not affected by this famine, large classes of people attest to semi-starvation by their poor physique; numbers of them suffer from a daily insufficiency of food; and the poorer classes are trained by life-long hunger to live on less food than is needed for proper nourishment. In the presence of facts like these, party controversy is silenced; and every Englishman and every Indian, experienced in administration and faithful to the British Empire, feel it their duty to suggest methods for the removal of the gravest danger which has ever threatened the Empire of India.

[From Dutt, *The Economic History of India Under Early British Rule* (London: Morrison and Gibb, 1901), v–ix, xi–xvi, xxi–xxii.]

SIR SAYYID AHMAD KHAN: AN ANTI-CONGRESS SPEECH

Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (see chapter 2) opposed the Congress from its inception. The following speech was given two years after its founding in 1885, and lays out his position. As is evident from Sir Sayyid's sarcastic language, British officials in India, and some educated Muslims as well, shared a stereotyped view of educated Hindu Bengalis as timid, ineffectual, and cowardly. The Rajputs, by contrast, were praised for being warlike, a quality that Sir Sayyid sought to present as shared by Muslims.

THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS AS A DANGER AND A FOLLY

In this speech Sir Sayyid tried to walk a careful line, persuading his Muslim audience that as former rulers they were gallant and militarily dangerous, such that in the wake of 1857 the British rulers were right to distrust them; but at the same time they were loyal and trustworthy British subjects, who did not seek anything as foolish and unworkable as democratic self-government. Still, the final cure for all problems was, as always, education.

Gentlemen,—I am not given to speaking on politics, and I do not recollect having ever previously given a political lecture. My attention has always been directed towards the education of my brother Mohammedans, for from education I anticipate much benefit for my people, for Hindustan, and for the Government. But at the present time circumstances have arisen which make it necessary for me, I think, to tell my brother Mussalmans clearly what my opinions are. The object [here] . . . is to explain the attitude which the Mohammedan community ought to adopt with regard to the political movements of the time. . . . There has grown up in India a political agitation, and it is necessary to determine what action should be taken by the Mohammedan community with

regard to it. . . . If it be useful, we must follow it, but if dangerous for the country or our nation, we must hold aloof.

Before I enter on this subject, let me briefly describe the methods of rule adopted by our Government, which has now been here for nearly a hundred years. Its method is this: to keep in its own hands all questions of foreign policy and all matters affecting its army. . . . Our interests will not suffer from these matters being left in the hands of Government. But we are concerned with matters affecting internal policy; and we have to observe what method Government has adopted for dealing with them. Government has made a Council for making laws affecting the lives, property, and comfort of the people. For this Council, she selects from all Provinces those officials who are best acquainted with the administration and the condition of the people, and also some Rais-es [nobles], who, on account of their high social position, are worthy of a seat in that assembly.

Some people may ask—Why should they be chosen on account of social position instead of ability? On this, gentlemen, I will say a few words. It is a great misfortune—and I ask your pardon for saying it—that the landed gentry of India have not the trained ability which makes them worthy of occupying those seats. But you must not neglect those circumstances which compel Government to adopt this policy. It is very necessary that for the Viceroy's Council the members should be of high social position. . . .

The method of procedure in the Council is this. If any member introduces a subject of importance and difficulty, a commission is appointed which collects evidence and digests it. The matter is discussed in every newspaper, and memorials are invited from Associations. The Council then discusses the matter, every member speaking his views with great vigour and earnestness, more even than was displayed in the discussion on the third resolution of the Mohammedan Educational Congress, advocating what he thinks necessary for the welfare of the country. . . . I have had the honour of being in this Council. I do not recollect any matter of importance concerning which ten or twenty memorials were not sent in. A Select Committee was then appointed, which read through these memorials and discussed them at length, many of which on consideration turned out to be thorough nonsense. Extracts from Urdu papers were also considered. Although not in my presence, yet often amendments suggested by these memorials have been adopted. This is the method of our Government. After this the law is passed and sent to the Secretary of State, who is assisted by the Council of State, which consists of men of the highest ability, who have lived for a long time in India and have often held all offices, from that of Assistant Collector to Lieutenant-Governor. If they think it expedient it is passed, otherwise a short note of four lines cancels it. Often people make objections to the laws so passed, and in some cases they are perhaps right; but in the majority of cases, as far as my experience goes, those very people who sit in their

houses and make objections would, if they had been on Viceroy's Council, have supported them. . . . No one can say that Government acts independently of the wishes and opinions of its subjects. Often it adopts some of the views expressed in newspapers and memorials. . . .

