

NEW DELHI, JULY 13, 1947

Brothers and sisters,

. . . There has been a Press conference addressed by Mr. Jinnah. . . . He holds out the assurance that the minorities in Pakistan will not be put to any hardship. They shall be accorded the same treatment as Muslims. The Hindus will be free to visit their temples and the Sikhs their Gurudwaras. Of course, I cannot take anyone's word at face value. Even today in Pakistan carnage and arson are rampant. This is happening in the Indian Union too. Who is doing this? Is it only the Muslims or are Hindus too responsible for it? I am flooded with letters of all kinds. People ask why they cannot live in peace. I ask Mr. Jinnah when his assurance will be put into practice. Will it be effective only after August 15? Sind will be a part of Pakistan. The Muslim League has the most influence there. Mr. Jinnah has become the Governor-General. . . . We are in some way still connected with him through the Governor-General and the Governor-General still remains responsible to the king. Mr. Jinnah also remains the President of the League. This further strengthens his status. He should act with justice. Why should Sindhis be running away from Sind? If even a single Sindhi leaves Sind it will be a matter of shame to Mr. Jinnah. . . .

I do not know what has happened . . . in U. P. But the Muslims of U. P. are walking in fear. They do not know whether they can continue to live there or not. But why can't they live there, I ask? I ask U. P. and Bihar as I ask Mr. Jinnah: Can Muslims live in those provinces or not? . . . If I can say anything on behalf of Muslims or the Indian Union, it is only this, that everyone should have justice. If this is ensured then there will be nothing more left to say and the pain of partition will have been forgotten. . . .

Even if we have not learnt the lesson of ahimsa, we should at least from our thirty years of experience learn the lesson that we shall never again become slaves irrespective of whether we achieve this through violence or non-violence. I do not say that it should be only through non-violence. I have been saying this since I was in Bihar. People ask for guns and swords. I say, why do you want these weapons? Proclaim that you will never bow down. I said the same in Noakhali. If we can show that we have learnt this lesson after thirty years of experience, it will not matter whether people are violent or non-violent. If they . . . ask me, I shall still say that they must follow only non-violence. If a single individual has to defy the world he can do so only through non-violence. Where there is non-violence there is God. The sword breaks before it.

[From CWMG, 88:329–331.]

ABUL KALAM AZAD: MUSLIM NATIONALIST

There were many Muslims who rejected the two-nation theory of Jinnah and the Muslim League. They were convinced that the best hope for the future of the Muslim population of the subcontinent was in a united India, and they supported the In-

dian National Congress. Among them was Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (1888–1958), a distinguished scholar and writer who was president of the Congress during the difficult period from 1940 to 1946. Born in Mecca of an Indian father and an Arabian mother, he received a traditional Islamic education in Calcutta, but he was persuaded by the writings of Sayyid Ahmad Khan to study the historical and philosophical heritage of Europe through the medium of English. “The ideas I had acquired from my family and early training could no longer satisfy me,” he wrote. “I felt that I must find the truth for myself. Almost instinctively I began to move out of my family orbit and seek my own path.” He adopted the pen name of Azad (“free”) to indicate this change in outlook, and joined an all-Hindu revolutionary group (partly through the influence of Aurobindo Ghose). In 1912 he founded the Urdu journal *al-Hilāl* (“the crescent moon,” an Islamic symbol). Like Mohamed Ali, he was kept in detention during World War I and later joined the pro-caliphate non-cooperation movement under Gandhi’s leadership. Unlike Mohamed Ali, Jinnah, and others, however, he remained within the Congress, believing that Muslims and Hindus could share citizenship in an independent India without compromising their religious beliefs. He became the Union of India’s minister of education from its birth until his death. His great work of scholarship was his commentary on the Quran in Urdu, in which he stressed God’s benevolent guidance of mankind.

