

India's Nationality Problem and Ruling Classes



Suniti Kumar Ghosh

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Preface

The nationality problem in India is one of the major political issues of today and needs to be widely discussed and debated.

It is a truism that India with a population of more than one hundred crores is a multinational state. Several nationalities in India, each living in a particular territory, with its own language, ways of life, traditions and culture and a distinct identity, are quite old; there are some which are emerging, and more are likely to emerge in the future. The immediate historic task for the nationalities is to realize the right to self-determination including the right to secede. Their ultimate integration can take place only on the basis of complete freedom, democracy and equality.

Like every other kind of thinking, the concept of Indian nationalism has a class character. It is a useful instrument in the hands of the Indian big bourgeoisie – mainly Marwari and Gujarati – which is in symbiotic relationship with imperialist capital, to throttle the aspirations of the different nationalities of India. Even before 1947 they wanted a centralized authoritarian state which would rule the entire Indian sub-continent, control the destinies of the people and would not share power with others. It was for this obsessive desire to have a centralized authoritarian state that the sub-continent was partitioned on communal lines in 1947. It is they and their representatives who have sought to grow and nurture the plant of Indian nationalism. This class, driven by the urge to dominate under the umbrella of Anglo-American powers the various nationalities of India as well as weak and less developed neighbouring nations, has sought to crush by all means including armed force the right of the nations and nationalities to self-determination.

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The Right of Indian Nationalities to Self-Determination

In their "Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia", the Soviet Government announced after the November Revolution:

... The first Congress of Soviets, in June of this year, proclaimed the rights of the peoples of Russia to self-determination.

The second Congress of Soviets, in November last, confirmed the inalienable right of the peoples of Russia more decisively and definitely.

Executing the will of these Congresses, the Council of People's Commissars [with Lenin as its President] has resolved to establish as a basis for its activity in the question of Nationalities, the following principles:

(1) The equality and sovereignty of the peoples [different nations and nationalities] of Russia.

(2) The right of the peoples of Russia to free self-determination, even to the point of separation and the formation of an independent state.

(3) The abolition of any and all national and national-religious privileges and disabilities.

(4) The free development of national minorities and ethnographic groups inhabiting the territory of Russia."¹

When the question arose about the basis on which to unite the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic, the Transcaucasian Soviet Republic, the Ukrainian Soviet Republic and the Byelorussian Soviet Republic and to form the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Lenin was firm that there should be a voluntary union of all the Soviet Republics "*in a new state entity, the Union of Soviet Republics, based on complete equality*". Lenin wrote: "We recognize ourselves equal with the Ukrainian Republic, and others, and join the new union, the new federation, together with them on an equal footing ..."²

It may be added that L.M. Karakhan, Russia's Acting Commissar for Foreign Affairs, issued a Declaration on July 25, 1919. It repudiated all unequal treaties concluded between Tsarist Russia and China and any and all privileges enjoyed by Russia in China, Mongolia and Manchuria. The Karakhan Manifesto of September 27, 1920 declared: "The Government of the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republics declares as void all the treaties concluded by the former Government of Russia with China, renounces all the annexations of Chinese territory, all the concessions in China, and returns to China free of charge, and forever, all that was ravenously taken from her by the Tsar's Government and by the Russian bourgeoisie."³

There are two ways of dealing with the nationality problem and the problem of dealing with weaker nations. Lenin's Government upheld one policy – to recognize the unfettered right of nationalities to self-determination including the right to secede and form their own independent states and later, to federate and build a larger state on the basis of complete equality; and to restore to weaker nations whatever had been plundered from them in the past.

The other way was followed by Jawaharlal Nehru and his associates, the most prominent representatives of India's ruling classes after the *formal* transfer of power in 1947. It was the policy of the Nehru government to suppress all nationalities, to deny them the right to self-determination and to build a centralized, authoritarian state, and to dominate over weaker neighbours and to grab whatever could be grabbed.

Which policy a country, the home of several nationalities, adopts depends on the class character of its rulers. Under Lenin the Russian working class seized power and ran the state. It unhesitatingly recognized the equality of all nations and nationalities inhabiting Russia and recognized their right to self-determination to the point of secession.

In India, power was formally transferred by the British imperialists in 1947 to the big comprador bourgeoisie,⁴ whose interests were intertwined with the interests of the imperialists, and who acted as intermediaries of imperialist capital in India – and to the feudal class. Those classes and their foreign masters were sworn enemies of all toiling people. Jawaharlal Nehru, who could ride two horses at the same time, was their best political representative.

Nehru, whose fevered imagination conceived of a multinational state stretching from West Asia to the Pacific region with India as its centre, said:

Indeed, the idea of self-determination for small countries in Asia or in Europe today is just a theory which cannot be put into practice. Such nations may be theoretically independent but, practically, they will be dependent on some large nations of whom they will be client states.⁵

Facts are at variance with what Nehru preached. At the present time, as in the past, there are very small countries (as well as large countries) which are independent, "theoretically" and practically; there are also very large countries (and small ones) which are what Nehru called "client states". Switzerland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and several other countries of Western Europe, though quite small, are independent and sovereign and are among the richest countries of the world. On the other hand, India is a very large country, the second most populous country in the world with a population of more than 105 crores. But it is one of the poorest and most backward countries and, though "theoretically independent", it is "practically" dependent on Western powers.⁶

India's rulers go through the motions of making economic and political decisions. But all major decisions on matters like India's agricultural strategy, the devaluation of the Indian currency, an open door policy towards imperialist capital, removal of barriers to imports, withdrawal of all state controls on industries, privatization of state-owned industries and so on – the decisions which mould Indian society and influence the lives of the Indian people – are made not at New Delhi but at the state capitals of imperialist countries, mainly Washington, and enforced through New Delhi. It is the subordination of a country's economy to the economy of an imperialist metropolis or metropolises and the latter's ability to determine the basic trends in the former that constitute the essence of colonialism or semi-colonialism. A former member of India's Planning Commission, J.D. Sethi, rightly observed that Nehru's model of economic development "was a model of dependency from the very beginning, notwithstanding all the claims of self-reliant industrialization."⁷ Indeed, India is a "client state", to use Nehru's expression. So, dependence or independence of a country cannot be judged, as they could not be judged in the past, by the criterion of the largeness of its territory. Otherwise, England could not have ruled India for about two hundred years.

Marxist-Leninists uphold the right of all oppressed nations, both large and small, to be free, that is, their right to self-determination, even to secession, their right to form their own states, if they choose to. Lenin said: "We [in Russia] must *link* the revolutionary struggle for socialism with a revolutionary programme on the national question."⁸ He further said that the

Russian proletariat should demand the freedom of all nations oppressed by tsarism to secede from Russia, "*not independently of our revolutionary struggle for socialism, but because this struggle will remain a hollow phrase if it is not linked up with a revolutionary approach to all questions of democracy, including the national question.*"⁹

To quote Lenin again, "The bourgeois nationalism of any oppressed nation has a general democratic content that is directed against oppression, and it is this content that we *unconditionally* support."¹⁰

The ultimate goal of Marxist-Leninists is complete integration of nations but this integration can take place only on the basis of freedom and democracy. The emancipation of all nations from oppression, their freedom to secede, marks a period of transition leading to complete integration. To ensure the widest possible democracy and freedom autonomous areas must be created for homogeneous populations or nationalities, however small.¹¹

There are some nationalities in India which are too small to form separate national states. They should enjoy not merely cultural-national autonomy but, as Lenin said, genuine local autonomy. There must be autonomous areas for them where they should have their own democratic self-government.

Marx and Engels upheld the cause of independence of Poland, Ireland, etc. "Marx considered", as Lenin said, "the separation of an oppressed nation to be a step towards federation, and consequently, not towards a split, but towards concentration, both political and economic, but *concentration on the basis of democracy.*"¹³

To quote Lenin again, "The aim of socialism is not only to end the division of mankind into tiny states and the isolation of nations in any form, it is not only to bring the nations closer together but to integrate them.... In the same way as mankind can arrive at the abolition of classes only through a transition period of the dictatorship of the oppressed class, it can arrive at the inevitable integration of nations only through a transition period of the complete emancipation of all oppressed nations, i.e., their freedom to secede."¹³ Lenin held that "the closer unity and even fusion of nations" can be achieved "only on a truly democratic, truly internationalist basis, which is *inconceivable* without the freedom to secede."¹⁴

The parliamentary communist and socialist parties of India are now staunch defenders of Indian unity. In a statement the CPI(M) said: "Our Party stands for the unity of the country and fights all forces of disintegration; we definitely stand for an effective and efficient centre capable of defending the country, organizing and consolidating its economic

life and adequately armed with powers to discharge its other jobs like foreign policy, communication, foreign trade, etc."¹⁵ "In Indian conditions", wrote Ranadive, "advocacy of self-determination plays into the hands of the enemies of the people, the imperialists, and totally misses the specific character of the nationality problem and its development through several years."¹⁶ He stated: "The national state [sic!] formed after the ousting of the British was faced with the existence of diverse linguistic groups. The problem is essentially how under a bourgeois-landlord regime the sense of unity and equality can be preserved for the various linguistic units, how a sense of inequality does not overpower unity of the state and lead to its disintegration"¹⁷

The 'Marxists' of the Ranadive variety claim that it is possible to find out a solution of the problem of preserving a sense of unity and equality between "various linguistic units" under the "bourgeois-landlord regime".

The parliamentary communist parties, which have been running governments in some states and have become part of the Establishment, are quite naturally representing the politics of India's ruling classes. They have become ardent defenders of the unity of what they call the "national state", which, as we shall see, serves the interests of the Indian big bourgeoisie and imperialist capital.

Ranadive wrote: "Lenin stated the correct viewpoint on this question in the following words, 'The proletarian party strives to create as large a state as possible, for this is to the advantage of the working people; it strives to draw nations *closer together* and bring about their *further fusion*; but it desires to achieve this aim not by violence, but exclusively through a free and fraternal union of the workers and the working people of all nations'."¹⁸ True to his character, Ranadive overlooked the following paragraphs which immediately precede the paragraph he quoted:

As regards the national question, the proletarian party *first of all* must advocate the proclamation and *immediate* realization of complete freedom of secession from Russia for all the nations and peoples who were oppressed by tsarism, or who were forcibly joined to, or forcibly kept within the boundaries of, the state, i.e., annexed.

All statements, declarations and manifestos concerning renunciation of annexations that are not accompanied by the realization of the right of secession in practice, are nothing but bourgeois deception of the people, or else pious petty-bourgeois wishes.¹⁹

Lenin held that "the proclamation and immediate realization of

complete freedom of secession" was the *immediate task* of the proletarian party. Only on completion of this task, the stage would be reached when nations and peoples under the leadership of the proletarian party would draw closer together and there would be the *ultimate* fusion or integration. He added: "*Complete freedom of secession*, the broadest local (and national) autonomy, and elaborate guarantees of the rights of national minorities this is the programme of the revolutionary proletariat."²⁰

While quoting Lenin about the ultimate fusion of the nations, Ranadive deliberately ignores what Lenin said about the "immediate realization of complete freedom of secession". This was the usual ploy of Ranadive and his ilk to distort Lenin and deceive the people.

Is it true that the "advocacy of self-determination plays into the hands of the enemies of the people, the imperialists," as Ranadive and the CPI(M) would have us believe? Or, is the opposite true? Is it not a fact that the Indian economy and the Indian state machinery are kept running with very costly loans received from imperialist countries and institutions dominated by them like the World Bank and the IMF under terms and conditions which are a repudiation of India's sovereignty? Is it not a fact that every sphere of Indian life – agriculture, industry, transport, communication, education and so on – is dominated by imperialist capital and imperialist institutions? The facts are: the Indian Union emerged in 1947, first as a British dominion and then as a member of the British Commonwealth of Nations, when direct rule by Britain changed into indirect rule by several imperialist powers; India and Indian economy have already been mortgaged to imperialist powers; the Indian ruling classes have been working as servitors of imperialism and they bow to the dictates of the imperialist powers which come from them directly or through the IMF and the World Bank (and the World Trade Organization, which emerged later).

In India, advocacy of, and struggle for, the right of nationalities to self-determination, far from playing into the hands of the enemies, constitutes one of the fronts of struggle against the imperialist powers and their Indian agents. That is why the revolutionary struggle of the Marxist-Leninists for New Democracy should be closely linked with a "revolutionary programme on the national question".

On the other hand, the struggle of the nationalities for self-determination can succeed only if it is linked with the anti-feudal and anti-imperialist struggle. Every national struggle, as Mao Tse-tung said, is in essence a class struggle. It is a struggle against a class of foreign oppressors and exploiters and against the class of exploiters within the oppressed

nationality, who collaborate with foreign exploiters to further their own interests and are a prop of their regime. In some national regions in India the struggles to realize national aspirations are led by the bourgeoisie or the petty bourgeoisie. They often tend to be divorced from class struggle, the struggle against the remnants of the feudal class (where they exist), the comprador bureaucratic bourgeoisie and the imperialist bourgeoisie. If it is so divorced, the struggle for the right of self-determination is likely to end in compromise with India's ruling classes and will be derailed or betrayed. Mao Tsetung said:

Why did forty years of revolution under Sun Yat-sen end in failure? Because in the epoch of imperialism, the petty bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie cannot lead any genuine revolution to victory.²²

The struggle which will assure the right of self-determination (including the right to secession) to a nationality in India is closely interlinked with the revolution for New Democracy – the anti-feudal and anti-imperialist revolution – of the peoples of India. If the former is led by the bourgeoisie or the petty bourgeoisie and divorced from class struggle, not only is it likely to be betrayed or derailed but certain dangers may also arise. It may raise chauvinistic slogans and may be directed against the toiling people of another oppressed nationality and may turn fratricidal. While upholding the right of the oppressed Polish nation to self-determination Lenin said: “At the same time we strictly distinguish it from the tendency towards national exclusiveness; we fight against the tendency of the Polish bourgeois to oppress the Jews, etc., etc.”²⁴ It is the unity of the toiling masses of the various nationalities of India that is the guarantee of the victory of the struggles for the right to their self-determination.

The right can be enforced *only* if their solidarity is built up and safeguarded. Because of their class character, the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie may not be able to mobilize the peasantry and the working class, and shorn of the strength that lies in such mobilization, the bourgeois- or petty bourgeois-led movement is likely to be ineffective.

The nationalism of an oppressed people is progressive when it is ranged against foreign oppressors and their domestic allies. But when it is directed against the oppressed people of another nationality, it helps the oppressors and enslavers, as it sets one oppressed nationality against another and breaks up the ranks of the toiling people.

No nation or nationality today is ethnically pure. The origin of a nationality may be traced to a particular race but, in the course of ages, some

other races too have contributed to the blood that courses through its veins. The idea of ethnic cleansing is not only unscientific but also dangerous. For historical reasons, people from other national regions, most often oppressed by the ruling classes, have come and settled in areas predominantly inhabited by a particular nationality. It cannot be too much stressed that the policies of the colonial rulers and of their heirs, the common enemies of all the oppressed nationalities, have added complexities to the problem. There cannot be a just solution or any solution at all if the problem is divorced from its historical setting.

Struggles between a majority nationality and a minority one in an area strengthen the hold of the oppressor classes within those nationalities: instead of class struggle, there is class collaboration and the national struggles tend to degenerate. Today the nationalities have to fight shoulder to shoulder against the present system, against the common enemies. The common struggle may bind them closer together and integrate them and they may unite in a new federal state on the basis of freedom, democracy and equality after they have won victory in their struggle.

Ethnic differences between nationalities living as neighbours are often exploited by their common enemies to set them against one another and thus liquidate the national liberation struggles. It is the bitter experience of political workers that the enemies plant agents within revolutionary organizations to disrupt them from within. Sometimes they even set up counter-revolutionary organizations with seemingly revolutionary appearances to confuse and bewilder the people and lead them into fratricidal strife. Those who instigate conflicts between the Nagas and the Kukis or between the Bodos on the one hand and Assamese- or Bengali-speaking toiling people on the other are the common enemies of them all.

The move to drive the Chakmas out of Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram serves not the cause of national self-determination but the interests of the reactionary ruling classes. Who are the Chakmas? They are among the worst victims of the vicious constitutional settlement among the British imperialists and their Hindu and Muslim collaborators, which partitioned India and tore Bengal and the Punjab each into two parts on the basis of religion. The most amazing and criminal thing was that the Punjab, Bengal and Sylhet were divided and the boundaries demarcated in less than a month by a British lawyer egged on by Mountbatten, the Nehrus and the Jinnahs.²⁴ Chittagong Hill Tracts, the homeland of the Chakma tribal people, was allotted to Pakistan, violating all norms. It became a part of East Pakistan, now Bangladesh. In course of time thousands of these innocent people were

driven out of their homes by oppression and injustice and they have been living as wretched refugees in neighbouring Tripura, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh.

It is necessary for the exploited people of different nationalities to fight together, support one another in their struggle against the common enemies and thus win the right to self-determination. There is no other way. They must not allow the classes of exploiters among them to derail their struggles and to direct them against one another. Ethnic differences should not be exaggerated. If class consciousness is submerged under ethnicity, national struggles are sure to face the danger of liquidation.

In every large industrial centre in India, the working class is composed of nationals of different regions. It would be playing into the hands of the reactionary ruling classes if the movement for realizing the right to self-determination including the right to secession tends to break up their solidarity. While fighting for the immediate task – to win the right to self-determination – the ultimate goal of fusion, integration, of the various nations should not be lost sight of.

It is the task of Marxist-Leninists to support all struggles for the right of nationalities to self-determination. While upholding the positive content of such struggles, it is also their task to point out their negative features, if any. They should warn people against all that breaks up the essential unity of the toiling peoples of the different nationalities, against every action that harms the people and weakens such struggles. It is the task of the Marxist-Leninists to integrate the struggles for the right to self-determination including the right to secession with the anti-feudal, anti-imperialist struggle – the struggle for New Democracy. To the Marxist-Leninists, the problem of nationalities is not an isolated one: it is a part of the general problem of revolution.

The present-day problem of nationalities in India is a historical legacy; and to have a proper understanding of it, it should be viewed in its historical context. The next sections represent an attempt to do so, however briefly.

From Artificial Unity to Artificial Disunity

C.H. Philips has raised the question: "Why, of all the political possibilities which were before India, this particular form of partition evolved; why it was the Muslims who came to found another nation state and not, for example, the Bengalis, the Madrasis, or any other of the linguistic, cultural

or racial groups of India.”²⁵

And Frank Moraes observed: “If the unity of India was artificial, so was its division. If India had to break up, it should have broken up on logical lines of language with ethnic and cultural affiliations.”²⁶

The question is: What led from artificial unity imposed by the British sword to artificial disunity? Why was the Indian subcontinent, the home of many nationalities, partitioned on communal lines instead of being divided into different nation states as in Western Europe or elsewhere?

It is agreed by all except the ruling classes and their men that India is a multinational state. It is a subcontinent with a population larger than that of a continent like Africa, North America or South America. It is the home of a number of big and small nationalities: the Telugus, Tamils, Oriyas, Bengalis, Maharashtrians, Punjabis, Gujaratis, Kannarese, Malayalees, Assamese and so on. Besides, there are other nationalities which are awakening to life or still lie dormant waiting to awaken to life.

