

## INDIA AND PAKISTAN: TWENTY YEARS AFTER

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THE best way of seeing Indo-Pakistan, or of seeing it again, is to meander from place to place, and an effort to record impressions of it may perhaps be excused for doing the same. From the air, the great northern plains at least are a symmetrical chequerboard of small square fields; at ground level it is a highly unsymmetrical patchwork, full of unexpectednesses, with something out of another century always lurking round the next corner. Floundering among heterogeneous creeds and epochs, it resembles western Europe in its lack of firm convictions. of any accepted destiny, by comparison with Russia, China, or the U.S.A. Modernity has made its entry; but whether only to linger in the same penumbral fashion as in Latin America, is still a question.

Both Pakistan and India are most distinctly conscious of themselves when they are, for reasons not clear to either of them and very unclear to outsiders, scowling at each other. But while their vendetta is a sharp one, and may end by impaling both, they are still in a hundred ways a single people, or the closest of relatives—"A little more than kin, and less than kind".

They share an ancestry far older than Islam, older even than Hinduism; the taste of life is the same, oftener than not, in both; they suffer an identical need for fields more fertile and marriage-beds less fertile, more machinery and education, less disease and religion. One paradoxical result of the vast uprooting and dispersal of human beings in 1947 was an exchange of social habits, costume, cookery, between the two regions. Lahore, where warlike passion burned fiercest during the 1965 encounter and one heard the enemy cannon whispering nightly, ten miles away, has a more "Indian" air than before Partition: with the burly Sikh vanished from its streets the run of the inhabitants look small and dark compared for instance with the large men of northern Persia. This clash of 1965 was almost a civil war between the two halves of the divided Punjab, an epilogue to the 1947 massacres. Between the two halves of less warlike Bengal similarities are closer still.

Geography as well as history dooms India and Pakistan to live side by side, almost like Siamese twins. Another link is their inheritance from Britain. Only twenty years ago when one contemplated the British Raj, spreading its gigantic canopy from the Himalayas to Ceylon, it might have boasted itself, with Julius Caesar, constant

as the Northern Star. Since the long siege of 1857 its flag on the bullet-scarred Residency tower at Lucknow had never been lowered day or night, and looked as if it never would be. Now, after so few years, the Raj seems further away in history than the Hapsburg Empire which in a way it resembled: almost as legendary as the Holy Roman Empire, for the idea that men from an island on the other side of the world could so lately have the confidence or impudence to rule this immense realm is almost too puzzling to grasp; the characters in a novel like *In Old Madras* barely sixty years ago sound at once realistic and totally unreal.<sup>1</sup> When England lost India, most Englishmen forgot all about it overnight. India could not forget so easily, and has not tried to. Old English, or rather Scottish, street-names are unchanged; both Lahore and Karachi still have their Mcleod Road, variously pronounced. Calcutta had added a Shakespeare Street to its Dalhousie Square, and although the old statuary has been thinned out two Viceroys still prance on the Maidan, with Mahatma Gandhi for company. George V, extraordinarily elongated on top of a slender white pedestal, like a ghost fading at cockcrow, still haunts one of New Delhi's enormous plazas. A lot of things continue from former days through force of habit. Others continue from force of real need. English may be worse spoken, but it is spoken more widely than ever, by someone or other in almost every nook and corner. As someone said to me in faraway Chittagong, where the *Laurel Bank* of Glasgow lay at anchor in the river, English is still the main highway of ideas and knowledge.<sup>2</sup>

In the boundless open spaces of New Delhi, the biggest car is an insect, and any minister or joint-secretary would have to perch himself on an elephant in order to feel equal to them, or to the national problems they symbolize. This gaping disproportion between men and things, which former dynasts took refuge from in the fantasy-world of the harem, their successors take refuge from in another British legacy, whisky. Wine is still unknown, whisky far better known than of yore, even though Scotch costs over £4 a bottle in Pakistan, over £7 in India (there are ways and means of getting it a trifle cheaper, and local brands to fall back on). In Pakistan outside Karachi, the purchaser requires a medical certificate showing alcohol to be necessary to his constitution; happily medical certificates are a commodity always in good supply. In both countries whisky has become a prime requisite, bereft of which the sum of things might well collapse, because the directing classes need its euphoria to float them along from evening to evening. Few get drunk, and some work hard; but with little vision of where they are travelling to, and little or no contact with the mass of their fellow-countrymen, they exist, as British officialdom did, like spacemen in a capsule thinly insulated from the void.

