit Nehru, Gandhi being a late and reluctant convert. The resolution was passed year after year, and in 1942 it was reinforced by the "Quit India" slogan. This happened at the crisis of the War, and without reference to the hard realities of the hour: the non-existence of a responsible Indian authority to which the governing power might be transferred, the refusal of Moslem leaders

to co-operate with the Congress, and the transcendent difficulties inseparable from the withdrawal of a complex and all-powerful government—an operation, by the way, such as no established authority, equipped with an unimpaired executive system, has ever been known to undertake and carry through.

It is impossible to doubt the effect, among the Eastern peoples as a whole, of the Indian independence movement under its uncompromising leader. Independence has become the single watchword, and since the collapse of Japan it has been taken up on all sides. Home-rule and self-government are vocables altogether devoid of appeal. Even the great word "freedom" has lost its magic. Indonesians are calling for independence, as are the widely varied peoples of Korea, Indo-China, Outer Mongolia. And we have at this juncture, and at opposite ends of the Eastern world, two illustrations of the advancing problem which yield lessons of striking appositeness. They are the Philippines and the Levant.

By an Act of Congress passed before the War the Philippines Commonwealth was to become formally independent in 1946. Being now liberated, after a campaign in which Filipino soldiers played an heroic part, the Commonwealth is to be rewarded by an early fulfilment of the American pledge. The resultant benefits will include fiscal separateness, so that the products of the archipelago, instead of freely entering the United States as heretofore, will be subject to the rigours of the American protective tariff. When independence was agreed to there was no

pretence that the Philippines could be defended from the onslaught of a modern enemy. Japanese power has been annihilated, so that for the time being the islands are entirely safe. The clean cut, therefore, is to be made, and the business of security remains exactly where it was before Pearl Harbour. The United States will continue to be responsible for the protection of its independent dependency.

Syria and the Lebanon present a considerably more complicated problem. The surrender of the French Mandate marked an important change in the Near East. The presence of British troops in war-time was not resented by the people. They knew that our military authorities, unlike the French, were under no temptation to stay. The British set the example, as they did also in Persia. The allied forces have gone. Syria and the Lebanon are by definition independent, although they lie near the pivotal point of an area which has endured the continuous ordeals incidental to the Old World's strategic centre through the twenty-three centuries since Alexander the Great. And in this connection it may be noted that by an initial decision of the United Nations Organization the dignity and the rights of sovereign independence have been conferred upon Trans-Jordan.

What, then, in the world of to-day and to-morrow is meant by sovereign independence for the new nation or the small Power? Surely nothing but an illusion, an illustration of current unrealism in international affairs?

A striking and encouraging fact of Europe during the last century was the general safety of the little nations. For a hundred years their right to live was almost unchallenged, and even by the War of 1914-18 it was not seriously endangered. But, after the Second World War, what statement or prediction could be hazarded as to the probable fate of independent nationality when, or if, the world achieves re-settlement? Everything depends, of course, upon the reality or otherwise of the United Nations Organization. The world order assumed in the Charter comprises a perfected system of collective security. Without that we are condemned to global control by the Big Three—or more probably, it may be, to a fateful unease of dominance by Russia and the United States. If the latter or anything resembling it is to be our destiny, what can be the meaning of independence for the majority of the member States of U.N.O. and for the nationalities which remain out of bounds? Think of those which, in our present stage of world anarchy, adjoin the perilous frontiers or are close to the centres charged with explosives: Poland, Finland, the Baltic States; the Balkans, the Levant, Persia, Korea. Can anyone run over a list of such names without misgiving?

In the age of Nationalism inaugurated by the French Revolution the statesmen of Europe failed to arrive at any solution of the puzzle that is involved in the relationship between the small nation and the Great Power. Is it not only too plain that this failure may be repeated in the East? Unless the signs of the hour are altogether misleading, we are to

see in Asia the frustration of many peoples who have been fired by the European idea, but are without political experience or the possibility of self-defence. The U.N.O., even if it be securely founded and powerfully directed, could not, so far as can at present be seen, meet the needs of such infant States as those we have in mind. In an ordered world they would not need to fear oppression or foreign intervention; but even so independence would remain a dream. The Asiatic peoples, all now most painfully struggling towards light and liberty, cannot in any future that we can measure hope to play a large part in the world order. And, in any case, whether East or West, the position allotted to the new nation, small or large, is not that of sovereign independence. Protected freedom is the definition of the status they would enjoy.

