

CHAPTER XII

NATIONAL FRUSTRATION

I

Suppose an Indian was asked, what is the highest destiny you wish for your country, what would be his answer? The question is important, and the answer cannot but be instructive.

There can be no doubt that other things being equal, a hundred per cent Indian, proud of his country, would say, "An integral and independent India is my ideal of India's destiny". It will be equally true to say that unless this destiny was accepted by both Hindus as well as Muslims, the ideal can only convey a pious wish, and can never take a concrete form. Is it only a pious wish of some or is it a goal to be persued by all?

So far as profession of political aims goes, all parties seem to be in agreement inasmuch as all of them have declared that the goal of India's political evolution is independence. The Congress was the first to announce that its aim was to achieve political independence for India. In its Madras session, held in December 1927, the creed of the Congress was defined in a special resolution to the effect that the goal of the Indian people* was complete national independence. The Hindu Maha Sabha until 1932 was content to have Responsible Government as the goal of India's political evolution. It made no change in its political creed till 1937 when in its session held at Ahmedabad it declared that the Hindu Maha Sabha believed in "Poorna Swaraj" i.e., absolute independence for India. The Muslim League declared its political creed in 1912 to be the establishment of Responsible Government in India. In 1937 it made a similar advance by changing its creed

* The creed of the Congress was not changed at Madras. It was changed at the Lahore session of the Congress by a resolution passed on 31st December 1929. In the Madras session only a resolution in favour of independence was passed. In the Calcutta session of the Congress held in December 1928 both Mr. Gandhi and the President of the Congress declared themselves willing to accept Dominion Status if it was offered by the British Government by midnight of 31st December 1929.

from Responsible Government to Independence and thereby brought itself in line with the Congress and the Hindu Maha Sabha.

The independence defined by the three political bodies means freedom from British Imperialism. But an agreement on freedom from the yoke of British Imperialism is not enough. There must be an agreement upon maintaining an independent India. For this, there must be an agreement that India shall not only be free and independent of the British but that her freedom and independence shall be maintained as against any other foreign power. Indeed, the obligation to maintain her freedom is more important than merely winning freedom from the British. But on this more important obligation there does not seem to be the same unanimity. At any rate, the attitude of the Muslims on this point has not been very assuring. It is obvious from the numerous utterances of Muslim leaders that they do not accept the obligation to maintain India's freedom. I give below two such utterances.

In a meeting held in Lahore in 1925 Dr. Kitchlew said* :—

“The Congress was lifeless till the Khilafat Committee put life in it. When the Khilafat Committee joined it, it did in one year what the Hindu Congress had not done in 40 years. The Congress also did the work of uplifting the seven crores of untouchables. This was purely a work for the Hindus, and yet the money of the Congress was spent on it. Mine and my Musalman brethren's money was spent on it like water. But the brave Musalmans did not mind. Then why should the Hindus quarrel with us when we Musalmans take up the Tanzim work and spend on it money that belongs neither to the Hindus nor to the Congress ?

“ If we remove British rule from this country and establish Swaraj, and if the Afghans or other Muslims invade India, then we Muslims will oppose them and sacrifice all our sons in order to save the country from the invasion. But one thing I shall declare plainly. Listen, my dear Hindu brothers, listen very attentively ! If you put obstacles in the path of our Tanzim movement, and do not give us our rights, we shall make common cause with Afghanistan or some other Musalman power and establish our rule in this country.”

Maulana Azad Sobhani in his speech† made on the 27th January 1939 at Sylhet expressed sentiments which are worthy of

* “Through Indian Eyes”. *Times of India* dated 14-3-25.

†The Bengali version of the speech appeared in the *Anand Bazar Patrika*. The English version of it given here is a translation made for me by the Editor of the *Hindustan Standard*.

attention. In reply to the question of a Maulana, Maulana Azad Sobhani said:—

“If there is any eminent leader in India who is in favour of driving out the English from this country, then I am that leader. In spite of this I want that there should be no fight with the English on behalf of the Muslim League. Our big fight is with the 22 crores of our Hindu enemies, who constitute the majority. Only 4½ crores of Englishmen have practically swallowed the whole world by becoming powerful. And if these 22 crores of Hindus who are equally advanced in learning, intelligence and wealth as in numbers, if they become powerful, then these Hindus will swallow Muslim India and gradually even Egypt, Turkey, Kabul, Mecca, Medina and other Muslim principalities, like Yajuj-Majuj (it is so mentioned in Koran that before the destruction of the world, they will appear on the earth and will devour whatever they will find).

“The English are gradually becoming weak..... they will go away from India in the near future. So if we do not fight the greatest enemies of Islam, the Hindus, from now on and make them weak, then they will not only establish *Ramrajya* in India but also gradually spread all over the world. It depends on the 9 crores of Indian Muslims either to strengthen or to weaken them (the Hindus). So it is the essential duty of every devout Muslim to fight on by joining the Muslim League so that the Hindus may not be established here and a Muslim rule may be established in India as soon as the English depart.

