

CHAPTER VIII

EVALUATION

In this, the last chapter of our study, we want to discuss some general questions like: what was the nature of the Khilafat movement, what were the reasons of its collapse — questions very much interrelated — and what were its results?

In order to come to grips with these problems, we might start from one the answer to which would not seem to be at all in doubt: was the Khilafat movement anti-British? If we pay attention to the vehement language in which British policy was denounced by, for instance, the Ali brothers, we can well understand that the Government of India's officers were complaining bitterly of their "objectionable", "inflammatory" and "seditious" speeches. They had good reasons to stress the anti-British character of the movement — if the intention to oust all British power from India¹ is not to be called anti-British, what else might be? And yet there is something more to be said about it.

In the first place, the Khilafat movement and the upsurge of Indian nationalism which it helped to reinforce in the years between 1920 and 1923 are not to be considered as isolated events. They had their place in a movement of a far wider range: the anti-western reaction among several Asian and, to a lesser degree, some African peoples after the war of 1914-18.² The ensuing conflicts coincided with religious and racial contrasts, but these differences, according to Toynbee, masked the real conflict which he considered to be one between different cultures. Perhaps we should view the situation in a still wider perspective, and look upon these conflicts as originating in an effort towards emancipation from foreign domination,³ an effort availing itself of all possible conflict-matter: economic, political, religious, cultural, and so on whatever presented itself. It was a reaction turning mostly against western powers, those being the foreign masters to get rid of, but it could also turn against Asians, as is proved by the Arab revolt against Turkish rule, and anti-Japanese sentiment and action in China. For this reason, the new nationalism in Asia and Africa was charged with dangerous

possibilities for all minorities, except those that deliberately threw in their lot with the majorities among whom they lived.⁴

It is in this perspective that we should see the situation of Indian Muslims about 1920. They were, considered in the structure of India as a whole, a minority — and were they willing to throw in their lot unconditionally with the Hindu majority? In the non-co-operation movement a good many of them did: religious and middle class leaders as well as the masses. As we have observed, among middle class and notably among upper class Muslims there was some reserve in this respect. But, whatever other reasons for an anti-British attitude they may have had, the immediate cause of their alliance with the Hindus was British policy towards the Sultan-Caliph and Turkey, which roused their anger as Muslims. This reason, however, would for the most part disappear if Great Britain and Turkey were to bury the hatchet, as they did at Lausanne in 1923. For many Khilafatists, we think, the anti-British tendencies of their movement were more or less accidental. This does not apply to all of them — not to those who had other reasons as well: middle class Muslims who felt thwarted by British rule and British exploitation of India,⁵ and Muslim divines who rejected British rule and British civilization as inimical to Islam.⁶ These leaders contended that the only means of saving the Caliphate and Turkey would be Indian independence.⁷ But by 1923 this assumption had proved to be only partly correct, for Turkey at least was saved — and the stubborn Khilafat leaders lost their following.

Indian Muslims, certainly, could take up the Indian national cause for its own sake. They were Indians too, and an effort to expel the British from India would be quite in keeping with the general anti-foreign trend. But who would succeed to British rule? The Indians — or the Hindus? Would ousting one foreign master from power not mean setting up another “foreign” master in his place? This fear, it seems, was never wholly absent from the Indian Muslims’ mind; we find it even among those who were willing to co-operate with the Hindus. Therefore their alliance with the majority was never unconditional: it started with the Lucknow pact, carefully stipulating the rights of both communities in a future, self-governing India, and when in 1928, with the Simon Commission in sight, an effort was made to resume Hindu-Muslim unity, it was the Nehru report, envisaging a change in these conditions on which the attempt broke down. The Government of India may have done something to promote discord by encouraging the setting up of a “loyal” separate Muslim League,⁸ but it was able to do so

because many Muslims resented the Nehru report. Distrust with regard to Hindu aims was never absent on the Muslim side.⁹