At the opening of the twentieth century the Indian movement was confined to the National Congress. It was entirely a derivative of English Liberalism. Its leaders were well read in the Liberal classics. They gave time to the study of Parliament and modelled their speaking on the Victorian masters of eloquence. Their demand was for representative institutions, equality in the public service, and a widening control of the revenue. A small extremist section was already vocal, but it was vague and negligible. No leader, however far to the left, ever spoke of independence. Even after the first World War, when nationalist aims were condensed into the one word *Swaraj* (Own Rule, the Hindu equivalent of Sinn Fein), there was no realistic approach to a programme. Gandhi

was a late-comer, active in social reform. Until his emergence as a leader of revolt, sounding a note of startling originality, he had no place at all among the politicians. His first reputation had been made as the champion of the large body of Indians in South Africa, who were demanding their civil rights. In fighting the Transvaal Government of Botha and Smuts he had adopted the method of non-violent resistance, taken over, as he explained, from Thoreau and Tolstoy. During that difficult struggle and for some years afterwards he was by no means a non-co-operator. He was ready to work heartily with Europeans, including British officials and missionaries. This phase, however, ended sharply early in 1919. A series of deplorable events in the Punjab made a decisive break in his attitude and career. He had become a man of implacable theory, committed to an elaborately simple mode of life that governed all his public acts and at times, while all the world wondered, compelling Authority to unbend and adjust its procedure to the personal routine of a little Hindu ascetic. Gandhi was unlike all his predecessors in that he wanted nothing for himself (save only the reality of power).

His rise to the first place was rapid. Within two years of his first gesture of defiance he had won over the governing group of the National Congress to the idea of non-violence and the practice of civil disobedience. He was striving to convert them to the exclusive wearing of *Khaddar* (native homespun cloth), and even to the symbolic daily task of hand-spinning. And he was gathering a multitude of

personal adherents, far more numerous than any leader of the modern world had ever commanded. The Mahatma also had become a constant in the news of the world. The American public especially was endlessly interested in and entertained by him.

Two decades exactly separate Gandhi's first conviction in India (1922) from the abortive mission of Sir Stafford Cripps. The interval comprises a confused series of incidents such as could not occur, and certainly would never be tolerated, under any Government save the British. Successive Viceroys sought ways of coming to terms. Friendly exchanges with Delhi or Simla would be followed by renewed defiance, another prison term, one more uneasy truce. Gandhi's acceptance of a seat at the Second Round Table Conference in London (1931) was preceded by a high tide of revolt, with mass demonstrations of extraordinary fervour and government measures of merciless repression. They revealed the immense range of the Mahatma's appeal, but also the self-defeating nature of his crusade. Mass civil disobedience could not be detached from violence. Time and again it had to be called off, yet even in a supreme war crisis the Congress Committee was unable to shake itself free: the weapon was kept formally in use.

There was one other conspicuous feature of the campaign, now wholly abandoned, upon which, I think, no more than a word is called for in passing. The recurring Gandhi fasts, undertaken for various specified purposes, fill a singular chapter of the record, but they had little to do with the actual issues of the

hour. The self-imposed ordeal of a party leader cannot touch the substance of a political dispute or the grievances of an oppressed class. Nor, in this instance, is the method of the master an example to be followed by the average. One foolhardy local politician who lately set out in imitation earned only a sharp rebuke from his great precursor.

The Cripps Mission of four years ago was an effort far in advance of any that had gone before, and it arose out of a most critical situation. The invader stood at the gates of India. The terms offered by the Churchill Cabinet pointed to full self-government, though the approach was lacking in subtlety. It was foolish to request a quick acceptance of the whole plan; but, in any case, no agreement was possible in 1942. There were men behind the National Congress who believed that the power of Britain in the Further East was broken and that India would need to make terms with a victorious Japan. The problem of authority over the armed forces was an insoluble difficulty. Conditions insisted upon by the Moslem League revealed that union in an interim National Government was out of the question. Gandhi, too, was uncompromising from the start. He would not believe that a transfer of governing authority was intended.