“Though the English are the enemies of the Muslims, yet for the present our fight is not with the English. At first we have to come to some understanding with the Hindus through the Muslim League. Then we shall be easily able to drive out the English and establish Muslim rule in India.

“Be careful! Don’t fall into the trap of Congress Maulvis; because the Muslim world is never safe in the hands of 22 crores of Hindu enemies.”

According to the summary of the speech given by the correspondent of the *Anand Bazar Patrika* Maulana Azad Sobhani then narrated various imaginary incidents of oppressions on Muslims in Congress provinces.

“He said that when the Congress accepted ministry after the introduction of Provincial Autonomy, he felt that Muslim interests were not safe in the hands of the Hindu-dominated Congress; but the Hindu leaders felt indifferently and so he left the Congress and joined the League. What he had feared has been put in reality by the Congress ministers. This forestalling of the future is called politics. He was, therefore, a great politician. He was again thinking that before India became independent some sort of understanding had to be arrived at with

the Hindus either by force or in a friendly way. Otherwise, the Hindus, who had been the slaves of the Muslims for 700 years, would ensalve the Muslims.”

The Hindus are aware of what is passing in the mind of the Muslims and dread the possibility of Muslims using independence to enslave them. As a result Hindus are lukewarm towards making independence as the goal of India’s political evolution. These are not the fears of those who are not qualified to judge. On the contrary, the Hindus who have expressed their apprehensions as to the wisdom of heading for independence are those who are eminently qualified by their contact with Muslim leaders to express an opinion.

Mrs. Annie Besant says* :—

“Another serious question arises with regard to the Muhammadans of India. If the relation between Muslims and Hindus were as it was in the Lucknow days, this question would not be so urgent, though it would even then have almost certainly arisen, sooner or later, in an Independent India. But since the Khilafat agitation, things have changed and it has been one of the many injuries inflicted on India by the encouragement of the Khilafat crusade, that the inner Muslim feeling of hatred against ‘unbelievers’ has sprung up, naked and unashamed, as in the years gone by. We have seen revived, as guide in practical politics, the old Muslim religion of the sword, we have seen the dragging out of centuries of forgetfulness, the old exclusiveness, claiming the Jazirut-Arab, the island of Arabia, as a holy land which may not be trodden by the polluting foot of a non-Muslim, we have heard Muslim leaders declare that if the Afghans invaded India, they would join their fellow believers, and would slay Hindus who defended their motherland against the foe: we have been forced to see that the primary allegiance of Musalmans is to Islamic countries, not to our motherland; we have learned that their dearest hope is to establish the ‘ Kingdom of God’, not God as Father of the world, loving all his creatures, but as a God seen through Musalman spectacles resembling in his command through one of the prophets, as to the treatment of unbeliever—the Mosaic *JEHOVA* of the early Hebrews, when they were fighting as did the early Muslims, for freedom to follow the religion given to them by their prophet. The world has gone beyond such so-called theocracies, in which God’s commands are given through a man. The claim now put forward by Musalman leaders that they must obey the laws of their particular prophet above the laws of the State in which they live, is subversive of civic order and the stability of the State; it makes them bad citizens for their centre of

**The Future of Indian Politics*, pp. 301-305.

allegiance is outside the nation and they cannot, while they hold the views proclaimed by Maulanas Mahomed Ali and Shaukat Ali, to name the most prominent of these Muslim leaders, be trusted by their fellow citizens. If India were independent the Muslim part of the population—for the ignorant masses would follow those who appealed to them in the name of their prophet—would become an immediate peril to Indian's freedom. Allying themselves with Afghanistan, Baluchistan, Persia, Iraq, Arabia, Turkey and Egypt and with such of the tribes of Central Asia who are Musalmans, they would rise to place India under the Rule of Islam—those in 'British India' being helped by the Muslims in Indian States—and would establish Musalman rule. We had thought that Indian Musalmans were loyal to their motherland, and indeed, we still hope that some of the educated class might strive to prevent such a Musalman rising; but they are too few for effective resistance and would be murdered as apostates. Malabar has taught us what Islamic rule still means, and we do not want to see another specimen of the 'Khilafat Raj' in India. How much sympathy with the Moplas is felt by Muslims outside Malabar has been proved by the defence raised for them by their fellow believers, and by Mr. Gandhi himself, who stated that they had acted as they believed that religion taught them to act I fear that that is true; but there is no place in a civilised land for people who believe that their religion teaches them to murder, rob, rape, burn, or drive away out of the country those who refuse to apostatise from their ancestral faiths, except in its schools, under surveillance, or in its gaols. The Thugs believed that their particular form of God commanded them to strangle people—especially travellers with money. Such 'Laws of God' cannot be allowed to override the laws of a civilised country, and people living in the twentieth century must either educate people who hold these Middle Age views, or else exile them. Their place is in countries sharing their opinions, where they can still use such arguments against any who differ from them—as indeed, Persia and with the Parsis long ago, and the Bahaists in our own time. In fact, Muslim sects are not safe in a country ruled by orthodox Muslims. British rule in India has protected the freedom of all sects: Shiahs, Sunnis, Sufis, Bahaists live in safety under her sceptre, although it cannot protect any of them from social ostracism, where it is in a minority. Musalmans are more free under British rule, than in countries where there are Muslim rulers. In thinking of an Independent India, the menace of Muhammadan rule has to be considered."