There is now another great duty of Government. That is, that in whatever country Government establishes its dominion, that dominion should be made strong, firm, and secure. I believe that if any of my friends were made Viceroy, he would be as loyal to Her Majesty the Queen-Empress of India as is our present Viceroy, Lord Dufferin. . . . It is a first principle of Empire that it is the supreme duty of everyone, whether Hindustani or Englishman, in whose power it rests, to do what he can to strengthen the Government of Her Majesty the Queen. The second duty of Government is to preserve peace, to give personal freedom, to protect life and property; to punish criminals and to decide civil disputes. . . . Every one will admit that Government completely fulfils its duty in this respect.

Many people think that the laws have become too numerous and consequently that lawsuits have become more complicated, and thus, lead to disputes between the zamindar and the kashtkar [laborer]. But this is the opinion of the critics who sit in their houses, who if they sat on the Viceroy's Council would change their views. The multiplicity of laws depends upon the condition of the country and of its people. New companies and new industries are springing into existence. New and unforeseen legal rights have arisen which are not provided for in the Mohammedan law. Hence, when the country is changing at such a rate, it is absolutely necessary that new laws should be brought forward to deal with the new circumstances. . . .

I come now to the main subject on which I wish to address you. That is the National Congress and the demands which that body makes of Government. . . . When the Government of India passed out of the hands of the East India Company into those of the Queen, a law was passed, saying that all subjects of Her Majesty, whether white or black, European or Indian, should be equally eligible for appointments. This was confirmed by the Queen's Proclamation. We have to see whether, in the rules made for admission to civil appointments, any exception has been made to this or not; whether we have been excluded from any appointments for which we are fitted. Nobody can point out a case in which for any appointment a distinction of race has been made. It is true that for the Covenanted Civil Service a special set of rules has been made, namely, that candidates have to pass a competitive examination in England. . . .

I do not think it necessary for me on this occasion to discuss the question why the competitive examination is held in England, and what would be the evils arising from its transference to India. But I am going to speak of the evils likely to follow the introduction into India of the competitive principle. I do not wish to speak in the interest of my own co-religionists, but to express faithfully whether I think the country is prepared for competitive examination or not.

What is the result of competitive examination in England? You know that men of all social positions, sons of Dukes or Earls, of darzies [tailors] and people of low rank, are equally allowed to pass this examination. Men of both high and low family come to India in the Civil Service. And it is the universal belief that it is not expedient for Government to bring the men of low rank; and that the men of good social position treat Indian gentlemen with becoming politeness, maintain the prestige of the British race, and impress on the hearts of the people a sense of British justice; and are useful both to Government and to the country. But those who come from England, come from a country so far removed from our eyes that we do not know whether they are the sons of Lords or Dukes or of darzies, and therefore, if those who govern us are of humble rank, we cannot perceive the fact. But as regards Indians, the case is different. Men of good family would never like to trust their lives and property to people of low rank with whose humble origin they are well acquainted (*Cheers from the audience*).

Leave this a moment, and consider what are the conditions which make introduction into a country of competitive examination expedient, and then see whether our own country is ready for it or not. This is no difficult question of political economy; everyone can understand that the first condition for the introduction of competitive examination into a country is that all people in that country, from the highest to the lowest, should belong to one nation. In such a country no particular difficulties are likely to arise. The second case is that of a country in which there are two nationalities which have become so united as to be practically one nation. England and Scotland are a case in point. . . . But this is not the case with our country, which is peopled with different nations. Consider the Hindus alone. The Hindus of our Province, the Bengalis of the East, and the Mahrattas of the Deccan, do not form one nation. If, in your opinion, the peoples of India do form one nation, then no doubt competitive examination may be introduced; but if this be not so, then competitive examination is not suited to the country. The third case is that of a country in which there are different nationalities which are on an equal footing as regards the competition, whether they take advantage of it or not. Now, I ask you, have Mohammedans attained to such a position as regards higher English education, which is necessary for higher appointments, as to put them on a level with Hindus or not? Most certainly not. Now, I take Mohammedans and the Hindus of our Province together, and ask whether they are able to compete with the Bengalis or not? Most certainly not. When this is the case, how can competitive examination be introduced into our country (*Cheers from the audience*).

Think for a moment what would be the result if all appointments were given by competitive examination. Over all races, not only over Mohammedans but over Rajas of high position and the brave Rajputs who have not forgotten the swords of their ancestors, would be placed as ruler a Bengali who at sight of a table knife would crawl under his chair (*Uproarious cheers and laughter from the audience*). There would remain no part of the country in which we should

see at the tables of justice and authority any face except those of Bengalis. I am delighted to see the Bengalis making progress, but the question is—What would be the result on the administration of the country? Do you think that the Rajput and the fiery Pathan, who are not afraid of being hanged or of encountering the swords of the police or the bayonets of the army, could remain in peace under the Bengalis? (*Cheers from the audience*). This would be the outcome of the proposal, if accepted. Therefore if any of you—men of good position, Rais-es, men of the middle classes, men of noble family to whom God has given sentiments of honour—if you accept that the country should groan under the yoke of Bengali rule and its people lick the Bengali shoes, then, in the name of God jump into the train, sit down, and be off to Madras, be off to Madras [for the Congress meeting]! (*Loud cheers and laughter from the audience*).