In this situation, the British foe might become a British ally. The vast majority of the Indian Muslim community probably never lost its awareness of this fact, even though it was, temporarily, drowned in the tumult of protestations of Hindu-Muslim unity and anti-British sentiment — a sentiment which was not lacking either among Indian Muslims. But it is exactly the temporary character of these anti-British cries which makes us doubt, not their sincerity, but their essential quality. The Ali brothers, as young men, had admired the British and from about 1930 onwards sided with the British again.¹⁰ Some Khilafatists took their leave from the movement at an early stage, perhaps partly because they did not want to be mixed up in a mass movement, but also partly because of the anti-British attitude it displayed openly; other men, like Amir Ali and the Agha Khan, fully sympathising with Turkey and the Caliphate and pleading their cause, wholly abstained from the Khilafat agitation in India; others again, like Chotani, did play an important part in this agitation, but were considered by the Agha Khan not to be unreservedly anti-British.¹¹ Their attitude may have to do, in most of these cases, with the fact that these men belonged to the upper strata of Muslim society, and their position was more or less dependent on the British-established order in India. But there are indications that other men, too, could at least consider striking a less anti-British attitude than they did in public.

An unexpected example is offered in this context by Maulana Mahmud-ul-Hasan, the head of the Deoband seminary. Mr. Silberrad, the Collector in Saharanpur, had an interview with him in August, 1920, and after the Maulana's death in November, 1920, another with Habib-ur-Rahman, head of the Arabic school at Deoband, in January, 1921. Mahmud-ul-Hasan was reported to have said, "... that the real and only essential grievance is as regards the Hedjaz, that rightly or wrongly the Mahomedans have it firmly fixed in their minds that the Sharif of Mecca is merely a puppet of the English, and that consequently the Holy Cities are practically under our control; and that if they would be convinced otherwise all the life would be taken out of the agitation, and that he himself, if Government would take steps to convince them of this, would exert all his influence to support Government both in India and across the frontier." Asked as to how he and the Indian Muslims generally could be convinced of this, he replied, "... that the Sharif must be told to make peace with the Caliph, and accept in some

measure at least his suzerainty . . . He said that all the rest of the late Turkish Empire, Mesopotamia, Armenia, Syria, Palestina, etc., did not matter in his eyes, or in the eyes of the genuine Mahomedan, and that he would say so clearly and publicly once there was a definite promise about the Hedjaz. That Shaukat Ali and Mahomed Ali's influence was a very ephemeral matter compared with his. His suggestion was that he should moot the idea to his immediate friends, and let it spread gradually, but he was most insistent that no word of it was to be made public through Government or otherwise than through him, as in such case much of his influence as the author of the arrangement would be gone; also the extremists would oppose it, as depriving them of the power of making political capital out of Mahomedan religious discontent."

In the second interview, Habib-ur-Rahman corroborated the Maulana's opinion. "Given assurances on these points . . . he says the ulemas would support Government, and would be followed by all the religious Mahomedans; he does not pretend that it would reconcile the irreconcilable element, such as the political (as opposed to the religious) leaders, *e.g.*, Ansari, Ajmal-ul-Mulk and Shaukat Ali, but he says that all the real sting would be taken out of the agitation among the Mahomedans." This second interview added one note lacking in the first: "Habib-ur-Rahman told me that he and the Ulema generally strong(ly?) objected to action of some of the leaders in subordinating their religion to Hindu-Mohamedan unity; *e.g.*, he specially mentioned with strong disapprobation Shaukat Ali's wearing a *tilak* of sandalwood at Madras, and the proposal to abandon *qurbani*."

