

CHAPTER I

WHAT DOES THE LEAGUE DEMAND ?

I

On the 26th of March 1940, Hindu India was startled to attention as it had never been before. On that day, the Muslim League at its Lahore Session passed the following Resolution :—

“1. While approving and endorsing the action taken by the Council and the Working Committee of the All-India Muslim League as indicated in their resolutions dated the 27th of August, 17th and 18th of September and 22nd of October 1939 and 3rd of February 1940 on the constitutional issue, this Session of the All-India Muslim League emphatically reiterates that the Scheme of Federation embodied in the Government of India Act, 1935, is totally unsuited to, and unworkable in the peculiar conditions of this country and is altogether unacceptable to Muslim India;

“2. It further records its emphatic view that while the declaration dated the 18th of October, 1939 made by the Viceroy on behalf of His Majesty's Government is reassuring in as far as it declares that the policy and plan on which the Government of India Act, 1935, is based will be reconsidered in consultation with the various parties, interests and communities in India, Muslim India will not be satisfied unless the whole constitutional plan is reconsidered *de novo* and that no revised plan would be acceptable to the Muslims, unless it is framed with their approval and consent;

“3. Resolved that it is the considered view of this Session of the All-India Muslim League that no constitutional plan would be workable in this country or acceptable to the Muslims unless it is designated on the following basic principle, viz. that geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be so constituted with such territorial readjustments as may be necessary, that the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority as in the North-Western and Eastern Zones of India should be grouped to constitute “Independent States” in which the Constituent Units shall be autonomous and sovereign;

“4. That adequate, effective and mandatory safeguards should be specifically provided in the constitution for minorities in these units and in the regions for the protection of their religious, cultural, economic, political, administrative and other rights, and interests in consultation with them; and in other parts of India where the Musalmans are in a minority, adequate, effective and mandatory safeguards shall be specifically provided in the constitution for them and other minorities for the protection of their religious, cultural, economic, political, administrative and other rights, and interests in consultation with them;

“5. This Session further authorizes the Working Committee to frame a Scheme of Constitution in accordance with these basic principles, providing for the assumption finally by the respective regions of all powers such as defence, external affairs, communication, customs, and such other matters as may be necessary.”

What does this Resolution contemplate? A reference to para 3 of the Resolution will show that the Resolution contemplates that the areas in which Muslims predominate shall be incorporated into independent States. In concrete terms, it means that the Punjab, the North-Western Frontier Province, Baluchistan and Sind in the North-West and Bengal in the East instead of remaining as the provinces of British India shall be incorporated as independent States outside of British India. This is the sum and substance of the Resolution of the Muslim League.

Does the Resolution contemplate that these Muslim provinces, after being incorporated into States, will remain each an independent sovereign State or will they be joined together into one constitution as members of a single State, federal or unitary? On this point, the Resolution is rather ambiguous, if not self-contradictory. It speaks of grouping the zones into “Independent States in which the Constituent Units shall be autonomous and sovereign.” The use of the term “Constituent Units” indicates that what is contemplated is a Federation. If that is so, then, the use of the word “sovereign” as an attribute of the Units is out of place. Federation of Units and sovereignty of Units are contradictions. It may be that what is contemplated is a confederation. It is, however, not very material for the moment whether these Independent States are to form into a federation or a confederation. What is important is the basic demand, namely, that these areas are to be separated from India and formed into Independent States.

The Resolution is so worded as to give the idea that the scheme adumbrated in it is a new one. But, there can be no doubt that the Resolution merely resuscitates a scheme which was put forth by Sir Mahomed Iqbal in his Presidential address to the Muslim League at its Annual Session held at Lucknow in December 1930. The scheme was not then adopted by the League. It was, however, taken up by one Mr. Rehmat Ali who gave it the name, Pakistan,

by which it is known. Mr. Rehmat Ali, M.A.,LL.B., founded the Pakistan Movement in 1933. He divided India into two, namely, *Pakistan* and *Hindustan*. His Pakistan included the Punjab, N. W. F. Province, Kashmir, Sind and Baluchistan. The rest to him was *Hindustan*. His idea was to have an “independent and separate Pakistan” composed of five Muslim provinces in the North as an independent State. The proposal was circulated to the members of the Round Table Conference but never officially put forth. It seems an attempt was made privately to obtain the assent of the British Government, who, however, declined to consider it because they thought that this was a “revival of the old Muslim Empire.”*

The League has only enlarged the original scheme of Pakistan. It has sought to create one more Muslim State in the East to include the Muslims in Bengal and Assam. Barring this, it expresses in its essence and general outline the scheme put forth by Sir Mahomed Iqbal and propagated by Mr. Rehmat Ali. There is no name given to this new Muslim State in the East. This has made no difference in the theory and the issues involved in the ideology of Mr. Rehmat Ali. The only difficulty one feels is that the League, while enlarging the facets, has not christened the two Muslim States with short and sweet names as it might have been expected to do. That it did not do and we are left to carry on the discussion with two long jaw-breaking names of Muslim State in the West and Muslim State in the East. I propose to solve this difficulty by reserving the name Pakistan to express the ideology underlying the two-nation theory and its consequent effect, namely, partition, and by designating the two Muslim States in the North-West and North-East as Western Pakistan and Eastern Pakistan.

