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ALL INDIA MUSLIM LEAGUE

LUCKNOW SESSION

OCTOBER, 1937

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

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by

MR. M. A. JINNAH

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This Sessions of the All India Muslim League is one of the most critical that has ever taken place during its existence for the last more than thirty years.

The Policy and the Programme that you are called upon to formulate and lay down involves the fate and the future of the Mussalmans of India and the country at large. On the 12th April, 1936, the Muslim League at its Sessions, the first time in its history, under-took the policy and programme of mass contact. The League considered the prevailing conditions and surveyed the situation that we had to face the forthcoming elections on the eve of the inauguration of the new provincial constitution embodied in the Government of India Act, 1935, and had no alternative but to enter the field and contest the elections to the Provincial Legislatures. It was also felt that there was no alternative but to utilize the provincial constitution for what it was worth, although it was far from being satisfactory. I may here reproduce the resolution that was passed on the 12th April, 1936:—

“Whereas the Parliamentary system of Government which is being introduced in this country with the inauguration of the new constitution presupposes the formation of parties with a well defined policy and programme which facilitate the education of the electorate, and co-operation between groups with

approximate aims and ideals and ensures the working of the constitution to the best advantage; and whereas in order to strengthen the solidarity of the Muslim community and to secure for the Muslims their proper and effective share in the Provincial Governments, it is essential that the Muslims should organize themselves as one party, with an advanced and progressive programme, it is hereby resolved that the All India Muslim League do take steps to contest the approaching provincial elections, and for this purpose appoint Mr. Jinnah to form a Central Election Board under his presidentship, consisting of not less than 35 members, with powers to constitute and affiliate Provincial Elections Boards in various Provinces, having regard to the condition of each province and devise ways and means for carrying out the aforesaid objects”.

In pursuance of that decision, the Muslim League Central Parliamentary Board was established in June, 1936, and also in various Provinces, provincial Boards were established to give effect to the resolution and the instructions of the League. It was not without difficulty and it was no small task to be performed, in the absence of any previous preparations or any existing sufficient organisation and machinery. It was a stupendous undertaking to contest elections in all the provinces specially when Mussalmans all over India are numerically in a minority and weak, educationally backward, and economically nowhere. There never had been made any systematic effort for their social and economic uplift, whereas our sister commu

nities have gone far ahead with their organisations and the systematic programme supported by a large bulk of people, especially the Hindus, who are not only in a majority but better trained, more disciplined and far better equipped educationally, economically and financially.

But here I may mention that within a short time of about six months' work before the elections were over, the results were very hopeful, and there is no need for us to despair. In each and every Province where League Parliamentary board was established and the League parties were constituted we carried away about 60 and 70 per cent., of the seats that were contested by the League candidates, and since the elections were over I find that hundreds of District Leagues have been established in almost every province, from the farthest corner of Madras to the North West Frontier Province. Since April last the Mussalmans of India have rallied round the League more and more and I feel confident that once they understand and realise the policy and programme of the Muslim League, the entire Mussalman population of India will rally round its platform and under its flag. The Muslim League stands for full national democratic self-government for India. A great deal of capital is made as to phrases more for the consumption of the ignorant and illiterate masses. Various phrases are used such as *Purna Swaraj*, *self-government*, *complete independence*, *responsible government*, *substance of independence* and *dominion status*. There are some who talk of complete independence. But it is no use having

complete independence on your lips and the Government of India Act, 1935, in your hands. Those, who talk of complete independence the most, mean the least what it means. Was the Gandhi-Irwin pact in consonance with complete independence? Were the assurances that were required before the offices would be accepted and the provincial constitutions could be worked were consistent with "*Purna Swaraj*", and was the resolution after the assurances were refused accepting offices and working the provincial constitution enacted by the British Parliament and forced upon the people of India by the imperialistic power are in keeping with the policy and programme and the declarations of the Congress party? Does wrecking mean working? These paper declarations, slogans and shibboleths are not going to carry us anywhere. What India requires is a complete united front and honesty of purpose and then by whatever name you may call your government is a matter of no consequence so long as it is a government of the people, by the people for the people.

The present leadership of the Congress, especially during the last ten years, has been responsible for alienating the Mussalmans of India more and more by pursuing a policy, which is exclusively Hindu, and since they have formed the Governments in six provinces where they are in a majority they have by their words, deeds and programme shown more and more that the Mussalmans cannot expect any justice or fair play at their hands. Wherever they are in a majority and wherever it suited them, they refused to co-operate with the Muslim League parties and demanded

unconditional surrender and signing of their pledges.

