

Yugoslav
Muslims'
Message
To India

by

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Foreword

We are giving in this short booklet the appeal of the leaders of the Muslims who live in the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (one of the six Republics that together constitute the Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia) addressed to the Muslims of our country.

There are about sixteen lakh Muslims in Yugoslavia of whom nearly half are concentrated in Bosnia and Herzegovina (see map) while the rest are scattered over different parts of the country. Slav in origin and speaking the same language (Serbian) as the Christians of that region, these Bosnian Muslims were converted to Islam during the Turkish invasion of Europe in the Middle Ages.

They have remained Muslims ever since; they have their own mosques, Ulema, religious holidays, separate from the rest of their people.

In other parts of the country the Muslims are Albanians or Turks by nationality, or they are a very small part of another nationality, like the Croats. Thus Muslims are to be found in many parts of Yugoslavia, as in many parts of India; speaking different languages, belonging to different nationalities, living in widely-separated areas; in Bosnia they are a majority while elsewhere they are a minority (as, for instance, majority of Punjabis and Bengalis are Muslims by religion while in Tamilnad or Bombay they are a small minority).

And as in our country which is under alien rule, so also in their country, both before Hitler conquered Yugoslavia when Yugoslavia; was a virtual colony of Anglo-French imperialism and after Hitler's conquest, reactionaries, the foreign invaders and local vested interests, tried their hardest to play upon the religious differences and to turn the Bosnian Muslims against, the rest of the common people and to split the common struggle for liberation.

For a time they succeeded but eventually they failed, and why they failed the Bosnian leaders themselves tell you in detail in their moving appeal.

There were reactionary leaders and parties among the Yugoslav Muslims, who raised the cry "Islam is in danger". They sought to take advantage of the fact that the common Muslims of Yugoslavia were backward in education and wealth as compared with the Christians and Serbians, and to incite them against the Christians. The Serbian ruling class and their foreign imperialist masters, first the Anglo-French imperialists and later the German fascists, took advantage of these reactionary groups to divide the Muslims from the Christians and thus to split Yugoslav people's struggle for national and social liberation.

Under the bloody lash of Nazi-German oppression and exploitation they slowly began to see through the communal reactionary policy of their old landlord Ulema leadership, just as the Serbian Christians and the Croatian common people began to see through the bourgeois chauvinist policies of their respective leadership.

The common Muslims and Christians, the common people belonging to all the six nationalities soon learned that they had got to stand together and fight together in the partisan war of national liberation initiated by the Communists, if they wanted to rid themselves of the yoke of Nazi-German slavery. They realised that in the struggle against landlords and the profit-greedy monopoly capitalists who had sold themselves to the fascists, they had again to fight together as peasants, workers and toilers, irrespective of their creed, colour and nationality.

In calling the people of all the nationalities, both Christians and Muslims, to join in the common front of struggle against the fascist enslaver, the Communist Party assured them all that freedom of Yugoslavia as a whole meant the freedom and self-determination for every one of its nationality. It assured the oppressed majority of each nationality, Muslims and Christians together, that they would be free to form their own democratic republican state and join the Yugoslav federal union on the basis of perfect equality,

Inspired by these great principles the Muslims of Yugoslavia rejected the communal policy of their upper-class leaders and joined the common struggle for the freedom of Yugoslavia, for land and bread. Today the Muslims of Yugoslavia have lived to see their complete rebirth. In Bosnia, together with Christians they have built a democratic republic which is proud to be a part of the Yugoslav federal union.

Muslim peasants have won land, not only in Bosnia but throughout Yugoslavia. Inspired by the common Yugoslav patriotism the Muslims are now wholeheartedly engaged in achieving their own economic, cultural and political regeneration for which all roads are open to them as never before. ‘

This great message of the liberated Muslims of Yugoslavia has a great significance for the Muslims of India. Three great lessons emerge out of this:

1. Freedom and well-being of the common Muslims cannot be won by Muslims fighting Hindus, but by the Muslims joining the great common battle which the oppressed majority of the Indian peoples have to wage against foreign imperialism—for independence of the country, for land and bread for all, and for freedom for every people.