THE MUSLIMS OF INDIA AND THE FUTURE OF INDIA

The following selection is taken from the speech Maulana Azad gave as Congress president in 1940. He said that when India adopted a new constitution, the rights of the minorities would be guaranteed; furthermore, the minorities, not the majority, would decide what safeguards were necessary.

We have considered the problem of the minorities of India. But are the Muslims such a minority as to have the least doubt or fear about their future? A small minority may legitimately have fears and apprehensions, but can the Muslims allow themselves to be disturbed by them? . . . Nothing is further removed from the truth than to say that Indian Muslims occupy the position of a political minority. It is equally absurd for them to be apprehensive about their rights and interests in a democratic India. . . .

During the last sixty years, this artificial and untrue picture of India was made. . . . This was the result of the same policy of divide and rule which took particular shape in the minds of British Officialdom in India after the Congress launched the national movement. The object of this was to prepare the Musalmans for use against the new political awakening. In this plan, prominence was given to two points. First, that India was inhabited by two different communities, the Hindus and the Musalmans, and for this reason no demand could be made in the name of a united nation. Second: that numerically the Musalmans were far less than the Hindus, and because of this, the . . . consequence of the establishment

of democratic institutions in India would be to establish the rule of the Hindu majority and to jeopardise the existence of the Muslims. Thus were sown the seeds of disunity by British Imperialism on Indian soil. The plant grew and was nurtured and spread its nettles. . . .

Politically speaking, the word minority does not mean just a group that is so small in number and so lacking in other qualities that give strength, that it has no confidence in its own capacity to protect itself from the much larger group that surrounds it. It is not enough that the group should be relatively the smaller, but that it should be absolutely so small as to be incapable of protecting its interests. Thus this is not merely a question of numbers; other factors count also. . . . Let us apply it to the position of the Muslims in India. . . . They stand erect, and to imagine that they exist helplessly as a "minority" is to delude oneself.

The Muslims in India number between eighty and ninety millions. The same type of social or racial divisions, which affect other communities, do not divide them. The powerful bonds of Islamic brotherhood and equality have protected them to a large extent from the weakness that flows from social divisions. It is true that they number only one-fourth of the total population; but the question is not one of population ratio, but of the large numbers and the strength behind them. Can such a vast mass of humanity have any legitimate reason for apprehension that in a free and democratic India, it might be unable to protect its rights and interest?

These numbers are not confined to any particular area but spread out unevenly over different parts of the country. . . . The position of the Muslims is not that of a minority only. If they are in a minority in seven provinces, they are in a majority in five. This being so, there is absolutely no reason why they should be oppressed by the feeling of being a minority.

Whatever may be the details of the future constitution of India, we know that it will be an all-India federation which is, in the fullest sense, democratic, and every unit of which will have autonomy in regard to internal affairs. The federal centre will be concerned only with all-India matters of common concern, such as foreign relations, defence, customs, etc. Under these circumstances, can any one who has any conception of the actual working of a democratic constitution, allow himself to be led astray by this false issue of majority and minority? . . .

I am a Musalman and am proud of that. . . . Islam's splendid traditions of thirteen hundred years are my inheritance. I am unwilling to lose . . . the smallest part of [it]. The teaching and history of Islam, its arts and letters and civilisation are . . . my fortune. It is my duty to protect them.

As a Musalman I have a special interest in Islamic religion and culture and I cannot tolerate any interference with them. But in addition to these sentiments, I have others also which the realities and conditions of my life have forced upon me. The spirit of Islam does not come in the way of these sentiments; it guides and helps me forward. I am proud of being an Indian. . . .

It was India's historic destiny that many human races and cultures and religions should flow to her, finding a home in her hospitable soil, and that many a caravan should find rest here. . . . One of the last of these caravans . . . was that of the followers of Islam. This came here and settled here for good. This led to a meeting of the culture-currents of two different races. Like the Ganga and Jumna, they flowed for a while through separate courses, but nature's immutable law brought them together and joined them in a sangam [union]. This fusion was a notable event in history. . . . We gave her, what she needed most, the most precious of gifts from Islam's treasury, the message of democracy and human equality. . . .

