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***Note by Sir S. Cripps**

L/P & J/10/4:ff 51-2

INTERVIEW WITH DR. AMBEDKAR AND MR. RAJAH, REPRESENTING THE DEPRESSED CLASSES

30th March 1942

After telling me about the conditions of the Depressed Classes, particularly in Madras and Bombay, they then went on to point out that under the system of election they would have a very small representation only in the constituent assembly, as most of their so-called representatives would be Congressmen, and that their position would therefore be very weak. They summed up the demands that they would make to the constituent assembly and then asked me whether we considered that they came within the racial and religious minorities, to which I answered yes, and what sort of provisions were likely to be made in the Treaty for their protection. I stated that these would probably be along the lines of the League of Nations minority treaties, and if already there were special provisions in the constitution these would probably be repeated in the Treaty, and there would be some obligation to refer the matter to some outside authority in cases of dispute, the Government of the Indian Union undertaking to abide by the decision so given, and that if they did not do so it would constitute a breach of Treaty, whereupon the British Government could take such steps as it considered wise in the particular circumstances. I stated that though this form of protection might no doubt seem to them inadequate, once granted the idea of self-government and self-determination for India, there was no other possible way by which we could intervene to protect any minority in India.

*The Transfer of Power, Nicholas Mansergh, Editor-in-Chief; published by His Majesty's Stationery Office, London, 1970; Vol. I, No. 442, pp. 552-53.

So far as the interim period was concerned, I pointed out that the probabilities were that some representative of the Depressed Classes would be asked to serve on the Executive Council at the Centre, and that one of the first tasks of that Council would no doubt be to make some temporary arrangements as regards the carrying on of the Provincial Governments.

Mr. Ambedkar expressed the view that they would demand to be treated as one of the major elements and to be taken into consultation by the Viceroy in the formation of the new Executive. I stated that this was not a matter for me; the Viceroy would exercise his own judgement as to whom he should consult in this matter.

Naturally they were not very happy about the whole situation, but I did not gather that they would oppose the scheme, since there was no other alternative under which they could get any greater measure of protection.

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