

NO. 1237

RECEIVED

AMERICAN CONSULATE

Bombay, India, February 9, 1944.

Handwritten notes and stamps at top right, including "W/T" and "No. 1237".

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

SUBJECT: Conversation with V. D. Savarkar, Leader of All-India Hindu Mahasabha.

Handwritten signature and circular stamp: "OFFICE OF HONORABLE VICE CONSUL THURSTON" with "Regular Office" written inside.

THE HONORABLE

THE SECRETARY OF STATE,

Administrative routing stamp with fields for "Yes" and "No" and "WASHINGTON".

845.00/2269

SIR:

I have the honor to report herein the substance of a long conversation which Vice Consul Thurston had on February 8, 1944, with Mr. V. D. SAVARKAR, titular head of the All-India Hindu Mahasabha, who has been confined to bed in his Bombay home during the last few months convalescing from an illness which has temporarily prevented him from taking an active political role in the Hindu Mahasabha.

For background information regarding Savarkar's place in the Indian political scene, the Department is referred to a confidential biographic sheet forwarded by this office on August 26, 1943. Mr. Savarkar, who was until the All-India session of the Hindu Mahasabha held at Amritsar in December 1944, the active head of that organization, has designated Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukerjee to be acting President until his own health is restored.

Mr. Savarkar expatiated in some detail upon the ancient greatness of the Hindu culture and religion and upon the essentially Hindu character of India. He clearly indicated that whatever political form the Indian nation may assume in the post-war world, it would be strongly permeated throughout with the Hindu religion and culture. He propounded the theory that religion could never be divorced from politics and adduced as proof the growing revival of religion in the Soviet Union.

When the Muslim hordes from beyond the Northern frontier broke into the Indian plains several centuries ago, they only temporarily succeeded in gaining control of India, Savarkar stated. He added that by the time the British arrived on the scene, the Hindus had by the

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strength of their culture, by their numerical preponderance and by their military valor virtually reduced the Muslim power in India to a nullity. Arguing in this fashion, Savarkar rhetorically asked by what right do the present day Muslims of India claim the privilege of establishing a separate state to be known as Pakistan? Mr. Savarkar attempted to make an American parallel by inquiring what would be the reaction of the average American if the negro minority in the United States were to claim the right to establish an independent State of Mississippi or Alabama.

Having outlined the historical and cultural factors which, in his opinion, make the Pakistan scheme indefensible, Savarkar went on to discuss the National Congress Party in terms of the Hindu-Muslim question. The trouble with the Congress policy was, according to Savarkar, that in attempting to bring about Muslim-Hindu unity under its auspices, it conceded too much to the Muslims and yielded too much on the part of the Hindus. Mr. Savarkar pointed out how ludicrous it was that Gandhi had allied himself with the "khalifat" movement in the early 1920s, which was a protest by Muslims against the deposition of the Caliph of Turkey from his position as head of Islam throughout the world. Gandhi and other Congress leaders associated themselves with this movement, Savarkar says, to prove that Hindus and Muslims were one in India. But how India's interests as a whole were served by the agitation is beyond the comprehension of Mr. Savarkar. He pointed out that to call oneself a Hindu became in due course a term of reproach in Congress circles, since it was considered that one should call oneself only a nationalist. He claimed that the Muslims, however, continued to call themselves Muslims, and generally refused to affiliate with the Congress movement. The Hindu Mahasabha emerged, according to Savarkar, to retrieve Hindu honor which was being thrown away by the Congress leaders in their vain effort to placate Muslim opinion.

The Hindu Mahasabha does not consider itself a communal organization, according to Savarkar. For example, Savarkar states that the leadership of the Mahasabha is not orthodox in the Hindu sense and does not believe in such orthodox Hindu precepts as "untouchability". There are, he says, more orthodox Hindus in the Congress fold than in the Mahasabha. The aim of the Mahasabha is to preserve the integrity of India and its basically Hindu character with due regard for the rights of all minorities, including the Muslims whose right to cultural autonomy and political representation in proportion to their numerical strength is fully recognized. The Mahasabha now has six million members, according to Savarkar, and a great many additional followers.

Mr. Savarkar was asked to elucidate the Mahasabha position with respect to absolute independence for India. It was pointed out to him in this connection that his colleague, Dr. Moonjee, had recently indicated in a

speech published in THE MAHRATTA of February 4, 1944, that India might, after getting her freedom, choose to remain in the British Empire, and the British Empire will then be automatically changed into the Indo-British Empire. Savarkar's reply to this inquiry was that Dr. Moonjee's statement should not be taken too literally but rather should be considered as a bid for British support in the shifting array of internal political forces in India. In other words, Mr. Savarkar stated, India must first have freedom and then she will have an opportunity to consider what international arrangements she wishes to make for her own welfare. He explained that at the present time Indian politicians can fight only on the platform and with their pen and that Dr. Moonjee's speech should be viewed in that light.

Mr. Savarkar made it very clear in the conversation that he did not see eye to eye with the leaders of the Congress National Party. Gandhi's policies were described as "dreamy nonsense". The Gandhian-espoused philosophy of non violence was called "stupid". Rajagopalachariar was described as a "Congress Pakistanite". Although the Hindu Mahasabha has come out officially for the release of the Congress leaders now imprisoned, it is Savarkar's opinion that when and if they are released, "they may all sign up for Pakistan". The Mahasabha must, he said, be vigilant to prevent such action.

It was learned that although Jinnah and Savarkar both live in Bombay, they have not seen each other for several months. Jinnah has, within the last six months, asked Savarkar to call upon him at his home, but Savarkar has not accepted these invitations for fear Jinnah would make political capital out of them by pointing out that the Hindu had come to the Muslim for a compromise. Savarkar stated that he had asked Jinnah to come to see him but Jinnah had refused. When Jinnah refused to visit Savarkar, the latter sent a message to the Muslim League leader saying that "we great leaders should not be childish".

Mr. Savarkar evidenced great interest in American policy towards India and also in the amount of publicity which the Hindu Mahasabha might be receiving in the American press. He stated that of the four great powers, Great Britain, Japan, Russia and the United States, an independent India would prefer to have the closest possible ties with the United States, particularly in the commercial field. A free India would like to import machinery and manufactured goods from the United States without political obligation. If he had his way, Savarkar added, he would send 10,000 young Indians to the United States now for technical training rather than to Great Britain. He indicated some fear that the United States might wish to annex a portion of India as a military base against Japan. He opined that the United States would get better results from winning the friendship of the Hindu people than by playing an imperialistic game in India. In discussing international affairs, Mr. Savarkar mentioned the possibility that there might be a war between Great Britain and the Soviet Union

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ten years or so from now. He added that if such a conflict were to occur, India's tie with Great Britain might result in a Russian invasion of India.

It may be concluded from the stand taken by Mr. Savarkar that the chances of a compromise agreement between the Muslim League and the Hindu elements in India with regard to Pakistan are negligible. The Department is referred in this connection to the Consulate's recent despatch no. 1202 dated January 25, 1944, covering a conversation with Mr. Jinnah.

Respectfully yours,



Howard Donovan  
American Consul

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Ozalid impression to the Department

Copy to American Mission, New Delhi.  
Copy to American Consulate General, Calcutta.