Today, both in India and in Pakistan, the question of the right to self-determination of nationalities has come to the forefront: it can no longer be swept under the carpet.

To have a grasp of the different aspects of the present-day problem of the nationalities in India, the economic and political contradictions and conflicts, responsible for the artificial division of India, need to be analysed. It is time also to know the interests which bitterly opposed the right to self-determination of nations in this subcontinent, worked for strong, unitary governments and played the main role in partitioning India on religious lines.

Later, we shall present the case of Bengal as a case study. We propose to probe the special circumstances which led to the dismemberment of Bengal, an integrated country for centuries, and to the destruction of her integrity as a nation. All the three parties responsible for the partition —the Congress leaders, the Muslim League and the British raj – admitted, however grudgingly, that Bengal was a nation which had the same language, tradition and culture. Gandhi said on 10 May 1947: “Differences in religion could not part the two [the Bengali Hindu and the Bengali Muslim] ... they spoke the same language, had inherited the same culture. All that was Bengal’s was common to both, of which both could be equally proud. Bengal was Bengal.”²⁷ “Nowhere in India”, stated Nehru, “is there a strong culturally united area as Bengal.”²⁸ (Every other national region, for instance, Tamil Nadu, is no less culturally united: each has certain characteristics which are uniquely her own and distinguish her from other national regions). M.A. Jinnah said that Bengal and the Punjab “had national characteristics in

common: common history, common ways of life.”²⁹ The British Cabinet Mission which came to India in 1946 stated: “We ourselves are also convinced that any solution which involves a radical partition of the Punjab and Bengal ... would be contrary to the wishes and interests of a very large proportion of the inhabitants of these Provinces. Bengal and the Punjab each has its own common language and a long history and tradition.”³⁰ Reginald Coupland, who accompanied the Mission, said that “Bengal has long acquired a kind of nationality of its own, based on the Bengali language and an old and rich literary and artistic tradition.”³¹

We propose to discuss later in detail the collaboration and conflicts between powerful interests, in the meshes of which Bengal was caught – the interests which, in order to dominate the Hindu-majority area of Bengal, sought to cripple Bengal economically and politically, proved too strong for her and tore her into two parts.

Today many myths pass as history. True history can be known only when it is shorn of ‘historical myths’ – half-truths, distortions and falsehoods intended to serve the interests of the ruling classes.

“Indian Nationalism”

“There is nothing wrong,” wrote Gandhi in September 1938, “in making a knowledge of Hindustani compulsory.... We must break through the provincial crust if we are to reach the core of all-India nationalism. Is India one country and one nation or many countries and many nations?”³²

The question was rhetorically put, not to invite a correct answer but to smother it.

History tells us that before British rule India was never a single entity – neither politically, nor socially nor culturally. According to Dr Dhirendranath Sen, a distinguished political scientist, “India had never perhaps been a political entity in municipal or in international law in a sense in which we have learnt to understand it during the last hundred years or more.”³³ During her long history, under the Mauryas, Guptas, and Mughals, large Indian empires arose but they never embraced the whole of India. These empires with shifting frontiers did not survive for a long time but vanished with the end of the rule of a dynasty. Even within such empires large regions remained virtually independent on payment of some tribute and were never integrated into one country. India’s political unity, as Karl Marx said, was “imposed by the British sword”.³⁴ Even then the greater part of India called ‘British India’ was directly governed by the imperialists, and each of about five hundred and

sixty-two native states under indirect British domination remained separate under separate administration.

India had never a common language, the most important bond that helps to integrate the people of a territory into one nation. Nor did she ever acquire a common national character. Different regions have even now different languages, different ways of life, different traditions and cultures. The Russian writer A.M. Diakov was right when he pointed out that the common cultural fund that had developed in India "is no greater than the common cultural fund of the different peoples of Europe, of the Far East and of the Middle East."³⁵ "Culturally, an Englishman and a Frenchman are much closer to each other than a Tamil and a Rajasthani or an Oriya and a Punjabi. The upholders of Indian unity usually equate it with unity based on the Hindu faith. Even Hindu religious unity is a weak bond. It is hard to define what 'Hindutva' is: the Hindu faith embraces conflicting thoughts and ideas, and Hindu religious practices differ from region to region. Even within the same region castes and outcastes follow different religious practices. Pan-Indian 'nationalism' with its basis on Hindu culture has family resemblance with political 'pan-Islamism' which was represented by the movement for Pakistan. 'Pakistani nationalism', a fiction, was conjured up by the Muslim elite, especially by the Muslim business magnates, as a convenient device with which to combat this 'pan-Indian nationalism' of the Congress leaders.

It is rightly said that "Indian history cannot be studied as a unit, any more than the history of Europe. There are many civilizations within an all-comprehensive Indian civilization. Linguistic and cultural groups have histories distinct from the history of India as a whole."³⁶

Indian unity was imposed by the British imperialists and the process of the formation of Indian nations and nationalities was arrested to serve imperialist ends. As we shall see, pan-Indian nationalism has been invoked to facilitate and perpetuate the domination of the whole of India by the Indian big bourgeoisie, which collaborated and collaborates with foreign capital and whose political representatives became heirs to the British raj.³⁷

'Indian Nationalism' versus 'Sub-Nationalism'

The Linguistic Provinces Commission, appointed by the Indian Constituent Assembly in June 1948 with three members – all from North India – to report on the question of the formation of the provinces of Andhra, Kerala, Karnataka and Maharashtra, opposed such formation on the ground that the

constitution of provinces on the linguistic principle "would bring into existence provinces with a *sub-national bias at a time when Indian nationalism was yet in its infancy* and is not in a position to bear any strain". The Commission stated:

The existing Indian Provinces are administrative units of British imperialism. They came into existence in a somewhat haphazard way, and were not designed to work democratic institutions; they are certainly susceptible of more scientific and rational planning. But they have taken root and are now living vital organisms and have served the useful purpose of bringing together people, who might otherwise have remained separated. *And though they may be somewhat disadvantageous in working modern democracy, they are not bad instruments for submerging a sub-national consciousness and moulding a nation.*

Reiterating that "*India is yet to become a nation*", the Commission insisted that "the redistribution of provinces must wait till India has become a nation...." It argued that the enjoyment of autonomy by the provinces would ultimately lead to the extinction of 'Indian nationalism' and recommended that whatever powers a province would enjoy under the *new constitution should be delegated to it by a strong Centre wielding "overriding powers in regard to its territory, its existence, and its functions"*. According to it, *only an authoritarian, centralized state could foster "national feeling" and help "to build up an Indian nation"*. It was afraid that "the linguistic provinces will inevitably cause" obstruction "to the spread of national language or national feeling in the country" and that "In a linguistic province *sub-nationalism* will always be the dominant force and will always evoke greater emotional response, and, in a conflict between the two, the *nascent nationalism* is sure to lose ground and will ultimately be submerged". So, until the blessed day dawns when India has become a nation, the formation of provinces on the linguistic principle must wait and "all sub-national tendencies in the existing linguistic provinces should be suppressed." The Commission warned:

... nationalism born under the stress of foreign domination or of the fear of external aggression cannot stand the strain of normal times unless there is some deeper unity to support it when the stresses which have brought it into being disappear.... *And Indian unity and Indian nationalism, which are yet in their infancy, will not be able to bear the strain of normal ties If India is to live, there simply cannot be an autonomous State anywhere in India for any group, linguistic or otherwise; and no sub-*

national province can be formed without preparing the way for ultimate disaster."

Hence, "The first and last need of India at the present moment is that it should be a nation."³⁸

The Linguistic Provinces Committee (also known as the Nehru-Patel-Sitaramayya Committee), constituted by the Congress in December 1948, attacked the principle of linguistic redistribution of provinces, which the Congress had upheld before the transfer of power. It declared that, for the sake of "the security, unity and economic prosperity of India", "every separatist and disruptive tendency should be rigorously discouraged", and that "language was not only a binding force but also a separating one."³⁹

To the Nehrus and Patels, Hindi was the "binding force" and all other languages separating ones and the formation of homogeneous entities on the basis of such languages needed to be strongly discouraged until the sense of 'Indian unity' was no longer the frail thing it was.

Interestingly, one of the members of this committee had sung an altogether different tune only two years before. In his presidential address to the Convention on Linguistic and Cultural Provinces in India, held at Delhi on 8 December, 1946, B.Pattabhi Sitaramayya had said:

...Indian Federation is being built like all real Federations out of provinces enjoying provincial autonomy... the constitution of provinces must be such as to present the necessary homogeneity of language and culture ... so that instruction in schools, administration in offices, argumentation in Courts and representation in Councils may all be conducted in one and that, the regional language. Anything short of this is a travesty of Provincial Autonomy and is a negation of Federalism... The Constituent Assembly would, therefore, be well-advised in accepting the principle at the very outset in its plenary, preliminary session, appointing a committee for a rough delineation of the new provinces on the map and referring the report to the Sections for adoption in the framing of Provincial constitutions To postpone to tomorrow what you must do today is dangerous.⁴⁰

The States Reorganization Commission, appointed by Nehru's government in 1953, stated in its report published two years later:

It has to be remembered that linguistic and other group loyalties have deep roots in the soil and history of India. The culture-based regionalism, centring round the idea of linguistic homogeneity, represents to the average Indian values easily intelligible to him. *Indian nationalism, on the other*

*hand, has still to develop into a positive concept.*⁴¹

What the Linguistic Provinces Commission was pleased to call 'sub-nationalism' has been described by the States Reorganization Commission in a classic periphrasis as "culture-based regionalism, centring round the idea of linguistic homogeneity". Interestingly, the Commission of 1948 found several "sub-nations" in an India which was "yet to become a nation". It is rather curious that a yet-to-be-born nation was supposed to have quite a few 'sub-nations' as its grown-up children. No doubt, a 'sub-nation' like Bengal had been an integrated country many centuries before Indian unity was imposed by the British sword and India became one country.

Significantly, even Nehru, who was responsible, among others, for India's partition on communal lines, bartered away the lives of millions in exchange for a strong centre⁴² and dreamed dreams of Indian expansionism, admitted in a letter of 10 May 1956 to chief ministers that "the basic fact remains that we have yet to develop a unified nation."⁴³

Whose interests did this 'one-nation concept', which was yet to become 'positive', intend to serve? According to the Commission of 1948, democratic rights would have to be denied to the people, the Centre was to enjoy "overriding powers" in regard not only to the territory of a provincial unit but also to its very existence and its functions, that is, to have a vice-like grip on the lives of the people of every province, in order to bring into existence a strong Indian nation. The classes to which the powers of direct administration of the Indian subcontinent minus certain parts in the east and in the north-west were handed over in August 1947 were determined to maintain like the British raj a strong, unitary, authoritarian state. They had reasons to be afraid that the sense of Indian unity that was "born under the stress of foreign domination" was too fragile and ephemeral to survive any conflict with "sub-nationalisms" which had "deep roots in the soil and history of India". As heirs to the British raj, they resolved to nurture "Indian nationalism" and stifle all "sub-national consciousness".

According to Diakov, the "one-nation concept" was "the expression of the centralistic tendencies of the summit of the Indian bourgeoisie, primarily the capitalists of the provinces of Gujarat and Marwara This capitalistic group aspires to a monopoly to dominate the Indian market..."⁴⁴ Criticizing the draft Indian constitution, the Communist Party of India charged that with exclusive central control of banking, insurance, stock exchanges, petroleum, mining, and airways, most initiative in industry and finance would be "in the hands of the Centre, to be utilized in the interests of

the Birlas and Dalmias.”⁴⁵ In the new constitution, the communists said at that time, “the wide powers given to the central government in the name of the security of the state, constitute nothing but a device for unbridled domination by the Marwari-Gujarati capitalists of the economic and political life of all nationalities.... The constitution denies equality of all languages and imposes English and Hindi as the state languages.... It is a weapon of creating a solid basis for Marwari-Gujarati domination....”⁴⁶ More of it later.

Formation of Nations and Colonial Rule

Before the advent of British rule, certain nations – Telugus, Tamils, Maharashtrians, Kannarese, Gujaratis, Bengalis and so on – emerged in this subcontinent, each in its particular territory and with its own language and literature, ways of life, culture and traditions and a distinct identity. “These regional identities”, to quote Selig S. Harrison, “are old and persistent: literary tradition in most regional languages or their precursors can be traced without difficulty to the first centuries after Christ, and there are, in all of the regional languages, more or less unbroken literary traditions at least eight centuries old.”⁴⁷ Many other nations and nationalities in this vast subcontinent lay dormant waiting to awaken to life.

With the British conquest of India this process was arrested, every national territory was carved up and portions artificially joined with other national regions to constitute provinces or princely states. For instance, the Maharashtrians were divided between two composite provinces – the Bombay Presidency and Central Provinces and Berar – as well as several princely states including Hyderabad and Mysore. Some nations were subjected to what may be called ‘multiple partition’ and their cultures were trampled upon. *The Report of the States Reorganization Commission 1955* stated: “The division of India during the British period into British provinces and Indian States was itself fortuitous and had no basis in Indian history.”⁴⁸ The division was not entirely fortuitous. There was a method in this madness. And the method was chiefly political. The object of the British colonialists in partitioning Bengal in the early years of the 20th century was to divert Bengali nationalism into the communal channel and weaken Bengal politically. It was a long term perspective they had. H.H. Risley, secretary to the Government of India, said, “Bengal united is a power; Bengal divided will pull in several different ways.”⁴⁹ When the question of

incorporation of Berar (Vidarbha) into British India arose in 1903, Viceroy Curzon noted: "I cannot contemplate any proposal which would add strength or solidarity of the Maratha community with anything but dismay." The amalgamation of Berar with the Central Provinces was preferred.⁵⁰

The changes in the administrative, social and economic systems that British rule brought about tended to encourage communal and caste differences and weaken the forces of nationalism. Two contrary processes were at work. While the spirit of resistance against alien rule brought the peoples near, the manoeuvres of the British raj and of the elite leaders often drove a wedge between the religious communities belonging to the same nationality. Though under severe attacks, nationalism has been a force at least since the beginning of the twentieth century. The first partition of Bengal in 1905 and its subsequent annulment were a tribute to it.

During colonial rule the assertion of a distinct national identity often took the form of a demand for formation of provinces on a linguistic basis. The memoranda submitted by the Government of India and the India Office to the Simon Commission (the Indian Statutory Commission), appointed in late 1927, informed the Commission that separate memoranda were being presented to it by the concerned people "on the amalgamation of the Oriya-speaking peoples", "on the formation of separate Andhra, Tamil and Kannada provinces" and "on the subject of the transfer of Sylhet from the province of Assam to the Bengal Presidency". The memoranda noted that though it was in the economic interest of the middle classes of Sylhet to remain in Assam, yet their sense of Bengali identity urged them to join Bengal. Resolutions had been moved in the central legislature for the formation of separate Andhra, Tamil and Kannada provinces, and a resolution urging the formation of separate Andhra province was adopted in the Madras Legislative Council in March 1927. "The general principle of the amalgamation of the Oriya-speaking tracts was accepted by the Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council in December 1921." Those who demanded "the linguistic or racial distribution of particular areas" pointed out, among other things, "the injurious effect of their present grouping on the development of particular peoples. For instance, it has been asserted that as a result of their division between different provinces and Indian States the language of the Kannarese has been mutilated, their culture destroyed, and their traditions, literature and art have been forgotten. Similar assertions are made in respect of the Oriyas to support the demand for the amalgamation of the Oriya-speaking tracts."⁵¹

It is significant that the process of formation of a nationality comprising

different ethnic tribes, the depressed classes and Momins (Muslim weavers), inhabiting Chota-nagpur, Santal Parganas and contiguous areas had started. A delegation of the Chotanagpur Unnati Samaj presented a memorandum before the Simon Commission demanding the formation of a Jharkhand province.⁵²

In the Tamil land E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker, known as the Periyar (or sage), a leader of the South Indian Liberal Federation, challenged the concept that India was a nation and raised the demands of "Dravidanadu for Dravidians" and "Tamilnadu for Tamilians". On his initiative the South Indian Liberal Federation renamed itself Dravida Kazaghham in 1944. A memorandum submitted on its behalf to the Cabinet Mission in 1946 demanded sovereign independence for Dravidistan. Later, for sometime, a sovereign independent Tamil Nadu became the battle-cry of the Dravida Kazaghham movement.

To be brief, we may refer to the letter, dated 9 May 1947, from Madras Governor A. Nye to Viceroy Mountbatten, which points to "an increasing tendency towards a *rather intense form of nationalism*" and reports that "in recent months there has been a demand not only for an Andhra province but also for a Tamil one and for separate Kerala and Karnataka Provinces also. So strong has this feeling become that the Ministry felt that they could not ignore it and the other day the Legislative Assembly passed a resolution recommending to the Constituent Assembly that the Madras Province should be divided into these four parts."⁵³

K.M. Munshi, a staunch supporter of the cause of 'Indian nationalism', noted: "Wherever the [Linguistic Provinces] Commission went, there were vehement demands for the linguistic re-distribution of India."⁵⁴

For some time in the first half of the forties the Communist Party of India supported the Pakistan demand of the Muslim League and upheld the right of the Muslims (who are intermingled with other religious communities and belong to different nationalities in India) to self-determination. But towards the end of 1945 it proposed in its election manifesto that there should be "17 sovereign National Constituent Assemblies based on the natural homelands of various Indian peoples" – Pathanland, Sind, Andhra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Bengal and so on. These 17 constituent assemblies should elect delegates to the All India Constituent Assembly and should "enjoy the unfettered right to negotiate, formulate and finally to decide their mutual relations within an Independent India, on the basis of complete equality." The manifesto said :

The Communist Party stands for a United and Free Bengal in a free India. Bengal as the common homeland of the Bengali Muslims and Hindus should be free to exercise its right of self-determination through a Sovereign Constituent Assembly based on adult franchise and to define its relation with the rest of India.