We have no reason to doubt the authenticity of the reports on these talks, but their significance is less certain.¹² They might be taken as a shrewd attempt to hoodwink a government official with regard to genuine opinions and intentions, but they may also point to the fact that even among prominent religious leaders the possibility of calling off the anti-British policy could be considered. And we take it that the reasons hinted at were real: they distrusted the more westernized "extremist" leaders of the "political" group,¹³ and they feared to lose something of their own Muslim identity in the alliance with the Hindus.¹⁴ It is, after all, hardly probable that a movement of such momentum would have been sustained only by negative — in this case anti-British — feelings; its very volume and intensity justify a search for some positive contents. Of what nature were these? We think it was a movement of a group searching for its own identity and trying to assert it. In the words of Binder, the Khilafat movement was "a

supraterritorial justification of the separateness of Islamic society in India.”¹⁵ Or, to quote an expression from Watson, it was “the struggle of the Indian Muslims to create a world in which they could live Islamically as Indians”.¹⁶

But both of these definitions¹⁷ point to some troubles lying ahead for the Khilafatists. They were not only Muslims and, on that account, Pan-Islamists, but Indians too — they were bound by two loyalties. Was it possible to combine these? Some leaders, evidently, thought they could do so. As an instance we quote from Abul Kalam Azad’s presidential address to the Ramgarh Congress session in 1940: “I am a Musalman and I am proud that I am a Musalman. I have inherited the glorious traditions of thirteen centuries of Islam. I am not prepared to see an iota of this perish. The teachings of Islam, its history and traditions, its art and sciences, and all that can be epitomized as Islamic culture is my treasure; and it is my bounden duty to protect and preserve it. As a Muslim in a particular religious and cultural sphere I possess an individuality on which no encroachment is acceptable. Yet, with all this, I have another feeling too, and this feeling is the creation of the realities of my life. Islam is in no way opposed to this. It is, as a matter of fact, a guide on this path. I feel with pride that I am an Indian. I am an element of the indivisible United Indian Nation; an inalienable element, without which the image of its greatness remains incomplete; and, in no circumstances, can I give up this position.”¹⁸

For the Maulana, evidently, there existed no conflict between his first loyalty, towards Islam, and his second, towards India; on the contrary, the former was “a guide on the path” towards the latter. But Abul Kalam Azad was a complex personality who could combine Pan-Islamism with Indian nationalism, and even he had not always seen fit to do so — in 1913 he had still rejected political co-operation with the Hindus,¹⁹ and it was only in the days of the Khilafat movement that he had developed his ideas about composite nationalism.

Not all Indian Muslims, however, could follow him along this path. The Deoband ulama and the *Jamiat-ul-Ulama* did,²⁰ but when the enthusiasm of the years 1920-1922 had died away, the Muslim intellectual élite as well as the masses refused to take this lead,²¹ since it did not offer them much guidance in the tragic conflict of communalism in the face of Hindu revivalism and superior strength.²² Even in the Khilafat days most of them probably had not been able wholly to identify themselves with India. The emblem of the Khilafat delegation stationery was made up of two overlapping circles of equal size, with

the word "Khilafat" in one, and the word "India" in the other.²³ In this emblem we see a clear indication of a potential conflict of divided loyalties — a conflict which, some years afterwards, was also expressed in words by Muhammad Ali: "I belong to two circles of equal size, but which are not concentric. One is India, and the other is the Muslim world."²⁴

If we were to apply this metaphor to Abul Kalam Azad's view of the same problem we would see concentric circles. Though we have no reason to doubt the sincerity of Muhammad Ali's declarations of Indian nationalism in his Khilafatist years, we think it probable that he never went quite as far in this respect as Abul Kalam Azad; in his heart he always remained "Muslim first, Indian afterwards."²⁵ Perhaps, if the combined effort of the non-co-operation and Khilafat movements had resulted in some definite success, Indian nationalism might have got more firmly entrenched among Indian Muslims.²⁶ The failure of this effort, however, was an impediment to the realization of this possibility.

In these observations we have, strictly speaking, already given our answer to the question of whether the Khilafat movement was nationalist or not, and mainly in the negative, at least when we think in terms of Indian nationalism, though we admit that it may have presented chances in this respect. One might call it nationalist in a very general way, in that it was anti-foreign, and strove for independence, and wanted to decide by itself its relations to other nations — but it had not quite decided which specific nation to set up in independence. Therefore, its relation to Indian nationalism was never a perfectly happy one, even if some of its leaders wanted to direct it on that course and their adherents were not unwilling to follow them.