Moreover, Sir Stafford Cripps, like Lord Wavell when trying again three years later, had before him the dire results of a decision taken in 1939. The Viceroy had proclaimed that India, as an integral portion of the British Empire, was at war with Germany, and the announcement was made without a vote

being asked for in the Legislative Assembly. Lord Linlithgow was technically correct but politically unwise. The Congress Executive made an issue of this use of the prerogative, and at the call of Mr. Gandhi the Congress Ministers in seven provinces came out, thus throwing the administration back upon the Governors and the Civil Service. The upshot was deplorable. Had responsible government been maintained during the War, the Cripps plan would have fitted into an actual framework of Indian authority with the Congress Ministers strong in experience.

As things were, Non-co-operation had done its fatal work. The Gandhist antagonism could not be overcome. The central anomaly of the Congress position was unresolved. Its leaders are perforce politicians. They cannot direct a great party towards political power and at the same time agree with their dictator, who is, unalterably, a Tolstoyan anarchist, issuing decrees and never admitting compromise in doctrine.

Mr. Gandhi is the solitary example in the modern age of a leader commanding a host of adherents with the aid of colleagues who reject his philosophy. He is an enemy of the democratic process as of scientific knowledge and technique. He declares that a return to the ways of ancient India is not only possible but obligatory. He would make an end of machinery and of collectivism in every form. He dreams of an India without a Central Government or an adequate Exchequer; a sub-continent of 700,000 villages devoid of national services. He has persuaded himself that its 400,000,000 people, increased by one-

fourth in something over half a century, could feed and clothe themselves by antique means and enjoy a tolerable standard of living, if only the weight of a " Satanic " alien Government were removed.

The paradox of the Congress leadership is most vividly brought out in the two most celebrated of living Indians. Gandhi embodies the spirit of Hinduism, Jawaharlal Nehru is a fully-equipped citizen of the modern world. Educated at Harrow and Cambridge, he reads our books and thinks as a European. He is agnostic and socialist, deeply influenced by Soviet Russia. He believes, with Lenin, in large-scale industry and electrification. One thing alone binds Nehru to Gandhi—the conviction that India must be wholly free, and without further delay.

The two are not in agreement on methods. Gandhi's adherence to the ideal of non-violence has never changed or weakened; it is of his very essence. True, it betrays him at times into utterances of wild unrealism, as when he explained how he would placate the Japanese, or urged the British Government and people to yield their beautiful island to Hitler and his hordes. These are instances of doctrinal fatuity. They should not be allowed to obscure the important fact that for twenty-five years Gandhi has striven to hold the Indian multitude within the bounds of an abstract ethical principle and that his success has been extraordinary. The value of the service he has thus rendered to India, and to the British Government, is incalculable. We have only to imagine what would have happened if the generalship of the greatest of

mass movements had fallen into different hands.

It has now passed into the hands of Jawaharlal Nehru, architect of the campaign for independence which was first launched in 1928. Nehru's partnership with Gandhi has been of the closest, but he is not an apostle of non-violence. Early in 1946 he joined with other leaders in urgent appeals for an end to the furious rioting in Bombay, but he added that when the hour for violence struck he himself would give the word. This statement came at the end of a tumultuous election campaign, during which Nehru, while driving home the theme of "Quit India," had replied to the Moslem demand for partition—a new Pakistan—in phrases that implied a threat of civil war. Upon this vital issue, it is to be noted, the attitudes of the party leaders have not been consistent. The Congress must stand for India undivided; but Gandhi has been ambiguous, and Nehru, after saying that the Moslems must fight for Pakistan, has intimated that an Indian settlement would give them ninety-five per cent of their demand.