The C.P.I. then stood for "a voluntary Union of national states".⁵⁵

Earlier, when Gandhi accepted Rajagopalachari's formula regarding partitioning India and dismembering Bengal and the Punjab on a religious basis and sought to discuss the issue with Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the Bengal Congress sent a delegation to meet Gandhi in August 1944, on the eve of the Gandhi-Jinnah talks. The delegation, led by K.S. Roy, leader of the Bengal Assembly Congress Party, discussed with Gandhi the Rajagopalachari formula and told him that its application to Bengal on a district-wise basis would result in cutting up the province into two areas and that the people of Bengal were opposed to dismemberment "as Bengal situated as at present is culturally and linguistically one single homogeneous unit". The delegation said that Bengal accepted the principle of self-determination but that it should be applied on the linguistic and cultural basis.⁵⁶

As P.C. Joshi wrote, "on the eve of the Gandhi-Jinnah meeting, the Bengal Provincial Muslim League passed a resolution in favour of a United Bengal which would exercise its sovereign will and decide whether to join Pakistan or Hindustan or to join neither, and instead remain completely independent," that "the Provincial League sent its resolution to the Congress leader, Kiran Shankar Ray, to discuss it among themselves", and that they told Jinnah "that the Bengalis would be able to decide their own fate."⁵⁷

Ayesha Jalal rightly observed: "What the Bengali Muslims were really after was freedom from central control and Government House in Calcutta saw clear hints of a specifically provincial Bengali nationalism capable of being deployed against Jinnah's centralist pretensions."⁵⁸

When the British Cabinet Mission's plan of 16 May 1946 was announced, "both Hindus and Muslims", as Bengal governor Burrows reported to the Cabinet Mission and Viceroy Wavell, "felt relieved ... that Bengal would not be partitioned" and the integrity of the Bengali nation would not be under attack.⁵⁹

But this relief was very short-lived. When the Congress leaders torpedoed the Cabinet Mission plan while claiming to accept it, demanded the partition of the Punjab on a religious basis and announced that the same

principle would apply to Bengal also, a movement under the leadership of Sarat Chandra Bose, a former member of the Congress Working Committee; Abul Hashim, Secretary of the Bengal Provincial Muslim League; H.S. Suhrawardy, premier of Bengal; and K.S. Roy, leader of the Bengal Assembly Congress Party, was launched to prevent Bengal's dismemberment and to preserve her integrity as a nation. But, the sinister forces that had been conspiring to dismember her proved too powerful.⁶⁰

It may be worth making a brief reference to contradictions and conflicts between the bourgeoisie of different national regions and the Marwari-Gujarati-Parsi comprador big bourgeoisie.⁶¹ While the latter swore by pan-Indian 'nationalism' in order to have freedom to expand and dominate the whole of India under the umbrella of Anglo-American powers, the bourgeoisie of the different national regions sought to exploit the growing national feelings in their interests. We may cite a few instances of these conflicts. It may be noted that the rising bourgeoisie always seeks to "capture the home market" and appeals to patriotic sentiments to secure it for itself, for its own growth and expansion.

Referring to the formations of the Maharashtra Chamber of Commerce and the Gujarat Chamber of Commerce, P.A. Wadia and K.T. Merchant commented that they "reveal the intensification of competition between the bourgeoisie of different regions."⁶²

There were contradictions between the Tamil and the Telugu bourgeoisie as well as between the bourgeoisie of South India and the more powerful Marwari-Gujarati-Parsi big bourgeoisie of the north. In South India, besides the European-dominated Madras Chamber of Commerce, there were a number of business associations formed by Indians – Southern India Chamber of Commerce (SICC, formed in 1909), Nattukottai Nagarathan Association (NNA, 1917), Indian Chamber of Commerce, Coimbatore (ICCC, 1929), South India Millowners Association (SIMA, 1933) and so on. Both the SICC and the NNA were dominated by the Nattukottai Chettiars of Tamil Nadu.⁶³ Both the organizations were represented in the Madras Legislative Assembly throughout the 1930s.⁶⁴

This excessive control over the major commercial associations of South India by the Chettiar groups was resented by Telugu businessmen, who revived the Andhra Chamber of Commerce in 1934. The Andhra Chamber complained against "the indifference shown towards Andhra commercial, industrial and banking interests by the Southern India Chamber of Commerce".⁶⁵

The commercial associations of South India were mostly affiliated to

the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry. The FICCI had been founded in 1927, mainly on the initiative of G.D.Birla and Sir Purshotamdas Thakurdas, the leading representatives of the Marwari and Gujarati big bourgeoisie, and the policies of this apex body were also moulded chiefly by them. The links of the South Indian business associations with FICCI, as Mahadevan writes, were "quite tenuous and South Indian commercial and industrial interests were of peripheral interest in the overall scheme of FICCI politics".⁶⁶

The latent antagonism between the capitalists of South India and the Marwari-Gujarati big bourgeoisie of the North came out into the open in the forties, if not earlier.⁶⁷ The former were afraid that the South Indian market might be dominated by the latter. While communicating its views to the Industrial Planning Committee of the Madras Government, the SICC contended that *economic planning should have not an all-India but a provincial basis*. It stated that if the decision was taken on an all-India basis, "then it might be said that Madras has no claim for opening any new textile factory even for weaving, any sugar factories, any cement factories... that would be most cruel and unfair ... we depend on other provinces for 80 percent of our cloth, 65 percent of our cement requirements.... We should aim at attaining self-sufficiency in these important commodities."⁶⁸ Defending the Madras Government's attempts to restrict the flow of North Indian capital into industries in Madras, the SICC said that "citizens of Madras province are being outwitted by *Nationals of other provinces* or other countries in the matter of race for industries and enterprises."⁶⁹ In its memorandum to the Madras Government on the eve of the 1946 budget session the SICC urged the ministry to "do everything possible to improve the trade and industries and help to retain as big a slice of them as possible for the benefit of the sons of the soil".⁷⁰

The SIMA also, in its memorandum to the Madras Government, contended that "the entire weightage should not be allowed to shift to the North and the interest of the South in the matter of industrial undertakings should be adequately protected".⁷¹

The South India Industrial and Commercial Conference, held in Madras in 1945 and attended by almost all the leading industrialists of South India, including Andhra, demanded in a resolution that regional interests should be safeguarded.⁷² To quote Selig.Harrison, "from the south, that most distant outpost of Marwari expansion, came the shrillest protests against alleged *economic imperialism*... South Indian business communities have reason to envy the ubiquitous Marwari...."⁷³

Naturally these developments caused disquiet among the Marwari and Gujarati business magnates who were at the helm of the FICCI. In a communication to the Department of Planning and Development, Government of India, "they opposed the principle of regionalisation of industries" and regretted that "every time a proposal to establish an industry in the Madras Presidency is turned down on the ground that the firm sponsoring the establishment of that industry does not belong to that presidency."⁷⁴ The FICCI complained that "the present policy of regional development [would] lead to the creation of monopolies for persons or firms born only in a particular district or province" and that this would "have the ultimate effect of arresting even the normal development of industries in various provinces". It urged that "private enterprise should be given the full freedom and facilities to establish industries in places most suitable for such development".⁷⁵

This sharp conflict between the Marwari and Gujarati big bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie of the South led to the withdrawal of the Marwari and Gujarati big bourgeois based in the South from the SICC and the establishment of their separate commercial association – Hindustan Chamber of Commerce.⁷⁶

That "private enterprise should be given the full freedom and facilities to establish industries in places most suitable for such development" has always been the battle-cry of more developed capitalism seeking to force its way into capitalistically less developed countries or regions. This was raised by the British capitalists when they were capitalistically most advanced; this has been the cry for a long time of American capital which seeks an open door to all countries. In the colonial days, the Marwari and Gujarati big bourgeoisie sought protection from more powerful foreign capital.⁷⁷ (It may be noted that the *primary* aspect of their relationship was and is one of collusion).

It seems that with the appointment of Sir Shanmukham Chetty, who had been a bitter critic of the Congress, as the first finance minister of post-colonial India, the Tamil big bourgeoisie was co-opted by the bourgeoisie of the North, both comprador in character, as a partner in the joint exploitation of India. Since 1947, power at the Centre has been shared by the Chettiers and other business magnates of the South. The demand for the right of the Tamils to self-determination, which was raised before, is no longer heard.

During colonial rule the demand for the right of self-determination of nationalities including the right of secession was not quite insistent for two reasons. First, British imperialism was then the common enemy and the urge

to be free brought the peoples of the subcontinent together. The Hindus, mainly the caste Hindus, were led to believe that the Congress was an anti-imperialist organization striving to liberate the people from colonial domination. Similarly, from about the late thirties, a large majority of the Muslims came to repose their trust in the Muslim League for setting them free from what they believed to be the double yoke – the British raj and a possible Hindu raj in a unitary Indian state. Second, the people were deceived on the question of autonomy of the national regions by the double-talk of the Congress and League leaders, who promised it only to betray it afterwards. In the complex situation that developed, the question of national self-determination then receded in the main into the background.

Congress Leaders' Double-Talk and Double –Deal

On the issue of formation of linguistic provinces and giving them genuine autonomy, as on many other issues, the Congress leaders had a public face as well as a private face. On the one hand, they were advocates of these popular demands and on the other, they worked for a unitary state with a strong central government in order to serve the interests of the Indian big bourgeoisie.

The Congress had opposed the first partition of Bengal in 1905 on the ground that the Bengali-speaking people formed a homogeneous entity. It had formed separate Congress provinces of Bihar in 1908, and of Sind and Andhra in 1917. In 1920 the Congress leaders yielded to the continuous pressure from different regions and adopted the linguistic principle as the basis for the reorganization of Congress provinces. In December 1927, after the appointment of the Simon Commission, the annual session of the Congress in Madras passed a resolution stating that “the time has come for the redistribution of provinces on a linguistic basis”; that “such beginning could be made by constituting Andhra, Utkal, Sind and Karnataka into separate provinces”.⁷⁸ *The delegates who spoke in support of the resolution – not the leaders – claimed the right of self-determination for the peoples speaking the same language and having the same tradition and culture.* Again, meeting in Calcutta in October 1937, the AICC, in a resolution, sponsored not by the Working Committee but by ordinary members, reaffirmed “the Congress policy regarding the redistribution of provinces on a linguistic basis and recommend[ed] to the Madras and Bombay Governments [where Congress ministers functioned at the time] to consider the formation of a separate Andhra and Karnataka province respectively”.

The resolution also urged "the Congress cabinet in Bihar to take early steps to restore the Bengali-speaking areas at present comprised in Bihar to the province of Bengal."⁷⁹ The resolution was put in cold storage; no steps were taken by the leaders to implement it.

In order to enthuse the peoples of different nationalities and to win their support before the transfer of power, the Congress high command gave lavish promises to them that future India would be a voluntary union of federating units.

The 'Quit India' resolution adopted by the All-India Congress Committee on 8 August 1942 declared: "*This constitution [of a future India], according to the Congress view, should be a federal one, with the largest measure of autonomy for the federating units, and with the residuary powers vesting in these units.*"⁸⁰ In September 1945, the Congress Working Committee declared in a resolution: "In accordance with the August 1942 Resolution of the AICC it will be for a *democratically elected* Constituent Assembly to prepare a Constitution for the Government of India, acceptable to all sections of the people. The Constitution, according to the Congress view, should be a federal one with the residuary powers vesting in the units."⁸¹ Contrary to this pledge, the Constituent Assembly that was set up was neither democratically elected nor was the Constitution it framed a federal one. In September 1945, the Congress Working Committee declared in a resolution: In 1945-6, when transfer of power was in sight, the election manifesto the Congress Working Committee issued, seeking votes for its candidates for election to provincial legislative assemblies, reaffirmed their adherence to the linguistic principle but qualified it with the phrase "as far as possible". It promised that the constitution of a future free India "should be a federal one with autonomy for its constituent units", *that the Indian federation "must be a willing union of its various parts"*. It said: "In order to give the maximum of freedom to the constituent units there may be a minimum list of common and essential federal subjects which will apply to all units, and a further optional list of common subjects which may be accepted by such units as desire to do so."⁸²

On the question of self-determination, Nehru stated in March 1946: "The Congress proposals as contained in the recent resolutions, and in particular in the election manifesto, are such as to give 95 percent self-determination to the constituent units in the federation. We have said that we want *willing partners* in the federation and that the common subjects for such units would be very minimum in number such as defence and foreign affairs This, I say, gives 95 per cent of self-determination and freedom to

the units as well as a joint working of the remaining 5 per cent.

Formation of Congress provinces on a linguistic basis and approaching the people through the mediums of their own languages brought the Congress rich dividends in the form of mass support. The States Reorganization Commission of 1953-5 was right when it observed that "the national [sic] movement... was built up by harnessing the forces of regionalism".⁸⁴ The Congress leaders' pious public pronouncements and pledges about their future India being a federation of "willing partners" or consisting of autonomous units were not meant to be acted upon. Their real purpose was to divest the units of all autonomy and to have a unitary India with all powers concentrated in the Centre.

A model 'Swaraj Constitution' was drawn up in 1928 by a committee called the Nehru Committee, of which Motilal Nehru was chairman. Jawaharlal acted as its secretary and was a co-author of its reports. The Congress session held in Calcutta in the Christmas week of 1928 accepted the Nehru Committee's reports outlining the 'Swaraj Constitution'. The constitution was intended to be submitted to the British raj for its consideration. It envisaged future India as a unitary state where all powers would be concentrated in the Centre which would be headed by the Governor-General appointed by the British King. Wholly subordinate to the British raj, the Centre would appoint governors, give or withdraw assent to bills passed by the provincial legislatures, have all the powers "to suspend or annul the acts, executive and legislative", of provincial governments and to dissolve the provincial legislatures through governors. The residuary powers would be vested in the Centre.⁸⁵

After transfer of power in 1947, the Congress leaders resisted the formation of provinces on a linguistic basis as long as it was possible for them to do so. Even as late as 1962, Prime Minister Nehru, referring to the demand for a Punjabi suba, declared, "I would rather face a civil war than concede a Punjabi-speaking state."⁸⁶ When the Congress leaders were forced by mass upheavals to concede the demand for linguistic states, they made reorganization itself a source of conflict between the various nationalities involved.

It may be noted that the Indian big bourgeoisie headed by G.D. Birla and Sir Purshotamdas Thakurdas were strongly opposed to the formation of states on a linguistic and cultural basis. The Citizens' Committee which was formed in Bombay to counter the demand for such reorganization included Thakurdas, Sir J.R. D. Tata and Sir H.P. Mody.⁸⁷ The All-India Marwari Federation was also up in arms against such reconstitution of states.⁸⁸

During the negotiations before the transfer of power with the British representatives and Muslim League leaders, the Congress leaders showed scant respect for their promises that future India would be a "willing union" of different units or that the units would enjoy full autonomy. They were bitterly opposed to any voluntary union of the different parts of India to constitute an Indian federation. They were in no mood to grant "the maximum of freedom" or autonomy to the constituent units.

While presenting a report of the Order of Business Committee at the fourth session of the Constituent Assembly on 14 July 1947, K.M. Munshi, one of the main architects of the Indian constitution, who was a member of 10 out of 13 important committees and sub-committees of the Constituent Assembly and Chairman of the Order of Business Committee, declared that they were "free to form a federation" of their choice, "a federation with a centre as strong as we can make it" and that there would be "no more provinces with residuary powers, no opting out", etc.⁸⁹

How did the Indian Union emerge in 1947? The 'Union' did not emerge on the crest of a victorious anti-imperialist struggle of the people, nor was it brought into existence by the consent of the people or of their elected representatives freely expressed. It was brought into existence through manoeuvres of British imperialists and a handful of Congress and League leaders. The two new states – the Indian Union and Pakistan – formed on communal lines and on the basis of dominion status were artificially created under the Mountbatten Award agreed to by the political representatives of the Birlas and Tatas and the Ispahanis and Adamjees.

A little earlier, Viceroy Mountbatten and his British staff drew up another plan for reconciling the conflicting claims of the warring Congress and League leaders. This plan gave to the representatives of the provinces (the North-West Frontier Province after a fresh election) and the Muslim-majority and non-Muslim majority areas of the Punjab and Bengal the right to decide whether they would join the existing constituent assembly or group together in one or more constituent assemblies or *stand out independently* and act as their own constituent assembly. Among the main features of the plan were: compulsory grouping, a feature of the Cabinet Mission plan, objected to by the Congress, was left out; the right of the provinces to make their own choice regarding the future constitutional set-up was recognized; Bengal and the Punjab would be free to decide whether they would remain undivided with their integrity intact and to decide their relations with the rest of India. The plan also envisaged that "the constituent assemblies, if more than one, should also create machinery for joint

consultation among themselves on matters of common concern, particularly Defence, and for the negotiation of agreements in respect of these matters". The native states after the lapse of British paramountcy would be "free to arrange by negotiation with those parts of British India to which power will be demitted whatever measure of association they consider to be in the best interests of their people".⁹⁰ This plan was shown to Nehru and Jinnah and then taken to the British cabinet for its approval.

At first Nehru and Jinnah approved the plan and then Nehru torpedoed it on the plea that it would lead to the 'balkanization' of India.⁹¹ To obtain a monopoly of power (of course, under the British umbrella), the Congress leaders opposed the plan that the provinces should *initially* be successor states and that the central authority or authorities should emerge on the *voluntary* coming together of the provinces – their voluntary agreement to part with some power or powers in favour of some central authority – the essence of genuine federalism. Every province (or national region like Andhra, Tamil Nadu, Bengal, Maharashtra and so on) was large enough to constitute an independent state – many of them far larger and more populous than most of the states of Western and Central Europe. Instead of recognizing the right of these nationalities to self-determination after dissolution of the native states and territorial adjustment and instead of agreeing to the voluntary basis of an Indian federation, the Nehrus killed the provincial choice and insisted on the partition of India on artificial, religious lines; the national regions or parts of them were coerced to join either Hindustan or Pakistan.

The essence of these plans was decentralization of powers while the Congress leaders were inflexible in their demand for concentration of powers at the Centre. And this policy pursued with vengeance led to the partition of India on religious lines. The partition of India on religious lines was the voluntary choice of the Congress leaders. A strong Centre would enable them by using the state machinery to suppress the different nationalities within the country and help them to realize their ambition of dominating weak nations outside the country. This obsessive desire has caused – deaths and immense sufferings of tens of millions of people – perhaps unprecedented in history. It was a diabolical crime to partition India on communal lines instead of dividing the Indian subcontinent into national regions by granting the different nationalities the right to self-determination. And there might be ultimate fusion of them on the basis of equality, freedom and democracy.

Either late in December 1946 or early in January 1947, the outline of the

plan which came to be known as the Mountbatten award or settlement had been drafted by V.P. Menon, the then Reforms Commissioner of the Government of India, on the basis of a discussion with Patel. Patel had agreed with Menon that if partition and dominion status were accepted, there would be many 'advantages'. Such an agreement would guarantee a peaceful transfer of power, earn Britain's friendship and goodwill, ensure continuity in respect of civil and military administration and "*enable the Congress to have at one and the same time a strong central Government, able to withstand the centrifugal tendencies all too apparent at the moment.*"⁹² To combat "the centrifugal tendencies", that is, the demands of the different nationalities of the subcontinent for the right to self-determination – "all too apparent at the moment" – was one of the main objectives of the dominion government that emerged with Nehru as prime minister and Patel as his deputy.

The constitution of India that they framed tramples underfoot the rights of the various nationalities of this subcontinent as it does the rights of individuals. (Here we shall not dwell on the constitutional right of the executive to negate all rights of individual citizens but shall only refer to the following Articles and Clauses of the constitution: Article 19, Clauses 2,3 and 4; Article 22, Clause 3(b); Articles 352 to 360; and various legislations which, empowered by the constitution, the state has enacted and which ensure that a citizen can enjoy his democratic rights only at the pleasure of the executive). Under the constitution, *the indivisibility of the Indian Union cannot be questioned; that is, the demand for the right to self-determination including the right to secession has been made illegal. Even no bill seeking territorial changes of a constituent state can be "introduced in either House of Parliament except on the recommendation of the President."*⁹³ On the other hand, India's Parliament dominated by a coterie representing the ruling classes *can dismember a state, increase or decrease its area, alter its boundaries and even its name.*^{93a} All powers are concentrated in the Centre, that is, in the hands of the ruling coterie. The state governments enjoy only trivial rights vis-a-vis the Centre.

