

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(PART II—PROCEEDINGS OTHER THAN QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Wednesday, 19th April, 1950

The House met at a Quarter to Eleven of the Clock.

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

12 Noon

(See Part I)

STATEMENT BY DR. S. P. MOOKERJEE ON HIS RESIGNATION AS
MINISTER OF INDUSTRY AND SUPPLY

Dr. S. P. Mookerjee (West Bengal) : Sir, in accordance with parliamentary convention I rise to make a statement explaining the reasons which have led to my resignation from the Cabinet. Let me assure the House that I have not taken the step on the spur of the moment but after deep and deliberate thought. It has been a matter of regret to me that I have not been able to reconsider my decision, although pressed to do so by many for whom I entertain the deepest personal regard. For over 2½ years it has been my proud privilege to work as a Minister of the first National Cabinet of Free India and I have not spared myself in the discharge of the duties that fell upon me. To me the experience has been of great value and it has been my privilege to work in an atmosphere of friendliness and co-operation during one of the most critical periods in the history of our country. To all sections of the House I convey my gratitude for the confidence reposed in me and to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel I specially tender my grateful thanks for the opportunity they gave me to serve the country under their leadership. There is nothing of a personal character which has prompted me to resign and I do hope that those with whom I have disagreed will appreciate the depth of my convictions just as I have unhesitatingly appreciated their own. My differences are fundamental and it is not fair or honourable for me to continue as a member of the Government whose policy I cannot approve of. In all fairness to the Prime Minister I should state that when I communicated my decision to him on 1st April, even before the Prime Minister of Pakistan arrived in India, he readily appreciated my standpoint, acknowledged our differences and agreed to release me from the burden of my office. Any withdrawal at a subsequent stage would not have been fair to him or to me.

I have never felt happy about our attitude towards Pakistan. It has been weak, halting and inconsistent. Our goodness or inaction has been interpreted as weakness by Pakistan. It has made Pakistan more and more intransigent and has made us suffer all the greater and even lowered us in the estimation of our own people. On every important occasion we have remained on the defensive and failed to expose or counteract the designs of Pakistan aimed at us. I am not, however, dealing today with general Indo-Pakistan relationship, for the circumstances that have led to my resignation are primarily concerned with the treatment of minorities in Pakistan, specially in East Bengal. Let me say at once the Bengal problem is not a provincial one. It raises issues of an all-India character and on its proper solution will depend the peace and prosperity, both economic and political, of the entire nation. There is an important difference in the approach to the problem of minorities in India and

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Pakistan. The vast majority of Muslims in India wanted the partition of the country on a communal basis, although I gladly recognise there has been a small section of patriotic Muslims who consistently have identified themselves with national interests and suffered for it. The Hindus on the other hand were almost to a man definitely opposed to partition. When the partition of India became inevitable, I played a very large part in creating public opinion in favour of the partition of Bengal, for I felt that if that was not done, the whole of Bengal and also perhaps Assam would fall into Pakistan. At that time little knowing that I would join the first Central Cabinet, I along with others, gave assurances to the Hindus of East Bengal, stating that if they suffered at the hands of the future Pakistan Government, if they were denied elementary rights of citizenship, if their lives and honour were jeopardised or attacked, Free India would not remain an idle spectator and their just cause would be boldly taken up by the Government and people of India. During the last 2½ years their sufferings have been of a sufficiently tragic character. Today I have no hesitation in acknowledging that in spite of all efforts on my part, I have not been able to redeem my pledge and on this ground alone—if on no other—I have no moral right to be associated with Government any longer. Recent happenings in East Bengal have however overshadowed all their past woes and humiliation. Let us not forget that the Hindus of East Bengal are entitled to the protection of India, not on humanitarian considerations alone, but by virtue of their sufferings and sacrifices, made cheerfully for generations, not for advancing their own parochial interests, but for laying the foundations of India's political freedom and intellectual progress. It is the united voice of the leaders that are dead and of the youth that smilingly walked upto the gallows for India's cause that calls for justice and fairplay at the hands of Free India of today.