Eleven hundred years of common history have enriched India with our common achievement. Our languages, our poetry . . . our culture, our art, our dress, our manners and customs . . . the . . . happenings of our daily life, everything bears the stamp of our joint endeavour. . . . Our languages were different, but we grew to use a common language; our manners and customs were dissimilar, but they acted and reacted on each other and . . . produced a new synthesis. . . .

This thousand years of our joint life has moulded us into a common nationality. This cannot be done artificially. Nature does her fashioning through her hidden processes in the course of centuries. The cast has now been moulded and destiny has set her seal upon it. Whether we like it or not, we have now become an Indian nation, united and indivisible.

[From Sankar Ghose, ed., *Congress Presidential Speeches* (Calcutta: West Bengal Pradesh Committee, 1972), 356–363.]

THE STEPS TO PARTITION

In his last years, Azad, with the help of writer and educationist Humayun Kabir, and possibly others as well, wrote an account of the Indian freedom struggle entitled *India Wins Freedom*. The first published edition omitted some crucial passages from Azad's original manuscript, in which Azad's version of Partition history differs from that of some of his closest colleagues, including Jawaharlal Nehru. A second, more complete edition restores those passages. Below, passages that were originally omitted in the first edition and that have been added in the second are rendered in italics. There were objections to Azad's account, including allegations that he exaggerated his role and often did not tell the truth. The fullest critique is by Rajmohan Gandhi, *India Wins Errors* (1989).

On 15 March 1946, Mr. Attlee made a statement in the House of Commons on the Indian situation. This statement had no precedents in the history of Indo-British relations. He frankly admitted that the situation had completely changed and demanded a new approach. . . . He went on to say that he did not wish to stress on the differences between the Indians, for . . . Indians were united in

their desire for freedom. This was the underlying demand of all the Indian people, whether they were Hindus or Muslims, Sikhs or Marathas, politicians or civil servants. Mr. Attlee frankly admitted that the conception of nationalism had continually grown stronger. . . . He concluded by announcing that the Cabinet Mission was going out in a positive mood. . . .

The Cabinet Mission arrived in India on 23 March. . . . I came to the conclusion that the Constitution of India must from the nature of the case be federal. Further, it must be so framed as to ensure complete autonomy to the provinces in as many subjects as possible. We had to reconcile the claims of provincial autonomy with national unity. . . .

It was clear to me that defence, communications and foreign affairs were subjects which could be dealt adequately only on an all India basis. Any attempt to deal with them on a provincial level would defeat the purpose and destroy the very basis of a federal Government. Certain other subjects would be equally obviously a provincial responsibility but there would be a third list of subjects where the provincial legislature would decide whether to retain them as provincial subjects or delegate them to the Centre. . . .

If a Constitution was framed which embodied this principle, it would ensure that in the Muslim majority provinces, all subjects except three could be administered by the province itself. This would eliminate from the mind of the Muslims all fears of domination by the Hindus. Once such fears were allayed, it was likely that the provinces would find it an advantage to delegate some other subjects as well to the Central Government. I was also satisfied that even apart from communal considerations, this was the best political solution for a country like India. . . . The Working Committee had given me full powers to negotiate with the Cabinet Mission. . . . I met the members of the Cabinet Mission for the first time on 6 April 1946. . . . I indicated the solution I had already framed. As soon as I said that the Centre should have a minimum list of compulsory subjects and an additional list of optional ones, Lord Pethick-Lawrence said, "You are in fact suggesting a new solution of the communal problem."

Sir Stafford Cripps . . . seemed to be satisfied with my approach.

The . . . Working Committee was convinced about the soundness of the proposal and Gandhiji expressed his complete agreement with the solution. . . .