Parliament is empowered "to make any law for the whole or any part of the territory of India for implementing any treaty, agreement or convention with any other country or countries or any decision made at any international conference, association or any other body".

The Governor of a state is not elected by its people but appointed by the President (that is, the central government) and holds "office during the pleasure of the President". When the method of selecting State Governors

was debated in the constituent assembly. Nehru was emphatic that they should be nominated by the central government because, as he said, "we should always view things from the context of preserving the unity, the stability and the security of India."⁹⁴ The main purpose was to curb the democratic rights of the peoples and to suppress their right to self-determination. Under the constitution, "The executive power of the State shall be vested in the Governor and shall be exercised by him either directly or through officers subordinate to him in accordance with this Constitution". He exercises his functions on the advice of a Council of Ministers but is authorized also to act in his discretion. And "the validity of anything done by the Governor shall not be called in question on the ground that he ought or ought not to have acted in his discretion". Every bill passed by the legislature of a state must receive the assent of the governor before it becomes law. The governor may reserve the bill for the consideration of the President.

On the basis of a report from the governor, his appointee (and sometimes in practice, without such a report), the President can dissolve or suspend the elected legislative assembly of a state, dismiss the ministry and impose President's rule ensuring unbridled exercise of powers by the Centre.⁹⁵ Till 1990-1, President's rule was imposed ninety-five times in different states and union territories; every state in India has been under President's rule at some time or other.

There are provisions in the constitution which confer absolute power on the President who is elected through a very indirect process and on the basis of extremely limited franchise. He is the chosen nominee and actually a tool in the hands of a ruling coterie. The emergency provisions – Articles 352 to 360 to which we have already referred – have, to quote Sarat Chandra Bose, "a remarkable family likeness to Sections 42, 43 and 45 of the Government of India Act, 1935, the quintessence of which is reincarnated in our Constitution with a minimum of verbal changes".⁹⁶ The Articles make a mockery not only of the meagre rights of citizens but also of the rights of the constituent states and union territories. The President is authorized to issue a proclamation of national emergency "if the President is satisfied that there is imminent danger" of external aggression or internal disturbance. Once the emergency is proclaimed, the executive is free to use despotic powers. The Centre can then assume all legislative and executive powers of the constituent units. And all "fundamental rights" of citizens remain suspended. Once the proclamation of emergency has been approved by Parliament by simple majority within two months, the emergency will

continue until it is revoked by a subsequent proclamation, that is, for an unlimited period.

Under the constitution the Union government administers all important subjects – defence and industries related to defence, atomic energy and mineral sources necessary for its production, foreign affairs, railways, important highways, shipping and navigation, major ports, airways, post and telegraph, currency, external trade, inter-state trade, banking, insurance, important industries, mining, maritime fishing, important institutions for scientific and technical education, certain universities, the Supreme Court, the High Courts, Income Tax (other than tax on agricultural income), excise duties on many goods, customs duties, corporation tax and so on. And the Centre has the sole right to print money. Even state subjects like law and order and education are indirectly controlled by the Centre. The residuary powers are vested in the Union government. By virtue of a resolution supported by not less than two-thirds of the members present and voting at a sitting of the Rajya Sabha, Parliament has the power to legislate on any matter enumerated in the State list.

As we have noted, all major sources of revenue are within the Union's sphere. The states have to depend to a great extent on the finances which the Centre deigns to dole out.

The Indian Civil Service, which was the steel-frame of the colonial administration, became (together with its successor, the Indian Administrative Service) the steel-frame of the new regime after the transfer of power. The members of the Indian Civil Service, appointed by the British Secretary of State in colonial days, were guaranteed by the Indian constitution the same conditions of service and other rights as before; rather, in practice, they came to enjoy more handsome emoluments. The Indian Administrative Service (IAS), as Francine Frankel writes, retains, "the structure and style of its elitist forerunner, perpetuating a national administrative system that in numbers and outlook *was more suitable to carrying out the narrow colonial functions of law and order* than the broad responsibilities for economic development of an independent government".⁹⁷ When the Constitution was drawn up, "Most of the Chief Ministers were opposed to the creation of such an all-India cadre [as the IAS]. They wanted to have their own services and control them, but the Sardar [Patel] sternly discouraged such separatist tendencies."^{97a} The higher rungs of the administration of a state are staffed by members of the ICS, IAS and other central services like the Indian Police Service. The personnel of these services are not amenable to discipline by the state. The Centre enjoys

a stranglehold on the administrative machinery of every state.

The higher appointments to the judiciary of a state are made by the centre. Every judge of the High Court of a state is appointed by the President "after consultation with the Chief Justice of India, the Governor of the State, and in the case of appointment of a Judge other than the Chief Justice, the Chief Justice of the High Court". The appointment, posting and promotion of district judges are made not by the ministers of the state concerned but "by the Governor of the State in consultation with the High Court exercising jurisdiction in relation to such State".

Under the constitution the states are no more than glorified municipalities which can be dissolved at the will of the central government.

The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (as amended in 1972) confers on the armed forces, as the very name of the Act implies, special powers in "disturbed" areas. It is the prerogative not of the ministers but of the governor of a state, the administrator of a union territory or the central government, to declare an area "disturbed". When an area is declared as "disturbed", the state legislature has no jurisdiction over it. The Act empowers any armed forces officer, warrant officer or any person of equivalent rank that he may, "if he is of the opinion that it is necessary to do so for the maintenance of public order, after giving due warning *as he may consider necessary, fire upon or otherwise use force, even to the causing of death*" of persons not only disobeying any law, but also those disobeying orders prohibiting the assembly of five or more persons and those carrying weapons or "things capable of being used as weapons". The Act also permits the military personnel to destroy any shelter from which, in their opinion, armed attacks "are likely to be made" or which has been used as a hide-out by absconders "wanted for any offence". The Act also allows the arrest without a warrant, with "whatever force as may be necessary", of any person against whom "a reasonable *suspicion*" exists that he is "*about to commit a cognizable offence*".⁹⁸ The only criterion is the *subjective* determination by the officer and he cannot be prosecuted or proceeded against without the sanction of the central government. This Act is an "emblem of tyranny and national oppression". This Act is used in Kashmir and the North-East to crush the aspirations of the peoples there to be free.

'Armies of occupation' have been stationed in the North-East and in Jammu and Kashmir for a long time and a bitter, undeclared war has been going on against the nationalities fighting to be free.

The constitution has a provision (Article 2) for conquest and annexation of new territories. So Sikkim was annexed and the unadministered territory,

the North-East Frontier Agency, which had never been a part of India, was annexed and became the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh.

The constitution of India contains every provision for stifling the voice of the people when it appears to be subversive of the rule of the classes which became heirs to the British raj. It is so drawn up as to help them to suppress the various nationalities of India. Shorn of its liberal, democratic pretensions, it is essentially the constitution of a centralized, authoritarian state seeking to serve imperialist and feudal interests and to contribute to the fabulous growth of the Indian big compradors.

It may be noted that the Constituent Assembly which drew up the constitution for India was formed according to the principles laid down by the British Cabinet Mission and the Viceroy in 1946. It was constituted not through election on the basis of adult suffrage, as had been promised by the Congress leaders many times before, but by single, transferable votes of the members of the then existing provincial legislatures, Muslim members and non-Muslim members voting separately. One may remember that these provincial legislatures had been formed under the Government of India Act of 1935 on the basis of communal electorates and a very much restricted franchise. Besides, according to an agreement between Nehru and the Chamber of Princes, on the accession of the native states to the Indian Union, about 50 percent of the seats allotted to them in the Constituent Assembly were filled by nominees of the Princes (erstwhile stooges of the British government) and the rest were supposed to represent the people of these states. India's Constituent Assembly was convened by the Viceroy and Governor-General of India and started functioning in December 1946, the twilight of *direct* colonial rule. This Constituent Assembly cannot claim to have represented the people of India – colonial or free.

"The transfer of power", observed Alan Campbell-Johnson, Mountbatten's press attaché, "was an unique response essentially to a revolutionary situation." He pointed out that dominion status "made possible the maximum administrative and constitutional continuity on the basis of the great India Act of 1935".⁹⁹ Some 250 articles out of 395 articles of the Constitution of 'free' India "were taken either verbatim or with minor changes in phraseology from the 1935 Government of India Act [described earlier by Nehru as the "Charter of bondage"] and the basic principles remained unchanged."¹⁰⁰ So did G.D. Birla write: "We have embodied large portions of the [1935] Act, as finally passed, in the Constitution which we have framed ourselves and which shows that in it was cast the pattern of our future plans."¹⁰¹

To stifle national consciousness in the different national regions and to cultivate and nurture the plant of 'Indian nationalism', the Indian big compradors and their political representatives, the Congress leaders, had been brandishing for a long time Hindi as the all-India language and Devanagari as the all-India script. Their object was to abolish all other scripts.¹⁰² Gandhi suggested abolition of other scripts – Tamil, Telugu, Bengali, etc. – in order "*to solidify Hindu India.*"^{102a} They managed somehow to provide in the constitution that "The official language of the Union shall be Hindi in Devanagari script". More of that later.

Among other instruments, 'development' planning has served as an effective one for curbing the rights of nationalities and establishing the political and economic domination of the Indian big bourgeoisie and imperialist capital.

'Indian nationalism' was quite useful to the imperialists as well as the Indian comprador big bourgeoisie. Before transferring power, the British imperialists wanted a 'United India' to serve their global strategy – political, economic and military.¹⁰³ The Indian big bourgeoisie, which flourished as intermediaries of British capital, were keen on having a unitary Indian state to fulfil their aspirations. They wanted an India with a strong Centre by controlling which they would be able to establish their sway over different national regions, curb the forces of genuine nationalism, suppress various nationalities of India and deal appropriately with potential rivals from them. Second, they aspired to become a zonal power in the Indian Ocean region as junior partners of the Anglo-American powers. 'Indian nationalism', 'a strong Centre' – all this was deemed indispensable for fulfilling their aspirations.

The Menace of the 'Great Power' Syndrome

As World War II drew to an end, the Indian big bourgeoisie saw rosy visions of its future. While the war years were the worst of times for the people, they were the best of times for the big bourgeoisie. During the war there was no control or almost no control over industrial prices unlike in the U.K., the U.S.A. or Canada.¹⁰⁴ Taking advantage of the war-time scarcity as well as fulfilling the demands of the vast war-machine, they made staggeringly high profits. The war showered gold on them.

On the other hand, the end of the war saw in Asia the defeat of Japan, the decline in the power and prestige of the old imperialist powers like France

and the Netherlands and the prospect of a bitter civil war in China. This whetted the appetite of the Indian big bourgeoisie. They came to cherish the dream of dominating not only South Asia but the entire Indian Ocean region. It was Jawaharlal Nehru who gave voice to their aspirations. In 1945 Nehru wrote:

The Pacific is likely to take the place of the Atlantic in the future as a nerve centre of the world. Though not directly a Pacific state, India will inevitably exercise an important influence there. India will also develop as the centre of economic and political activity in the Indian Ocean area, in south-east Asia and right up to the Middle East.... For the small national state is doomed.^{104a}

The man who opposed the right of nationalities to self-determination most bitterly was Nehru. While sitting in the Ahmednagar Fort prison he affirmed:

... Whether India is properly to be described as one nation, or two, or more really does not matter, for *the modern idea of nationality has been almost divorced from statehood. The national state is too small a unit today and small states can have no independent existence.*¹⁰⁵

He again asserted :

*... the small national state is doomed. It may survive as a cultural, autonomous area but not as an independent political unit.*¹⁰⁶

Earlier, he had hailed Hitler as "an agent of destiny to the extent that the days of small nations are past."¹⁰⁷ (Ironically, Hitler perished in the flames he had kindled while the small nation-states to which Nehru referred have survived and prospered.) Nehru stated: "The right of any well-constituted area to secede from the Indian federation or union has often been put forward, and the argument of the U.S.S.R. advanced in support of it. That argument has little application, for conditions there are wholly different and the right has little practical value."¹⁰⁸ He held that it was India's 'manifest destiny' to become the centre of a "supernational state" stretching from the Middle East to South-East Asia and to exercise "an important influence" in the Pacific region.¹⁰⁹ "So it seems", Nehru asserted, "that in the modern world it is inevitable for India to be the centre of things in Asia. (In that term, I would include Australia and New Zealand too, being in the Indian Ocean region. East Africa comes into it also.) ... India is going to be the centre of a very big federation...".¹¹⁰ He stated : "*India is likely to dominate politically*

and economically the Indian Ocean region."¹¹¹ He recalled the "ages gone by [when] India ruled over various other countries of Asia, and its civilization and culture spread far and wide."¹¹² In August 1945 he declared: "I stand for a south Asia federation of India, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and Burma.... In the world of today there are two big powers, Russia and America. In the world of tomorrow, there will be two more, India and China – there will be no fifth."¹¹³ Addressing army officers in October 1946, when he was vice-president of the Viceroy's Executive Council, known as the 'Interim Government', when India was still a colony, he said: "India is *today* among the four great powers of the world: other three being America, Russia and China. But in point of resources India has a greater potential than China."¹¹⁴ It became the refrain of many of his speeches and statements that India was "bound to emerge as one of the greatest powers of the world".¹¹⁵ Patel too was afflicted with this 'great power' syndrome. He said: "Let India be strong and be able to assume the leadership of Asia, *which is its right*."¹¹⁶ Gandhi desired that Hindustani should "become the language of the whole of Asia".¹¹⁷

The Congress leaders were sure that Pakistan would not prove viable and would come back to them.¹¹⁸ Nehru considered Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) to be "really part of India" and wanted her to be "an autonomous unit of the Indian federation".¹¹⁹ He claimed that Nepal was "certainly a part of India", though she was a nominally independent country.¹²⁰ (Later, Chester Bowles, who served as U.S. ambassador to India for two terms, observed: "So India has done on a small scale in Nepal what we have done on a far broader scale on two continents.")¹²¹

How could India "dominate politically and economically the Indian Ocean region" when she was one of the most impoverished countries, woefully lacking in economic, political and military strength?

Early in April 1942, Nehru told Colonel Louis Johnson, then U.S. President Roosevelt's Personal Representative in India, that India wanted to hitch her wagon to America's star, not Britain's.

Later, Nehru modified his view and asserted: "We shall seek to build anew our relations with England on a friendly and co-operative basis, forgetting the past."^{121a}

The Indian big bourgeoisie and their political frontmen expected Britain and the U.S.A. to equip them economically and arm them militarily so that they could become a zonal power under the umbrella of the Anglo-U.S. powers. The following from the written evidence of the Engineering Association of India before the Fiscal Commission 1949-50 is illuminating:

...industrially advanced countries like U.S.A. and U.K. should undertake the obligation of making India industrially great. The exigencies of the situation in South-East Asia require it" and demand "that India should be made strong in order that she may act as a bulwark against the rising tide of Communism in this part of the globe."¹²¹

The role India under Nehru hoped to play was not an imperialist role but the role of a sub-exploiter – an intermediate role between the imperialist metropolises and countries in Asia weaker and less developed than India. The Indian big bourgeoisie had been accustomed to playing the role of a sub-exploiter in the British colonies of Burma, Malaya, Sri Lanka and in East Africa. The end of World War II made them see visions of greener pastures in the whole of Asia except China and Japan.

The Indian ruling classes proved a menace to the freedom of neighbouring small nations like the Sikkimese, the Nagas, the Mizos and the Manipuris. A time came when they annexed Sikkim. Regarding Nagaland, Nehru wrote: "It lies between two huge countries, India and China.... Inevitably, therefore, this Naga territory must form part of India and of Assam... the excluded areas should be incorporated with the other areas."¹²² From about the mid-seventies of the nineteenth century the British had pursued a 'forward policy', occupied the central area of the Naga territory and created the Naga Hills District. The British followed a policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of the Naga Hills District. Besides, the Naga-inhabited areas bordering Tibet and Burma were left unadministered. When the Simon Commission (the Indian Statutory Commission) came to India in 1928, the Nagas placed their demand before it for restoration of independence. They raised a similar demand before the Cabinet Mission in 1946. But Nehru's great power chauvinism would not allow the Nagas to have their own independent state after the withdrawal of the British. On 7 August 1951, Nehru's principal private secretary wrote to A.Z. Phizo, the leader of the Naga National Council, that the Indian Government would not allow any attempt by any section of the people of India to claim an independent state.¹²³ The Nehrus wanted to annex Nagaland – the Naga Hills District as well as the excluded areas which had been left free by the British. The Nagas wanted liberation not only of the Naga hills but also of other Naga-inhabited areas in India and Myanmar. The Peace Mission with Assam's Chief Minister B.P. Chaliha, Jayaprakash Narayan and Michael Scott as members acknowledged that the Naga people were beyond doubt a separate nation. When all peaceful negotiations failed, when the Indian ruling classes, after the end of direct colonial rule, were keen not only on

preserving but enlarging the British legacy, the Naga leaders held a plebiscite among the Nagas, who rallied behind the demand for independence and boycotted the General Elections of 1952. Armed hostilities started in 1953. In the meantime the Nagas had set up their underground Naga Federal Government. The Nagas put up brave resistance against invasion by the Nehrus' troops who did not hesitate to commit every kind of atrocity on the Nagas. In the course of the resistance the Naga tribes were welded into one nation. It was in 1997 that the Indian government signed a ten-year ceasefire with the National Socialist Council of Nagaland. It was renewed in 2007 for an indefinite period.

A P.T.I. report in a recent issue of *The Hindu* (Kolkata edn., 4 March 2010) stated that the Indian Government were having talks with the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-IM) but rejected its demand for sovereignty and its territorial claims for Naga-inhabited areas in neighbouring states.

The Indian ruling classes also sought to grab Jammu and Kashmir. On 14 June 1947, V.K. Krishna Menon, who was Nehru's confidant and often acted as his emissary, made a fervent appeal to Viceroy Mountbatten to ensure that on the lapse of British paramountcy Jammu and Kashmir acceded to India in the interest of the 'free world' (a euphemism for the world which is dominated by the imperialists and their accomplices).¹²⁴ Before Mountbatten went to Kashmir to meet the Maharaja and his prime minister, he received a note on Kashmir, dated 17 June, from Nehru. After pointing out that the Muslims constituted 77.11 percent of the population of the state, Nehru wrote that it should join India. He argued: "If any attempt is made to push Kashmir into the Pakistan Constituent Assembly, there is likely to be much trouble because the National Conference is not in favour of it and the Maharaja's position would also become very difficult. *The normal and obvious course appears to be for Kashmir to join the Constituent Assembly of India....* It is absurd to think that Pakistan would create trouble if that happens."¹²⁵ 'Socialist' Nehru's solicitude for the position of the Maharaja (to whose ancestor, Gulab Singh, the British had sold Jammu and Kashmir along with its people for 75 lacs of rupees) was remarkable. According to him, there were only two alternatives before Jammu and Kashmir: either accession to India, which was Nehru's heart's desire, or accession to Pakistan. Kashmir would not be allowed to remain separate and independent. In *Naya Kashmir*, a document adopted at a conference held in 1944, the National Conference led by Sheikh Abdullah envisaged the future state of Jammu and Kashmir as "an independent federation... like a

Switzerland of the East".¹²⁶ Soon the National Conference raised the slogan that the Maharaja should 'Quit Kashmir' and launched a struggle against the autocratic rule of the Maharaja. It also sent a memorandum to the British Cabinet Mission which came to India in March 1946, in which it raised the question of the Amritsar Treaty (which had transferred Jammu and Kashmir to Gulab Singh) and demanded that Jammu and Kashmir be ruled by the people of the state.¹²⁷ Sheikh Abdullah's telegram to the Cabinet Mission said: "Today the people of Kashmir cannot be pacified with only a representative system of governance. They want freedom. Total freedom from the autocratic Maharaja after the termination of the British rule Kashmir has the right to become independent. We Kashmiris want to inscribe our own destiny."