2. There is no freedom or self-determination of Muslims which can be won by fighting Hindus, just as there is no independence of India which can be won by Hindus fighting the Muslims. Independence and self-determination of India, the common motherland of Hindus and Muslims, must include the freedom and self-determination of its national linguistic units—such as Bengal, Punjab, Sindh, Pathanland etc.—which are common homelands of Muslims and Hindus and of other communities. The fight for the two is inseparable and requires the joint fighting front of the oppressed majority of all Indians, both Hindus and

Muslims, against foreign imperialism as well as against feudal princes and reactionary vested interests, both Hindus and Muslims.

3. Common Muslim people have to join hands with their other oppressed Indian brothers, to build the common fighting front of final struggle, of Congress, League and Communist Party—for winning Independence of the country, for land and bread, for self-determination for every national unit, by defeating the present compromising and disruptive policies of the League and Congress leaderships.

The Serbian Christians, Croats and Yugoslav Muslims once fought bitterly against each other to the great delight of the fascists. But the hard school of fascist-landlord oppression taught the Yugoslav people otherwise. There is no doubt that the Hindus and Muslims of India too will soon bury the ignoble chapter of the ghastly communal riots incited by the imperialists, and build the glorious fighting front for winning an Independent India which will be a voluntary union of national republics, ensuring all the oppressed communities and classes fullest opportunities of progress and development.

January 22, 1947

Mohan Kurnaramangalam

NOTE

The population of Yugoslavia, nationality-wise is as follows (1939 census):

Serbs	6,180,000
Croats	3,200,000
Slovenes	1,100,000
Macedonians	800,000
Montenegrins	325,000
Albanians	680,000

and other small minorities

The religious divisions of Yugoslavia were as follows (1931 census):

Serbian—Orthodox Catholics	6,785,500	(48.70%)
Boman Catholics	5,217,910	(37.45%)
Muslims	1,561,166	(11.20%)
Greek Catholics	44,671	(0.32%)
Protestants	231,169	(1.66%)
Jews	68,405	(0.49%)

and others

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TO THE MOSLEMS OF INDIA

The peoples of Yugoslavia, as well as we, Moslems, from Bosnia and Herzegovina follow with the greatest interest the liberation struggle of the peoples of India for their national and state independence. Prior to this war, the peoples of Yugoslavia as well as we, Moslems, were nationally and socially oppressed by a handful of Greater-Serb hegemonists and militarists headed by the Karadjordjevic dynasty.¹

We, the Moslems of Bosnia and Herzegovina, although we were a Slavic part of our national community, suffered especially at the hands of the regime of oppression in pre-war Yugoslavia. Men who at that time directed Moslem policy—chiefly large landowners, rich merchants, high **Ilmia**²—did not conduct a people's democratic policy, did not try to link up our struggle for freedom and democracy with the struggle for freedom and democracy of the other Yugoslav peoples, but conducted a policy of selfish bargaining with ruling Belgrade quarters, so that they might in this way protect their merchant and large landowners' interests.

The wide working masses of Moslems—our peasants, workers and intelligentsia enjoyed no human and civil rights, they were daily exposed to terror and chicanery of the regime's police; the ruling quarters, as well as the reactionary Moslem leaderships particularly exerted their efforts towards preventing every cultural development in our midst. No schools were opened in our villages. Only a very small part of our youth, under the most difficult conditions, managed to complete higher education. Educational organisations, created by the intelligentsia which was close to the people, were banned.

The economic position of the Moslems in general, and our peasants in particular, was very difficult. They were plundered by rich merchants, usurers, capitalistic banks, and also by the state which imposed upon them heavy taxes and dues. Hunger and illness never left our villages. Even those peasants who were forced to leave villages and seek employment in industry and mines or various jobs in towns, were exposed to merciless exploitation.

This difficult position of ours necessarily demanded and imposed the need of our struggle for freedom and better life to be linked up with the struggle of our brethren, the Serbs and Croats, with whom we have been living together for centuries in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The workers' movement and the progressive intelligentsia did their utmost for the cause of the unification of all the people's forces, but the reactionary leadership of the Serbs, Croats and Moslems, supported by the Belgrade regimes, was unanimous in resisting this idea so that it might not take deeper roots among the people.