The scheme not only called Hindu India to attention but it shocked Hindu India. Now it is natural to ask, what is there that is new or shocking in this scheme ?

* Halide Edib—Inside India, p. 355.

II

Is the idea of linking up of the provinces in the North-West a shocking idea ? If so, let it be remembered that the linking of these provinces is an age-old project put forth by successive Viceroys, Administrators and Generals. Of the Pakistan provinces in the North-West, the Punjab and N. W. F. P. constituted a single province ever since the Punjab was conquered by the British in 1849. The two continued to be a single province till 1901. It was in 1901 that Lord Curzon broke up their unity and created the present two provinces. As to the linking up of the Punjab with Sind, there can be no doubt that had the conquest of Sind followed and not preceded the conquest of the Punjab, Sind would have been incorporated into the Punjab, for the two are not only contiguous but are connected by a single river which is the most natural tie between them. Although Sind was joined to Bombay, which in the absence of the Punjab was the only base from which it could be governed, the idea of disconnecting Sind from Bombay and joining it to the Punjab was not given up and projects in that behalf were put forth from time to time. It was first put forth during the Governor-Generalship of Lord Dalhousie; but for financial reasons, was not sanctioned by the Court of Directors. After the mutiny, the question was reconsidered but owing to the backward state of communications along the Indus, Lord Canning refused to give his consent. In 1876, Lord Northbrook was of the opinion that Sind should be joined to the Punjab. In 1877, Lord Lytton, who succeeded Northbrook, sought to create a trans-Indus province, consisting of the six frontier districts of the Punjab and of the trans-Indus districts of Sind. This would have included the six Frontier districts of the Punjab, namely, Hazara, Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu (except the Cis-Indus tracts), Dera Ismail Khan (with the same exception), Dera Ghazi Khan, and trans-Indus Sind (with the exception of Karachi). Lytton also proposed that Bombay should receive the whole or part of the Central Provinces, in order to compensate it for the loss of trans-Indus Sind. These proposals were not acceptable to the Secretary of State. During the Viceroyalty of Lord Lansdowne (1888—94), the same project was revived in its original form, namely, the transfer of Sind to the

Punjab, but owing to the formation of the Baluchistan Agency, Sind had ceased to be a Frontier district and the idea which was military in its motive, lost its force and Sind remained without being incorporated in the Punjab. Had the British not acquired Baluchistan and had Lord Curzon not thought of carving out the N. W. F. P. out of the Punjab, we would have witnessed long ago the creation of Pakistan as an administrative unit.

With regard to the claim for the creation of a National Muslim State in Bengal, again, there is nothing new in it. It will be recalled by many that in 1905, the province of Bengal and Assam was divided by the then Viceroy, Lord Curzon into two provinces : (1) Eastern Bengal and Assam with Dacca as its capital and (2) Western Bengal with Calcutta as its capital. The newly-created province of Eastern Bengal and Assam included Assam and the following districts of the old province of Bengal and Assam: (1) Dacca, (2) Mymensingh, (3) Faridpur, (4) Backer gunge, (5) Tippera, (6) Noakhali, (7) Chittagong, (8) Chittagong Hill Tracts, (9) Rajshahi, (10) Dinajpur, (11) Jalpaiguri, (12) Rangpur, (13) Bogra, (14) Pabna and (15) Malda. Western Bengal included the remaining districts of the old Province of Bengal and Assam with the addition of the district of Sambalpur which was transferred from C. P. to Western Bengal.

This division of one province into two, which is known in Indian history as the Partition of Bengal, was an attempt to create a Muslim State in Eastern Bengal, inasmuch as the new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam was, barring parts of Assam, a predominantly Muslim area. But, the partition was abrogated in 1911 by the British who yielded to the Hindus, who were opposed to it and did not care for the wishes of the Muslims, as they were too weak to make themselves felt. If the partition of Bengal had not been annulled, the Muslim State in Eastern Bengal, instead of being a new project, would now have been 39 years old.*

*Government of India Gazette Notification No. 2832, dated 1st September 1905. The two provinces became separate administrative units from 16th October 1905.