The Caliphate, however, was something affecting the Muslim community in India primarily, but in itself it held no importance for the Hindus; for the latter, it derived its importance from the fact that it offered them an opportunity of gaining Muslim friendship. Gandhi, explaining his attitude concerning the Khilafat movement in a letter to the Viceroy,²⁷ wrote: "I consider that as a staunch Hindu wishing to live on terms of the closest friendship with any of my Mussalman countrymen, I should be an unworthy son of India if I did not stand by them in their hour of trial." The Khilafat movement was for Gandhi, we cannot but conclude, an opportunity to cement Hindu-Muslim unity. However sincere his sympathy for his Muslim compatriots may have been, even in his case an element of opportunism was not lacking, and

undoubtedly with many of his co-religionists the ratio between sincere friendship and opportunism — men like Lala Lajpat Rai and Malaviya — will have been less gratifying. This makes us understand why the word “artificial” is so often used with regard to Hindu-Muslim unity in those years.²⁸ It might have been a natural unity if it had been focused on ends purely Indian — always supposing that both communities could agree on what the desirable ends were — but aimed at the preservation of the Caliphate and the power of Turkey, it certainly did contain an element of artificiality.

If for these reasons Indian nationalism was a difficult proposition for the Khilafatists, their Pan-Islamic starting-point also kept them from accepting other nationalisms — at least to some degree. Their repudiation of Arab nationalism as led and exploited by the Sharif of Mecca may partly be explained by their disgust for his British advisers in Cairo, but it also had to do with their indignation over the Sharif's betrayal of the Sultan-Caliph. It is remarkable that Turkish nationalism met with their complete approval as long as it maintained a semblance of Pan-Islamism and, when exposing its secular aims, was not at once vehemently condemned. The Arab conqueror Ibn Saud, too, found favour with many of them because he was expelling indirect British influence from the Holy Cities, but without any Pan-Islamic intentions. In both of these cases, however, they accepted the facts not as Khilafatists but rather as ex-Khilafatists, when their movement was disintegrating. Therefore these instances might constitute an indication that the Pan-Islamic feelings of the Khilafatists were less strong and pure than they would have had it appear — and perhaps sincerely believed themselves. This was another reason for British observers to dub the Khilafat agitation as “artificial”²⁹ — an opinion which, by the way, was very apt to make them underrate its force. Perhaps we may characterize this aspect of the Khilafat movement as follows: it was a movement which might have taken the road towards some form of Muslim nationalism, if it had not started on the wrong — *i.e.* Pan-Islamic — foot.

By this we mean: the Indian Khilafat movement started as a communal movement trying to consolidate Muslim solidarity. By emphasizing this solidarity it strengthened the group consciousness of the Indian Muslim community. But since its direct object was a question of foreign policy — or at least a question that was treated as such by other interested parties, like Great Britain and Turkey — it stressed the need for an Indian Muslim foreign policy of its own. It questioned the validity

of British supremacy in this respect. Muslim loyalty to the Empire was declared to be "conditional" on the preservation of their religious freedom,³⁰ which in this case compelled Indian Muslims to repudiate British foreign policy. In other words, their need for independence was stressed, their need to acquire a status that would enable them to act in their own right in international relations. This status might have been won by Indian independence if Indian Muslims had felt that they could rely on the good faith of their Hindu compatriots. As it was, however, distrust with regard to Hindu intentions never wholly disappeared, and therefore the Indian Muslims were more or less thrown back on themselves. This feeling may not have been equally strong in all sections of the Muslim community; the middle class leaders probably were more open to it than the ulama, but it determined the attitude of the larger part of the community. In this situation they might have developed the feeling of being a nation, with a right to complete independence, if they had not been hampered by their Pan-Islamism, which prevented them from concentrating on their own particular interests and on their own identity as a specific group of Muslims.³¹

The next question we must pay attention to is whether the Khilafat movement was primarily a religious or a political movement. In a certain sense, this is a sham problem because of the inseparability of these categories in Islamic thought; we have observed, for instance, how the demand for "religious suzerainty" was taken up by the Sultan-Caliph precisely for the sake of its political implications. Yet we cannot ignore the question completely, since at the time the problem was put in those words.

