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MOSLEM INDIA ON GUARD

DANGERS OF HINDU "DEMOCRACY"

CONGRESS CHALLENGED

From Our Correspondent in India

The Congress demand for a British declaration of independence has greatly intensified the opposition between the Hindu and Moslem communities and has introduced new factors into Indian politics which may have far-reaching effects upon the ultimate political destiny of the country. The apparent subsidence of Moslem influence which accompanied the introduction of Provincial Autonomy has been followed by a Moslem resurgence, expressing itself in an unwillingness to submit to majority rule on the ground that its working in India is undemocratic and implies Hindu domination.

By basing their plea for independence on the theoretic principles of majority rule the Congress leaders have impressed oversea democracies as to the reasonableness of their case. Congress propagandists in Great Britain and the United States assert that a settlement of the Indian controversy can easily be obtained by the simple application of the democratic principles which are understood and appreciated in those countries. This is far from being the case. Indian political conditions to-day are such that the immediate application of normal democratic methods for solving all problems will lead to chaos. The Moslems are not prepared to subject themselves to the majority community which encircles them, and assertions are openly made that civil war will follow any settlement that places the Moslems in the hands of the Hindu majority which composes the Congress Party.

British faith in democracy as applying to India found its expression in the scheme of Federation, which aimed at associating British India and the Indian States in a federal project, based on compromises and calculated to bring the federal units into constitutional harmony with the democratic ideals of the British Commonwealth. The scheme did not represent democracy in its fullest sense, but it marked a stepping-stone towards it. The preliminary stage of the 1935 reforms saw the establishment of Provincial Autonomy, which transferred Provincial control from British to Indian hands, and represented the expansion of the democratic system in a more elaborate form than had been previously attempted in India. The Moslems claim that this measure of democracy has failed, holding that Provincial Autonomy in its working in the Congress-governed Provinces has emerged as a dictatorship, exercised by an inner cabinet of the Congress Working Committee, which Moslems describe as a caucus, with powers to order Congress Ministries to assume and abandon office for political considerations which have no bearing on Provincial affairs.

A CONGRESS BLUNDER

In the first elections under the new Constitution the Congress Party secured control of eight of the 11 Provinces. This unexpected accession to power warped the judgment of Congress leaders. Believing that its success at the polls justified its claim to represent all India, the Congress Party proceeded to launch a "mass cam-

paigned of unifying the Moslems against the Congress in a manner hitherto unknown. The Moslem League came into its own. Before the elections the League had a loosely-knit organization, was divided within itself, and was marred by jealousies among its leaders; and after the elections it was not called upon to form Ministries, even in the Moslem Provinces. The Congress campaign among the Moslem masses changed all that. The belief emerged that the Congress Party was trying to cause divisions among the Moslems, with the object of impressing the world that the Congress Party was the sole representative organization of politically-minded India. The Congress policy gave new life to the Moslem League whose members rallied with such enthusiasm behind their leader, Mr. M. A. Jinnah, that he was virtually given a blank cheque on its behalf.

The League quickly became the focusing agency, on an all-India scale, for Moslem political opinion. Although non-League Ministries held office in the important Provinces of the Punjab and Bengal, the Prime Ministers of these territories entered into new associations with Mr. Jinnah. The League achieved a new unity and a new importance in current politics, and no other Moslem party has such widespread influence. The Jamiat-ul-Ulema Hind (Society of Learned Men of India) has primarily a religious basis, and its present incursions into politics are led by men lately connected with the League. The Ahrars attained importance in the Punjab some years ago, when its members flocked in bands into Kashmir to take part in political activities there, but its attitude in the Shahidganj affair in Lahore lessened its prestige among orthodox Moslems. There is a general inclination to associate the Jamiat-ul-Ulema and the Ahrars with the Congress political philosophy.

MR. JINNAH

It is held by some that the younger educated Moslems of to-day disagree with League policy, chiefly because League leadership has largely been based on communal considerations. But support for the League has lately been developed for political reasons, particularly since the Congress leaders demanded a declaration of independence. The majority of politically conscious Moslems support the League, not necessarily by membership, and no existing Moslem party is strong enough to supplant it. Nor can any Moslem group produce a leader to supersede Mr. Jinnah. The communal issue remains intricately interwoven with the constitutional controversy, but it has lately assumed a new character, in which the Moslems show concern for their future constitutional status, quite apart from the religious features of communalism.

The League has made it clear that no assurance about constitutional advance should be given to the Congress leaders without its consent and approval; and it holds that no Constitution should be framed and adopted without that consent and approval. The League does not recognize the authority either of the British Government or the Congress Party to determine the future constitutional position of the Moslem community, and it rejects any proposal for a constitutional solution along lines implying the supremacy of the Hindu majority. The League wants the British Government to review and revise the 1935 Constitution *de novo* in the light of the experience gained in the working of Provincial Autonomy and the political tendencies which have emerged since its introduction. Moslems claim that under Congress Governments their community has suffered, asserting that Congress policy aims at "the intimidation and demoralization of the Moslems, the extermination of the healthy and nation-building influences of Moslem culture, the suppression of Moslem religious customs and their religious obligations, and the elimination of their political