The demand was insistent, abjure your party and foreswear your policy and programme and liquidate Muslim League; but where they found that they had not a majority like the North West Frontier Province, their sacred principle of collective responsibility disappeared, and promptly the Congress party was allowed in that province to coalesce with any other group. That any individual Mussalman member who was willing to unconditionally surrender and sign their pledge was offered a job as a minister and was passed off as a Mussalman minister, although he did not command the confidence or the respect of an overwhelming majority of the Mussalman representatives in the legislatures. These men are allowed to move about and pass off as Muslim ministers for the "loyal" services they have rendered to the Congress by surrendering and signing the pledge unconditionally and the degree of their reward is the extent of their perfidy. *Hindi* is to be the national language of all India and that *Bande Mataram* is to be the national song, and is to be forced upon all. The *Congress flag* is to be obeyed and revered by all and sundry. On the very threshold of what little power and responsibility is given, the majority community have clearly shown their hand that Hindustan is for the Hindus; only the Congress masquerades under the name of nationalism, whereas the Hindu Mahasabha does not mince words. The result of the present Congress party policy will be, I venture to say, class bitterness, communal war and strengthening of the imperialistic hold as a consequ-

ence. I dare say that the British Government will give the Congress a free hand in this direction, and it matters very little to them, nay, on the contrary it is all to the good, so long as their interests imperial or otherwise are not touched and the defence remains intact, but I feel that a fearful re-action will set in when the Congress has created more and more divisions amongst Indians themselves, and made the united front impossible.

Here it will not be out of place to state that the responsibility of the British Government is no less in the disastrous consequences which may ensue. It has been clearly demonstrated that the Governor and the Governor-General who have been given the powers and special responsibility to safeguard and protect the minorities under the constitution which was made so much of by Lord Zetland, the Secretary of State for India during the controversy of the assurances demanded by the Congress party, have failed to use them and have thereby been a party to the flagrant breach of the spirit of the constitution and the instrument of instructions in the matter of appointment of Muslim ministers. On the contrary they have been a party to passing off men as Muslim ministers by appointing them as such, although they know full well that they do not command the confidence of the Muslim representatives or the public outside. If in a matter like this, the Governors have shown their utter helplessness and disregard for their sacred obligations which were assumed by the British Government for the protection of minorities, could they or

would they be able to afford protection in hundred and one other matters which may not come up to the surface or known in the day to day working of the Legislature and the administrative machinery. These are very serious and noteworthy signs of the time. The one wholesome lesson that I ask the Mussalmans to learn, before it is too late, is that the path before the Mussalmans is therefore plain. They must realise that the time has come when they should concentrate and devote their energies to self-organization and full development of their power to the exclusion of every other consideration. I have pointed out before that a section of Mussalmans is divided, that there is a group that stands with face turned towards the British. If they have not learnt by now of the bitter consequences they will never learn. God only helps those who help themselves. There is another group which turns towards the Congress, and they do so because they have lost faith in themselves. I want the Mussalmans to believe in themselves and take their destiny in their own hands. We want men of faith and resolution who have the courage and determination and who would fight single-handed for their convictions, although at the moment the whole world may be against them. We must develop power, and strength, till the Mussalmans are fully organised and have acquired that power and strength which must come from the solidarity and the unity of people.

No settlement with the majority is possible, as no Hindu leader speaking with any authority shows any

concern or genuine desire for it. Honourable settlement can only be achieved between equals, and unless the two parties learn to respect and fear each other, there is no solid ground for any settlement. Offers of peace by the weaker party always mean confession of weakness, and an invitation to aggression. Appeals to patriotism, justice and fair-play and for the good-will fall flat. It does not require political wisdom to realize that all safeguards and settlements would be a scrap of paper unless they are backed up by power. Politics means power and not relying only on cries of justice or fair-play or good-will. Look at the nations of the world, and look at what is happening every day. See what has happened to Abyssinia, look what is happening to China and Spain, and not to say of the tragedy of Palestine, to which I shall refer later.

The Congress High Command speaks in different voices. One opinion is that there is no such thing as Hindu-Moslem question, and there is no such thing as Minorities' question in the country. The other high opinion is that if a few crumbs are thrown to the Mussalmans in their present disorganised and helpless state, you can manage them. They are sadly mistaken if they think that the Mussalmans can be imposed upon. The All Indian Muslim League has now come to live, and play its just part in the world of Indian politics, and sooner it is realised and reckoned with, the better it will be for all interests concerned. The third opinion is that there is no light to be seen through the impenetrable darkness; but as the

Congress goes on acquiring strength and power so the past promises of the blank-cheques remain unfilled and unsigned.