The second demand of the National Congress is that the people should elect a section of the Viceroy's council. They want to copy the English House of Lords and the House of Commons. The elected members are to be like members of the House of Commons; the appointed members like the House of Lords. Now, let us suppose the Viceroy's Council is made in this manner. And let us suppose first of all that we have universal suffrage, as in America, and that everybody, chamars [Untouchables] and all, have votes. And first suppose that all the Mohammedan electors vote for a Mohammedan member and all Hindu electors for a Hindu member, and now count how many votes the Mohammedan members have and how many the Hindu. It is certain the Hindu members will have four times as many because their population is four times as numerous. Therefore we can prove by mathematics that there will be four votes for the Hindu to every one vote for the Mohammedan. And now how can the Mohammedan guard his interests?

In the second place, suppose that the electorate be limited. Some method of qualification must be made; for example, that people with a certain income shall be electors. Now, I ask you, O Mohammedans! Weep at your condition! Have you such wealth that you can compete with the Hindus? Most certainly not. Suppose, for example, that an income of Rs. 5,000 a year be fixed on, how many Mohammedans will there be? Which party will have the larger number of votes? I put aside the case that by a rare stroke of luck a blessing comes through the roof, and some Mohammedan is elected. In the normal case no single Mohammedan will secure a seat in the Viceroy's Council. The whole Council will consist of Babu So-and-so Chuckerburty [a Bengali name] (*Laughter from the audience*). Again, what will be the result for the Hindus of our Province, though their condition be better than that of the Mohammedans? What will be the result for those Rajputs the swords of whose ancestors are still wet with blood? And what will be the result for the peace of the country?

Now, we will suppose a third kind of election. Suppose a rule is to be made that a suitable number of Mohammedans and a suitable number of Hindus are

to be chosen. I am aghast when I think on what grounds this number is likely to be determined. Of necessity proportion to total population will be taken. So there will be one number for us to every four for the Hindus. No other condition can be laid down. Then they will have four votes and we shall have one. Now, I will make a fourth supposition. Leaving aside the question as to the suitability of members with regard to population, let us suppose that a rule is laid down that half the members are to be Mohammedan and half Hindus, and that the Mohammedans and Hindus are each to elect their own men. Now, I ask you to pardon me for saying something which I say with a sore heart. In the whole nation there is no person who is equal to the Hindus in fitness for the work. . . . Tell me who there is of our nation in the Punjab, Oudh, and North-Western Provinces, who will leave his business, incur these expenses, and attend the Viceroy's Council for the sake of his countrymen. When this is the condition of your nation, is it expedient for you to take part in this business on the absurd supposition that the demands of the Congress would, if granted, be beneficial for the country? Spurn such foolish notions. It is certainly not expedient to adopt this cry—*Chalo* [Let's go to] Madras! *Chalo* Madras!—without thinking of the consequences.

Besides this there is another important consideration, which is this. Suppose that a man of our own nationality were made Viceroy of India, that is, the deputy of Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen-Empress. Could such a person grant demands like these, keeping in view the duty of preserving the Empire on a firm and secure basis? Never! Then how absurd to suppose that the British Government can grant these requests? The result of these unrealizable and impossible proposals can be only this, that for a piece of sheer nonsense the hearts of everybody will be discontented with Government. . . .

Everybody knows well that the agitation of the Bengalis is not the agitation of the whole of India. But suppose it were the agitation of the whole of India, and that every nation had taken part in it, do you suppose the Government is so weak that it would not suppress it, but must needs be itself overwhelmed? Have you not seen what took place in the Mutiny? It was a time of great difficulty. The army had revolted; some *badmash*es [bad characters] had joined it; and Government wrongly believed that the people at large were taking part in the rebellion. I am the man who attacked this wrong notion, and while the Government was hanging its officials, I printed a pamphlet, and told Government that it was entirely false to suppose that the people at large were rebellious. But in spite of all these difficulties, what harm could this rebellion do to the Government? Before the English troops had landed, she had regained her authority from shore to shore. Hence, what benefit is expected from all this for the country, and what revolution in the Government can we produce? The only results can be to produce a useless uproar, to raise suspicions in Government, and to bring back again that time which we experienced thirty or thirty-one years

ago. . . . Will you kindly point out to me ten men among our agitators who will consent to stand face to face with the bayonets? When this is the case, then what sort of an uproar is this, and is it of such a nature that we ought to join it?