The Moslem reactionary leaders came to grips with the Serb and Croat

reactionaries, regarding who would grasp more power in the then regimes, regarding who would receive a concession or high position in state and economic institutions. They depicted their mutual conflicts as a struggle among the Moslems, Serbs and Croats, endeavouring to portray and identify their own interests, which had nothing in common with the fate and life of the people, with the people's interests. In this way, they enflamed religious hatred, sowed intolerance and chauvinism, put forth the slogan that Islam was in danger—all this with the aim of preventing rapprochement of the Moslems and their brethren and their link-up with the general people's democratic movement headed by the working class. Painful cases of conflict and reckoning took place daily between Moslem peasants and their brethren, Serb and Croat peasants.

Such squaring of accounts and conflicts were inspired by reactionaries, aided by foreign officials and police of the then state administration. Such mutual relations, such a chasm and division among the Moslems, Serbs and Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina favoured the ruling clique of the Yugoslav capitalists and large landowners headed by the king, who transformed our province into a semi-colony from which they extracted all our wealth, while the people suffered in misery and ignorance.

No better life was lived by the other subjugated peoples—the Croats, Slovenes, Macedonians, Montenegrins and even by the Serbian people in Serbia itself in whose name the monarchy and capitalists ruled over 20 years. The sole true people's democratic movement which fought against the national and social oppression, was the workers' movement headed by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. The Communist Party united the struggle of the working class for freedom with the movements of national liberation of the oppressed peoples of Yugoslavia.

In this struggle for democracy, national equality, independence of our country from foreign imperialists, for friendship with the great and mighty Soviet Union, the working class was joined by large masses of peasants and people's intellectuals. In Bosnia and Herzegovina also a democratic movement was being founded, the basic strength of which was represented by the working class.

As a component part of the general democratic and fighting movement of the peoples of Yugoslavia, it strove for brotherhood and unity among Serbs, Moslems and Croats, for a new state order in which better conditions of life and equality among the Yugoslav peoples would be guaranteed. The idea and programme of this movement penetrated into the consciousness of wide Moslem masses. Their awakening and rallying to this movement developed with considerable difficulty and with less rapidity than among others, because the Moslem masses were culturally backward, because the retrogressive part in the leadership with all its means supported the backwardness and conservatism, because it sowed distrust

towards everything new and progressive, because the thought of solidarity with peoples of another religion were interpreted as being a “violation of sacred traditions and the rules of Islam.”

But despite all, the Moslem workers, the Moslem peasants and our honest intelligentsia joined the movement, because they saw in it their only protector and saviour from slavery and insufferable hardships of life.

The democratic movement in Yugoslavia developed under difficult conditions. It struggled against the Yugoslav circles which were oppressing the people and which had strong support from the imperialistic circles outside Yugoslavia. They were aided in their struggle against the people and its democratic anti-fascist movement by English and French imperialists and later, with the establishment of the Nazi regime in Germany, they found support among German imperialists.

Bankers, large landowners, rich merchants and exporters, in their hatred towards the people and its movement, became a stronghold of foreign imperialists in Yugoslavia and strove to make our country fully dependent of the big imperialistic states. With their internal and foreign policy those ruling circles weakened the defensive strength of the country and Yugoslavia collapsed a few days after the German attack.

Grim days of fascist occupation, full of indescribable sufferings and tribulations befell the peoples of Yugoslavia and also us, the Bosnian and Herzegovinian Moslems. The majority of the ruling circles placed itself at the service of the fascist invaders. Of the political leadership of the Moslems, Dzaferbeg Kulenovic, Hakija Hadzic and others entered the quisling administration of Ante Pavelich, the traitor of the Croatian people, whom the enemy brought to power. The circles of the high Ilmia, among whom Rels-ul-Ulema Spaho, gave their blessings to German arms and together with the treacherous politicians described the occupation as being the liberation of the Moslems.

The fascist enemies continued their policy of creating contention and mutual hatred among our peoples. They realised that the existence of their authority depended upon to what extent they would succeed in broadening the rift between our peoples. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially, the enemy intended with the help of Moslems and Croats to threaten the national existence of the Serbian people. With the help of Moslem traitors the German and Italian fascists formed armed bands composed of the worst social scum, which committed the worst terror and murder of the innocent population in order to spread the flames of fratricidal war.