Similar fear was expressed by Lala Lajpatrai in a letter* to Mr. C. R. Das:—

"There is one point more which has been troubling me very much of late and one which I want you to think carefully and that is the question of Hindu-Mohamadan unity. I have devoted most of my time during the last six months to the study of Muslim history and Muslim Law and I am inclined to think, it is neither possible nor practicable. Assuming

*Quoted in *Life of Savarkar* by Indra Prakash.

and admitting the sincerity of the Mohamedan leaders in the Non-cooperation movement, I think their religion provides an effective bar to anything of the kind. You remember the conversation, I reported to you in Calcutta, which I had with Hakim Ajmalkhan and Dr. Kitchlew. There is no finer Mohamedan in Hindustan than Hakimsaheb but can any other Muslim leader override the Quran ? I can only hope that my reading of Islamic Law is incorrect, and nothing would relieve me more than to be convinced that it is so. But if it is right then it comes to this that although we can unite against the British we cannot do so to rule Hindustan on British lines, we cannot do so to rule Hindustan on democratic lines. What is then the remedy ? I am not afraid of seven crores in Hindustan but I think the seven crores of Hindustan plus the armed hosts of Afghanistan, Central Asia, Arabia, Mesopotamia and Turkey will be irresistible. I do honestly and sincerely believe in the necessity or desirability of Hindu-Muslim unity. I am also fully prepared to trust the Muslim leaders, but what about the injunctions of the Quran and Hadis ? The leaders cannot override them. Are we then doomed ? I hope not. I hope learned mind and wise head will find some way out of this difficulty.”

In 1924 the editor of a Bengalee paper had an interview with the poet Dr. Rabindra Nath Tagore. The report of this interview states* :—

“..... another very important factor which, according to the poet, was making it almost impossible for the Hindu-Mohamedan unity to become an accomplished fact was that the Mohamedans could not confine their patriotism to any one country The poet said that he had very frankly asked many Mohamedans whether, in the event of any Mohamedan power invading India, they would stand side by side with their Hindu neighbours to defend their common land. He could not be satisfied with the reply he got from them. He said that he could definitely state that even such men as Mr. Mahomed Ali had declared that under no circumstances was it permissible for any Mohamedan, whatever his country might be, to stand against any other Mohamedan.”

II

If independence is impossible, then the destiny acceptable to a hundred per cent. Indian as the next best would be for India to have the status of a Dominion within the British Empire. Who would be content with such a destiny ? I feel certain that left to themselves the Musalmans will not be content with Dominion Status while the Hindus most certainly will. Such a statement is

* Quoted in “Through Indian Eyes” in the *Times of India* dated 18-4-24.

sure to jar on the ears of Indians and Englishmen. The Congress being loud and vociferous in its insistence of independence, the impression prevails that the Hindus are for independence and the Muslims are for Dominion Status. Those who were present at the R. T. C., could not have failed to realize how strong a hold this impression had taken of the English mind and how the claims and interests of the Hindus suffered an injury because of the twin cries raised by the Congress, namely, independence and repudiation of debts. Listening to these cries, Englishmen felt that the Hindus were the enemies of the British and the Muslims, who did not ask either for independence or repudiation, were their friends. This impression, however true it may be in the light of the avowed plans of the Congress, is a false impression created by false propaganda. For, there can be no doubt that the Hindus are at heart for Dominion Status and that the Muslims are at heart for Independence. If proof is wanted there is an abundance of it.

The question of independence was first raised in 1921. In that year the Indian National Congress, the All-India Khilafat Conference and the All-India Muslim League held their annual sessions in the city of Ahmedabad. Each had a resolution in favour of Independence moved in its session. It is interesting to note the fate which the resolution met at the hands of the Congress, the Khilafat Conference and the Muslim League.

The President of the Congress was Hakim Ajmal Khan who acted for Mr. C. R. Das, who though duly elected could not preside owing to his arrest by Government before the session commenced. In the session of the Congress, Maulana Hasrat Mohani moved a resolution pressing for a change in the creed of the Congress. The following is the summary of the proceedings* relating to the resolution :—

“Maulana Hasrat Mohani in proposing his resolution on complete independence made a long and impassioned speech in Urdu. He said, although they had been promised Swaraj last year, the redress of the Khilafat and the Punjab wrongs within a year, they had so far achieved nothing of the sort. Therefore it was no use sticking to the programme. If remaining within the British Empire or the British Commonwealth they could not have freedom, he felt that, if necessary, they should not hesitate to go out of it. In the words of Lok. Tilak

* See *The Indian Annual Register*, 1922, Appendix, pp. 64-66.