But we consider it mainly a terminological problem. We refer to the case of Muhammad Ali, stating that religion was his sole *locus standi* when pleading the cause of the Khilafat³² — whereas Lord Curzon was of the opinion that "... Constantinople is the symbol to the East not of spiritual predominance, but of political power."³³ The contradiction implied in these assertions arises from the fact that the former is using the word religion in an Islamic sense, including things temporal as well as spiritual, while the latter is using the word political in a western sense, which is completely secular.

Not quite the same case is offered by the interviews between Mr. Silberrad and the Deoband leader Habib-ur-Rahman,³⁴ when the latter distinguished between religious as opposed to political leaders. Here the difference is, it would seem to us, related to the question of ends and means. "Political" should be understood as referring to leaders whose

protestations of Islamic faith masked their true end, Indian nationalism, and who subordinated their religion to Hindu-Muslim unity, while "religious" is the characteristic reserved for leaders for whom Indian independence was a possible, an ultimate means to ensure the freedom of the Indian Muslims to live according to Islamic law. In this case it would, in our opinion, be appropriate to speak about Khilafatists who identified themselves with their fellow-Indians, Hindus and Muslims alike, and those who clung primarily to their Muslim identity. In this sense, we think, the words are also used by Muhammad Shafi, a member of the Viceroy's Council, writing³⁵ about the "complete misapprehension" prevailing in certain quarters in England, "... that the Khilafat movement in India is not religious but is part of the political movement for Indian Swaraj." He adds that, if the Caliph's religious suzerainty over the Holy Places of Islam were recognized, "... the religious sentiment of at least the vast majority of the Indian Mussalmans will thereby be satisfied and an immediate split between Gandhi's Swarajists and the Khilafat Party will almost automatically follow."³⁶

Discussing the nature of the movement we have, at the same time, approached a solution of the problem of its sudden and complete collapse. This is a subject on which many authors make some observations; we found a coherent treatment of it only in Watson's study. The remarks most often to be met are (a) that Gandhi's sudden cancelling of the non-co-operation movement caused a fatal frustration, and (b) that the abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate deprived the movement of its very base. Both observations are, in our opinion, undoubtedly correct, but we do not think they explain everything.

One might try to distinguish between external and internal causes of the movement's collapse. Under the first head would be listed, probably, both factors just mentioned because both of them could hardly be influenced directly by the Indian Khilafatists. But considering them, therefore, as external causes would betray a shallow judgment; after all, the choosing of an ally whose aims differ from one's own — accepting even the leadership of this ally — and of a cause the survival of which one may oneself hardly influence, is not a wholly external factor, but one pertaining to one's own nature. A really external cause might be found in the improvement of economic conditions,³⁷ and we would not deny the possible influence of this factor,³⁸ but there is no proof whatever that the Khilafatists were aware of it themselves and therefore we are not inclined to attach too much importance to it. We think we should look for the causes of its downfall mainly in the nature of the movement

itself. Another reason for seeking the cause of the Khilafat movement's demise in the patient's constitution itself is the fact that its fellow-patient, the non-co-operation movement, did survive, and after some years arose from its sickbed, to confront the Government of India with fresh troubles.

In Watson's opinion, the Khilafat movement was realistic in its approach to communal relations in that it correctly appraised the necessity of Hindu-Muslim unity if it wanted to wrest any concessions from the British;³⁹ on the other hand, he admits that the Khilafatists judged the problems arising from this attempt at unity hopelessly impractically, acting as "visionaries" or in an "intoxication".⁴⁰ We are inclined to agree with him on both points, but subject to the reservation that the latter restriction deprives the first statement of much of its worth. According to him, the movement's failure was mainly due to the fact that its stated objectives: the rescue of the Caliphate and *swaraj* for India were unattainable at short notice; it was lack of any short-term achievements that killed the movement.⁴¹