Nehru resented the demand of the National Conference for the abolition of monarchy. Speaking as president of the All India States People's Conference (AISPC) at its general council meeting in June 1946, he stated:

...our approach to the Princes must be a friendly one.... Our objective is responsible government in the States under the aegis of the ruler, as a constitutional head.¹²⁸

At the call of Nehru Sheikh Abdullah left for Delhi and the movement of the people of Kashmir for an end to the Maharaja's rule was suspended. On the way Abdullah was arrested and a reign of terror was unleashed in Kashmir. The whole of the Kashmir valley was brought under military administration. Many were shot and killed, and more were put behind bars. While criticizing the state's repressive measures, Nehru declared in a press statement that it was "the policy of the All India States People's Conference to demand full responsible government in all the States under the aegis of the ruler" and "*regretted* that the issue of the ruler continuing or not was raised in Kashmir at this stage."¹²⁹ Before he left for Kashmir, he tried to assure the Maharaja that the purpose of his visit was to bring about a peaceful settlement and appealed to him to release Abdullah. The Kashmir authorities banned his entry into the Kashmir territory. He entered it but returned to Delhi at the instruction of the Congress Working Committee. Gandhi, Patel and Azad appealed to the Maharaja to lift the ban on Nehru and it was removed. After assuring the Maharaja and others about his peaceful intentions, Nehru went to Kashmir with the consent of the Viceroy and Gandhi. The net result of his visit was that Abdullah signed a statement in court, jointly drafted by Nehru and Asaf Ali, retracting the earlier demand for the abolition of monarchy, and the civil disobedience movement was

withdrawn. But Abdullah was not released; National Conference workers continued to languish in prison; atrocities on the people continued. A quite happy settlement was achieved through Nehru's efforts.

On 15 August 1947 British paramountcy lapsed but the Maharaja had withstood pressure from Mountbatten¹³⁰ and Congress leaders like Gandhi (who visited Kashmir early in August 1947)¹³¹ and refused to accede to either India or Pakistan. Both the Maharaja and his prime minister R.C. Kak had been toying with the idea of Kashmir remaining separate and independent. Many Hindu and Sikh refugees from West Punjab migrated to neighbouring Jammu. Many Muslims were killed and, according to Alastair Lamb, at least five lakh Muslims fled from Jammu to Pakistan. Towards the end of October, Pathan tribesmen, helped by Pakistan, invaded Kashmir. The Maharaja asked India for help and acceded to the Indian Union (for three subjects – defence, foreign affairs and communications. The instrument of accession included the proviso that the accession was *provisional*. Indian troops were flown to Kashmir to beat back the invaders.

On their release from the Maharaja's prisons in September 1947, Sheikh Abdullah and the National Conference cadres, secular in their outlook even when the Indian subcontinent was filled with the poisonous fumes of communalism and had been partitioned on a religious basis, resisted the invaders together with Indian troops. They were not in favour of joining Pakistan. After months of war there was ceasefire. Pakistan remained in occupation of a considerable part of the state in the north-west while the rest came under the control of India.

To dispel suspicions and rally the support of the predominantly Muslim population behind India, Nehru declared on 2 November that "the accession would have to be considered by the people of Kashmir later when peace and order were established. We were anxious not to finalize anything in a moment of crisis and without the fullest opportunity being given to the people of Kashmir to have their say. *It was for them ultimately to decide* It was in accordance with this policy that we added a proviso to the Instrument of Accession of Kashmir."¹³²

On 25 November he solemnly stated in India's Constituent Assembly (Legislative): "In order to establish our bonafides, we have suggested that when the people are given the chance to decide their future, this should be done under the supervision of an impartial tribunal such as the United Nations Organization."¹³³

India's Constituent Assembly recognized not only Kashmir's autonomous status but also her right to self-determination.

Again, on 31 December 1947, in its complaint to the United Nations Organization, the Nehru government pledged that after the restoration of normalcy in the state, "the people of the State will freely decide their fate, and that decision will be taken according to the universally accepted democratic means of plebiscite or referendum. To ensure free and fair plebiscite, the supervision of the United Nations will be necessary."

On behalf of the Indian government Nehru repeated the same pledge times without number.¹³⁴

Speaking in India's Parliament on 7 August 1952, Nehru once again declared:

We do not want to win people against their will and with the help of armed force: and, *if the people of Jammu and Kashmir State wish to part company with us, they can go their way and we shall go ours. We want no forced marriages, no forced unions. I hope this great Republic of India is a free, voluntary, friendly and affectionate union of the States of India.*¹³⁵

No doubt, it was a noble ideal, nobly phrased. But did the phrases, like many other peacock phrases coined by Nehru, contain a single grain of truth?

Within a few days -- on 25 August 1952 -- Nehru sent a note to Abdullah, then Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, in which Nehru wrote:

Our general outlook should be such as to make people think *that the association of Kashmir state with India is an accomplished and final act and nothing is going to undo it ... I have held these views concisely and precisely for the last four years....* What has sometimes worried me is what happens in Kashmir, because I have found doubt and hesitation there, and not clarity of vision or firmness of outlook."¹³⁶

It seems Nehru had a private face as different from his public one, as black is from white.

India's Constitution, adopted towards the end of 1949, assumes that J and K's accession to India was *final, not provisional*. There is no mention in it of the proviso to the accession that the people of the state would be free to decide later whether to remain within the Indian Union or not. The Constitution betrayed the Indian government's pledge to the people of J and K and to the United Nations.

In the beginning, while annexing J and K within the Indian Union, the Constitution granted under Article 370 'special status' to J and K. The Constitution recognized the rights of the state to have its own constituent

assembly, parliament, head of the state, freedom from the jurisdiction of India's Supreme Court, etc. But Hindu communal forces in India started an agitation for the repeal of Article 370, the end of any special status for J and K and its complete integration into India.^{136a} What Nehru was trying to achieve by stages with his policy of double-speak and double-deal, the Hindu communal forces wanted to accomplish more brazenly. Later, several amendments were made to Article 370 to make a mockery of J and K's 'special status'.

When the U.S. Foreign Secretary, Dulles, visited Delhi in May 1953, he expressed the view during his interviews with Nehru that "it would be much better [than a plebiscite] to settle the problem on the basis of partition or some other ad hoc arrangement".¹³⁷ Nehru shared Dulles's view and held that the solution of the Kashmir problem lay in the division of the state and its human 'chattels' between India and Pakistan.¹³⁸ Nehru, according to Gopal, "continued to suggest a settlement on Kashmir broadly on the lines of the status quo".¹³⁹ The Indian expansionists felt no scruples about destroying the integrity of the Kashmiri nation. They were prepared to share Kashmir with Pakistan but would not allow it to decide its own fate, to go its own way. When Sheikh Abdullah, "convinced that even Nehru could not subdue communal forces in India", "publicly proclaimed that Kashmir should become independent", he was dismissed and promptly arrested.¹⁴⁰ There were mass protests against the arrest and about 1,500 Kashmiris were butchered to quell the resentment that burst forth. Armed force and Kashmiri stooges were relied upon by India's ruling classes to trample underfoot the long cherished aspirations and the struggle of the Kashmiri people to be free.

On 20 August 1953 an agreement was signed by Prime Minister Nehru and Prime Minister Mohammed Ali Bogra of Pakistan for solving the Kashmir problem. Their joint statement said that it was their firm belief that the Jammu and Kashmir dispute should be settled in accordance with the wishes of the people of that state. It added that the most feasible method of ascertaining the wishes of the people was by fair and impartial plebiscite.

This was a clever move on Nehru's part and served his purpose well. Issued almost immediately after Sheikh Abdulla's arrest, the statement helped to stem the tide of growing revolt of the Kashmiri people and to bring the situation in Kashmir under control. And then, characteristically, Nehru backed out.¹⁴¹

The Kashmiris waited for long years for India to respect her pledge. The overwhelming majority of the Kashmiris aspired to *azadi*, to independence from the rule of both India and Pakistan. They were deceived too many

times. In the late eighties the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front was set up. The JKLF is fighting for a Kashmir free from the control of both India and Pakistan. It stands for an independent, sovereign and secular state of Kashmir. It gave a call for armed struggle of the Kashmiris to win the right to self-determination. It was an unequal fight. The Indian army and paramilitary forces like the Border Security Force (BSF) and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), armed with draconian legislations like the Armed Forces (Jammu and Kashmir) Special Powers Act, Jammu and Kashmir Public Security Act, the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, the Jammu and Kashmir Disturbed Areas Act, etc, were mobilized to crush by force the legitimate aspirations of the Kashmiri people.

Added to the forces of state repression were and are several state-sponsored armed organizations of counter-insurgents. Under the protection of the Rashtriya Rifles, a wing of the regular Indian army, they torture and kill the activists who fight for the right of self-determination, their sympathizers and human rights activists; loot and burn houses, shops, etc., of the people; plunder whatever they can; and smuggle out rich timber from the Himalayan forests. They are on the pay-roll of the government. Similar groups were organized by the police in West Bengal during the Naxalite movement. They have a family resemblance with the Salwa Judum, the counter-revolutionary organization, brought into existence by the state to fight the Maoists in Chattisgarh.

Amnesty International stated in its report of January 1995: "The brutality of torture [by the state's armed forces and intelligence agencies] defies belief. It has left people disabled and mutilated for life."

Tens of thousands have been killed; people are killed on mere suspicion. Many thousands have been made to disappear and many thousands languish in prison.

Instead of open warfare as in the early nineties, the Kashmiri militants resorted to guerrilla warfare. They have also been waging mass movements – strikes, demonstrations, *bandhs*, etc. What is remarkable is the mass character of the Kashmiri people's struggle.

It is India's armed forces, several lakhs strong, that actually rule in Jammu and Kashmir. Whatever ministry may be there is for show purposes only. Elections are held but at the point of the gun.

We shall cite one instance to show how alienated from the people of Kashmir are the Indian ruling classes. The latter were determined to conduct census operations in 2000 in J and K as in India. But the Kashmiris were

opposed to them on the ground that in those days of turmoil the census would give a false demographic picture. But the Indian rulers ignored the Kashmiris' opposition and made preparations. Even Kashmir government employees refused to co-operate. The Indian government was forced to climb down. The director, census operations in Kashmir, told reporters that the census could not be conducted unless people co-operated with the government and appealed to Hizbul Mujahideen, one of the guerrilla organizations, to lift the ban on the census.^{141a}

We would quote some lines which a Kashmiri, Akhtar Mohi-ud-din, wrote. He had been secretary to the Cultural Academy in Kashmir and retired from civil service as additional secretary and director, department of law in 1981. He received the Sahitya Academy Award and in 1968 the Padmashree (which he later renounced). In a letter of 14 February 1990, he wrote to I.K. Gujral, then India's Minister of External Affairs: "In Kashmir itself people are mercilessly gunned down and young men and teenagers are made special targets of this violence; communal feelings are sought to be created and fear psychosis created among minorities to divide the society vertically and accuse the majority of religious fanaticism and fundamentalism, which designs have all along been frustrated by the emancipated people of Kashmir. It has been the bane of Kashmiris right from 1947 that whenever they raise their voice for basic human rights, big hue and cry is started on all sides to drown their voice in the din of war machines, bullets, disinformation, etc."¹⁴² In a letter to Khushwant Singh, dated 16 February 1990, Mohi-ud-din wrote: "The history of the past forty years of [the] Kashmiris' association with India is a sad tale of broken promises, state terrorism, fraudulent elections, sham democracy, corruption, coercion, interrogation centres, encouraging political opportunism and breeding and rearing anti-social elements. In this hateful game all members of the ruling class got involved, vying with each other in scoring harder and harder hits." Before concluding the letter, he wrote; "And, above all, is this national interest of India [to be] perpetually in conflict with the genuine aspirations of the people of Kashmir of safeguarding their identity, living with honour and dignity and preserving and developing their National culture? If yes (and the experience of the past forty years indicates that way), then what is the way out? Raising bogeys? Sabre-rattling and war hysteria? Massacres and media disinformation or what? These are the vital questions which need immediate attention and consideration. Meanwhile, the people of Kashmir are continuing their just struggle to achieve their basic human rights." (These letters did not reach

their addressees for, according to the writer, he had information that these were censored at the Srinagar post office.)¹⁴³

To quote Mohi-ud-din again, "My son was killed by renegade militants in 1990. He used to work in the finance department and there was Rs. 16 lakh in the locker." When the renegade militants came and demanded the money and he refused, he was killed. Mohi-ud-din wrote: "Four years later, in 1995, my son-in-law, who was the general manager of a co-operative, was returning home at 4 P.M. when the Border Security Force caught him and shot him in broad daylight on the road just outside his house."¹⁴⁴

The crimes of the Indian armed forces against the people of Kashmir are legion. We shall cite one comparatively recent incident – the Shopian incident. On 29 May 2009, two young women – Neelofar Jan and Asiya Jan, her sister-in-law – went to see their orchard across the Rambiar Nullah in the afternoon and did not return. The road passes by CRPF and police camps. Searches were made that night by Neelofar's husband and the police but no trace of them could be found. Later, the bodies were found by the side of the nullah near a CRPF camp – the spot near the nullah which had been searched earlier but then no traces of the bodies had been found. No person, what to speak of dragging two dead bodies, could have gone there without the knowledge of the security forces. The people of Kashmir were sure that the Indian security forces murdered them after possibly raping them. The Indian authorities did everything possible to cover up the crime. But as soon as the Kashmiri masses came to know of the crime, they started agitating throughout the state. Demonstrators were fired upon and four Kashmiris were killed at Baramulla. The general strike in Shopian itself continued for 62 days. It ended only when the then Chief Justice of Kashmir made an appeal and promised justice. Significantly, the Kashmir bar association "is at the forefront of the *azaadi* struggle."^{144a}

Recently, on 31 January 2010, Wanik Farooq, a young boy of 16, became a victim of the worst kind of state terrorism. According to a news item, there was a clash on that day between some people in Srinagar and the CRPF, the paramilitary force, which fired a "tear-gas" shell that killed them. Another teenager, Zahid Farooq was also killed when he was playing cricket. Besides them, 35 ordinary men and six members of the CRPF personnel were severely wounded. The Hurriyat Conference gave a call for a bandh as a protest and life in Srinagar stood still. According to the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, this assault by the CRPF was an instance of heinous state terrorism.^{144b} Indiscriminate killings of Kashmiris by Indian paramilitary forces are the norm. Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, a moderate

Hurriyat Conference leader, “the only separatist leader to openly support the dialogue process”, refused to participate in the dialogue with New Delhi, told *Hindustan Times* that such killing “cannot be tolerated”. He accused New Delhi of perpetrating “police excesses and daily deaths”. Crowds of Kashmiris retaliate by throwing stones at the killers.^{144c}

Much was made of the Kashmiri Hindu Pandits’ migration from the Kashmir valley to Jammu some years ago. As Akhtar Mohi-ud-din said, “It was Mr Jagmohan [who was governor of Jammu and Kashmir in the early 1990’s and became later a member of the BJP-led NDA cabinet at the Centre] who conspired to give a communal touch to the movement in Kashmir. The Pandits were terrorized by his men and renegades employed by the government. These renegades also killed Pandits to generate that fear psychosis.” Again, Mohi-ud-din said: “Jagmohan organized their migration in a phased manner.”¹⁴⁵ The Indian ruling classes have left no stone unturned to blacken the image of the fighters for Jammu and Kashmir’s liberation. And to weaken the struggle they wanted to raise a communal divide in Jammu and Kashmir.

The question is, who suffers, besides the people of Jammu and Kashmir who are victims of many atrocities? A few years ago, during the rule of the BJP-led NDA cabinet at the Centre, Narendra Modi, then BJP general secretary in charge of Jammu and Kashmir, claimed that during 25 years of rule by Abdullah’s family, the Centre had released Rs 1.5 lakh crore for Jammu and Kashmir. Yet, according to the BJP, they had failed to deliver the goods as expected by the Indian ruling classes.¹⁴⁶ (The question is, why don’t you leave the Kashmiris to their fate and come away, instead of wasting such enormous amount of the Indian people’s money?) We do not know the source of Modi’s figures, but for the rest of the period, the Indian government must have released to other stooge governments of Jammu and Kashmir almost an equal sum to whatever was spent under the Abdullahs, if not much more.

And how many lakhs of crores of rupees have they spent directly on India-controlled Kashmir, over which the Indian and Pakistani armed forces clashed some years ago). And how much does the Siachen glacier cost? To quote a well-known journalist, “Siachen is the most strategically absurd high altitude war, fought at elevation exceeding 6,000 metres. The

dispute over an undemarcated border beyond a point known as NJ-9842 has defied solution, although such a solution would obviously be in the interests of both India and Pakistan. Siachen means a per day loss of 2.7 men and Rs 2.5 to 2.6 crore... for India. According to Indian Army sources, air maintenance for the Siachen operation alone costs Rs 1,000 crore... a year."¹⁴⁷

Retired admiral Ramdas added: "Thousands of our soldiers are suffering frost-bite, hypoxia, and severe mental stress."

Can one calculate the colossal amounts that have been and are being spent on the military and paramilitary forces and intelligence agencies in order to deny the people of Jammu and Kashmir the right to self-determination, as promised? One may add to that the cost in suffering and death of soldiers and civilians directly affected.

Not only do the people of Jammu and Kashmir but also the people of India suffer. A large percentage of the Indian people are being denied their right to adequate food, education, health care and so on. If the vast amounts of money spent on crushing the resistance of the Kashmiri people were spent on improving the lot of the Indian people, things would have been different from what they are now. This undeclared war against the Kashmiri people, euphemistically called a fight to suppress insurgency, hits many millions of Indians in the stomach.

Significantly, this year (2010), the Indian flag was not hoisted at Lal Chowk, the busy city centre of Srinagar, on the Republic Day – a departure from the practice observed every year in the past with much fanfare. Afraid of repercussions among the people, the Indian army did not hold any function on the day.^{147a} This symbolical of the state of things in Kashmir.

