

### CHAPTER III

#### A NOBEL PRIZE ESSAY

*"If the Muslims have a right to be in India, the British have also"*—BRITISH PROPAGANDA GEM.

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*"Every Englishman today fully subscribes to the ideology which lays down that it is wrong or one race to rule another against its will"*—**ESSENTIALS OF THE INDIAN PROBLEM.**

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*"British traders and soldiers acquired India between 1600 and 1857 ; the conception that the conquest or rule of one race by another was wrong, did not then exist"*—BRITISH APOLOGIA ISSUED TO AMERICANS.

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No argument is too ridiculous to bluff the Americans about India. What are the essentials of the Indian problem ? Indians would say, the need for early freedom, internal peace, etc. Most Americans would say the same. But the British in America have to save face, save their prestige, save their privileges. The result is that they over-reach themselves in their apologia for their continued occupation of India.

Such an apologia was issued in the U. S. some time ago. The publication covers twelve foolscap, single-spaced, pages and is entitled, *Essentials of the Indian problem*. It makes two astounding claims. One is: "If the Muslims have the right to be in India, the British have also." After five lines follows the naive declaration. "Every Englishman today fully subscribes to the ideology which lays down that it is wrong for one race to rule another against its will." No British spokesman has ever made this confession on the floor of the Indian Legislature, nor have any of the numerous declarations and proclamations made on behalf of the British Government ever whispered a word of this sentiment. But necessity knows no limits--in America. Here are passages of abiding interest:

#### IF INDIANS RULED EUROPE !

'One way to understand the general situation in India is to take an analogy, with the caution that no analogy should be pressed too far.

'Let us imagine that Indian traders found it profitable to set up trading stations in Italy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; Italy throughout that period was constantly in the throes of warfare between the innumerable States into which it was divided; since Europe

as a whole owed a vague suzerainty to the Holy Roman Emperor the Indian traders duly sought his protection and secured licences to trade from him. The Indian traders found the Emperor unable to protect them and their trade was frequently interrupted by local warfare, so that they were led to fortify their factories which they defended with Indian soldiers; the neighbouring Italian States soon learned the fighting value of these Indian soldiers and in some cases began to enlist their services as allies; in the event of victory greater trading facilities were granted or territorial requisitions were made, in addition to which the Indian traders learned that there were other benefits to be obtained by acquiring actual territorial possessions rather than more trading rights.

'To telescope a long story, the Indians who first came to trade became embroiled in European politics and in the course of time they became one of the European military powers—in the end the paramount power—this, let us say, by 1857.

'Let us imagine, the whole of the European continent ruled by a foreign Indian Government since 1857; what would have been the effects on Europe.

'In the first place, there would have been no war between Prussia and Austria in 1866; no Franco-Prussian war of 1870; no Balkan

War ; no Great War of 1914-18 ; and no Second World War of 1939.

“GIFT” OF COMMON LANGUAGE

The Indians (whom we imagine to have conquered Europe) formed a central administration which required a large Civil Service and although at first the higher positions were reserved for Indians, from the beginning thousands of secondary positions gave employment to Europeans. As the Indian administration was conducted in Hindustani, all Europeans desirous of government employment had to learn this language ; Indian trading houses which came over in ever greater numbers and established business up and down the Continent from Cracow to Barcelona conducted their work in Hindustani, which thus became the common language for virtually all educated Europeans, so that for the first time Finns in the north could converse freely with Spaniards in the south, and French in the west could converse freely with Bulgarians in the east.

The Indians invested large sums in developing European products and they established freedom of trade throughout this great area ; they built roads, canals and railroads where none had been before.

‘What would the consequences have been if this picture were real and not imaginary ?

'Surely that as time went on the diverse races of Europe—the Rumanians, Turks, Greeks, Portuguese, Swedes, Estonians, Germans and French—would have begun to think of themselves less as Rumanians, Turks, Greeks, Portuguese, etc., and more and more as Europeans; they would for the first time have begun to consider their affairs from the viewpoint of Europe as a whole; once this idea had begun to establish itself, parallel with it would have come the consciousness of the difference of their civilization from that of their foreign rulers, the Indians.