The political and inter-racial outlook in the East is extraordinarily dark and confused. The developments of the future, near or distant, are wholly beyond our power to forecast. But this does not affect the main point of the present lecture—namely, that the resurgence of Asia is a movement of overmastering import for our age. Here is a mounting tide of humanity which will not be stayed; it must in due course alter the balance of the world. Its militant stage has covered no more than a single generation. Before the

end of the century, we may be sure, it will have been carried far towards positive fulfilment in many forms; and we should be foolish indeed if we were to assume that a process of peaceful evolution is possible. Conflict and catastrophe are plainly indicated, and we have no reason to suppose that they will not be of the nature and on the scale which the East has always known.

From the end of the Manchu era China has been torn by civil war. The continental pressure of the Soviet Union, steadily increasing both east and south since the defeat of Japan, makes the emergence of armed resistance highly probable if not unavoidable. The Hindu apostle of non-violence has invited the British Government to leave India to God, " or, in modern parlance, to anarchy." It is impossible to look upon Palestine, that unique danger-spot, without being reminded that all parties are preparing for an outbreak of the bitterest strife—for a conflict in which race and creed, economic interest and warring traditions of the soil are all involved. The future of Asia, in a word, is ominous beyond description.

Great Britain's profound concern in that future is centred in and overridden by India. For thirty years and more assailants of the British system all over the world have concentrated upon India. They refuse to acknowledge the evidences of vital change in policy and direction. They have continued to assert that the Empire is unmodifiable and that imperialists of the old type are still in command. Events, however, are moving fast. We may be justified in hoping that the happenings of the present year will disabuse

the outside critics, as, apparently, they are now sufficient even for Mr. Gandhi. Lord Wavell makes known in the clearest language that the British Government desires earnestly that the transfer of governing authority shall be accomplished thoroughly and peaceably, without bitterness or confusion. Lord Halifax, a recent predecessor in the Viceroyalty, adds his assurances in a solemn address to the American people. The Prime Minister, without opposition in Parliament, gives his final pledge. Indian leaders have affirmed that the time has come for the British Government to treat them as equals. Can they not see that this point was reached long ago? Three Cabinet Ministers go to India on behalf of the proposals and for aid to the Viceroy. The efforts now being made towards a final solution are above party. They are the expression of an agreed national purpose. If India's leaders will have it so, they can be in full charge of their country's affairs within a few years.

Notwithstanding the incessant repetition of the view that freedom for India is not vitally affected by communal dissension, every Indian public man knows this to be untrue. The Hindu-Moslem dispute overshadows the whole scene. It has been narrowed to the single issue of Pakistan—that is, the demand of the Moslem League for partition and the creation of two independent Moslem States, N.W. and N.E. The Moslem community comprises a total of some 95,000,000 in the ocean of Hinduism. Their relative position is fixed. They are an unalterable minority.

The governing motive of their leader in

respect of Pakistan is an entirely natural fear. The Moslems are afraid of political dominance by the Congress party and of Hindu industrial and financial power. The regions in which they are numerically strong are and will remain agricultural; their influential men are not seldom feudal magnates. But the design of Pakistan, as formulated by Mr. M. A. Jinnah, is economically weak and geographically most difficult. The drawing of new boundaries would necessitate drastic changes in several historic provinces. If the task were undertaken by an impartial body the results would be controversial, certain to provoke the fiercest resentment. A partitioned India would be fatal to the Central Government as established. It would make the defence of India a new and baffling problem, for the integral military system would, of necessity, be dissolved. Pakistan links the North-West with Afghanistan and the Moslem Middle-East. Russia is closely interested in the scheme, doubtless seeing in it a potential development favourable to Soviet policy in Persia and along the road to the Gulf. Nehru's more recent references to the subject would appear to imply that substantial concessions by the Congress to the League are under contemplation, in recognition of the imperative need for peace and settlement in India preparatory to National Government. But Mr. Jinnah's co-operation in a National Government is barred by his uncompromising stand on the issue he has himself made. If, therefore, the question be asked, "How can India enter upon the momentous adventure of independence, with one-fourth of her 400,000,000

people standing aside and, through their only effective organization, insisting upon new frontiers within the country and separate State Governments?", the only answer possible at the present stage is that no one, either Indian or British, can possibly tell.