The recent Agreement, to my mind, offers no solution to the basic problem. The evil is far deeper and no patchwork can lead to peace. The establishment of a homogeneous Islamic State is Pakistan's creed and a planned extermination of Hindus and Sikhs and expropriation of their properties constitute its settled policy. As a result of this policy, life for the minorities in Pakistan has become "nasty, brutish and short". Let us not be forgetful of the lessons of history. We will do so at our own peril. I am not talking of by-gone times; but if anyone analyses the course of events in Pakistan since its creation, it will be manifest that there is no honourable place for Hindus within that State. The problem is not communal. It is essentially political. The Agreement unfortunately tries to ignore the implications of an Islamic State. But anyone, who refers carefully to the Objectives Resolution passed by the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan and to the speech of its Prime Minister, will find that while talking in one place of protection of minority rights, the Resolution in another place emphatically declares "that the principles of democracy, freedom, equality, tolerance and special justice as enunciated by Islam shall be fully observed". The Prime Minister of Pakistan while moving the Resolution thus spoke :

"You would also notice that the State is not to play the part of a neutral observer wherein the Muslims may be merely free to profess and practice their religion, because such an attitude on the part of the State would be the very negation of the ideals which prompted the demand of Pakistan and it is these ideals which should be the cornerstone of the State which we want to build. The State will create such conditions as are conducive to the building up of a truly Islamic Society which means that the State will have to play a positive part in this effort. You would remember that the Quaid-e-Azam and other leaders of the Muslim League always made unequivocal declarations that the Muslim demand for Pakistan was based upon the fact that the Muslims had their own way of life and a code of conduct. Indeed, Islam lays down specific directions for social behaviour and seeks to guide society in its attitude towards the problems which confront it day to day. Islam is not just a matter of private beliefs and conduct."

In such a Society, let me ask in all seriousness, can any Hindu expect to live with any sense of security in respect of his cultural, religious, economic and political rights?

Dr. Mookerjee he resigned with K.C. Neogi

STATEMENT BY DR. S. P. MOOKERJEE ON HIS RESIGNATION AS MINISTER OF 3019
INDUSTRY AND SUPPLY

Indeed our Prime Minister analysed the basic difference between India and Pakistan only a few weeks ago on the floor of the House and his words will bear repetition :

"The people of Pakistan are of the same stock as we are and have the same virtues and failings. But the basic difficulty of the situation is that the policy of a religious and communal State followed by the Pakistan Government inevitably produces a sense of lack of full citizenship and a continuous insecurity among those who do not belong to the majority community".

It is not the ideology preached by Pakistan that is the only disturbing factor. Its performances have been in full accord with its ideology and the minorities have had bitter experiences times without number of the true character and functioning of an Islamic State. The Agreement has totally failed to deal with this basic problem.

Public memory is sometimes very short. There is an impression in many quarters that the Agreement recently made is the first great attempt of its kind to solve the problem of minorities. I am leaving aside for the time being the disaster that took place in the Punjab ; in spite of all assurances and undertakings there was a complete collapse of the administration and the problem was solved in a most brutal fashion. Afterwards we saw the gradual extermination of Hindus from the North Western Frontier Province and Baluchistan and latterly from Sind as well. In East Bengal about 13 millions of Hindus were still living and their future had been a matter of the gravest concern to all of us in India. Between August, 1947 and March, 1948, as many as five lakhs of Hindus were squeezed out of East Bengal. There were no major incidents as such ; but circumstances so shaped themselves that they got no protection from the Government of Pakistan and were forced to come away to West Bengal for shelter. During that period there was no question of any provocation given by India where normal conditions had settled down ; there was no question of Muslims being coerced to go away from India to Pakistan. In April, 1948, the First Inter-Dominion Agreement was reached in Calcutta, dealing specially with the problems of Bengal. If anyone analyses and compares the provisions of that Agreement with the recent one it will appear that in all essential matters they are similar to each other. This Agreement, however, did not produce any effective result. India generally observed its terms but the exodus from East Bengal continued unabated. It was a one-way traffic, just as Pakistan wished for. There were exchanges of correspondence ; there were meetings of officials and Chief Ministers ; there were consultations between Dominion Ministers. But judged by actual results Pakistan's attitude continued unchanged. There was a second Inter-Dominion Conference in Delhi, in December, 1948, and another Agreement was signed, sealed and delivered. It dealt with the same problem—the rights of minorities specially in Bengal. This also was a virtual repetition of the first Agreement. In the course of 1949 we witnessed a further deterioration of conditions in East Bengal and an exodus of a far larger number of helpless people, who were up-rooted from their hearth and home and were thrown into India in a most miserable condition. The fact thus remains that in spite of two Inter-Dominion Agreements as many as 16 to 20 lakhs of Hindus were sent away to India from East Bengal. About a million of uprooted Hindus had also to come away from Sind. During this period a large number of Muslims also came away from Pakistan mainly influenced by economic considerations. The economy of West Bengal received a rude shock and we continued as helpless spectators of a grim tragedy.