The Muslim League had for the first time spoken of a possible division of India in its Lahore Resolution. This later on came to be known as the Pakistan Resolution. The solution I suggested was intended to meet the fears of the Muslim League. . . . I felt that the time had come to place it [my scheme] before the country. Accordingly on 15 April 1946, I issued a statement. . . .

I have considered from every possible point of view the scheme of Pakistan as formulated by the Muslim League . . . I have come to the conclusion that it is harmful not only for India as a whole but for Muslims in particular. And in fact it creates more problems than it solves. I must

confess that the very term Pakistan goes against my grain. It suggests that some portions of the world are pure while others are impure. Such a division of territories into pure and impure is un-Islamic and is more in keeping with orthodox Brahmanism which divides men and countries into holy and unholy—a division which is a repudiation of the very spirit of Islam. . . . The prophet says, “God has made the whole world a mosque for me.”

Further, it seems that the scheme of Pakistan is a symbol of defeatism and has been built up on the analogy of the Jewish demand for a national home. It is a confession that Indian Muslims cannot hold their own in India as a whole and would be content to withdraw to a corner. . . .

One can sympathise with the aspiration of the Jews for such a national home, as they are scattered all over the world. . . . The condition of Indian Muslims is quite otherwise. Over 90 million in number, they are in quantity and quality a sufficiently important element in Indian life to influence decisively all questions of administration and policy. . . .

In such a context, the demand for Pakistan loses all force. As a Muslim, I for one am not prepared for a moment to give up my right to treat the whole of India as my domain and to share in the shaping of its political and economic life. . . .

As is well known, Mr. Jinnah’s Pakistan scheme is based on his two nation theory. His thesis is that India contains many nationalities based on religious differences. Of them the two major nations, the Hindus and Muslims, must as separate nations have separate states. When Dr. Edward Thompson once pointed out to Mr. Jinnah that Hindus and Muslims live side by side in thousands of Indian towns, villages and hamlets, Mr. Jinnah replied that this in no way affected their separate nationality. Two nations according to Mr. Jinnah confront one another in every hamlet, village and town, and he, therefore, desires that they should be separated into two states. . . .

If it can be shown that the scheme of Pakistan can in any way benefit Muslims I would be prepared to accept it myself and also to work for its acceptance by others. . . . I am forced to the conclusion that it can in no way benefit them or allay their legitimate fears.

Let us consider dispassionately the consequences which will follow if we give effect to the Pakistan scheme. India will be divided into two States, one with a majority of Muslims and the other of Hindus. In the Hindustan State there will remain three and a half crores of Muslims scattered in small minorities all over the land. With 17 per cent in U.P., 12 per cent in Bihar and 9 per cent in Madras, they will be weaker than they are today in the Hindu majority provinces. They have had their homelands in these regions for almost a thousand years and built up well-known centres of Muslim culture and civilisation there.

They will awaken overnight and discover that they have become alien and foreigners. Backward industrially, educationally and economically, they will be left to the mercies [of] what would become an unadulterated Hindu raj. . . . Their position within the Pakistan State will be vulnerable and weak. Nowhere in Pakistan will their majority be comparable to the Hindu majority in the Hindustan States. . . . Their majority will be so slight that it will be offset by the economical, educational and political lead enjoyed by non-Muslims in these areas. Even if this were not so and Pakistan were overwhelmingly Muslim in population, it still could hardly solve the problem of Muslims in Hindustan.

Two states confronting one another, offer no solution of the problem of one another's minorities, but only lead to retribution and reprisals by introducing a system of mutual hostages. The scheme of Pakistan therefore solves no problem for the Muslims. . . . It may be argued that if Pakistan is so much against the interests of the Muslims themselves, why should such a large section of Muslims be swept away by its lure? . . . They argued that if Hindus were so opposed to Pakistan, surely it must be of benefit to Muslims. An atmosphere of emotional frenzy was created which made reasonable appraisal impossible and swept away, especially the younger and more impressionable among the Muslims. . . .

