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REPORT ON MISSION TO INDIA

* MEMORANDUM BY THE LORD PRIVY SEAL

6 July 1942

I think it is desirable for purposes of official record and for the assistance of any similar Mission to India in future that I should provide a detailed account of the discussions which I had with Indian leaders during my recent visit to India.

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**(*f*) The Depressed Classes

I received Dr. Ambedkar and Mr. Rajah as representatives of the Depressed Classes on the 30th March. They pointed out that, under the present system of election of Depressed Class representatives to Provincial Legislatures imposed by the Poona pact,[@] the Depressed Classes would get very small representation in the Constituent Assembly, as most of their so-called representatives would be Congressmen. They asked me whether we considered the Depressed Classes to be one of the racial and religious minorities, and I replied that we did. They then asked what kind of provisions were likely to

*The Transfer of Power, Vol. H, No. 227. pp. 336-37.

**The Transfer of Power, Vol. II, No. 227, p. 336-37. *Portion concerning Dr. Ambedkar alone is reproduced.*—Ed.

@ The Poona Pact between Hindu and Depressed Class leaders modified the Communal Award of 4 August 1932 (*see* note II). Its principal provisions were as follows : 148 instead of 71 seats were to be reserved for the Depressed Classes but their representatives were to be elected jointly by Caste Hindu as well as Depressed Class voters; however, the joint electorate's choice was to be confined to a panel of four candidates selected in a primary election in which only Depressed Class voters could take part. The Pact was reached under pressure from Gandhi (then in gaol at Poona) who regarded the Depressed Classes as members of the Hindu community and opposed separate electorates for them. He threatened a fast (begun on 20 September) 'unto death' unless the Communal Award was altered to meet his objections. The Pact was agreed on 24 September and the acquiescence of I.L.M.G. was announced on 26 September 1932.

be made in the Treaty for their protection. I said that these would be on the lines of the League of Nations minority treaties, and that, if there were special provisions in the Constitution, these would probably be repeated in the Treaty, and that there would be some obligation to refer the matter to some outside authority in the event of a dispute, the Government of the Indian Union undertaking to abide by the decision so given. If the Indian Government failed to do so this would constitute a breach of treaty, and the British Government could take such steps as it considered wise in the particular circumstances. I said that, though this form of protection might seem to them inadequate, it was the only possible one, once granted the principle of self-determination for India.

On the following day Dr. Ambedkar and Mr. Rajah wrote to me saying that the proposals were unacceptable to the Depressed Classes, as they would place them under an unmitigated system of Hindu rule, and would be resisted by them by all the means at their disposal. They requested me to convey their anxieties to His Majesty's Government, and to impress upon them that the Depressed Classes would regard it as a breach of faith if a Constitution were forced upon them by His Majesty's Government which had not received their free and voluntary consent, and did not contain within itself the provisions necessary for safeguarding their interests.

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