Today there is a general impression that there has been failure both on the part of India and Pakistan to protect their minorities. The fact however is just the reverse of it. A hostile propaganda has been also carried on in some sections of the foreign press. This is a libel on India and truth must be made known to all who desire to know it. The Indian Government—both at the Centre and in the Provinces and States—generally maintained peace and security throughout the land after Punjab and Delhi disturbances had quietened down, in spite of grave and persistent provocations from Pakistan by reason of its failure to create conditions in Sind and

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East Bengal whereby minorities could live there peacefully and honourably. It should not be forgotten here that the people who came away from East Bengal or Sind were not those who had decided to migrate to India out of imaginary fear at the time of partition. These were people who were bent on staying in Pakistan, if only they were given a chance to live decent and peaceful lives.

Towards the end of 1949, fresh events of a violent character started happening in East Bengal. On account of the iron curtain in that area, news did not at first arrive in India. When about 15,000 refugees came to West Bengal in January 1950, stories of brutal atrocities and persecutions came to light. This time the attack was directed both against middle class urban people and selected sections of rural people who were strong, virile and united; to strike terror into their hearts was a part of Pakistan's policy. These startling reports led to some repercussions of a comparatively minor character in certain parts of West Bengal. Although these were checked quickly and effectively, false and highly exaggerated reports of so-called occurrences in West Bengal were circulated in many parts of East Bengal. This was clearly done with official backing and with a sinister motive. In the course of two to three weeks events of a most tragic character, which no civilized Government could ever tolerate, almost simultaneously broke out in numerous parts of East Bengal, causing not only wanton loss of lives and properties, but resulting also in forcible conversion of a large number of helpless people, abduction of women and shocking outrages on them. Reports which have now reached our hands clearly indicate that all these could not have happened as stray sporadic incidents. They formed part of a deliberate and cold planning to exterminate minorities from East Bengal; to ignore this is to forget hard realities. During that period our publicity both here and abroad became hopelessly weak and ineffective. This was partly done in order to prevent repercussions within India. Pakistan however followed exactly the opposite course of action. The result was that we were dubbed as aggressors while the truth was the reverse of it. During these critical weeks—although there were people who were swayed by passions and prejudices—vast sections of India's population were prepared to leave matters in the hands of Government and expected it to take stubborn measures to check the brutalities perpetrated in Pakistan. At that hour of crisis we failed to rise equal to the occasion. Where days—if not hours—counted, we allowed weeks to go by and we could not decide what was the right course of action. The whole nation was in agony and expected promptness and firmness, but we followed a policy of drift and indecision. The result was that in some areas of West Bengal and other parts of India, people became restive and exasperated and took the law into their own hands. Let me say without hesitation that private retaliation on innocent people in India for brutalities committed in Pakistan offers us no remedy whatsoever. It creates a vicious circle which may be worse than the disease; it brutalizes the race and lets loose forces which may become difficult to control at a later stage. We must function as a civilised State and all citizens, who are loyal to the State, must have equal rights and protection, irrespective of their religion or faith. The only effective remedy in a moment of such national crisis can and must be taken by the Government of the country and if Government moves quickly, consistent with the legitimate wishes of the people and with a full sense of national honour and prestige, there is not the least doubt that the people will stand behind the Government. In any case, Government acted promptly to re-established peace and order throughout India. Meanwhile Muslims, though in much lesser numbers, had also started leaving India, a good number of whom belonged to East Bengal and had come to West Bengal for service or occupation. Pakistan realised the gravity of the situation only when it found that on this occasion, unlike previous ones, there was no question of one-way traffic. Since January last at least 10 lakhs of people have come out of East Bengal to West Bengal. Several lakhs have gone to Tripura and Assam. Reports indicate that thousands are on their march to India today and they represent all classes and conditions of people.

The supreme question of the hour is, can the minorities continue to live with any sense of security in Pakistan? The test of any Agreement is not its reaction within India or in foreign lands, but on the minds of the unfortunate minorities living in Pakistan or those who have been forced to come away already. It is not how a few top-ranking individuals in Pakistan think or desire to act. It is the entire set-up of that State, the mentality of the official circles—high and low—the attitude of the people at large and the activities of organisations such as 'Ansars' which all operate together and make it impossible for Hindus to live. It may be that for some months no major occurrences may take place. Meanwhile we may on our generosity supply them with essential commodities which will give them added strength. That has been Pakistan's technique. Perhaps the next attack may come during the rainy season when communications are virtually cut off.

I have found myself unable to be a party to the Agreement for the following main reasons :

First—we had two such Agreements since Partition for solving the Bengal problem and they were violated by Pakistan without any remedy open to us. Any Agreement which has no sanction will not offer any solution.

Secondly, the crux of the problem is Pakistan's concept of an Islamic State and the ultra-communal administration based on it. The Agreement side-tracks this cardinal issue and we are today exactly where we were previous to the Agreement.