I want the Mussalmans to ponder over the situation and decide their own fate by having one single definite uniform policy which should be loyally followed throughout India. The Congressite Mussalmans are making a great mistake when they preach unconditional surrender. It is the height of defeatist mentality to throw ourselves on the mercy and good-will of others, and the highest act of perfidy to the Mussalman community, and if that policy is adopted, let me tell you, the community will seal its doom and will cease to play its rightful part in the national life of the country and the Government. Only one thing can save the Musslamans and energise them to regain their lost ground. They must first re-capture their own souls and stand by their lofty position and principles which form the basis of their great unity and which bind them in one body politics. Do not be disturbed by the slogans and the taunts such as are used against the Mussalmans, "*communalists*", "*toadies*" and "*reactionaries*". The worst "*toady*" on earth, the most wicked "*communalists*" to-day amongst Muslims when he surrenders unconditionally to the Congress and abuses his own community becomes the nationalist of nationalists tomorrow. These terms and words and abuses are intended to create an inferiority complex amongst the Musslamans and to demoralise them; and are intended to sow discord in their midst and give us a bad name in the world abroad. This is the

standard of propaganda which can only be treated with contempt.

The All India Muslim League certainly and definitely stands to safeguard the rights and interests of the Mussalmans and other minorities effectively. That is its basic and cardinal principle. That is the "*Casus belli*". That is why the Muslim League and those who stand by it have incurred the displeasure of the Congress for what else are we doing which the Congress object to? Congress is doing exactly what we decided two years ago. The League is not going to allow the Mussalmans to be exploited either by the British Government or any other party or group inside the legislature or outside. The Congress with all its boasts has done nothing in the past for the Mussalmans. It has failed to inspire confidence and to create a sense of security amongst the Mussalmans and other minorities. The Congress attempt under the guise of establishing mass contact with the Mussalmans is calculated to divide and weaken and break the Mussalmans and is an effort to detach them from their accredited leaders. It is a dangerous move and it cannot mislead any one. All such manoeuvres will not succeed notwithstanding the various blandishments, catchwords and slogans. The only honest and straightforward course is to give the minorities a fair deal. All the talk of hunger and poverty is intended to lead the people towards socialistic and communistic ideas for which India is far from prepared. The Muslim League in the present conditions considers the policy of direct action as suicidal and futile. Two

such attempts have hitherto failed and have entailed untold misery and suffering to the people, and it had to be wound up after two decades of persistent efforts in that direction with the result that a more reactionary constitution is forced upon the people, and the Congress is working it now.

To ask by a resolution the Governor-General to convey to the Secretary of State for India, to call a constituent assembly on the basis of adult franchise is the height of all ignorance. It shows lack of any sense of proportion. A constituent assembly can only be called by a sovereign authority and from the seat of power—a special body of men chosen as the representatives with the authority of the sovereign people to frame such constitution of the government of the country as they may think proper, and their function ceases and the constitution so framed by them would automatically take the place and function as the constitution of the Government of the country. Who is to constitute the electorates on the basis of adult franchise, and how many representatives will be chosen by these electorates constituted on the basis of adult franchise, and what will happen to the minorities in such constituencies and what will the electorates understand and how will they make their choice of this special body of men with final authority and power to frame the constitution of this great continent? Who will direct the machinery to choose the special body of men with representative authority to frame such constitution as they may think proper? Who will set in motion the machinery? And above

all what will happen to the minorities in such a body; Is the Congress really serious that the Secretary of State is going to carry out all these requirements? When only a few days ago, the representative of the British Government speaking with the highest authority, His Excellency the Viceroy, said that he was full of hope that they might succeed in securing the federation of India in the near future, that when he came out to India he had expressed the hope that scheme of federation was on the whole one calculated to secure federation within a reasonable time after the inauguration of provincial autonomy, and that his experience of the last 18 months had confirmed him in that view regarding the establishment of federation within a reasonable time.

Taking the country as a whole, the Congress is still far from occupying the seat of authority, and it is a travesty of realities to think of British Government calling a constituent assembly and for the ability of the Congress to do so is pure moonshine. Let the Congress first bring all principal communities in the country and all principal classes of interest under its leadership. To ask Foreign Government who is the ruling and sovereign authority in this country to convene such a body before even the communal problem has been solved and before all important communities in India have accepted the leadership of the Congress is like putting the cart before the horse, and not to forget that 1/3 of Indian India stands on very special footing constituting the Indian States and Ruling Princes.