Here we do not quite agree with him. We think he is right when he declares that the Caliphate was not to be saved, because it was an antiquated notion in which the majority of the Muslims outside India was no longer interested; we will return to this point later. Nor was *swaraj* to be attained in those years as Watson defines it: he is thinking in terms of complete independence, and it seems improbable that Great Britain could be forced to concede this to India at this juncture. But the notion of *swaraj* was a very elastic one. If the combined Hindu-Muslim effort had succeeded in wresting major concessions from the British — and in December, 1921, it came very near to this⁴² — these might have been conceived as representing *swaraj*. Looked at in this way, *swaraj* was not as unattainable as Watson considers it, and the problem becomes one of why the movement proved unable to obtain this limited form of *swaraj*. In our opinion, the reasons should be sought in the vulnerable character of Hindu-Muslim co-operation, and in the tensions arising from the fact that what had developed into a mass movement was commanded by a middle-class leadership not quite happy about the kind of following it had got.

But first we will discuss why the Caliphate and Pan-Islamism no longer constituted suitable objectives for a religio-political movement in those days. Several authors remark upon the disparity between the sphere of thought and sentiment the Khilafatists were moving in, and their sphere of action.⁴³ Their ideal of Pan-Islamism was based upon

a romantic view of Islamic unity at the time of the four "rightly guided" Caliphs,⁴⁴ but they had to act in a world where this unity was hailed from motives which had little to do with Islam, and therefore stunted a healthy growth of Pan-Islamism. In this respect, the Indian Muslims were out of tune with their age and their environment, without however realizing this.

A disparity of this kind will always be, to some degree, the lot of a revivalist movement, but it may be lucky enough to strive for the realization of its ideals in a world not wholly unsympathetic to them. But Pan-Islamism was a dying cause,⁴⁵ or perhaps we had better say that it was fading away from the realm of realities into that of remote possibilities.⁴⁶ This was why the abolition of the Caliphate was a death-blow to the Khilafat movement: if Pan-Islamism had been a reality in the Muslim world at large, the Khilafatists might have found another outlet for their endeavours, another symbol for their aspirations. But they were out of touch with the religio-political realities outside India.⁴⁷ They did not know that Abdul-Hamid II, as well as his enemies, the Young Turks, thought only about the safety of his own throne and the preservation and greatness of Turkey, when propagating Pan-Islamic unity. We have already noted that Muhammad Ali's *Comrade*, before the Great War, was not well-informed about other Muslim countries;⁴⁸ also there was the complete lack of knowledge among Khilafatists with regard to the secular turn taken by Turkish nationalism, and about the force of Arab nationalism. Even an observer like the Agha Khan, who was in a position to have access at every kind of information, was surprisingly ill-informed about these matters, and consequently could blunder naïvely.⁴⁹ Thus the extra-territorial Muslim loyalty was limited to "a one-way traffic"⁵⁰: neither Turks nor Arabs cared much about the troubles of their co-religionists. On the other hand, their attitude was perhaps not quite undeserved: the Indian Muslims' Pan-Islamism was, probably not to a little degree, inspired by selfish motives. They wanted solidarity to profit by it, for they felt in need of support against British power, and insecure vis-à-vis the Hindu majority. In Turkey, at least, there was a feeling that Indian Muslims had not given any support to the Turks in their hour of need.⁵¹ So the Indian Pan-Islamists could hardly complain about not finding much understanding of their needs outside India. The argument may be not quite correct, since Indian Khilafatists really did exert themselves to help Turkey after the war, but if this was the way the Turks looked upon it, it proves once more the disparity between the Indians' own view of their role and its

appraisal by other Muslims.

Another instance of the erroneous estimate the Indian Muslims made of the world they were actually living in is shown by the high hopes they pinned on Afghanistan. This was understandable in 1919, when Amir Amanullah encouraged them and made war on the British power in India. But even then Indian Khilafat leaders might have realized that the Afghans stood no chance against a modern, well-equipped army, and the masses might have gathered as much from what demobilized soldiers told them. And when we see talk of an Afghan invasion still being raked up in 1925, we may state once again: the Khilafat leaders were out of tune with the world they were living in. The same circumstance, we think, partly explains the Khilafat leaders' encouraging the *hijrat* to Afghanistan. They were taking a grave responsibility, for they should have known better than to send their followers on this quest, but we should see their attitude in the context of the climate of self-delusion prevailing in their midst.

