

## **Divide and rule in India**

The British invaders of India did not create Moslem-Hindu rivalry but they certainly made use of what they found. A divided India was a weak India. Although communal riots were troublesome for the Police and costly to traders it was possible for the alien rulers to view them somewhat philosophically. British capitalists were holding down India because they made big profits out of it and they no more thought of getting out of India because of Hindu-Moslem riots than they would have thought of giving up the profits of capitalism at home because of occasional conflicts with the workers.

The enthusiasts for Indian independence, particularly the members of the predominately Hindu Congress Party, built up their propaganda on a foundation provided by two charming myths. One was that if only British capitalism would get out Moslems, Hindus and the adherents of other religious systems would forget their traditional differences and live peaceably together. The other was that India is a "nation," all its 400 million inhabitants yearning to be united under their own Indian government. Events during the past year have shattered both. British rule has ended but the largely Hindu India and the largely Moslem Pakistan refused to unite. They are two separate States facing each other in an atmosphere of tension bordering on war. Many tens of thousands of Moslems in India and Hindus in Pakistan have been brutally murdered in communal disturbances that dwarf anything that has happened for years. Hundreds of thousands of refugees now live in misery and fear.

It may be asked, in view of what has happened, have the leaders of the Indian parties failed in their object? Were they mistaken in their myths and have their eyes now been opened? By no means. Myths are made by leaders for the deception of their followers, not for the leaders' own consumption. The masses may now be suffering pangs of disillusionment, but not the leaders—except perhaps some curious figures like Gandhi and his circle.

Gandhi's despair was exposed in a speech he made late in September:

"If there is no other way of securing justice from Pakistan and if Pakistan persistently refuses to see its proved error and continues to minimize it the Indian Union Government would have to go to war against it. As for myself, my way is different. I worship God which is Truth and non-violence. There was a time when India listened to me. Today I am a back number. I have no place in the new order where they want an army, a navy, and an air force and what not. I can never be a party to all that."  
(*Times*, 29/9/47.)

No, the propertied classes, the Princes, landowners, and thrusting capitalists with their expanding textile steel and engineering plants have not failed in their object, which was the same as that of the British capitalists in India, the object of preserving their privileged position as exploiters of the masses. Compared with a matter of such paramount importance words about religious and national union are of no account. It is possible some day that India and Pakistan, faced with a menacing threat from some more powerful state may unite for mutual protection, but at present they are rivals, quarrelling about the division of the arms of the former British-controlled army, and maneuvering for control of areas rich in natural resources or of strategic importance.

So capitalism runs true to form whether under the banner of Christianity, Hinduism or Mohammedanism.

The conflict between Pakistan and India and their religions is being made to serve the interests of the respective ruling class groups just as British capitalism made use of communal rivalry. What could be more useful to the Pakistan ruling class in persuading peasants and workers to be content with their lot than to be able to distract their attention away from bread and butter questions towards the iniquities of Hindus and the greed and aggression of the Indian Government? And how convenient for the latter to be able to rally the masses to the need for patriotism and to defend the country against Pakistan cruelty and trouble making.

Under cover of the need for a more national spirit the Congress Party in India decided early in the summer to form a rival trade union federation to combat the existing All-India Trade Union Congress. "Communist control" was the excuse but the real object is certain to be to divide and weaken the organised workers.

The chief bone of contention between India and Pakistan is Kashmir, and an invasion by tribesmen is reported in Indian circles to have been promoted and helped by the Pakistan Government. Spokesmen of the two governments have much to say about the rights and wrongs of their respective claims to take over the territory. India, which at present holds it, promises a plebiscite; to which Pakistan writers retort that it will be faked. The real reason why the issue is so important that both sides are prepared to use military force has nothing to do with the wishes or welfare of the inhabitants. Strategically, from the standpoint of defending India (as well as Pakistan) from attack by other Powers through Central Asia it is a vital area. It has also great natural wealth in its vast forests and undeveloped coal deposits and other minerals, and its water-power may become the foundation of a great electrical development.

The ending of British rule in India was to be the opening of a new era. So said the supporters of Indian nationalism. Indeed it is. For long years capitalists and administrators plundered this conquered land in the haphazard way appropriate to the times and conditions. Now the Indian workers and peasants are going to be exploited under home-born instead of alien masters. Their craft skill and muscular energies are going to serve in the modernisation and industrialisation of India and Pakistan, new Powers fighting for the markets of Asia. The workers there could learn much from the European countries and US., if only to avoid the costly mistakes made and still being made by the workers who first suffered from the capitalist industrial revolution that is now sweeping over Asia.

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