The policy of unity and brotherhood among the peoples of Yugoslavia, and among the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina, under new conditions. were introduced by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, consistent to its earlier policy. It called upon the peoples of Yugoslavia, upon all patriots and democrats, to take

up arms. The Communist Party of Yugoslavia, in those difficult days, succeeded in convincing the peoples of Yugoslavia that without true brotherhood and unity, without full solidarity and sincere cooperation they would not be able to win their freedom, nor would they be able to realise their authority.

During more than four years of fascist occupation the liberation movement of the peoples of Yugoslavia developed and strengthened. The ideal of brotherhood and solidarity became the leading ideal of millions of toilers of our country. Thanks to this, our Movement of National Liberation, our National Army and Army of Liberation strengthened its ranks among all the peoples of Yugoslavia and also among the Moslems of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Perhaps, you Moslems of India and your public opinion are not acquainted with the sufferings and trials which we lived through under the occupation. During the first days of the occupation the German fascists directed their fury upon the Serbian people, assuring the Moslems that they would be under their special protection. The Moslem reactionaries supported the enemy in their insidious policy, deepened the already existing chasm between us and our brethren. Moslem workers and intellectuals rose against this policy and entered the armed struggle together with the other peoples.

The development of the movement and its spreading to all the peoples, forced the enemy—with the intention of weakening it—to rely upon the Chetniks⁴ of Draza Mihailovic who conducted the policy of the emigre government in London, which had the support of reactionary imperialistic quarters in England. Draza Mihailovic and the emigre government endeavoured to prevent the unity of the peoples of Yugoslavia from which victory had to result. In this policy he was at one with the enemy and became their servant. He was the leader of chauvinism and fratricidal war which turned with all its sharpness against all the progressive Yugoslav forces and especially against us Moslems, who steadily increased our participation in the Movement of National Liberation. The enemy and Draza Mihailovic burned down thousands of Moslem villages, murdered tens of thousands of the Moslem population.

The Moslem masses in those days learned from their own experience that the enemy and Draza Mihailovic—who personified the reactionary circles, who tended towards the re-establishment of former Yugoslavia after the war—were the enemies of the Moslems, that all were lies what the enemy and old Moslem leaders and the Moslem high Ilmia said, and that the road to unity and brotherhood with all the peoples, that the road of common struggle was the only salutary road. The Moslems as one man joined the Movement of National Liberation and the People's Army. In the struggle against fascism and the traitors, Moslem workers, peasants and intellectuals gave their lives with the conviction that they were fighting for a new life in which Moslems would live with their other brethren as equals.

The idea and programme of the Movement of National Liberation united all our forces and for ever removed those unfortunate phenomena from our past when for their own benefit, and that of foreign gentlemen, they rose against each other—Serbs against Moslems or Croats and vice-versa, when peasants fought peasants, workers fought workers etc.

Thanks to the armed struggle, to the firm unity and brotherhood created in blood, thanks to the great political and material support of the Soviet Union and other freedom-loving people, a new, Tito's⁵ Yugoslavia was created—created upon the full equality of all its peoples, built up on principles of new democracy, free and independent of all imperialistic circles.

The inexhaustible strength of new Yugoslavia arises from the fact that the national question is solved; it arises from the fact that in our country authority is in the hands of the wide working masses of town and village. The land has been expropriated from large landowners and given to those who work it and live by it. All the wealth of the land as well as all the basic means of production have become the property of the people. Upon these political and democratic foundations⁶ we are building a new social order in which man's exploitation of man will disappear.

Yugoslavia is no longer a centralised and hegemonistic state, it is composed of six sovereign people's republics, among which one is Bosnia and Herzegovina. The democratic Constitution of new Yugoslavia has legalised all the achievements of our National Revolution. Through the struggle and today in freedom the Moslems have lived to see their complete rebirth. Today we are free and equal. Freedom of religion is fully guaranteed. Together with our brethren we are building a new Yugoslavia. All the roads to economic, cultural and political progress are open. The Moslem youth and Moslem women for the first time have become a factor in our social and political life.

A true patriotism has been born in the widest Moslem masses for the new Yugoslavia. We are proud of being the first, after the Moslems in the Soviet Union, to have won true freedom and democracy.

This gives us the right as citizens of the new Yugoslavia, to address you Moslems of India, who are today struggling for national and state independence, a struggle which all democrats in the world, and especially the peoples of Yugoslavia, are following with the deepest sympathy.