Perhaps the most fatal error resulting from their romantic illusionism was constituted by their supposition that Hindu-Muslim unity had only to be proclaimed to be a fact. The alliance with Gandhi and Congress was hailed as Hindu-Muslim unity achieved, but this rosy picture was revealed to be largely fictitious. In our opinion, B. M. Chaudhuri's statement that this alliance showed "the realities of Hindu-Muslim unity when it is based on action and struggle and the tremendous possibilities of that unity when the communities realise that they are bound by ties of common sorrows and sufferings and actuated by the spirit of nationalism",⁵² is a little off the mark: it takes for granted that conditions were fulfilled which actually were not, or at least not sufficiently. Hindus and Muslims were suffering only partly from the same wounds, and the spirit of nationalism was not absent, but it did not prove strong enough to overcome the spirit of communalism. A common success might have given them a tremendous push towards nationalism, but this did not materialize. On the other hand, the same common success might have constituted the starting-point for a further struggle between the poor masses and the propertied classes, and this may have been a reason why these classes preferred communalism to nationalism.

Thus far, we have been stressing the "romantic" aspects of the Khilafat movement, the aspects which made it lose touch with the realities of its own age and environment. But it would not do to describe the Khilafatists as out and out romanticists, living wholly in a world of their own making. Had this been the case, they would probably have

scored no more than a literary or a verbal success. As it was, they led a movement of great, if temporary, force, and therefore they cannot have been completely unaware of the world around them. For a long time, politics in India had been the province of the upper and middle classes only; it was only about 1920 that the masses were drawn into them, and it was the merit of the Khilafat leaders that they were able to rouse the Muslim masses. Mass participation proved to be an effective means of pressure upon the British Raj. But it would seem that the Khilafat leaders were not able to handle their own success in this respect. Roughly dividing the leaders into two groups — the westernized middle class group and the ulama — we think that the former shied back from the unruly character of its own following, whereas the latter were too deeply and too exclusively immersed in religious issues (or the religious aspects of political issues) to keep a hold on them. These inner contradictions, provoking tensions even during the movement's heyday, made it disintegrate when the hopes of a startling success had been lost.

How far, actually, did its success go? We should distinguish here between at least two fields in which the Khilafatists sought success. The first was that of the Allies' policy towards Turkey and the Caliphate. We need not dwell on this subject very long, because we have discussed it in the preceding chapters. Our conclusion is that the Khilafatists succeeded by and large in bringing the Government of India to taking up their demands. This in itself, perhaps, would not have needed much Khilafatist pressure, but at any rate it was due to that pressure that the Government of India expressed Muslim feelings with great emphasis in London.

The Khilafatists, however, failed almost completely in impressing their views on the British Government, which was the authority that really mattered. Khilafat agitation probably counted for something in the British decision regarding Turkish rights in Constantinople in January, 1920, but we have our doubts concerning the veracity of British declarations that this decision was largely influenced by the desire not to hurt Muslim susceptibilities.⁵³ In the cabinet meeting deciding this question,⁵⁴ the Indian Muslims' feelings were certainly taken into account, but we get the impression that military considerations and rivalry with France were of no less, probably even of greater importance. At any rate, British allowances for Muslim feeling were not great enough to keep the British Government from occupying the same city two months later. And the change-over from the treaty of Sèvres to that of Lausanne was entirely due to Turkish military successes and