'liberty was their birth-right', and any Government which denied this elementary right of freedom of speech and freedom of action did not deserve allegiance from the people. Home Rule or Dominion lines or Colonial Self-Government could not be a substitute to them for their inborn liberty. A Government which could clap into jail such distinguished leaders of the people as Mr. Chitta Ranjan Das, Pandit Motilal Nehru, Lala Lajpat Rai and others, had forfeited all claim to respect from the people. And since the end of the year did not bring them Swaraj nothing should prevent them from taking the only course left open to them now, that of winning their freedom free from all foreign control. The resolution reads as follows:—

“The object of the Indian National Congress is the attainment of Swaraj or complete independence free from all foreign control by the people of India by all legitimate and peaceful means.’”

After several delegates had spoken in favour of it, Mr. Gandhi came forward to oppose the resolution. In opposing the resolution, Mr. Gandhi said :—

“Friends, I have said only a few words in Hindi in connection with the proposition of Mr. Hasrat Mohani. All I want to say to you in English is that the levity with which that proposition has been taken by some of you has grieved me. It has grieved me because it shows lack of responsibility. As responsible men and women we should go back to the days of Nagpur and Calcutta and we should remember what we did only an hour ago. An hour ago we passed a resolution which actually contemplates a final settlement of the Khilafat and the Punjab wrongs and transference of the power from the hands of the bureaucracy into the hands of the people by certain definite means. Are you going to rub the whole of that position from your mind by raising a false issue and by throwing a bombshell in the midst of the Indian atmosphere? I hope that those of you who have voted for the previous resolution, will think fifty times before taking up this resolution and voting for it. We shall be charged by the thinking portion of the world that we do not know really where we are. Let us understand, too, our limitations. Let Hindus and Musalmans have absolute, indissoluble unity. Who is here who can say today with confidence : ‘Yes Hindu-Muslim unity has become an indissoluble factor of Indian Nationalism ?’ Who is here who can tell me that the Parsis and the Sikhs and the Christians and the Jews and the untouchables about whom you heard this afternoon—who will tell me that those very people will not rise against any such idea ? Think therefore fifty times before you take a step which will redound not to your credit, not to your advantage, but which may cause you irreparable injury. Let us first of all gather up our strength ; let us first of all sound our own depths. Let us not go into waters whose depths we do not know, and this proposition of Mr. Hasrat Mohani lands you into depths

unfathomable. I ask you in all confidence to reject that proposition, if you believe in the proposition that you passed only an hour ago. The proposition now before you rubs off the whole of the effect of the proposition that you passed only a moment ago are creeds such simple things like clothes which a man can change at will ? For creeds people die, and for creeds people live from age to age. Are you going to change the creed which with all deliberation and after great debate in Nagpur, you accepted ? There was no limitation of one year when you accepted that creed. It is an extensive creed; it takes in all, the weakest and the strongest, and you will deny yourselves the privilege of clothing the weakest amongst yourselves with protection if you accept this limited creed of Maulana Hasrat Mohani, which does not admit the weakest of your brethren. I, therefore, ask you in all confidence to reject his proposition.”

The resolution when put to vote was declared to be lost.

The session of the All-India Khilafat Conference was presided over also by Hakim Ajmal Khan. A resolution in favour of independence was also moved in the subjects committee of this Conference. What happened to the resolution is clear from the following summary of its proceedings. The report of the proceedings says* :—

“Before the Conference adjourned at eleven in the night till the next day the President, Hakim Ajmalkhan, announced that the Subjects Committee of the Conference had, on the motion of Mr. Azad Sobhani, supported by Mr. Hasrat Mohani, by a majority resolved to ask all Mohammedans and other communities to endeavour to destroy British imperialism and secure complete independence.

“This resolution stated that whereas through the persistent policy and attitude of the British Government it cannot be expected that British Imperialism would permit the Jazirat-ul-Arab and the Islamic world to be completely free from the influence and control of non-Muslims, which means that the Khilafat cannot be secured to the extent that the Shariat demands its safety, therefore, in order to secure permanent safety of the Khilafat and the prosperity of India, it is necessary to endeavour to destroy British Imperialism. This Conference holds the view that the only way to make this effort is, for the Muslims, conjointly with other inhabitants of India, to make India completely free, and that this Conference is of opinion that Muslim opinion about Swaraj is the same, that is, complete independence, and it expects that other inhabitants of India would also hold the same point of view.

“On the Conference resuming its sitting on the second day, December 27th, 1921, a split was found to have taken place in the camp

**The Indian Annual Register*, 1922, Appendix, pp. 133-34.

over this resolution about independence. When Mr. Hasrat Mohani was going to move his resolution declaring as their goal, independence and the destruction of British Imperialism, objection was taken to its consideration by a member of Khilafat Subjects Committee on the ground that according to their constitution no motion which contemplated a change in their creed could be taken as adopted, unless it was voted for in the Subjects Committee by a majority of two-third.

“The President, Hakim Ajmalkhan, upheld this objection and ruled the independence motion out of order.