We ought to consider carefully our own circumstances and the circumstances of Government. If Government entertains unfavourable sentiments towards our community, then I say with the utmost force that these sentiments are entirely wrong. At the same time if we are just, we must admit that such sentiments would be by no means unnatural. . . . Think for a moment who you are. What is this nation of ours? We are those who ruled India for six or seven hundred years (*Cheers from the audience*). From our hands the country was taken by Government into its own. Is it not natural then for Government to entertain such thoughts? Is Government so foolish as to suppose that in seventy years we have forgotten all our grandeur and our empire? Although, should Government entertain such notions, she is certainly wrong, yet we must remember she has ample excuse. We do not live on fish; nor are we afraid of using a knife and fork lest we should cut our fingers (*Cheers from the audience*). Our nation is of the blood of those who made not only Arabia, but Asia and Europe to tremble. It is our nation which conquered with its sword the whole of India, although its peoples were all of one religion (*Cheers from the audience*). I say again that if Government entertains suspicions of us it is wrong. But do her the justice and admit that there is a reasonable ground for such suspicions. . . . If Government be wise and Lord Dufferin be a capable Viceroy; then he will realise that a Mohammedan agitation is not the same as a Bengali agitation, and he will be bound to apply an adequate remedy.

Our course of action should be such as to convince Government of the wrongness of her suspicions regarding us, if she entertains any. We should cultivate mutual affection. What we want we should ask for as friends. And if any ill-will exists, it should be cleansed away; I am glad that some Pathans of the N.W.P. and Oudh are here to-day, and I hope some Hindu Rajputs are also present. My friend Yusuf Shah of the Punjab sits here, and he knows well the mood of mind of the people of the Punjab, of the Sikhs and Mussalmans. . . . You should conduct yourself in a straightforward and calm manner. . . .

I come now to some other proposals of the Congress. We have now a very charming suggestion. These people wish to have the Budget of India submitted to them for sanction. Leave aside political expenses; but ask our opinion about the expenses of the army. Why on earth has Government made so big an army? . . . How ridiculous then for those who have never seen a battlefield, or even the mouth of a cannon, to want to prepare the Budget for the army!

A still more charming proposal is the following: When some people wrote articles in newspapers, showing that it was impossible to establish representative government in India, and bringing forward cogent reasons, then they came down a little from their high flight and said: "Let us sit in the Council, let us

chatter; but take votes or not, as you please"; can you tell me the meaning of this, or the use of this folly?

Another very laughable idea is this. Stress is laid on these suggestions: that the Arms Act be repealed, that Indian Volunteers be enlisted, and that army schools be established in India. But do you know what nation is proposing them? If such proposals had come from Mohammedans or from Rajput brothers, whose ancestors always wore the sword, which although it is taken from their belts, yet still remains in their hearts, if they had made such proposals there would have been some sense in it. But what nation makes these demands? I agree with them in this and consider that Government has committed two very great mistakes. One is not to trust the Hindustanis and to allow them to become volunteers. A second error of Government of the greatest magnitude is this, that it does not give appointments in the army to those brave people whose ancestors did not use the pen to write with; no, but a different kind of pen—(*Cheers from the audience*)—nor did they use black ink, but the ink they dipped their pens in was red, red ink which flows from the bodies of men (*Cheers from the audience*). O brothers! I have fought the Government in the harshest language about these points. The time is, however, coming when my brothers, Pathans, Syeds, Hashmi and Koreishi, whose blood smells of the blood of Abraham, will appear in glittering uniform as Colonels and Majors in the army. But we must wait for that time. Government will most certainly attend to it; provided you do not give rise to suspicions of disloyalty. . . .

I will suppose for a moment that you have conquered a part of Europe and have become its rulers. I ask whether you would equally trust the men of that country. This was a mere supposition. I now come to a real example. When you conquered India, what did you yourself do? For how many centuries was there no Hindu in the army list? But when the time of the Mughal family came and mutual trust was established, the Hindus were given very high appointments. Think how many years old is the British rule. How long ago was the Mutiny? And tell me how many years ago Government suffered such grievous troubles, though they arose from the ignorant and not from the gentlemen? Also call to mind that in the Madras Presidency, Government has given permission to the people to enlist as volunteers. I say, too, that this concession was premature, but it is a proof that when trust is established, Government will have no objection to make you also volunteers. And when we shall be qualified, we shall acquire those positions with which our forefathers were honoured. . . .

In the time of Lord Ripon I happened to be a member of the Council. Lord Ripon had a very good heart and kind disposition and every qualification for a Governor. But, unfortunately, his hand was weak. His ideas were radical. At that time the Local Board and Municipality Bills were brought forward, and the intention of them was that everybody should be appointed by election. Gentlemen, I am not a Conservative, I am a great Liberal. But to forget the prosperity