A free India under National Government cannot come without internal peace, a basis of broad agreement, and executive co-operation at the centre. The Government of India could not retire unless there had come into being at Delhi a provisional Government invested with complete authority and capable of wielding it. We have here, surely, a basic reality beyond all dispute. It carries an impressive moral and a grave warning. British rule in India has been autocratic, embodied in a remarkable union of executive power and trained public service—in other words, empire and trusteeship combined. The British Empire has long been under challenge, above all, because of India. We know it to be true that, before the bar of world public opinion, judgment has gone emphatically against the continuance of the old system. But this also is true : if the governing power were unwisely surrendered, if freedom for India were to dawn amid anarchy and bloodshed, with helpless multitudes at the mercy of the forces of misrule, then the British Cabinet and Parliament would be condemned without measure; and the hardest words of all would come from many of those in the West who have been preaching the doctrine that independence is the one thing needful.

Of one thing at least we may be certain—namely, that the panorama of Asia is unfolding towards developments of tremendous, of

apocalyptic, scope and character. As our century nears its meridian the whole prospect is enveloped in cloud. Who, for example, would hazard a prediction as to the Islamic nations? The countries belonging to the nascent Arab League are nearly all immense in area, but they display beyond all others the ravages of fifteen centuries—in diminished population, social stagnation, and exhaustion of the soil. We may well wonder whether their political future is imaginable except within forms which imply the dominant influence of a great Power. The varied peoples of the South-East, again, have all been stirred into new and troubled life by Japanese aggression and intrigue. British Malaya has begun a new chapter. The old Dutch colonial régime is finished. An autonomous Indonesia is taking shape. Changes there, undeniably, are to be rapid and full of surprise; but could one be mistaken in asserting that a unified South-Eastern Asia under the leadership of India, as imagined by Nehru, is a dream that stretches far beyond our ken?

Nevertheless there are a few great matters concerning which we cannot be in serious doubt. The power and pressure of Soviet Russia is a new and overwhelming fact of Asia. The expansionist designs, or desires, by which it is being driven are racial and historic, not essentially different from those which lay behind the Tsardom. They are a still unmeasured reality with which in due time both India and China will have to be organically related; and, needless to say, the ultimate destinies of Eastern Asia must be determined by the forces that are embodied

in those eight hundred millions of people.

India, of course, is crucial for Britain, while the importance of China for the United States is at last becoming known to the American people. With the elimination of Japan, China takes rank in the new grouping of the great Powers, but only in a nominal sense. The policy of the Washington Government is based upon this formal recognition, and upon the assumption that China is soon to emerge unified and actually independent, offering an unlimited field for American enterprise in economic reconstruction and in opening the greatest of the world's still unexploited markets. The settlement and unification of China, however, is so far no more than an aspiration. In no country of the world has civil war been so persistent and destructive, and nowhere in Asia is there an internal conflict with deeper roots than those of the antagonism between Chungking and the Communist north, notwithstanding the indubitable fact that Chinese Communism is detached from Moscow to a striking degree. And to say this is equivalent to saying that American hopes of early and abundant rewards from China will not, almost certainly cannot, be fulfilled.

Let no man, said Mr. Churchill in his Missouri oration, " let no man underrate the continuing power of the British Commonwealth and Empire." No one among ourselves can be in need of this warning with respect to the Commonwealth. The six years of war provided proofs of unity and co-operation almost beyond the world's credence, and no home-keeping Briton could fail to be

impressed by the magnificent behaviour of the Dominions during the world crisis through which we are now beating our way. But what of the Empire in relation to Mr. Churchill's concept of power? It is in Asia that the British destiny will be decided, said Disraeli, whose mind ran continually ahead of his own short-sighted expedients. The truth of this remark is now as evident to the man in the street as it is to the sorely-tried members of the Imperial Services. The policy of withdrawal, centred at the time of writing in the efforts of the Cabinet Mission at Delhi, is the most significant expression of political purpose by a great Government that the modern age has known. The momentous decisions of 1945-6 were implicit in the Cripps offer of 1942, and that offer, we should not forget, stood for the unanimous will of a National Government with Winston Churchill at the head. Great Britain has entered upon an unprecedented line of action. This involves the deliberate surrender of an empire upon which depends the welfare of one-fifth of the entire human race. The British-Indian system which was completed ninety years ago has reached its term. There is no possibility of its power or prestige being restored, whatever the outcome of the Delhi negotiations may be; for the past is past.