'A European Nationalist Movement would have been born. Agitation for a greater share of Europeans in the Indian administration would have been followed by demands for an equal status for Europe in the Indian Empire.

#### HOW DISPUTES WERE REVIVED

'History suggests that nobody in possession of something readily gives it up. Consequently the agitation would have lasted with growing impetus for many years; but we can imagine the Indians realizing that the strength of the European nationalist demand was growing and that the Indian Empire would be more likely

to survive if it were converted into an Indian Commonwealth of Nations, in which Europe would be a partner. The Indian rulers granted various constitutional reforms, recruited up to fifty per cent of the higher civil servants from the Europeans, and finally committed themselves to Dominion Status for Europe.

“As soon as the Europeans realized that home rule was not some distant ideal but might be expected within a few years, some of their old animosities began to revive ; the French, for example, disliked the idea of being numerically in the position of a minority to their traditional enemy the Germans, within the framework of government with democratic majority rule ; other minorities also asked for safeguards ; friends of the foreign Indian Government maintained that as long as the quarrels between the Europeans over minority safeguards continued, the Indians could not grant them Dominion status ; critics of the Indian Government maintained that they took advantage of these divisions to continue autocratic rule undisturbed.

“This analogy, if not pressed too closely, gives a broad picture of the situation in India.”

#### WHAT THE BRITISH DID

“British traders who went to India established their factories under licences from the

Moghal Emperor, they sought his protection ; found it of no avail : and fortified their factories. They became embroiled in Indian politics, and eventually became the paramount power in the continent. Before the pressure of Indian nationalist opinion, the British conceded reforms, which beginning modestly, culminated in the Government of India Act of 1935, the first part of which came into force in 1937. The federation of British India with the Indian States—the second part of the Act—was delayed by almost universal objections to it. The Act reserved seats in the Central Legislature for minorities and while orthodox Hindus would have got the biggest single representation, they would have had to form a coalition government with one or other of the minorities ; this they considered unfair ; the Muslims, on the other hand, objected because they thought their interests were inadequately safeguarded. Further action to carry out this part of the Act was shelved for the duration of the war.”

#### BLESSINGS OF BRITISH PEACE !

“In the world today, Britain is frequently called upon to justify her position in India. The fundamental justification for the presence of the British in India is not the benefits in the way of commercial and industrial development, irri-

gation, roads, railways, etc., conferred on India ; nor can it be claimed that the blessings of British peace constitute an ultimate justification for the British in India ; these benefits are undoubted and must be taken into account in estimating what Britain has done in India ; for example, India's 62,000,000 artificially irrigated acres cover the biggest artificially irrigated system in the world ; her 42,000 miles of railroads form the biggest railroad system in Asia and the third biggest in the world—only the American and Russian systems take precedence ; these facts must be taken into account, but if they are made the fundamental justification, they are open to the fair comment that capital was not invested, irrigation works were not established and roads were not built by British philanthropists simply for the benefit of the poor Indians—they gave a financial return.

“The fundamental justification for the presence of the British in India must be sought in the facts of history.

“The British conquered India by force ; this irrefutable fact cannot be slurred over ; in the course of the last 30 years or so an ideology has been developed which maintains that it is wrong for one nation to conquer another, or for one race to rule another ; few people today quarrel



with this view ; but it cannot be applied to those British traders and soldiers who acquired India between 1600 and 1857 ; the conception that the conquest or rule of one race by another was wrong did not then exist and would have been incomprehensible ; these British traders and soldiers merely did to India what the Hellenes did to Greece, the Romans to Europe, the Anglo-Saxons to England, the Normans to the Anglo-Saxons, and the Muslims to India. Nobody dreams of attributing moral blame to the Hellenes, Normans, Anglo-Saxons and Muslims.

“If the Muslims have a right to be in India the British have also. In times when the right of the conqueror was disputed by no one, the British conquered India. Any defence of the British position in India must, therefore, start from the historical fact that they have been in India some 300 years.

“The British Government and every Englishman today fully subscribes to the ideology which lays down that it is wrong for one race to rule another against its will, and the British Government is committed irrevocably to recognizing any constitution, carrying with it complete independence if desired, drawn up by Indians without outside interference as soon as the war is won.”