III

Is the idea of separation of Pakistan from Hindustan shocking ? If so, let me recall a few facts which are relevant to the issue and which form the basic principles of the Congress policy. It will be remembered that as soon as Mr. Gandhi captured the Congress, he did two things to popularize it. The first thing he did was to introduce Civil Disobedience.

Before Mr. Gandhi's entry into the politics of India, the parties contending for power were the Congress, the Liberals and the Terrorists of Bengal. The Congress and the Liberals were really one party and there was no distinction between them such as divides them today. We can, therefore, safely say that there were only two parties in India, the Liberals and the Terrorists. In both, the conditions for admission were extremely difficult. In the Liberal Party, the condition for admission was not merely education but a high degree of learning. Without first establishing a reputation for study, one could never hope to obtain admission to the Liberal Party. It effectively excluded the uneducated from rising to political power. The Terrorists had prescribed the hardest test conceivable. Only those who were prepared to give their lives for the cause, not in the sense of dedicating them but in the sense of dying for it, could become members of their organization. No knave could, therefore, get an entry into the Terrorists' organization. Civil disobedience does not require learning. It does not call for the shedding of life. It is an easy middle way for that large majority who have no learning and who do not wish to undergo the extreme penalty and at the same time obtain the notoriety of being patriots. It is this middle path which made the Congress more popular than the Liberal Party or the Terrorist Party.

The second thing Mr. Gandhi did was to introduce the principle of Linguistic Provinces. In the constitution that was framed by the Congress under the inspiration and guidance of Mr. Gandhi, India was to be divided into the following Provinces with the language and headquarters as given below :—

Province		Language		Headquarters
Ajmere-Merwara	...	Hindustani	...	Ajmere.
Andhra	...	Telegu	...	Madras.
Assam	...	Assamese	...	Gauhati
Bihar	...	Hindustani	...	Patna.
Bengal	...	Bengali	...	Calcutta.
Bombay (City)	...	Marathi-Gujarati	...	Bombay.
Delhi	...	Hindustani	...	Delhi.
Gujarat	...	Gujarati	...	Ahmedabad.
Karnatak	...	Kannada	...	Dharwar
Kerala	...	Malayalam	...	Calicut.
Mahakosal	...	Hindustani	...	Jubbulpore.
Maharashtra	...	Marathi	...	Poona.
Nagpur	...	Marathi	...	Nagpur.
N.W.F.P.	...	Pushtu	...	Peshawar.
Punjab	...	Punjabi	...	Lahore.
Sind	...	Sindhi	...	Karachi.
Tamil Nadu	...	Tamil	...	Madras.
United Provinces	...	Hindustani	...	Lucknow.
Utkal	...	Oriya	...	Cuttack.
Vidarbha (Berar)	...	Marathi	...	Akola.

In this distribution no attention was paid to considerations of area, population or revenue. The thought that every administrative unit must be capable of supporting and supplying a minimum standard of civilized life, for which it must have sufficient area, sufficient population and sufficient revenue, had no place in this scheme of distribution of areas for provincial purposes. The determining factor was language. No thought was given to the possibility that it might introduce a disruptive force in the already loose structure of the Indian social life. The scheme was, no doubt, put forth with the sole object of winning the people to the Congress by appealing to their local patriotism. The idea of linguistic provinces has come to stay and the demand for giving effect to it has become so insistent and irresistible that the Congress, when it came into power, was forced to put it into effect. Orissa has already been separated from Bihar.* Andhra is demanding separation from Madras. Karnatak is asking for separation from Maharashtra.† The only linguistic province that is not demanding separation from

* This was done under the Government of India Act, 1935.

† Karnatak also wants some districts from the Madras Presidency.

Maharashtra is Gujarat Or rather, Gujarat has given up for the moment the idea of separation. That is probably because Gujarat has realized that union with Maharashtra is, politically as well as commercially, a better investment.

Be. that as it may, the fact remains that separation on linguistic basis is now an accepted principle with the Congress. It is no use saying that the separation of Karnatak and Andhra is based on a linguistic difference and that the claim to separation of Pakistan is based on a cultural difference. This is a distinction without difference. Linguistic difference is simply another name for cultural difference.

If there is nothing shocking in the separation of Karanatak and Andhra, what is there to shock in the demand for the separation of Pakistan ? If it is disruptive in its effect, it is no more disruptive than the separation of Hindu provinces such as Karnatak from Maharashtra or Andhra from Madras. Pakistan is merely another manifestation of a cultural unit demanding freedom for the growth of its own distinctive culture.

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