The formula which I have succeeded in making the Congress accept secures whatever merit the Pakistan scheme contains while all its defects and drawbacks are avoided. . . .

When India attains her destiny, she will forget the chapter of communal suspicion and conflict and face the problems of modern life from a modern point of view. Differences will no doubt persist, but they will be economic, not communal. Opposition among political parties will continue, but it will be based, not on religion but on economic and political issues. . . .

The League had moved further along the path of separatism since the Lahore Resolution of 1940 popularly described as the Pakistan Resolution. . . . The Cabinet Mission was not prepared to concede the demand. On the contrary, the Mission was in favour of a solution more or less on the lines I had suggested. . . .

I have already mentioned that the Cabinet Mission published its scheme on 16 May. Basically, it was the same as the one sketched in my statement of 15 April. The Cabinet Mission Plan provided that only three subjects would belong compulsorily to the Central Government. These were the three subjects—defence, foreign affairs and communications— . . . The Mission . . . added a new element to the Plan. It divided the country into three zones, A, B and C, as the members of the Mission felt that this would give a greater sense of assurance among the minorities. Section B would include Punjab, Sind, NWFP and British Baluchistan. This would constitute a Muslim majority area. In Section C,

which included Bengal and Assam the Muslims would have a small majority over the rest. The Cabinet Mission thought that this arrangement would give . . . assurance to the Muslim minority, and satisfy all legitimate fears of the League. . . .

Since the Cabinet Mission Plan was in spirit the same as mine and the only addition was the institution of the three sections I felt that we should accept the proposal.

At first Mr. Jinnah was completely opposed to the scheme. The Muslim League had gone so far in its demand for a separate independent State that it was difficult for it to retrace its steps. The Mission had stated in clear and unambiguous terms that they could never recommend the partition of the country and the formation of an independent State. . . . Mr. Jinnah had to admit that there could be no fairer solution of the minority problem than that presented in the Cabinet Mission Plan. . . . He advised the Muslim League to accept the scheme and the Council voted unanimously in its favour. . . .

The acceptance of Cabinet Mission Plan by both the Congress and the Muslim League was a glorious event in the history of the freedom movement in India. It meant that the difficult question of Indian freedom had been settled by negotiation and agreement and not by methods of violence and conflict. . . . We rejoiced but we did not then know that our joy was premature. . . .

The Working Committee met on 6 July and prepared . . . resolutions for the consideration of the AICC. . . . Then I moved the resolution on the Cabinet Mission Plan. . . . I further pointed out that the Cabinet Mission Plan had accepted in all essentials the Congress point of view. It guaranteed the unity of India, while at the same time it held out the necessary assurances to the minorities. The Congress had stood for the freedom and unity of India and opposed all fissiparous tendencies. . . .

My speech had a decisive influence on the audience. When the vote was taken, the resolution was passed with an overwhelming majority. Thus the seal of approval was put on the Working Committee's resolution accepting the Cabinet Mission Plan. . . .

Now happened one of those unfortunate events which change the course of history. On 10 July, Jawaharlal held a press conference in Bombay *in which he made an astonishing statement. . . . Press representatives asked him whether, with the passing of the Resolution by the AICC, the Congress had accepted the Plan in toto, including the composition of the Interim Government.*

Jawaharlal in reply stated that Congress would enter the Constituent Assembly "completely unfettered by agreements and free to meet all situations as they arise."

Press representatives further asked if this meant that the Cabinet Mission Plan could be modified.

Jawaharlal replied emphatically that the Congress had agreed only to participate in the Constituent Assembly and regarded itself free to change or modify the Cabinet Mission Plan. . . . *The Muslim League had accepted the Cabinet Mission Plan only under duress. Naturally, Mr. Jinnah was not very happy about*