Another victim of the Indian rulers' great power chauvinism is Manipur. This land of the Meiteis was an ancient Asian state known as Kangleipak. The state emerged in the early Christian era through an amalgamation of seven principalities. The Manipur army was defeated by the British army in 1891 and Manipur remained under British military occupation for several years. On 15 August 1947, when British paramountcy lapsed, Manipur became independent and sovereign. But on 15 October 1949 Manipur was annexed by the Indian rulers and there was a so-called merger agreement which the Manipur king was coerced to sign. The people of this land of beauty and culture have waged a national liberation movement under the banner of the Revolutionary People's Front (RPF) and other organizations since 1978 for their right to self-determination. They have been fighting against a large Indian army, besides

other mercenaries. The brave people of Manipur numbering only 19 lacs, of whom adults were only 9 lacs, in September 1999 when they submitted a memorandum to the Secretary General, United Nations and the Chairman of the Decolonisation Committee (Committee of 24) for de-colonisation of Manipur from Indian colonialism have been waging a liberation struggle, despite torture, indiscriminate killings, rapes of their women and other barbarities committed by Indian forces. One can have some idea of these atrocities from Amnesty International's long report "India: 'Operation Bluebird' – A Case Study of Torture and Extrajudicial Executions in Manipur", dated October 1990.

We shall cite one instance of the criminality of the Indian armed forces stationed in Manipur and the exasperation of the Manipuris. One Manipuri woman was raped and murdered by Indian soldiers. Several Manipuri women stripped and demonstrated before the Indian army camp with a banner which read among other things: "Indian army, eat our flesh".

This kindled a wild fire of resentment and struggle, throughout Manipur. The Manipuris demanded the withdrawal of Indian armed forces, the scrapping of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), and the restoration of the Kangla Fort, the historic symbol of independent Manipuri rule for centuries. Faced with the people's struggles, the Indian rulers were forced to withdraw AFSPA from seven districts of Imphal and the Indian army from the Kangla Fort and to release some detenus. While making a temporary retreat the Indian expansionists organized a murderous force – the Manipur Police Commandos whose job was to carry out extra-judicial killings. It is under the banner of Apunba Lup (United Body) that the Manipuri masses have been waging their heroic struggle.

A Manipuri lady, Irom Sharmila Chanu, is on hunger-strike for ten long years, the Indian tyrants occasionally force-feeding her. She went on hunger-strike on 2 November 2000 in protest against the killing of ten Manipuris by the Assam Rifles. She has raised the demand for the repeal of the AFSPA, an instrument of oppression of the different nationalities.

The heirs to the British legacy were anxious not only to preserve it but to enrich it. Even before the British raj's mantle fell on them, they had been casting longing looks not only at Ceylon, Nepal, Manipur, the Naga territory, Jammu and Kashmir but also at the regions in the north-east beyond Assam. On 8 April 1947, when Nehru, as a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, was in charge of the External Affairs Department of the Government of India, its deputy secretary wrote to the political officer in Sikkim that "In regard to the Indo-Tibetan boundary, the Government of

India stand by the McMahon line..." But the message referred to the Simla Convention of 1914 as an "abortive" one.¹⁴⁸ On 25 April the External Affairs Department informed the Secretary of State that "Government of India now wish to be represented in Tibet... and should be grateful to know whether His Majesty's Government desire to retain separate Mission there in future. *If they do not, it would seem feasible to arrange transition from 'British Mission' to 'Indian Mission' without publicity and without drawing too much attention to change, to avoid if possible any constitutional issue being raised by China.*" The Indian expansionists wanted to exploit the contradictions between the Chinese and the 'serf-owners' of Tibet, however surreptitious their methods were.¹⁴⁹

After sometime Nehru started claiming that the boundary between India and Tibet, which was subject to the suzerainty of China, had been demarcated and fixed and was beyond dispute. Speaking in Parliament on 20 November 1950, he asserted:

The frontier from Bhutan eastwards has been clearly defined by the McMahon line which was fixed by the Simla Convention of 1914Our maps show that the McMahon line is our boundary and that is our boundary – map or no map.¹⁵⁰

The Simla Convention, which had been described by them as 'abortive', was no longer so. The Nehrus tried to pass something spurious as genuine, as they always did. The facts are: the boundary had never been demarcated; the McMahon line drawn on a map by a high British official was never ratified by the parties concerned including the British Indian government, and the Chinese had objected to it from the very beginning. Even Viceroy Lord Hardinge refused to accept it.¹⁵¹

It is well-known that Nehru's belligerency invited from China a rebuff in 1962 which he had not bargained for.¹⁵²

Like Nehru, Patel too was thinking imperially. On 7 November 1950, he wrote to Nehru: "The undefined state of the frontier [in the north and the north-east] and the existence on our side of a population with its affinities to Tibetans or Chinese have all the elements of potential trouble between China and ourselvesOur northern or north-eastern approaches consist of Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, and the Darjeeling [area] and tribal areas in Assam ... The people inhabiting these portions have no established loyalty or devotion to India." He proposed that "political and administrative steps" should be taken "to strengthen our northern and north-eastern frontiers". This "would include the whole of the border, i.e., Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim,

Darjeeling and the tribal territory in Assam.”¹⁵³

Patel was suggesting on the plea of strengthening India's defence against any future trouble with China that India should extend her domination over Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, the tribal territory of Assam, etc.

We would quote here from Neville Maxwell's *India's China War*:

In the case of Sikkim, India in 1949 seized the opportunity of a local uprising against the ruler to send in troops and bring the state into closer dependence as a protectorate than it had formally been under the British [and in 1974 Nehru's worthy daughter and then India's prime minister, Indira Gandhi, marched Indian troops into Sikkim and annexed it]; in the same year [1949] India signed a treaty with Bhutan, in which she took over Britain's right to guide Bhutan in foreign affairs. New Delhi's influence in Nepal continued to be paramount, and was increased in 1950 when the Indian Government helped the King of Nepal to break the century-old rule of the Rana clan. The new Government thus took over and consolidated the 'chain of protectorates' as Curzon had described the Himalayan states.^{153a}

We would like to discuss briefly the question raised by C.H. Philips – the question why the Muslims could found a state in the Indian subcontinent and why the nationalities like the Bengalis could not.

“Who killed India?” asked Khwaja Ahmad Abbas indignantly. “The wonder and the tragedy is that India should have been killed by the children of India,” said Abbas.¹⁵⁴

It was only a handful of “children of India” that killed her. And Mushirul Hasan said: “...Never before in South Asian history did so few divide so many, so needlessly.”¹⁵⁵

Many hold the Muslim League led by M.A. Jinnah responsible for the partition of India. Facts lead to a different conclusion. Michael Brecher, Nehru's biographer, writes that the consensus among the people, including Nehru, whom he met, was that “a united India was within the realm of possibility as late as 1946”. He adds that “one must assume” that the partition of India “was a voluntary choice of Nehru, Patel and their colleagues”.¹⁵⁶ Abul Kalam Azad also held that “Patel was the founder of India's partition”. He said: “I was surprised that Patel was now an even greater supporter of the two-nation theory than Jinnah. Jinnah may have raised the flag of partition but now the real flag-bearer was Patel.”¹⁵⁷ He also blamed Nehru for the partition. In fact, Gandhi, Nehru, Patel and their close associates shared the responsibility. To quote Frank Moraes, “Reflecting on my many conversations and discussions with Jinnah I am convinced that he

did not really want Pakistan but was driven by the logic of events and the intransigence of the Congress leaders into finally embracing it.”¹⁵⁸

To be brief, when during the negotiations between British imperialism, the Congress and the League, there was no agreement between the leaders of the Congress and of the League as regards the future political set-up in India, the Cabinet delegation which came to India in 1946 and Viceroy Wavell produced their own plan, known as the Cabinet Mission Plan, on 16 May. It rejected the League demand for a separate Pakistan and argued that “*a radical partition of the Punjab and Bengal, as this would do, would be contrary to the wishes and interests of a very large proportion of the inhabitants of these Provinces*”. It said: “Bengal and the Punjab each has its own common language and a long history and tradition.” Besides, the partition of the Punjab would be harmful to the interests of the Sikhs who were spread over the whole of the province.

The Cabinet Mission Plan outlined a scheme for *a united India*. The plan, recommended for India comprising both ‘British India’ and the native states, was a three-tier one – a Union Centre dealing with foreign affairs, defence and communications and with powers to raise the necessary finances and equipped with an Executive and a Legislature; three groups of provinces (or sub-federations) with their own executives and legislatures – one including all Hindu majority provinces, another comprising the Punjab, Sind, the NWFP and Baluchistan; and the third one consisting of Bengal and Assam. The provinces would be vested with all subjects other than the Union subjects and with residuary powers. British paramountcy over the native states would lapse and there should be negotiations between them and the rest of India for their inclusion in the Indian Union.

The three groups of provinces would frame constitutions for the provinces included in them and decide whether to have group constitutions. A province would be free to opt out of a particular group after the first general election under the new constitution.

The Muslim League agreed to a united India with its grouping of provinces.¹⁵⁹ The Congress Working Committee resolution of 24 May insisted that “India must necessarily have a strong central authority.” The Nehrus were violently opposed to the grouping system, which, according to the British government, was an essential feature of the Cabinet Mission Plan. Talking glibly of provincial autonomy, of which the Nehrus were sworn enemies, they torpedoed the plan which envisaged a United India.

The Congress leaders’ real objection was not to the denial of provincial autonomy to Assam and the NWFP – the NWFP, which they soon threw to

the wolves, as Abdul Ghaffar Khan accused the Congress leaders of doing. What they really objected to was the emergence of groups or sub-federations, which would render the Centre weak. *Their policy was basically opposed to the essence of the Cabinet Mission Plan – decentralization of powers and a weak Centre.* As they had chosen the royal road of negotiations to attain the goal of self-government, they were prepared to settle for an India minus certain parts in the north-west and the east. But they were not willing to make any compromise on the issue of a strong Centre – a strong Centre which would not be restricted to the exercise of merely three subjects. That is why on the pleas of upholding the sacred principle of provincial autonomy and Sikh interests, they buried the Cabinet Mission Plan, which would have preserved the unity of India.

As noted before, the Congress (and the people) were offered another chance for having a United India. After assuming office on 23 March 1947 as Viceroy, Mountbatten realized that the Cabinet Mission Plan could not be revived as the difference between the Congress and the League over the grouping system could not be reconciled. The Viceroy and his British staff drafted a plan which gave to the representatives of the provinces (the NWFP after a fresh election) and the Muslim-majority and non-Muslim-majority areas of the Punjab and Bengal the right to decide whether they would join the existing constituent assembly (dominated by the Congress) or group together in one or more constituent assemblies or stand out independently and act as their own constituent assembly. Among the main features of the plan were: compulsory grouping was avoided to meet the objections of the Congress to this feature of the Cabinet Mission Plan; the right of the provinces to decide their own fate was recognized; Bengal and the Punjab would be free to decide whether they would remain undivided with their integrity intact and free to decide their relations with the rest of India.

The plan also envisaged that "the constituent assemblies, if more than one, should also create machinery for joint consultation among themselves on matters of common concern, particularly Defence, and for the negotiation of agreements in respect of these matters."

If either of the two plans was accepted by the Congress leaders, the holocausts throughout India in 1947 and after would have been averted. But the lives of tens of millions of ordinary Indians were dirt cheap to the Congress leaders who have been falsely acclaimed as leaders of India's freedom struggle.

The Congress Working Committee, which met early in May for several days with Gandhi attending, took a completely different stand. In an

interview to the Associated Press of America, Patel proposed two alternatives. All power should be transferred to the Central Government "as it now stands" ("the interim Government", formed by Congress representatives on 2 September 1946 and joined by Muslim League representatives later, in which the Congress had majority support), which should function as a dominion government with "the Viceroy standing out". "If there were conflicts in the Cabinet on any question, the majority would rule." The other alternative was that power should be transferred to the two constituent assemblies – the existing one [boycotted by League members] and the other composed of Muslim League members already elected. Patel affirmed: "Congress would like to have a strong centre." So the alternatives were either Congress rule or partition on communal lines.

The plan drawn up by Mountbatten and his British staff fully satisfied Nehru's craving (more hypocritical than genuine) for provincial autonomy. So Nehru had to raise another bogey: the plan, if implemented, would lead to the balkanization of India.

To obtain a monopoly of power (of course, under the British umbrella), the Congress leaders opposed the plan that the provinces should initially be successor states and the central authority or authorities should emerge on the voluntary coming together of the provinces – their voluntary agreement to part with some powers in favour of some central authority – the essence of genuine federalism. Every province (or national region like Andhra, Tamil Nadu, Bengal, Maharashtra etc.) was large enough to constitute an independent state – many of them far larger and more populous than most of the states of Europe. Instead of accepting the federal principle to which the Congress leaders often paid lip service, they killed the provincial choice and insisted on having an undivided India with a centralized, authoritarian state run by them; or, if that was not possible, they were prepared for the partition of India on artificial, religious lines with the national regions or parts of them coerced to join either Hindustan or Pakistan. That this would cause countless millions mourn did not matter to the political representatives of the Indian big bourgeoisie. Millions of lives of the common people were nothing compared to profits earned by this class. Quite sometime before the Muslim League demanded the partition of India on a religious basis, G.D. Birla had pleaded for it. On 11 January 1938, he wrote to Mahadev Desai, Gandhi's secretary:

I wonder why it should not be possible to have two Federations. one of Muslims and another of Hindus. The Muslim Federation may be composed of all the provinces or portions of the provinces which contain more than

two-thirds Muslim population and the Indian states like Kashmir ... if anything is going to check our progress, it is the Hindu-Muslim question – not the Englishman, but our own internal quarrels.¹⁶⁰

Not only did Birla try to persuade Gandhi to agree to the partition of India on communal lines as early as January 1938 but he also approached Viceroy Linlithgow with the same proposal in the same month.¹⁶¹

Even after the partition of India became a settled fact, there arose the possibility of Bengal remaining undivided outside Hindustan and Pakistan. A memorandum of the Secretary of State, dated 4 March 1947, envisaged the possibility of the emergence of three states: Pakistan, Hindustan and Bengal.¹⁶²

On 15 May, Lord Ismay informed Mountbatten that the British Cabinet's India and Burma Committee "were pledged to give the Provinces the option of remaining independent of either Hindustan or Pakistan, if they so desired. *This was particularly applicable to the case of Bengal.*"¹⁶³

In a memorandum, dated 17 May, the Secretary of State, Listowel, said that "*there are strong practical arguments for giving the third option of remaining united and framing its own constitution certainly to Bengal and probably also to the Punjab.*" He refuted Nehru's charge of balkanization and said that it would be consistent with the right of self-determination.¹⁶⁴ At the Cabinet meeting on 23 May, Prime Minister Attlee said: "In the North-East there were good hopes that Bengal might decide to remain united on the basis of a coalition Government elected on a joint electorate."¹⁶⁵ On the same day Attlee mentioned in his messages to the prime ministers of the British dominions the emergence of "two or possibly three independent states" in the Indian sub-continent.¹⁶⁶

Curiously, in his letter of 9 March 1947 to Wavell, Nehru demanded that *Bengal and the Punjab should be partitioned even if India was not partitioned*. The demand had already been raised by Birla's *Hindustan Times*. On 1 May Nehru again conveyed to Mountbatten the same demand. Shyama Prasad Mookerjee of the Hindu Mahasabha, who had become a special favourite of the Patels, went on echoing it.¹⁶⁷

The leaders of Bengal, both Hindu and Muslim, who had a mass base, started a move to prevent the dismemberment of Bengal and keep her undivided outside both Hindustan and Pakistan. Earlier, in April 1946, when rumours were afloat in Delhi about the possible partition of Bengal, Sarat Chandra Bose, then leader of the Congress party in the Central Legislative Assembly, arranged a meeting of Congress representatives of Bengal. They

expressed their unanimous view that "partitioning of Bengal would ruin the national life of the Bengalis for all time. They are reported to have stated that, although in the minority, the Hindus of Bengal would prefer to remain as they were at present and work with the majority community in the political sphere rather than accept any scheme of partitioning Bengal." According to the report, "They also contended that the scheme for partitioning Bengal was absolutely uncalled for."⁶⁸

The destinies of Bengal, the Punjab, the NWFP, etc, were being traded between the big compradors of the Hindu (and Parsi) and Muslim communities. The representatives of these provinces whose fate was being decided were excluded from the negotiations. It is the minuscule coteries of Congress and League leaders, especially Nehru, Patel, Gandhi and Jinnah, and the British rulers, who were seeking to make the best bargain for those whom they represented – the decisions that would have the most profound impact on the lives of hundreds of millions and of their descendants.

Sarat Chandra Bose resigned from the Congress Working Committee in January 1947. In the same month he, Abul Hashim (the secretary of the Bengal Provincial Muslim League) and several other leaders started discussions about how to settle communal differences, form a new representative ministry, prepare an outline of the future Constitution of Bengal and prevent her dismemberment. They believed neither in India being one nation nor in the two-nation theory. They held that India was a subcontinent, the home of many nationalities.¹⁶⁹

At the invitation of Akhil Chandra Datta, former Vice-President of the Central Legislative Assembly, a representative conference of prominent persons was held on 23 March in Calcutta. The conference regarded partition as a "retrograde and reactionary move". It stated: "Communalism is only a passing phase in our national life. The destiny of our country will inevitably be shaped by socio-economic and political forces which have already begun to work. The partition of Bengal will create a permanent cleavage between the two communities and perpetuate an evil which is bound to die out even earlier than some people find it difficult to believe."¹⁷⁰ The All-Bengal Anti-Pakistan and Anti-Partition Committee was set up in April with Sarat Bose as President and Kamini Kumar Dutta, M.L.C., as Secretary.

Bengal's Muslim politicians of different political hues were unanimous in their demand for a united Bengal outside Hindustan and Pakistan. H.S. Suhrawardy, then Prime Minister of Bengal, made every effort to build a "united, undivided, sovereign Bengal". Khwaja Nazimuddin, a former Bengal

Premier and then deputy leader of the Muslim League Party in the Central Legislative Assembly; Mohammad Ali, then Bengal's finance Minister (all of whom later became at different times Prime Ministers of Pakistan) were opposed to Bengal's dismemberment. So were Fazlul Huq, Professor Humayun Kabir, then general secretary of the Krishak Praja Party, and others.

Jogendra Nath Mondal, a leader of the Scheduled Castes Federation and Law Member of the Interim Government of India, declared in a statement to the press on 21 April that the majority of non-Muslims were not behind the demand for the partition of Bengal and that *this could be proved by a referendum*. He also said that it was not in the interests of the Hindus to divide the province, and the scheduled castes, who together with the backward castes formed a majority of the population of proposed West Bengal, were definitely opposed to partition.¹⁷¹

On 25 April, at the Viceroy's eighth miscellaneous meeting, Mountbatten "said that he had got the impression that Bengal, for economic reasons, wanted to remain as an entity.... Sardar Patel said he believed that the feeling in Bengal among non-Muslims was that, whether there was Pakistan or not, they could not remain united unless *joint electorates were introduced*."¹⁷²

The fact is, the joint committee which was set up at a meeting of Congress and League leaders in the last week of April and which included Sarat Bose, Kiran Shankar Roy (leader of the Congress party in the Bengal Legislative Assembly), Suhrawardy, Nazimuddin, Abul Hashim, Mohammad Ali, etc, drew up a draft constitution of united Bengal by 19 May. To be brief, while envisaging future Bengal as a Free State, it provided for election to the Bengal Legislature on the basis of joint electorate and adult franchise with reservation of seats proportionate to the population amongst the Hindus and Muslims.¹⁷³

Parties like the Forward Bloc and Communist Party of India supported the cause of a united Bengal outside Hindustan and Pakistan.