“Mr. Hasrat Mohani strongly protested and pointed out that the President had disallowed a similar objection by the same member in the Subjects Committee, while he had allowed it in the open Conference. He said that the President had manoeuvred to rule his motion out of order in order to stand in their way of declaring from that Conference that their Swaraj meant complete independence.”

The President of the All-India Muslim League was Maulana Hasrat Mohani. The report of the proceedings of the League bearing on the resolution says* :—

“The Muslim League met at 9 p.m. on 31st December 1921. After it had passed some non-contentious resolutions the President Hasrat Mohani made an announcement amidst applause that he proposed that the decision of the Subjects Committee rejecting his resolution regarding the attainment of independence and destruction of British Imperialism would be held as final and representing the opinion of the majority in the League, but that in view of the great importance of the subject he would allow a discussion on that resolution without taking any vote.

“ Mr. Azad Sobhani, who had moved the resolution in the Subjects Committee, also moved it in the League. He said he believed in Hindu-Muslim unity as absolutely essential, in non-violent non-cooperation as the only way to fight their battle and Mr. Gandhi was fully deserving the dictatorship which had been invested on him by the Congress but that he also believed that British Imperialism was the greatest danger to India and the Muslim world and must be destroyed by placing before them an ideal of independence.

“Mr. Azad Sobhani was followed by several speakers who supported him in the same vein.

“The Hon’ble Mr. Raza Ali announced that the reason for the ruling of the President was that the League did not want to take a step which the Congress had not taken. He warned them against saying big things without understanding them and reminded the audience that India was at present not ready for maintaining liberty even if it was attained.

“He asked, who would, for instance, be their Commander-in-Chief if the British left tomorrow. (A voice, ‘Enver Pasha’.)

* Ibid., Appendix, p. 78.

“The speaker emphatically declared that he would not tolerate any foreigner. He wanted an Indian Commander-in-Chief.”

The question of Independence was again raised at the Congress session held in March 1923 at Coconada but with no success.

In 1924 Mr. Gandhi presiding over the Congress session held in Belgaum said:—

“In my opinion, if the British Government mean what they say and honestly help us to equality, it would be a greater triumph than a complete severance of the British connection. I would, therefore, strive for Swaraj within the Empire but would not hesitate to sever all connection if it became a necessity through Britain’s own fault. I would thus throw the burden of separation on the British people.”

In 1925 Mr. C. R. Das again took up the theme. In his address to the Bengal Provincial Conference held in May of that year he, with the deliberate object of giving a deadly blow to the idea of independence, took particular pains to show the inferiority of the idea of Independence as compared with that of Dominion Status:—

“..... Independence, to my mind, is a narrowed ideal than that of Swaraj. It implies, it is true, the negative of the dependence ; but by itself it gives us no positive ideal. I do not for a moment suggest that independence is not consistent with Swaraj. But what is necessary is not mere independence but the establishment of Swaraj. India may be independent tomorrow in the sense that the British people may leave us to our destiny but that will not necessarily give us what I understand by Swaraj. As I pointed out in my Presidential address at Gaya, India presents an interesting but a complicated problem of consolidating the many apparently conflicting elements which go to make up the Indian people. This work of consolidation is a long process, may even be a weary process; but without this no Swaraj is possible.....

“Independence, in the second place, does not give you that idea of order which is the essence of Swaraj. The work of consolidation which I have mentioned means the establishment of that order. But let it be clearly understood that what is sought to be established must be consistent with the genius, the temperament and the traditions of the Indian people. To my mind, Swaraj implies, firstly, that we must have the freedom of working out the consolidation of the diverse elements of the Indian people ; Secondly, we must proceed with this work on National lines, not going back two thousand years ago, but going forward in the light and in the spirit of our national genius and temperament.....

“Thirdly, in the work before us, we must not be obstructed by any foreign power. What then we have to fix upon in the matter of ideal is

what I call Swaraj and not mere independence which may be the negation of Swaraj. When we are asked as to what is our national ideal of freedom, the only answer which is possible to give is Swaraj. I do not like either Home Rule or Self-Government. Possibly they come within what I have described as Swaraj. But my culture somehow or other is antagonistic to the word 'rule'—be it Home Rule or Foreign Rule.”

* * * * *

“Then comes the question as to whether this ideal is to be realised within the Empire or outside? The answer which the Congress has always given is ‘within the Empire if the Empire will recognise our right’ and ‘outside the Empire, if it does not’. We must have opportunity to live our life,—opportunity for self-realization, self-development, and self-fulfilment. The question is of living our life. If the Empire furnishes sufficient scope for the growth and development of our national life the Empire idea is to be preferred. If, on the contrary, the Empire like the Car of Jagannath crushes our life in the sweep of its imperialistic march, there will be justification for the idea of the establishment of Swaraj outside the Empire.

“Indeed, the Empire idea gives us a vivid sense of many advantages. Dominion Status is in no sense servitude. It is essentially an alliance by consent of those who form part of the Empire for material advantages in the real spirit of co-operation. Free alliance necessarily carries with it the right of separation. Before the War it was generally believed that it is only as a great confederation that the Empire or its component parts can live. It is realised that under modern conditions no nation can live in isolation and the Dominion Status, while it affords complete protection to each constituent composing the great Commonwealth of Nations called the British Empire, secures to each the right to realise itself, develop itself and fulfil itself and therefore it expresses and implies all the elements of Swaraj which I have mentioned.