Thirdly—India and Pakistan are made to appear equally guilty, while Pakistan was clearly the aggressor. The Agreement provides that no propaganda will be permitted against the territorial integrity of the two countries and there will be no incitement to war between them. This almost sounds farcical so long as Pakistan troops occupy a portion of our territory of Kashmir and warlike preparations on its part are in active operation.

Fourthly—events have proved that Hindus cannot live in East Bengal on the assurances of security given by Pakistan. We should accept this as a basic proposition. The present Agreement on the other hand calls upon minorities to look upon Pakistan Government for their safety and honour which is adding insult to injury and is contrary to assurances given by us previously.

Fifthly—there is no proposal to compensate those who have suffered nor will the guilty be ever punished, because no one will dare give evidence before a Pakistan Court. This is in accordance with bitter experience in the past.

Sixthly—Hindus will continue to come away in large numbers and those who have come will not be prepared to go back. On the other hand, Muslims who had gone away will now return and in our determination to implement the Agreement Muslims will not leave India. Our economy will thus be shattered and possible conflict within our country will be greater.

Seventhly—in the garb of protecting minorities in India, the Agreement has reopened the problem of Muslim minority in India, thus seeking to revive those disruptive forces that created Pakistan itself. This principle, carried to its logical conclusions, will create fresh problems for us which, strictly speaking, are against our very Constitution.

This is not the time nor the occasion for me to discuss alternative lines of action. This must obviously wait until the results of the policy now adopted by Government are known. I do not question the motives of those who have accepted the Agreement. I only hope that the Agreement must not be unilaterally observed. If the Agreement succeeds, nothing will make me happier. If it fails, it will indeed be a very costly and tragic experiment. I would only respectfully urge those who

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believe in the Agreement to discharge their responsibility by going to East Bengal—not alone, but accompanied by their wives, sisters and daughters and bravely share the burden of joint living with the unfortunate Hindu minorities of East Bengal. That would be a real test of their faith. While I have differed from the line of approach adopted by our Government to solve a malady which perhaps has no parallel in history, let me assure the House that I fully agree that the supreme need of the hour is the maintenance of peace and security in India. While utmost pressure can and must be put upon the Government of the day to act rightly, firmly and timely to prevent the baneful effects of appeasement and to guard against the adoption of a policy of repression, no encouragement should be given to create chaos and confusion within our land. If Government is anxious to have another chance—and let us understand it clearly that this is the last chance that it is asking for—by all means, let Government have it. But let not the critics of Government policy be silenced or muzzled. To our misfortune, one of the parties to the Agreement has systematically broken its pledges and promises and we have no faith in its capacity to fulfil its future pledges, unless it shows by actual action that it is capable of so doing. This note of warning sounded by us should not be unwelcome to Government, for it will then act with more keenness and alertness and not permit the legitimate interests of India to be sacrificed or sabotaged in any way.

While dealing with the problem of refugees, we will have to consider also the stupendous task of rehabilitation. The present truncated province of West Bengal cannot simply bear this colossal burden. It is a mighty task where both official and non-official elements can work together for the larger good of the country and between Government and its critics there will always be ample room for co-operation in facing a problem which concerns the peace and happiness of millions of people and of the advancement of the entire nation.

PAPERS LAID ON THE TABLE

GENERAL REPORT OF GEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA FOR 1948.

The Minister of Workes, Mines and Power (Shri Gadgil) : I beg to lay on the Table a copy of the General Report of the Geological Survey of India for the year 1948. [*Placed in Library. See No. P-90/50.*]

REPORT ON ISSUE OF IMPORT LICENCE IN FAVOUR OF MESSRS. K. RAMSON AND COMPANY, MADRAS

The Minister of Workes, Mines and Power (Shri Gadgil) : I beg to lay on the Table a copy of the Report on the issue of an import licence for self-raising flour in favour of Messrs. K. Ramson & Company Madras. [*See Appendix No. VIII, annexure No. 4.*]

Shri Kamath (Madhya Pradesh) : With regard to the second Report which has been laid on the Table just now, the enquiry to which the Report relates was held in pursuance of a promise made by the then Commerce Minister, Mr. Neogy, in answer to my question asked on the 15th or 16th March last. As that question was only half answered on that day and as today is the last day of the present Session, may I request you to ask the hon. Minister to let us know at least what the recommendations and conclusions of the Enquiry Committee are ?

Mr. Speaker : That will not serve any useful purpose now. Today is the last day and we should not take any time now over this. Let us try to finish the agenda. The Report is laid on the Table and the hon. Member may study it.