Instead of ploughing the sands, let the Congress at least concentrate and see that the All India Federation scheme embodied in the Government of India Act, 1935, which is more re-actionary than even the present central constitution, is not brought into being as now it is so emphatically and confidently asserted by those who speak with authority on behalf of the British Government that it is soon going to be inaugurated. What is the Congress going to do? Do they think that they can single handed as a party prevent it? Or will some other formula be evolved and the Congress quietly accept it as a *fait accompli* as it has done the provincial constitution in spite of all the rantings of some of the foremost leaders of the Congress against it.

May I now turn and refer to the question of Palestine. It has moved the Mussalmans all over India most deeply. The whole policy of the British Government has been a betrayal of the Arabs from its very inception. Fullest advantage has been taken of their trusting nature. Great Britain has dishonoured her proclamation to the Arabs which had guaranteed to them complete independence of the Arab home lands, and the formation of an Arab Confederation under the stress of the great war. After having utilised them, by giving them false promises, they installed themselves as the mandatory power with that infamous Balfour declaration, which was obviously irreconcilable and incapable of simultaneous execution, and having pursued the policy to find a national home for the Jews, Great Britain now proposes to partition

Palestine, and the Royal Commission's recommendation completes the tragedy and if given effect to must necessarily lead to the complete ruination and destruction of every legitimate aspiration of the Arabs in their home land; and now we are asked to look at the realities. But who created this situation? It has been the handiwork and brought about sedulously by the British Statesmen. The League of Nations has, it seems, and let us hope not approved of the Royal Commission's scheme and a fresh examination may take place. But is it a real effort intended to give the Arabs their due? May I point out to Great Britain that this question of Palestine if not fairly and squarely met, boldly and courageously decided, it is going to be the turning point in the history of the British Empire. I am sure I am speaking not only of the Mussalmans of India, but of the world, and all sections of thinking and fair minded people will agree when I say that Great Britain will be digging its grave if she fails to honour her original proclamation, promises and intentions—pre-war and even post-war—which were so unequivocally expressed to the Arabs and the world at large. I find that a very tense feeling of excitement has been created and the British Government, out of sheer desperation are resorting to repressive measures and ruthlessly dealing with the public opinion of the Arabs in Palestine. The Muslims of India will stand solid and will help the Arabs in every way they can in their brave and just struggle that they are carrying on against all odds. May I send a message on behalf of the All India

Muslim League of cheer, courage, and determination in their just cause and struggle and I am sure they will win through.

To the Mussalmans of India in every province, in every District, in every tahsil, in every town, I say your foremost duty is to formulate a constructive and ameliorative programme of work for the people's welfare and to devise ways and means of social, economic and political uplift of the Mussalmans. We shall not hesitate to co-operate with any party or group in any practical and constructive programme for the welfare and advance of the provinces or the country, I entreat and implore that every man, woman and child should rally round one common platform and flag of the All India Muslim League. Enlist yourself by hundreds and thousands as quickly as you can as members of the All India Muslim League, Provincial Leagues and District Leagues. Organise yourself, establish your solidarity and complete unity. Equip yourself as trained and disciplined soldiers. Create the feeling of *esprit de corps*, and of comradeship amongst yourselves. Work loyally, honestly and for the cause of your people and your country. No individual or people can achieve anything without industry, suffering and sacrifice. There are forces which may bully you, tyrannise over you and intimidate you, and you may even have to suffer. But it is by going through this crucible of fire of persecution which may be levelled against you, tyranny that may be exercised, the threats and intimidations may un-nerve you, but it is by resisting, by over-coming, by facing these disadvantages,

hardships, and suffering and maintaining your true convictions and loyalty that a nation will emerge worthy of its past glory and history and will live to make the future history greater and more glorious not only of India, but in the annals of the world. Eighty millions of Mussalmans in India have nothing to fear. They have their destiny in their hands, and as a well-knit, solid, organised, united force can face any danger, and withstand any opposition to its united front and wishes. There is the magic power in your own hands. Take your vital decisions—they may be grave and momentous and far-reaching in their consequences. Think hundred times before you take any decision, but once a decision is taken, stand by it as one man. Be true and loyal, and I feel confident that success is with you.