The British government, as Mountbatten said, "had declared themselves willing to agree to an independent Bengal – in fact willing to agree to any solution for Bengal with which the leaders of the principal parties [the Congress and the League] agreed."¹⁷⁴

Besides the British government, the leaders of one of the two "principal parties" – the Muslim League – declared several times their agreement to Bengal remaining united and 'independent'. When, on 26 April, Mountbatten spoke to Jinnah of Suhrawardy's proposal for a United Bengal outside Hindustan and Pakistan, Jinnah "said without any hesitation: 'I

should be delighted, they had much better remain united and independent.”¹⁷⁵ Liaquat Ali Khan, the League’s General Secretary, told Mountbatten’s principal secretary, Mievile, on 28 April that “he was in no way worried about Bengal as he was convinced in his mind that the province would never divide. He thought that it would remain a separate state, joining neither Hindustan nor Pakistan.”¹⁷⁶ The same view was expressed by Jinnah and Liaquat Ali several times afterwards.¹⁷⁷

It was the leaders of the other ‘principal’ party – the Nehrus – who were firm and inflexible in their opposition to any such possibility. It is they who alone insisted on breaking up Bengal on communal lines. No plebiscite or fresh election on the issue of Bengal’s partition was held though it was demanded by Jinnah, Jogendranath Mondal, Humayun Kabir, CPI and others. There arose the possibility of Bengal emerging with her integrity intact and with joint electorates and a Constituent Assembly of her own, based on adult suffrage, which would decide her relations with the rest of India. In such a Bengal communal strife would yield to the united struggle for the overthrow of the indirect rule of imperialism and of its Indian lackeys and new vistas of progress and development would open up. This possibility was killed by the Nehrus, which inflicted an endless series of tragedies the like of which few countries have experienced.

It is the interests of the big Indian compradors like the Birlas that decided the fate of Bengal. The Nehrus were willing to have an undivided Bengal within Hindustan but not outside it. At that time Calcutta was the seat of big Marwari capital. So they would not allow West Bengal to escape from their clutches.

Replying to Patel, B.M. Birla wrote on 5 June: “I am so glad... that things have turned out according to your desire.... *I am very happy that the Bengal question has also been settled by you.*”¹⁷⁸ When the prospect of being uprooted from their homes and terrors of an unknown future haunted tens of millions of Bengalis the big compradors were elated, for their long-held objective was fulfilled.

In the Punjab the most to suffer were the Sikhs. They lived all over the old Punjab. When the Punjab was partitioned on communal lines an immense number of them were uprooted from their age-old homes and became homeless refugees elsewhere. Lakhs of Muslims also, whose homes were in East Punjab, sought shelter in West Punjab. The misery of the uprooted Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs is hard to conceive of.

Later, G.D. Birla, who had been putting pressure on Gandhi at least since January 1938 to agree to partition of India on a religious basis and

consequent dismemberment of Bengal and the Punjab, wrote in a self-congratulatory vein:

I somehow or other not only believed in the inevitability of Partition but always considered this as a good way out of our difficulties.¹⁷⁹

The right of self-determination of the Indian nationalities, especially Bengalis, Punjabis and Pathans of the NWFP, were trampled underfoot by the Nehrus to serve the interests of big compradors. The lives of tens of millions were held cheap – and expendable – for the sake of the profits of a few.

India's ruling classes turned out to be a menace to the freedom of the nations outside the Indian subcontinent too. Though their spokesmen claimed that they supported the national liberation struggles in South-East Asia, they actually belonged to the imperialist camp and did whatever they could to keep the peoples there under imperialist subjection.

Significantly, in his inaugural address to the annual session of the FICCI on 3 March 1947, Nehru welcomed the proposal made by Herbert Evatt, foreign minister of Australia. In a speech Evatt had stated that "the time had now come for forming in the South-East Asia and Western Pacific region an appropriate regional instrumentality concerned with the interests of all the peoples of this area". Commending this speech and Australia's foreign policy as "wise", Nehru said that Australia was rightly "thinking of these areas which are tied together. *Whatever their political differences may be they have to go together.*" He asserted that "we shall have to consider, in common with these other countries to the east, south-east and south-west, common policies and develop common lines of action, because the *economic factor and even the defence factor override these political boundaries and other considerations.*" Nehru exhorted the business magnates to bear a greater burden than in the past so that India might play an "important role all over Asia and in world affairs". He assured foreign imperialist capital that there was "a place in India" for it.¹⁸⁰

What economic interests and defence needs were shared in common by the imperialist powers like Britain, the U.S.A., France and the Netherlands which were striving to restore, safeguard and advance their imperial interests in this vast region and their domestic collaborators on the one hand and the peoples like those of Vietnam and Indonesia and later of Malaya (now Malaysia), the Philippines, etc., who were fighting arms in hand to liberate themselves from the rule of the former? Was there any basis on which they could combine and pursue "common policies and develop common lines of action"? Whose interests would be served by the regional

grouping extending from South Asia to the West Pacific region, which the British dominion Australia's foreign minister proposed and Nehru warmly supported? Whose instrument would be this "appropriate regional instrumentality"? On the plea that "these areas" were "tied together", that the imaginary "economic factor" and "defence factor override those political boundaries and other considerations", Evatt and Nehru were actually proposing the formation of a regional grouping of all the lackeys of imperialism under the imperialist aegis to crush the national liberation struggles in this region.

On returning from London after attending in April 1949 the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference which resulted in the "historic" decision that India would remain a member of the Commonwealth,¹⁸¹ Nehru announced:

We join the Commonwealth, obviously because we think it is beneficial to us and to certain causes in the world that we wish to advance.¹⁸²

Again, he declared:

I think there can be little doubt that it does us good, that this continuing association at the present moment is beneficial for us, and *it is beneficial in the larger sense, to certain world causes that we represent*. And lastly, if I may put it in a negative way, not to have had this agreement would certainly have been detrimental to those world causes as well as to ourselves.¹⁸³

It is obvious which "world causes" 'socialist' Nehru wanted to serve along with Britain, Canada, Australia and South Africa, The 'world cause' was mentioned rather bluntly by the Engineering Association of India in its evidence before the Fiscal Commission 1949-50: "... industrially-advanced countries like U.S. A. and U.K. should undertake the obligation of making India industrially great. The exigencies of the situation in South-East Asia require it" and demand "that India should be made strong in order that she may act as a bulwark against the rising tide of Communism in this part of the globe."¹⁸⁴

The decision to remain a member of the Commonwealth or British Commonwealth of Nations, of which the British king or queen is the head, was hailed by the *New York Times* as "a historic step, not only in the progress of the Commonwealth, but in setting a limit to Communist conquest and opening the prospect of a wider defence system than the Atlantic pact."¹⁸⁵ By "Communist conquest" the U.S. imperialists' organ and Indian compradors

meant the march of the national liberation struggles in Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaya, the Philippines, etc.

The Indian big bourgeoisie and their representatives had been aligned with the imperialists for a long time. They were eager to serve the cause of world imperialism and play the role of a sub-exploiter - an intermediate role between the imperialist metropolises and countries in Asia weaker and less developed than India.

When, in June 1947, Field Marshal Lord Montgomery, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, came to India and "pointed out the grave man-power difficulty of the United Kingdom leading to the necessity of their retaining Gurkha troops in South-East Asia for emergencies, notably war", that is, war against the nations fighting for national liberation, Nehru on behalf of India agreed in principle to grant the facilities the British government was seeking. Several Gurkha regiments and battalions which were part of the Indian army were allotted for service under the British government. Recruitment of Gurkha soldiers by the British on Indian soil continued.¹⁸⁶

In February 1947 Nehru agreed to the Defence Department's recommendation that the French government should be permitted to fly over India with stop-overs eleven transport aircraft which were going to Vietnam to suppress the national liberation struggle raging there.¹⁸⁷

It was decided that the Indian soldiers who joined the Indonesians in their liberation struggle against the Dutch would be struck off the rolls of the Army from the date of their desertion. It was also decided not to give any publicity to them.¹⁸⁸ When appeals were made and higher emoluments offered to British officers and other ranks so that they would continue to serve in post-colonial India's defence forces, the Indian soldiers who supported the Indonesians in their freedom struggle, the INA men and the navy men who revolted against British rule in February 1946, would have no place in them.

To serve the "world causes" that the Nehrus represented, arrangements were made at the April 1949 London conference of the Prime Ministers "for Britain, India and Pakistan jointly to supply the puppet government of Burma with finance and arms in order to suppress the popular revolt in Burma."¹⁸⁹

Many such services have been rendered by India's ruling classes to imperialist powers.

Not for nothing did the arch-imperialist Winston Churchill greet Nehru more than once as "the Light of Asia".¹⁹⁰

The Trend of History

Language has been used as one of the chief instruments to establish the domination of the Indian big bourgeoisie over the different nationalities of India. To promote the growth of 'Indian nationalism' and suppress 'sub-nationalisms' and stifle 'sub-national consciousness', India's ruling classes have tried for a long time to foist Hindi in the Devanagari script as the common language of the whole of India. Since the advent of Gandhi in India's politics, the Congress leaders have organized systematic campaigns with funds provided by the big bourgeoisie to make Hindi the *rashtabhasha* of India.¹⁹¹ Language has been to the big bourgeoisie an indispensable means of fulfilling their political and commercial ambitions. Their scheme was in conformity with their plan to have a powerful centre in a unitary Indian state in the interests of the Hindu and Parsi business magnates. It became one of the causes of the communal estrangement between the two major communities of India.

The Constitution of India imposed Hindi in the Devanagari script as the official language of India. The constitution made a provision that English would continue to be used for official purposes "for a period of fifteen years from the commencement of this constitution", that is, from 1950.

When the constitution was drawn up, no referendum was held either on the language issue or any other issue. That there was deep-seated resistance to Hindi as the state language of India can be guessed from the following facts.

To avoid open debate and discussion which would consolidate opposition and thwart the plan of imposing Hindi, "Language provisions", writes Selig Harrison, "were pointedly omitted from the Draft Constitution of October 1947, as well as from all subsequent versions until the very last." It was revealed by B.R. Ambedkar, Chairman of the Drafting Committee, that at the Congress meeting to consider the Draft Constitution "there was no article which proved more controversial than Article 115, which deals with the (Hindi) question. No article produced more opposition. No article, more heat,... After a prolonged discussion, when the question was put, the vote was 78 against 78. The tie could not be resolved. After a long time when the question was put to the meeting once more the result was 77 against 78 for, Hindi. Hindi won its place as national language by one vote."¹⁹² When the issue came up for decision in the Constituent Assembly, the Congress members "had to obey the Party's directive."¹⁹³ It may be noted that a large majority of the members of the Constituent Assembly were the chosen

nominees of the Congress leadership.

Resentment against the imposition of Hindi on non-Hindi-speaking people was bitter. During the debates in the Constituent Assembly, a member from Tamil Nadu, T.A Ramalingam Chettiar, said that the south was faced with "a matter of life and death."¹⁹⁴ Shankarrao Deo of Maharashtra, Gandhi's associate and a long-time member of the Congress Working Committee, lashed out at those who talked glibly of a common culture to deny the rights of different nationalities. He said that "the chief of the R.S.S. organization [Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh, a Hindu communal body] appeals in the name of culture. Some Congressmen also appeal in the name of culture. Nobody tells us what this word culture means. Today, as it is interpreted and understood, it only means the domination of the few over the many."¹⁹⁵

Since then, using the state apparatus and employing huge government funds, "the few" have tried to impose Hindi as the *sole* official language of India; but, because of the resistance from different nationalities, that object is yet to be fulfilled. English, a foreign language, continues to be the *major* official language and to dominate the higher educational institutions. As a result, the healthy development of the various Indian languages has been retarded.

Another significant fact is that no political party of the ruling classes, other than the Congress, can claim an all-India character. During the last decades of colonial rule there were two such parties in the Indian sub-continent – Congress and League. The British imperialists were then the common enemies of all the different nationalities of India. The Hindus, mainly the caste Hindus, irrespective of nationality, were led into believing that the Congress was an anti-imperialist organization striving to liberate the people from colonial oppression and rallied under its banner. Similarly, from about the end of the thirties, an overwhelming majority of the Muslims belonging to different nationalities rallied to the support of the Muslim League in the fond hope that it would lead them to freedom from the British yoke as well as from what they thought to be likely Hindu domination.

Soon after the end of *direct* colonial rule the Muslim League in Pakistan lost its hold on the people; in East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, it met with an ignominious defeat within a few years. In India the Congress is still a force but it is fast losing its influence on the people. The decline, unlike that of the League, has been slow, because it enjoys the massive support of the Indian big bourgeoisie. Yet the Congress is the leading political party in very few national regions.

The striking thing is that the Congress is losing not to another all-India party but to parties that have emerged in different national regions and have a pronounced regional character or to some temporary combination of parties which, though seemingly of an all-India character, have their influence restricted to particular national regions. Despite their earnest and sustained efforts, the ruling classes have as yet failed to consolidate an all-India political party which could replace Congress after its decline. The Socialist Party, the Krishak Mazdoor Party, the Swatantra Party, the Congress (O) have all failed to fulfil the task allotted to them and have disintegrated. The 'Janata' experiments, too, have been short-lived and the Janata Dal has split into several regional parties. The Bharatiya Janata Party, the old Jana Sangh which descended from the Hindu Mahasabha, waving the Hindu communal banner, is competing with other parties for influence mainly in the Hindi belt. The different parliamentary 'communist' and 'socialist' parties are yet to acquire an all-India character. It is the parties like the D.M.K., Anna D.M.K., Telugu Desam and Asom Gana Parishad that have challenged the Congress each in its own national region, at first by raising the demands of the particular nationalities, and have achieved substantial successes. It is the political trend that the people are rejecting the Congress not in favour of another all-India party but in favour of parties that profess and *only profess* to serve the interests of their national regions. The gradual fading away of the only all-India party, the Congress, and the failure of any other party with an all-India character to emerge indicate that 'Indian nationalism' has failed to strike root and is proving to be something still-born despite all the support and manoeuvres of the ruling classes to nurture it.

Most important of all is the fact that in several regions the demand for the right to self-determination and secession is quite loud and is backed by armed struggle of those nationalities. It is significant that some of these armed struggles are being waged for years and the terror unleashed on them by the armed forces and paramilitary troops of the Indian government has failed to subdue them. We have already referred to the Nagas, the Manipuris, the Mizos and the Kashmiris who have been fighting arms in hand to realize their right to self-determination.

All the struggles of the nationalities in different regions are a flaming repudiation of the concept of 'Indian nationalism'. It is the trend of history that the conflict between 'Indian nationalism' and 'sub-nationalisms' will become more and more acute with the passing of days and 'Indian nationalism', despite all the machinations of the Indian ruling classes and their vast state machinery, will have to retreat before advancing 'sub-

nationalisms’.

Years ago, on 12 February 1953, Nehru wrote to Rajagopalachari:

India is some kind of a jigsaw puzzle with a tendency for separate parts to jump out. It is no easy matter to keep them together.¹⁹⁶

The fact is, a nation cannot be created artificially – in the interests of the ruling classes and by orders from above.

The *immediate* task of the different nationalities of India is to win the right to self-determination, including the right to secession. There will be the *ultimate* fusion, the integration, only on the basis of complete independence and equality, only after the *immediate* task has been fulfilled.

Before the goal is attained, many difficult battles will have to be fought and won.

NOTES

(The Roman numeral after a book indicates the number of the volume and the Arabic numeral the page number.)

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2. Lenin, *Collected Works* (hereafter cited as *CW*), XXXVI, 713-14, note 655.
3. Dennis J. Doolin, *Territorial Claims in the Sino-Soviet Conflict*, Stanford University, 1965, 14 and note 2.
4. For the character of the Indian big bourgeoisie, see Suniti Kumar Ghosh, *The Indian Big Bourgeoisie*, Calcutta, 2nd edn. 2000.
5. *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, ed. by S. Gopal et al (hereafter cited as *SWN*), New Delhi, XIV, 324; see also XV, 35.
6. See Suniti Kumar Ghosh, *India and the Raj, 1919-1947*, Calcutta, 2007 edn., 616-23, 630-43.
7. J. D. Sethi, "Planning and Foreign Policy", *Economic Times*, 7 Dec 1989.
8. Lenin, "The Revolutionary Proletariat and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination", *CW*, XXI, 408 - emphasis in the original.
9. *Ibid*, 413 - emphasis added.
10. Lenin, "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination", *CW*, XX, 412 - emphasis in the original.
11. See Lenin, "Critical Remarks on the National Question", *CW*, XX, 50.
12. Lenin, "The Revolutionary Proletariat and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination." *CW*, XXI, 410—emphasis added.
13. Lenin, "The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination", *CW*, XXII, 146-7.
14. Lenin, "The Revolutionary Proletariat and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination", *CW*, XXI, 413-4 - emphasis in the original.
15. Quoted in B.T. Ranadive, "Marxism and the Nationality Question in India". *The Marxist* (New Delhi), Oct-Dec. 1983, 47.
16. *Ibid*, 32.
17. *Ibid*, 29.
18. *Ibid*, 20; Ranadive quotes from Lenin, "The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution", *CW*, XXIV, 73 - emphasis in the original.

19. Lenin, *ibid*-emphasis added.

20. *Ibid*-emphasis added.

21. See Suniti Kumar Ghosh, *Naxalbari: Before and After*, Chap. 2, "Indian Economy: 1947 to the Early 1970s".

22. Mao Tsetung, "On the People's Democratic Dictatorship", *SW*, IV, 422; see also p. 421.

23. Lenin, "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination", *CW*, XX, 412 -emphasis added.

24. See Ghosh, *India and the Raj*, 605-12.

25. C.H. Philips, "Introduction" to C.H. Philips and M.D. Wainwright (eds.), *The Partition of India*, London, 1970, 11-2

26. Moraes, *Witness to an Era*, London. 1973, 295.

27. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (hereafter cited as *CWG*), New Delhi, LXXXVII, 446.

28. *SWN*, XIV, 385; also 300.

29. N. Mansergh (Editor-in-chief), *Constitutional Relations between Britain and India: The Transfer of Power 1942-7* (hereafter cited as *TOP*), I-XII, London, 1971-1983; X, 159.

30. V.P. Menon, *The Transfer of Power in India*, Calcutta, 1957, 468.

31. Coupland, *The Constitutional Problem in India*, Part III, 88.

32. *CWG*, LXVII, 325.

33. Sen, *From Raj to Swaraj*, Calcutta, 1954, 218.

34. Marx, "The Future Results of the British Rule in India", in K. Marx and F. Engels, *On Colonialism*, Moscow, 2nd impression, 84.

35. Diakov, *The National Question and British Imperialism in India* (in Russian). Moscow, 1948, 47; cited in Selig S. Harrison, *India: The Most Dangerous Decades*, Madras, 1960, 157.