The condition of our victory was our unity with all the other peoples of Yugoslavia—the condition of our victory was the unity of our widest people's masses which freed themselves from the political influence of reactionaries and exploiters, deadly enemies of their freedom and their state and national independence. This idea will bring victory also to the peoples of India which will not be deceived by various bargains between English imperialism and certain Indian politicians who mainly calculate on preventing the peoples of India from

winning their national independence under the leadership of true democratic forces.

We think it is not necessary to stress that the winning of national freedom for the peoples of India creates enormous possibilities for their progress. Today there is not one man who does not attach world-historical significance to the liberation struggle of the peoples of India because he knows that the wealth and culture of free India will be an invaluable contribution to the wealth and culture of the freedom-loving peoples of the world.

Reports on conflicts between Hindus and Moslems reach us. That reminds us of our grim past. We know that this is the work of English imperialists and reactionaries in the ranks of the Congress Party and the Moslem League.

Our message which at this moment we send from our hearts, Moslems of India, is:

Unite all your forces against all those who stand in the way of your national liberation and in the way of the realisation of a free and democratic Indian State, in the way of unification of all the democratic forces of India on the basis of equality, brotherhood and unity of the Moslems and Hindus.

DEATH TO FASCISM—FREEDOM TO THE PEOPLE!

Sarajevo, December 19th, 1946

Dr. Zajim Sarac: Minister of Commerce and Supplies, Yugoslav Government.

Sulejman Filipovic: Vice-President, Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Avdo Humo: Minister of Finance, Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Osman Karabegovic: Chairman of the Control Commission, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Hasan Brkic: Minister of Commerce and Supplies, Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Dr. Hamdija Cemerlic; Minister of Justice, Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Sefket Maglajlic: Chairman of the Republican Committee of Trade Unions, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Ismet Mujezinovic: Artist.

Skender Kulenovic: Writer.

Tafro Dervis: Professor and Chairman of the Moslem Cultural and Educational Society, Bosnia and Herzegovina—“Preporod”

Midzic Dzevad: Member of the Plenum Central Council of People's Youth, Yugoslavia.

Zehra Mujidovic: Member of the Republican Committee of Anti-Fascist Women's Front.

Dr. Hiba Serbic; Physician.

REFERENCE NOTES

1. This dynasty whose last representative, Peter, was dethroned when Yugoslavia declared itself a federal republic on January 31, 1946, ruled Yugoslavia from 1903 to 1940.
2. Muslim religious heads corresponding to our **Ulema**.
3. Ante Pavelich was the chief Croatian agent of Hitler and head of the satellite Croatian state set up by the Nazis. He also organised the Ustashis, reactionary armed bands that terrorised the people in the interests of the Nazis.
4. Armed bands of the Serbs, formed by loyal followers of the Karadjordjevic regime and headed by General Mihailovich. Their original aim was to fight the German invaders with the help of the Western imperialists of Britain and the U.S. in order to reimpose the old monarchical regime on Yugoslavia at the end of the war. However, as partisan strength under Communist leadership grew, these bands and Mihailovich, looking upon this new and rising force as even more dangerous than the Nazis, adopted a neutral position regarding the Nazis and finally became their collaborators.
5. Marshal Josip' Broz-Tito, founder of modern Yugoslavia, a Croat metal-worker and General Secretary of the Yugoslav Communist Party; he became the undisputed leader of the Yugoslav peoples in the patriotic war against Nazi Germany and was the main builder of the Yugoslav Army of Liberation. He is today Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia. He is particularly loved by the Yugoslav people because he was the first to proclaim the need for the unity of all the peoples of Yugoslavia—Croat, Serb, Macedonian, Bosnian etc.—in the common battle for liberation, democracy and social justice, on the basis of equality for them all.
6. The full details of the constitutional framework of the new Yugoslav State can be studied in the Constitution of the **Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia**, published by People's Publishing House, Bombay, (As. 8).

THE MAP OF YUGOSLAVIA



The Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia is composed of: i) People's Republic of Serbia, ii) People's Republic of Croatia, iii) People's Republic of Slovenia, iv) People's Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, v) People's Republic of Macedonia and vi) People's Republic of Montenegro. The People's Republic of Serbia includes the Autonomous Province of Voyvodina and the Autonomous Kosovo-Methohjan Region.