“To me the idea is specially attractive because of its deep spiritual significance. I believe in world peace, in the ultimate federation of the world; and I think that the great Commonwealth of Nations called the British Empire—a federation of diverse races, each with its distinct life, distinct civilization, its distinct mental outlook—if properly led with statesmen at the helm is bound to make lasting contribution to the great problem that awaits the statesmen, the problem of knitting the world into, the greatest federation the mind can conceive—the federation of the human race. But if only properly led with statesmen at the helm;—for the development of the idea involves apparent sacrifice on the part of the constituent nations and it certainly involves the giving up for good the Empire idea with its ugly attribute of domination. I think it is for the good of India, for the good of the world that India should strive for freedom within the Commonwealth and so serve the cause of humanity.”

Mr. Das not only insisted that Dominion Status was better than Independence but went further and got the Conference to pass the following resolution on the goal of India's political evolution :—

“1. This Conference declares that the National ideal of Swaraj involves the right of the Indian Nation to, live its own life, to have the opportunity of self-realization, self-development and self-fulfilment and the liberty to work for the consolidation of the diverse elements which go to make up the Indian Nation unimpeded and unobstructed by any outside domination.

“2. That if the British Empire recognises such right and does not obstruct the realisation of Swaraj and is prepared to give such opportunity and undertakes to make the necessary sacrifices to make such rights effective, this Conference calls upon the Indian Nation to realise its Swaraj within the British Commonwealth”

It may be noted that Mr. Gandhi was present throughout the session. But there was no word of dissent coming from him. On the contrary, he approved of the stand taken by Mr. Das.

With these facts, who can doubt that the Hindus are for Dominion Status and the Muslims are for Independence ? But if there be any doubt still remaining, the repercussions in Muslim quarters over the Nehru Committee's Report in 1928 must dissolve it completely. The Nehru Committee appointed by the Congress to frame a constitution for India accepted Dominion Status as the basis for India's constitution and rejected independence. It is instructive to note the attitude adopted by the Congress and the Muslim political organizations in the country towards the Nehru Report.

The Congress in its session held at Calcutta in 1928 passed a resolution moved by Mr. Gandhi which was in the following terms:—

“This Congress, having considered the constitution recommended by the All-Parties Committee Report, welcomes it as a great contribution towards the solution of India's political and communal problems, and congratulates the Committee on the virtual unanimity of its recommendations and, whilst adhering to the resolution relating to complete independence passed at the Madras Congress approves of the constitution drawn up by the Committee as a great step in political advance, especially as it represents the largest measure of agreement attained among the important parties in the country.

“Subject to the exigencies of the political situation this Congress will adopt the constitution in its entirety if it is accepted by the British

Parliament on or before December 31, 1929, but in the event of its non-acceptance by that date or its earlier rejection, Congress will organise a non-violent non-co-operation by advising the country to refuse taxation or in such other manner as may be decided upon. Consistently with the above, nothing in this resolution shall interfere with the carrying on, in the name of the Congress, of the propaganda for complete independence.”

This shows that Hindu opinion is not in favour of Independence but in favour of Dominion Status. Some will take exception to this statement. It may be asked what about the Congress resolution of 1927? It is true that the Congress in its Madras session held, in 1927 did pass the following resolution moved by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru:—

“This Congress declares the goal of the Indian people to be complete National Independence”.

But there is enough evidence to support the contention that this resolution did not and does not speak the real mind of the Hindus in the Congress.

The resolution came as a surprise. There was no indication of it in the speech of Dr. Ansari* who presided over the 1927 session. The Chairman† of the Reception Committee only referred to it in passing, not as an urgent but a contingent line of action.

There was no forethought about the resolution. It was the result of a coup and the coup was successful because of three factors.

In the first place, there was then a section in the Congress which was opposed to the domination of Pandit Motilal Nehru and Mr. Gandhi, particularly the former. This group was led by Mr. Srinivas Iyengar who was the political rival of Pandit Motilal.

* This is all that Dr. Ansari said about the subject in his speech :

“Whatever be the final form of the constitution, one thing may be said with some degree of certainty, that it will have to be on federal lines providing for a United States of India with existing Indian States as autonomous units of the Federation taking their proper share in the defence of the country, in the regulation of the nation’s foreign affairs and other joint and common interests”.—*The Indian Quarterly Register*, 1927, Vol. II, p. 372.

† Mr. Muthuranga Mudaliar said :

“We ought to make it known that if Parliament continues in its present insolent mood, we must definitely start on an intensive propaganda for the severance of India from the Empire. Whenever the time may come for the effective assertion of Indian nationalism, Indian aspiration will then be towards free nationhood, untrammelled even by the nominal suzerainty of the King of England. It behoves English statesmanship to take careful note of this fact. Let them not drive us to despair.”—*Ibid.*, p. 356.