The British view of the Indian movement towards full autonomy, a view from which there have been few informed dissenters, has been steadily maintained and repeatedly enforced. It is that the actual transfer of authority could be possible only if a National Government had come into being, a Govern-

ment representative of all India and capable of wielding full executive power. We stand to-day, however, on the eve of a complete abdication, with no such pivotal condition guaranteed or even outlined. The leaders of the Indian parties and communities refused for years to confer with one another. They proclaimed not only that they are unable to agree among themselves, but even, in the plainest words, that they had no wish to make peace.

In language too often recalling that of American agitators in the age of "irrepressible conflict," they announce that the Hindu-Moslem issue must be fought out, which means that India is doomed to civil war, to chaos and disintegration. And this, too, when independence has been conceded without reserve by the Power which has not yet ceased to rule and to bear responsibility; and moreover, in an hour of deepest crisis for the Eastern world, when all the concerns of governments and parties, with the hosts of people affected, are in imminent peril of being swamped by a famine more appalling than any recorded in the annals of mankind.

The great transition in Asia, as we have seen, is the result of two centuries of ever-enlarging influences from the West. In India the process is in direct fulfilment of the principles and methods which Britain has applied—haltingly enough, no doubt, and often in defiance of the beliefs and habits of her governing class. The recent decisions, moreover, are to be read as definite indications of the truth, now almost everywhere acknowledged, that a fully developed political democracy cannot main-

tain an autocratic imperial system, and will not consent to try.

British power in Asia is passing swiftly into a new and uncharted phase. I find it impossible to imagine how the picture will appear to the world when India has ceased to be the British Empire in the East: when, that is, there has passed away the most firmly planned, the most closely reticulated system of alien rule ever created. A critical and sceptical world has seen it, monstrously distorted, as a scheme of despotism and spoliation. From Communist Russia to capitalist America the world has been hostile in sentiment to the British system. Is it our own fault in the main that, except by the smaller nations, the Empire has not been looked upon as a power vitally necessary, the breaking of which in two world wars would have meant, infallibly, the end of civilization? And is it our fault also that the greatest merit of the system has been generally unperceived—the fact that the tenet of constitutional freedom is a self-redeeming principle, the one and only spring from which the freedom of constituent members could arise? The great conflict of to-morrow will and must be between free government and totalitarian rule. And the essential conclusion seems to me above and beyond all doubt. Men and women will not live permanently under despotism. They will not forever obey the police power. The omnipotent State contains within itself the seeds of its own dissolution. For the first time in history the people are aroused. All the forces of our age combine for their awakening, and in the end an awakened world must be a world set free.

APPENDIX

THE CONWAY MEMORIAL LECTURESHIP

AT a general meeting of the South Place Ethical Society, held on October 22, 1908, it was resolved that an effort should be made to establish a series of lectures, to be printed and widely circulated, as a permanent Memorial to Dr. Moncure Conway. The general objective in view was the furtherance of the cause of social, political, and religious freedom always closely associated with his name.

The range of the lectures (of which the thirty-seventh is published herewith) must be regulated by the financial support accorded to the scheme. It is thus most desirable that the Lecture Committee should be able to count upon such support. Those who enjoy the liberty for which Conway so nobly fought should be eager to keep his name alive as a reminder to the future of what was so hardly won. An earnest appeal is therefore made for donations and subscriptions. Contributions may be forwarded to the Hon. Treasurer.

ERNEST CARR, *Hon. Secretary.*

C. E. LISTER, *Hon. Treasurer*, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY,

CONWAY HALL, RED LION SQUARE, W.C.1.

Objects of the Society :—

"The objects of the Society are the study and dissemination of ethical principles and the cultivation of a rational religious sentiment."