the British desire to restore British influence in the Near East.⁵⁵

The second field to consider is that of Indian politics. On this account the judgement will be influenced by what one thinks to be the essential aim of the Khilafatists. On the face of it, this would seem to be the achievement of Hindu-Muslim unity, in order to strengthen Indian nationalism — irrespective of whether Indian nationalism was, for the Khilafatists, and end in itself or a means to get a stronger lever on the British policy regarding Turkey and the Caliphate. If considered this way, there is no reason for exultation. Notwithstanding its promising start, Hindu-Muslim unity was fatally injured by the riots the masses indulged in, and by the mutual distrust caused by the failure of their combined efforts. Congress, it is true, did retain a prominent Khilafat leader like Maulana Abul Kalam Azad who was no mean asset to his party; some other Khilafat leaders constituted the Nationalist Muslim Party, operating within Congress, but often in conflict with majority decisions about Congress policy.⁵⁶ But these leaders did not, in the long run, succeed in retaining their following.⁵⁷

Thus far, our account of the Khilafat movement's success has not been impressive — rather distressing, one would think, when considering the sacrifices made in its name, and the expectations it provoked in its heyday. This, we think, is the reason why not unfrequently it has been judged succinctly in words like "tragic", "fantastic self-sacrifice", "wasted energies", and so on.⁵⁸ But, as we argued before, the Khilafat movement's aims in Indian politics were too complicated to be expressed in the one notion of "Indian nationalism"; it contained germs not only of this, but also of some kind of Muslim nationalism. Indian Muslims themselves could hardly be aware of this, and certainly not be articulate about it, since no adequate theory of nationalism, reconciling their Pan-Islamic sentiment to the exigencies of a world in which nationalism was the coming force, had yet been offered to them. They had to wait for Iqbal, who argued that "... in the existing world situation Islam could best survive neither by narrow nationalism nor in the naive dream of re-establishing a universal state, but in a multi-national free association, in something like a League of Nations of Islam."⁵⁹ This "multi-national pan-Islamism"⁶⁰ was perhaps what some Khilafatists had dimly envisaged in the early twenties. Reacting to the abolition of the Turkish Sultanate, by which the Caliph lost his temporal power, they had voiced the idea of a "Muslim League of Nations", still linking it, however, with the institution of the Caliphate,⁶¹ whereas Muhammad Ali, some years later, showed himself to be as averse to nationalism as ever.⁶² So

we need not wonder that Iqbal, though attracted at first to the Khilafat movement, was soon repelled by the naiveté of its leaders.⁶³ But we do not think it improbable that this movement may have prepared the Indian Muslims for taking up Iqbal's ideas and the movement for Pakistan in the thirties.⁶⁴

This we may consider a success of the Khilafat movement, but we should bear in mind that this success was no less devoid of tragedy than the lack of success we were pointing out before. One aspect of the movement was its highly emotional character,⁶⁵ which made it unruly, undisciplined and apt to get out of hand — qualities not recommending it to middle-class leaders. This, we think, was one reason why Jinnah abstained from it. "Jinnah's ideas about Muslim nationalism can be judged by his neutralist attitude towards the Caliphate movement which had affected virtually all Moslems. He believed that a false religious frenzy coloured Indian political activity, which would ultimately do more harm than good to India in general and Moslems in particular"⁶⁶ — this is Malik's opinion, the key words of which are "religious frenzy". As a westernized Muslim leader, Jinnah did not care for a great influence of the traditional religious leaders in politics; but as a man of compromise — and his subsequent career should not make us forget that he was a man of compromise until about 1930 — he had no less dislike of the passions which would upset cautious and reasonable solutions of complex problems. And lastly, Jinnah had entered politics as an Indian nationalist and a member of Congress. He may well have feared that religion by itself did not constitute a sufficient basis for any nationalism. We have characterized the Khilafat leaders as men living in dreams and illusions — and the kind of Muslim nationalism which thrived on the soil prepared by their movement may well have inherited something of their lack of realism. The subsequent history of Pakistan proves that the problems it provoked were at least grossly underestimated.

But Muslim League leaders may well have drawn from the events between 1919 and 1924 the conclusion that, in order to get a hold on the Muslim masses in India, one had to make an emotional appeal to Islam. This could not fail to bring about in their following enthusiasm, but hatred as well. In preparing the way for Muslim nationalism the Khilafat movement was pointing to the future, but also to its ugly aspects.