They were searching for a plan which would destroy the power and prestige of Pandit Motilal and Mr. Gandhi. They knew that the only way to win people to their side was to take a more extreme position and to show that their rivals were really moderates, and as moderation was deemed by Congressmen to be a sin, they felt that this plan was sure to succeed. They made the goal of India the battle-ground, and knowing that Pandit Motilal and Gandhi were for Dominion Status, put forth the goal of Independence. In the second place, there was a section in the Congress which was led by Mr. Vithalbhai Patel. This section was in touch with the Irish Sinn Fein party and was canvassing its help in the cause of India. The Irish Sinn Fein party was not willing to render any help unless the Indians declared that their goal was Independence. This section was anxious to change the goal from Dominion Status to Independence in order to secure Irish help. To these two factors was added a third namely, the speech made by Lord Birkenhead, the then Secretary of State for India, on the occasion of the appointment of the Simon Commission when he taunted the Indians on their incapacity to produce a constitution. The speech was regarded as a great insult by Indian politicians. It is the combination of these three factors which was responsible for the passing of this resolution. Indeed, the resolution was passed more from the motive* of giving a fitting reply to Lord Birkenhead than from the motive of defining the political goal of the country and if Mr. Gandhi and Pandit Motilal Nehru kept quiet it was largely because the storm created by the intemperate language of Lord Birkenhead against Indians was so great that they thought it wise to bow to it rather than engage upon the task of sweeping it off which they would have otherwise easily done.

That this resolution did not speak the real mind of the Hindus in the Congress is beyond doubt. Otherwise, it is not possible to explain how the Nehru Committee could have flouted the Madras resolution of 1927 by adopting Dominion Status as the basis of the constitutional structure framed by it. Nor is it possible to explain how the Congress adopted Dominion Status in 1928 if it

*Mr. Sambamurti in seconding the resolution said :

"The resolution is the only reply to the arrogant challenge thrown by Lord Birkenhead".—*The Indian Quarterly Register*, 1927, Vol. II, p. 381.

had really accepted* independence in 1927 as the resolution says. The clause in the resolution that the Congress would accept Dominion Status if given before 31st December 1929, if not, it would change its faith from Dominion Status to Independence was only a face-saving device and did not connote a real change of mind. For time can never be of the essence in a matter of such deep concern as the political destiny of the country.

That notwithstanding the resolution of 1927, the Congress continued to believe in Dominion Status and did not believe in Independence, is amply borne out by the pronouncements made from time to time by Mr. Gandhi who is the oracle of the Congress. Anyone, who studies Mr. Gandhi's pronouncements on this subject from 1929 onwards, cannot help feeling that Mr. Gandhi has not been happy about the resolution on Independence and that he has ever since felt necessary to wheel the Congress back to Dominion Status. He began with the gentle process of interpreting it away. The goal was first reduced from Independence to substance of Independence. From substance of Independence it was reduced to equal partnership and from equal partnership it was brought back to its original position. The wheel completed the turn when Mr. Gandhi in 1937 gave the following letter to Mr. Pollock for the information of the English people :—

“ Your question is whether I retain the same opinion as I did at the Round Table Conference in 1931. I said then, and repeat now, that, so far as I am concerned, if Dominion Status were offered to India in terms of the Statute of Westminster, i.e., the right to secede at will, I would unhesitatingly accept,”†

Turning to the pronouncements of Muslim political organizations on the Nehru Report it is interesting to note the reasons given by them for its rejection. These reasons are wholly unexpected. No doubt some Muslim organizations such as the Muslim League

* Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in moving the resolution said :

“It declares that the Congress stands today for complete Independence. Nonetheless it leaves the doors of the Congress open to such persons as may perhaps be satisfied with a lesser goal”.—

Ibid., p. 381.

†*Times of India* 1-2-37. In view of this, the declaration made by the National Convention— consisting of the members elected to the new Provincial legislatures under the new constitution— on the 20th March 1937 held at Delhi in favour of independence has no significance. But from his having launched the Quit India movement it may be said that Mr. Gandhi now believes in Independence.

rejected the Report because it recommended the abolition of separate electorates. But that was certainly not the reason why it was condemned by the Khilafat Conference or the Jamiat-ul-Ulema—the two Muslim organizations which went with the Congress through the same fiery ordeal of non-co-operation and civil disobedience and whose utterances expressed far more truly the real opinion of Muslim masses on the issues relating to the political affairs of the country than did the utterances of any other Muslim organization.

Maulana Mahomed Ali set out his reasons for the rejection of the Nehru Report in his Presidential address to the All-India Khilafat Conference held in Calcutta in 1928. He said* :—

“ [I] was a member of the Indian National Congress, its Working Committee, the All-India Muslim League and [I] have come to the Khilafat Conference to express (my views) on the important political issues of the time, which should have the serious attention of the whole Muslim community.

* * * * *

“ In the All-Parties Convention he had said that India should have complete independence and there was no communalism in it. Yet he was being heckled at every moment and stopped during his speech at every step.

