

## FREEDOM

### One Era Ends: A New Begins

Today the people of India achieve their freedom. That freedom is complete. By passing the Indian Independence Act, the British Parliament transferred to the two new Indian Dominions full powers to look after their own affairs and as Dominions they have the right, if they so desire, to leave the British Commonwealth of Nations at any time in the future. Thus ends a long political struggle marked by many varying phases. On this day it behoves the people of the two new States to remember with gratitude those giants of the past who sowed what their descendants are reaping. No brief list of their names can pretend to be complete, but among them we would recall Dadabhoi Naoroji, Pherozeshah Mehta, Gokhale, Tilak, Annie Besant, W. C. Bonnerji, Surendranath Banerji, C. R. Das, Motilal Nehru and a host of others. Today we happily have with us many who see the fruition of their life's work, including Mr. Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, to mention only a few. Mr. Jinnah has got Pakistan. Nor must we forget the tremendous service rendered by Lord Mountbatten in the final stages. But it is Mr. Gandhi whom the vast majority of his fellow-countrymen will regard as the architect of their freedom and the object of their veneration. Before Mr. Gandhi became the dominant influence in the Indian National Congress, the men who advanced the country's political claims were a group of what might be termed intellectuals. To Mr. Gandhi must go the credit for making the movement for political freedom a mass agitation; it was he who took it out of the hands of the few and gave it to the many. From the day that Mr. Gandhi broad-based his appeal, its success—despite mistakes and reversals—was eventually certain.

#### PARTITION

The one disappointment to Mr. Gandhi—as to millions of his fellow-countrymen—is the fact that freedom comes to an India divided into two separate States. But the roots of that unhappy division lie deep in history. It was the chaos in this country following the break up of the Moghul Empire which enabled merchant adventurers from the West to gain a foothold in the country. India became the cockpit of vested foreign interests struggling for supremacy, and out of that welter—in which British, French, Dutch and Portuguese contended—the British finally emerged triumphant. The "Governor and Company of Mer-

chants of London trading into "the East Indies"—the East India Company—was formed in 1600, and by the middle of the 18th century it had established a firm hold over large areas of the country. Its administration continued until after the uprising of 1857, which sealed the fate of the Company after a life of more than two and half centuries. In 1858 India was taken over by the Crown, with the promise of good and impartial government to all castes and creeds contained in Queen Victoria's famous proclamation. So long as a foreign power ruled the country, members of all communities were united in the struggle for emancipation, but as soon as the prospect of freedom appeared on the horizon, the embers of a centuries-old rivalry were fanned into flame. There arose the question—to whom is political power to be bequeathed? Everybody now admits that in the handling of this problem all parties were to blame. Mistakes—the consequences of which could not be seen at the time—were made, and age-old passions were revived. The result we see today in the creation of Pakistan. But we firmly hold the view that time, forbearance and statesmanship will heal the breach. When fears and suspicions have died down, we believe that the forces making for the essential unity of the country will establish themselves, and that they will bring about an honourable partnership, thereby bestowing on this sub-continent its rightful and powerful place among the countries of the world.

#### PEACEFUL TRANSFER

Let us be thankful for one great blessing. It is one of the biggest triumphs of democracy that freedom has come to the people of this country without a violent and bloody upheaval. We do not forget the struggles of the past, nor the fact that they occasionally led to bloodshed; to Mr. Gandhi again must go the credit for the non-violent form which mass agitations generally took. Yet never before in history has so vast transfer of power been accomplished with so much speed and with so much goodwill on both sides. As a writer in one of the articles which we publish today puts it, nothing in all their long connection with this country has become the British people better than their method of leaving it. Mr. Attlee, the British Prime Minister, described his Government's action as the fulfilment of a mission. For many years past successive British Governments have proclaimed their intention of leading India to self-government; the dispute was not so much over the goal as over the speed and method by which that goal could be achieved. The people of this sub-continent, freed from outside control, will develop in future according to their own genius and in their own best interest. Yet they inherit from British rule three things which are worth adhering to in the interests of the common people—freedom from external aggression, a sound administrative system, and the rule of law.

#### THE FUTURE

What of the future? On this great day, amid their rejoicings, the people must dedicate themselves to the solemn tasks which lie ahead. Problems connected with the welfare of the masses, with food and clothing, with black-marketing and corruption, with social injustice, crowd heavily upon our future rulers. It must be their task to see that these grievances are remedied as speedily and as completely as is humanly possible. On the other hand, the people themselves have a duty to perform; it is to ensure that progress is achieved in a peaceful and orderly atmosphere. Nothing could more quickly ruin the country than internal upheavals of a political or social nature. India and Pakistan are starting on their voyage of independence as democracies. The success of the democratic system depends on the willingness of the public to subscribe to democratic methods—the parliamentary form of government, toleration of each other's point of view, and the friendly co-operation of people of all classes and creeds. While pressing for the redress of grievances in a constitutional manner, the public must not be encouraged to any form of direct action, since direct action is the negation of democracy. In our present state it is definitely unpatriotic. If orderly progress is achieved, a great future lies ahead of this country. With its tremendous resources of men and material it can provide not only for the prosperity of its own people, but it can play a great part in the affairs of the nations towards the uplift of mankind and justice for all. To that noble end, amid their rejoicings, the people must dedicate themselves. One era has ended; another, full of hope and faith and pregnant with immense possibilities, opens before us.