36. K.P. Chaudhury, *Content of History in Indian Schools* (Ministry of Education, GOI, Pamphlet No.9, 1952), 43; quoted in Harrison, *op cit*, 83.

37. See Suniti Kumar Ghosh, *The Indian Big Bourgeoisie* and *India and the Raj 1919-1947*.

38. *Report of the Linguistic Provinces Commission, 1948*, New Delhi, 1948, in *On Committees and Commissions in India 1947-73*, Vol.1, 1947-54, compiled by Virendra Kumar, New Delhi, 1988, 67-9 -emphasis added

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41. *Report of the States Reorganization Commission 1955*, 43 – emphasis added.
42. See Michael Brecher, *Nehru : A Political Biography*, London, 1959, 375, 377; Abul Kalam Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, Calcutta, 1988 edn., 198, 201.
43. Cited in S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, II, Delhi 1979, 267 – emphasis added.
44. Diakov, *op cit*, 45; cited in Harrison, *op cit*, 158.
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46. *Manifesto of the Central Committee of the Communist Party on the New Constitution*.
47. Harrison, *op cit*, 15.
48. *Report of the States Reorganization Commission 1955*.
49. Quoted in Sumit Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal 1903-1908*, New Delhi, 1973, 17; see also P. Hardy. *The Muslims of British India*, Cambridge, 1972, 50; R.C. Majumdar, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, II, Calcutta, 1975, 27.
50. See *ibid*.
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52. See Javeed Alam, *Class, Community and Nationality Formation* (mimeo), Occasional Paper, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, 1985, 9, 57 note 21.
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56. *Indian Annual Register*, ed. by N.N. Mitra (hereafter cited as *LAR*). 1944, II, 180-1; *CWG*, LXXVIII, 85, 89; Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi – The Last Phase*, I, Ahmedabad, 1956, 89.
57. P.C. Joshi, *For the Final Bid for Power!* 10-11. This pamphlet appeared towards the end of 1945 or early in 1946,

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59. *TOP*, VII, 675.
60. See Ghosh, *India and the Raj*, 579-84, 593-600.
61. For a discussion of the comprador character of the Indian big bourgeoisie, see Ghosh, *The Indian Big Bourgeoisie*.
62. Wadia and Merchant, *Our Economic Problem*, Bombay, 1957, 503-4.
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64. See Raman Mahadevan, "The Politics of Business Interest Groups: Some Observations on their Articulation of Interests in Colonial Madras" (mimeo), Paper presented at the seminar on "Business and Politics in India", Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, 29-31 March 1989.
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70. SICC, *Report*, Jan-Dec, 1946, 37, quoted in Mahadevan, *ibid*, 30.
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76. *Ibid*, 32.
77. D. R. Gadgil, *Economic Policy and Development*, Pune, 1955, 141; GOI, *Report of the Fiscal Commission 1949-50*, I, Delhi, 1950, 85.

78. *The Encyclopaedia of the Indian National Congress* (ed. by A.M. and S.G. Zaidi), New Delhi, IX, 312.
79. *Ibid*, XI, 262.
80. See *CWG*, LXXVII, Appendix X, 459.
81. *TOP*, VI, 281.
82. *Congress Encyclopaedia*, XII, 531 – emphasis added.
82. *SWN*, XV, p.36 – emphasis added; see also 49,50, 111.
84. *Report of the States Reorganization Commission*, 38.
85. See Ghosh, *India and the Raj*, 224-31.
86. Ranajit Roy, “Punjab's (Un)holy politics”, *Business Standard*, 30 Oct. 1981.
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91. See Ghosh, *India and the Raj*, 597-8.
92. Menon, , *The Transfer of Power in India*, 358-9 – emphasis added.
93. Emphasis added.
- 93a. See *The Constitution of India*, Part I, Article 3.
94. See Michael Brecher, *Nehru*, 424.
95. GOI, *The Constitution of India*, Delhi, 1972 edn., 87-93, 98-9, 113-4.
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98. Emphasis added.
99. Campbell-Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten*, 353; also 319.
100. Michael Brecher, *Nehru: A Political Biography*, 421.
101. G.D. Birla, *In the Shadow of the Mahatma*, Bombay, 1968, 131.
102. See Ghosh, *India and the Raj*, 432-3.

- 102a. *CWG*, XXXIV, 168-9; also LXI, 31-2 – emphasis added.
103. See Ghosh, *India and the Raj*, 578-9.
104. Gadgil, “Wartime Controls and Peacetime Ends”, *op cit*, esp, 80-1.
- 104a. Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, London, 1956 edn., 550.
105. *Ibid*, 545 – emphasis added.
106. *Ibid*, 550 – emphasis added.
107. *SWN*, XII, 134 – emphasis added.
108. Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, 548.
109. *Ibid*, 550.
110. *SWN*, XV, 562, 566 – emphasis added. See also *ibid*, 123; XIV, 160, 187, 474-5, 477; *passim*.
111. *Ibid*, XIV, 325 – emphasis added; see also *ibid*, 470; XV, 123.
112. *Ibid*, XIV, 161.
113. *Ibid*, 440, 441-2; see also XII, 332.
114. *Ibid*, 2nd Series, I, 311—emphasis added.
115. *Ibid*, 19, 439; see also XIV, 228.
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119. *SWN*, XIV, 450; XV, 458; see also X, 32; XI, 788-9.
120. *Ibid*, 2nd Series, II, 470; see also Jawaharlal Nehru, *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches 1949-1953*, Delhi, 1957, 176-8.
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- 121a. *SWN*, XII, 105, 169, 194-5; *TOP*, I, 665.
- 121b. GoI, *Report of the Fiscal Commission 1949-50*, III (Written Evidence), p. 80.
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123. Gopal, *op cit*, 208.

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127. *SWN*, XV, 367 and fn 6; also 366, fn.3.
128. *Ibid*, XV, 341-2; 353, 356; also 360, 422-3, 426, *passim*.
129. Emphasis added.
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134. *Ibid*, 89; Nehru, *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches*, 152, 341-2, 345, 352, *passim*.
135. *Ibid*, 361 – emphasis added.
136. Quoted in Gopal, *op cit*, 122 – emphasis added.
- 136a. See Myron Weiner, *Party Politics in India*, Princeton, New Jersey, 1957, 175-6.
137. Nehru's note on interviews with Dulles, 22 May 1953; cited in Gopal, *op cit*, 128.
138. *Ibid*, 127.
139. *Ibid*, 272.
140. *Ibid*, 131-3.
141. A. G. Noorani, "Missed Moments", *The Statesman*, 25 Oct, 1999.
- 141a. *The Statesman*, 18.9.2000.
142. Akhtar Mohi-ud-din, "The Hindu-Muslim Divide is the Curse of the Subcontinent", *South Asia Citizens Web (SACW)* Dispatch No.2, 14 Sept, 2000.
143. *Ibid*.
144. *Ibid*.
- 144a. *The Telegraph* (Calcutta), 7.3.2010.
- 144b. *Ekdin* (Bengali daily), 3 February 2010.
- 144c. *Hindustan Times* (Kolkata), 8.2.2010.
145. Akhtar Mohi-ud-din, *op cit*.

146. "BJP likens Autonomy demand to Pak's Kargil Misadventure", *The Statesman*, 5 July 2000.
147. Praful Bidwai, "Grim state of Indo-Pak Ties", *The Kashmir Times*, 16 Nov. 1998; cited in L. Ramdas (former Chief of the Indian Navy), "India-Pakistan Relations at a Crossroads: A Personal Statement", *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, April-June 1999, 75.
- 147a. *Ananda Bazar Patrika* (Bengali daily), 28.1.2010.
148. *TOP*, X, 157 – emphasis added.
149. *Ibid*, 430.
150. Quoted in Gopal, *op cit*, 176.
151. Karunakar Gupta, "The McMahon Line 1914-45: the British Legacy", *China Quarterly* (London), Jul-Sep. 1971.
152. See Suniti Kumar Ghosh, *The Himalayan Adventure*, Mumbai, 2002.
153. Durga Das (ed.), *op cit*, X, 337-8, 340.
- 153a. Neville Maxwell, *India's China War*, Bombay, 1971, 67-8.
154. Abbas, *I am not an Island: An Experiment in Autobiography*, Delhi, 1987, 280; quoted in Mushirul Hasan (ed.), *India's Partition*, Delhi, 1994, 31.
155. *Ibid*, 43.
156. Michael Brecher, *Nehru: A Political Biography*, 375, 377; also 374.
157. Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, Calcutta, 1988 edn. 198, 201.
158. Moraes. *Witness to an Era*, 81.
159. *TOP*, VII, 437, 512; *CWG*, LXXXIV, 482-4, 487-9.
160. G.D. Birla, *Bapu: A Unique Association*, III, 144.
161. John Glendevon, *The Viceroy at Bay*. 88-89; cited in *Words to Remember* (a book on G.D. Birla sponsored by the Birla family), Mumbai, 1983, 82-83.
162. *TOP*, IX, 842.
163. *Ibid*, X, 834 – emphasis added.
164. *Ibid*, 876-78 – emphasis added.
165. *Ibid*, 964.
166. *Ibid*, 974.
167. *Ibid*, IX, 899; X, 519, 557; E.W.R. Lumby, *The Transfer of Power in India, 1945-7*, London, 1954, 150; *Amrita Bazar Patrika* (an English daily now extinct),

25 April, 1947 – emphasis added.

168. *The Statesman*, 16 April 1946.

169. Sarat Chandra Bose, *I Warned My Countrymen*, 184-85; also 176; Abul Hashim, *In Retrospection*, 23, 134.

170. *Hindusthan Standard* (an English daily now extinct), 25 March 1947.

171. *The Statesman*, 23 April 1947 – emphasis added.

172. *TOP*, X, 424-25.

173. See Sarat Chandra Bose, *op cit*, 186-87, 191-92.

174. *TOP*, XI, 2.

175. *Ibid*, X, 452.

176. *Ibid*, 479.

177. *Ibid*, 472, 512, 554-55, 625, 657.

178. Durga Das (ed.), *op cit*, IV, 55-56.

179. G. D. Birla, *In the Shadow of the Mahatma*, 286.

180. *SWN*, 2nd Series, II, 581-2.

181. On 2 May 1949, almost immediately after the conference was over, British Prime Minister Attlee declared in the House of Commons "with reference to the London Agreement that *no distinction should be drawn between the use of the terms 'Commonwealth', 'British Commonwealth' or 'British Empire'*, all of which should be regarded as interchangeable." R. Palme Dutt, *India Today*, Bombay, 1949 edn, 575 – emphasis added.

182. Nehru, *Independence and After*, 275.

183. *Ibid*, 280 – emphasis added.

184. *Report of the Fiscal Commission 1949-50. III – Written Evidence*, Delhi, 1950, 80; see also Nehru, *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches 1949-53*, 116, 126.

185. *New York Times*, 28 Apr. 1949; quoted in Gopal, *op cit*, 54.

186. See Ghosh, *India and the Raj*, 617-8.

187. *SWN*, 2nd series, II, 527, fn.2.

188. *Ibid*, 548 and fn.4.

189. R. Palme Dutt, *op cit*, 576.

190. Gopal, *op cit*, 236-7.

191. See Ghosh, *India and the Raj*, 432-3.

192. Ambedkar, *Thoughts on Linguistic States*, Bombay, 1955, 14; quoted in Harrison, *op cit.* 282.

193. *Ibid.*

194. *Constituent Assembly Debates*, IX, No.33. 1370; quoted in Harrison, *op cit.* 283.

195. *Constituent Assembly Debates* IX, No.33, 1430. quoted in Harrison. *op cit.*, 283.

196. Gopal, *op cit.*, 222.

A Note from R.U.P.E.

When we wrote a short note to Suniti Kumar Ghosh conveying our

opinions and suggestions regarding his essay on India's nationalities question, he requested that we publish our note along with his essay. Unfortunately, we have been very late in preparing the manuscript for publication. We sincerely apologise to him and to our readers for this delay.

Our note appreciated the essay as a whole, and expressed agreement with much of it. It also made the following criticisms/suggestions.

1. The references in the essay to the "Marwari-Gujarati-Parsi" big bourgeoisie, and its presentation of the question of the imposition of Hindi, may suggest that in India there is an oppressor nationality, or something that approximates an oppressor nationality.

According to our understanding, there is no single dominant nation in India that oppresses the other nations of India. Rather, *all* the nationalities of India are indirectly oppressed by imperialism. That is, their real development and their ability to decide their own fate, in any meaningful sense, are held back by the neo-colonial hold of imperialism on India. The entire pattern of development is shaped by these external forces and the classes in India that are tied to them. This is the main aspect of the "national question" in India: none of the nationalities controls its own destiny. Thus there is no *basic* conflict of interests among the various peoples of India. In order to achieve pro-people, all-round development, in economic, social, cultural, and political terms, they need to join hands against the classes and the political order that perpetuate a neo-colonial hold on India. It is only through such a process that they can truly determine their own destiny.

At the same time, there are factors working against such a joining of hands. The present pattern of neo-colonial development, by its very nature, not only fosters inequality within each nationality; it also fosters inequality among different nationalities. Thus there is plenty of scope for suspicion and hostility to develop among the different nationalities of India, despite the basic commonality of their interests. Indeed the rulers do not stop at that: they actively sow discord and enmity among and within the nationalities, as a method of rule. (For example, it is not uncommon to find leaders of a single ruling class party hailing from neighbouring states whipping up sentiments against the people of the other state regarding the sharing of river waters or the demarcation of state boundaries.)

India is officially deemed to be democratic; but as working people discover quickly in the course of even the most peaceful struggle, it is not so in fact. The business of those who rule an autocracy is to be autocratic. This autocratic conduct of the rulers of India, generally drawn from the relatively

developed or bigger nationalities, gives rise to resentment and estrangement among the diverse peoples of India.

So the secondary aspect of the national question in India is that there is inequality and discrimination among the different nationalities. This aspect is secondary in the sense that it does not *determine* whether or not a nationality is oppressed: that status, common to all the nationalities and tribal communities of India, is determined by their subjugation to imperialism. While the inequality and discrimination among the nationalities are secondary in this sense, they are nevertheless of great importance. In many cases, they are felt more directly by the people than the other aspect (i.e., the subjugation of all the nationalities to imperialism). This is especially so in the case of those nationalities which, for historical reasons, have been yoked forcibly to India. Further, the importance of these national inequalities, discrimination, prejudice and slight is that they affect the relations among the various nationalities in India, making it more difficult to bring about a united struggle against the forces which are responsible for their oppression.

To sum up: on the one hand, it is through the Indian ruling classes that imperialism exercises its stranglehold on India, and prevents the free development and true self-determination of the different nationalities of India; and on the other, it is the same ruling classes of India that foster inequality, discrimination and strife among the different nationalities and communities. Both aspects can be done away with only when the various nationalities join hands, under working class leadership, to overcome the forces and political order that are responsible for national oppression. That is, the nationalities need to win the right of self-determination primarily vis-a-vis imperialism. Only on the basis of that liberation from imperialism and emancipation from feudal autocracy would each nationality have scope for exercising its right to self-determination vis-a-vis other nationalities.

Such national liberation can be won only if the different nationalities join hands in struggle. And that can only come about through consistently struggling in practice against every expression of disparity, prejudice and oppressive conduct, and unconditional upholding of the right of every nationality to self-determination (including the right to secession).

(A secondary point is that the term "Marwari-Gujarati-Parsi" big bourgeoisie, while an approximation or shorthand description of the summit of the big bourgeoisie in 1947, appears to be no longer adequate. The big bourgeoisie is multi-national, though no doubt drawn from among the relatively developed or bigger nationalities. For example, a significant number of the top business houses are based in South India.)

2. While the essay has correctly shown how the comprador big bourgeoisie has been a menace to the rights of the nationalities, it is equally important to note that semi-feudal relations too cripple the development of a nationality. National industry is suppressed not only by comprador industry and policies but also by paucity of purchasing power among the vast rural masses and the lack of integration of the whole economy. The development of language, the most important means of human intercourse, is stunted by, among other things, lack of literacy and the limited reach of written literature. Obscurantism, irrational beliefs, and the persistence of retrograde cultural practices (including caste oppression and divisions) prevent the healthy development of a national culture.

In order to free itself from imperialism, Indian society must shake off its semi-feudal chains. As the resolution of all secondary questions is always linked to the resolution of the main question, the resolution of India's national question is linked to the resolution of the contradiction with feudalism. In this way, the essential content of the programme for the liberation of the nationalities of India is the liberation of the country from the grip of imperialism and feudalism. The path for the nationalities to win genuine self-determination will revolve around the agrarian struggle. (A special case of nationality is the defence and development of the tribal identities and cultures, which revolve around their gaining control of their land and forest.)

It is worth recalling the manner in which the communists gave an anti-feudal, anti-imperialist content to the Andhra Mahasabha during the course of the heroic Telangana armed struggle of 1946-51. It is the establishment of the organs of people's power that alone can guarantee the right of nationalities to self-determination.

However, the aspiration of nationalities for self-determination actually gets manifested in many forms and under diverse leaderships. We cannot ignore such expressions merely because they emerge under such leaderships. While urging the people to take the course of winning real self-determination (in not only form but content, i.e. from imperialism and feudalism), we must categorically uphold the *right* of nationalities to self-determination, including secession, in all cases.

3. The essay mentions that the ruling classes, particularly the comprador bourgeoisie, wished to impose a unitary state in India in order to control the all-India market and to provide them a base to dominate neighbouring countries. Another pressing reason for them to desire a unitary state,

however, should not be overlooked here: their fear (shared by the imperialists) that weak provincial governments would not be able to suppress effectively the class forces emerging rapidly in the post-World War II situation. The Raj and the Congress were united in this fear of the revolutionary upsurge. The emergence of the Telangana armed struggle, and the inability of the Nizam to effectively suppress it, was a stark object lesson in the need for a unitary state with strong Central powers. In other words, a strong Centre was required to suppress the workers' and peasants' struggles.

4. At certain places the expression "centralized authoritarian state" is used. Such a term might imply a unified capitalist economy underlying the centralization of state power. In fact the process of development in the last six decades has not centralized or truly integrated the economy, but left large swathes of it backward, while creating small islands of prosperity linked to the imperialist countries. The political expression of this economic reality is a diverse pack of ruling class political parties (and factions within each party) wielding influence at the state level, linked to semi-feudal and trader interests. Hence it would be better to say "autocratic state with powers concentrated in the hands of the Centre."

5. The essay criticises the concept of "Indian nationalism", from the angle that this obliterates the rights of the different nationalities. However, the term "Indian nationalism" came to be used by genuine anti-imperialist forces during the freedom struggle as a synonym for anti-imperialism. Thus, for example, the "Indian National Army (INA)" of Subhash Bose. Perhaps it would be better to discuss separately the misleading implications of the term "Indian nationalism". We feel it would be better here to use the phrase "unity and integrity of India". Thus, for example, instead of "Like every other kind of thinking, the concept of Indian nationalism has a class character," we would suggest "Like every other kind of thinking, the concept of the unity and integrity of India has a class character."