* * * * *

“The Nehru Report had as its preamble admitted the bondage of servitude.... Freedom and Dominion Status were widely divergent things.....

* * * * *

“I ask, when you boast of your nationalism and condemn communalism, show me a country in the world like your India—your nationalist India.

* * * * *

“You make compromises in your constitution every day with false doctrines, immoral conceptions and wrong ideas but you make no compromise with our communalists — with separate electorates and reserved seats. Twenty-five per cent, is our portion of population and yet you will not give us 33 per cent, in the Assembly. You are a Jew, a Bania. But to the English you give the status of your dominion.”

**The Indian Quarterly Register*, 1928, Vol. II, pp. 402-403.

The conference passed a short resolution in the following pithy terms:—

“This Conference declares once more that complete independence is our goal”.

Maulana Hasrat Mohani, as President of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema Conference held in Allahabad in 1931, gave the same reasons for condemning the Nehru Report in words measured but not less scathing. Said* the Maulana :—

“My political creed with regard to India is now well known to everybody. I cannot accept anything short of complete independence, and, that too, on the model of the United States of America or the Soviet Russia which is essentially (1) democratic, (2) federal and (3) centrifugal, and in which the rights of Muslim minorities are safeguarded.

“For some time the Jamiat-ul-Ulema of Delhi held fast to the creed of complete independence and it was mostly for this reason that it repudiated the Nehru Report which devised a unitary constitution instead of a federal one. Besides, when, after the Lahore session, the Congress, at the instance of Mahatma Gandhi, declared the burial of the Nehru Report on the banks of the Ravi and the resolution of complete independence was unanimously agreed upon, the Delhi Jamiat ventured to co-operate with the Congress and its programme of civil disobedience simply because it was the duty of every Indian, Hindu or Muslim, to take part in the struggle for independence.

“But unfortunately Gandhiji very soon went back upon his words and (1) while yet in jail he told the British journalist Mr. Slocombe that by complete independence he meant only the substance of independence, (2) besides, when he was released on expressing his inclination for compromise he devised the illusory term of ‘Purna Swaraj’ in place of complete independence and openly declared that in ‘Purna Swaraj’ there was no place for severance of the British connection, (3) by making a secret pact with Lord Irwin he definitely adopted the ideal of Dominion Status under the British Crown.

“After this change of front by Gandhiji the Delhi Jamiat ought to have desisted from blindly supporting the Mahatma and like the Nehru Report it should have completely rejected this formula of the Congress Working Committee by which the Nehru Report was sought to be revived at Bombay.

“But we do not know what unintelligible reasons induced the Delhi Jamiat-ul-Ulema to adopt ‘Purna Swaraj’ as their ideal, in spite of the knowledge that it does not mean complete independence but something

**The Indian Quarterly Register*, 1931, Vol. II, pp. 238-39.

even worse than complete independence. And the only explanation for adopting this creed is said to be that, although Gandhiji has accepted Dominion Status, he still insists that Britain should concede the right of secession from the British Empire to the Indians.

“Although it is quite clear that insistence on this right has no better worth than the previous declaration of complete independence, in other words, just as Gandhiji insisted on complete independence with the sole object of forcing the British Government to accede to the demand of Dominion Status, which was the sole ultimate aim of the Mahatma, in the same way the leaders of the Congress insisted upon the right of secession with the object of extorting the largest measure of political rights from the British people who might not go beyond a certain limit in displeasing them. Otherwise Gandhiji and his followers know it full well that even if this right of secession is given to Indians, it would perhaps be never put into practice.

“If someone considers this contention of mine to be based on suspicion and contends that the Congress will certainly declare for secession from the Empire whenever there is need of it, I will ask him to let me know what will be the form of Indian Government after the British connection is withdrawn. It is clear that no one can conceive of a despotic form and a democratic form, whether it be unitary or federal but centripetal, will be nothing more than Hindu Raj which the Musalmans can in no circumstances accept. Now remains only one form, viz., after complete withdrawal of the British connection India with its autonomous Provinces and States forms into united centrifugal democratic government on the model of the United States Republic or Soviet Russia. But this can never be acceptable to the Mahasabhaite Congress or a lover of Britain like Mahatma Gandhi.

“Thus the Jamiat-ul-Ulema of Delhi after washing its hands of complete independence has stultified itself, but thank God the Ulemas of Cawnpore, Lucknow, Badaun, etc., still hold fast to their pledge and will remain so, God willing. Some weak-kneed persons urge against this highest ideal that, when it is not possible for the present to attain it, there is no use talking about it. We say to them that it is not at all useless but rather absolutely necessary, for if the highest ideal is not always kept before view, it is liable to be forgotten.

“We must, therefore, oppose Dominion Status in all circumstances as this is not the half-way house or part of our ultimate aim, but its very negation and rival. If Gandhiji reaches England and the Round Table Conference is successfully concluded, giving India Dominion Status of any kind, with or without safeguards, the conception of complete independence will completely vanish or at any rate will not be thought of for a very long time to come.”