New Delhi was one of Britain's last doings, built by an empire in

old age: dynasties pile up mountains of brick and stone when they have outlived the capacity to create anything living. In those days, the mandate of Heaven was deserting the **Raj**, its moral energy petering out, the sort of man who came out from home to serve it mostly second- or third-rate. Only a romanticist in politics such as Churchill, with the artist's gift for self-deception, could see it clothed in greatness. It wore an air rather of having to make an effort to pretend to itself that it actually existed; it reminded one of a reveller in evening dress walking owlshly home in broad sunlight. Indians were often angry with it, but from some time about forty years ago they became able to laugh at it, and this in the long run was even more fatal. Most absurd of all its adjuncts was its camp-following of princes, as brilliantly dressed up as commissionaires outside cinemas, who had a free hand to rule or misrule one third of India. Britain was supposed to have a solemn duty to protect these rulers, and the landlords, much as Shivaji and his Maratha empire protected cows and Brahmins instead of peasants. There was something utterly preposterous about this collection of Native States, fossils embedded in the surface of India. Nehru on one occasion was arrested in a place called Nabha and farcically tried by a magistrate who appeared unable to read or write in any language.<sup>3</sup> The accumulation of social decay and poison represented by these backwaters is a graver matter to reflect on. As Nehru warned the public, their autocrats were bolstering their positions towards the end, by convincing the senile Raj that it needed them as a counterweight to the Congress.

In the realm of reality, nothing is left today half so anachronistic. In the realm of ideas, or mental cobwebs, the past still loiters in diverse guises, pre-eminently in a craze for astrology. This has always had a great vogue in India, where any ancient treatises carry weight simply by being ancient, and also by the minute exactitude with which they chart the celestial influences—the Hindu mind has always excelled at rigorous systematization of moonshine. India learns much, unlike the Bourbons, but like them forgets nothing, so that the wisdom and folly of all the ages, from snake-worship to atomic physics, jostle together in her head. Of late years, astral balderdash has spread remarkably, profiting by a dearth of more sober thinking. There was the same dabbling in the occult in the eighteenth century, when the Moghul civilization was in decay, or in seventeenth-century Europe which laboured under the same sense of irrationality in events, the same dislocation of cause and effect. Nehru was, needless to say, above this nonsense, and kept it in check, but certain ministers are much maligned if it has not made its way since his time into the highest quarters. A big proportion of today's politicians are of rustic origin. Some day, a cabinet post may come to be reserved for an astrologer, as in old Spain for the royal confessor. Horoscopes can be turned to matter-of-fact uses at times, as when an excuse is wanted

for breaking off a marriage negotiation. A prominent businessman, much addicted to building temples, is reported to call in the faculty whenever he floats a new company: for the sake of their professional credit, they then go the round of the brokers and help to make sure that their auspicious predictions turn out correct. A lawyer, practising in the supreme court, lately silenced a moneybags after long haggling over the fee by saying his astrologer had warned him that he would lose any cases for which he charged reduced fees.<sup>4</sup> Practitioners belong to one or two small caste-groups, and by pooling their information about the future might secure (or may have secured) considerable influence.

Indians and Pakistanis seem as a rule inclined to recall what was good, more than what was bad, in British rule; partly no doubt because most of those who are in leading positions now were themselves formerly its assistants. They recall old bitternesses, especially about the tactics of divide-and-rule, when a crisis like that of 1965 comes to revive suspicions against Britain, in the past or in the present, of trying to manipulate one of them against the other. John Bull himself is only too ready to forgive and forget his own trespasses, as if he had a private Ganges to wash them away in. He remembers in his own favour that in 1947 he withdrew from India without a fight, and whether magnanimity or prudence this was no doubt to his credit. He is still in 1966 however trying to hang on to some of his smaller apanges or spheres of influence, with the same obstinacy as he used to cling to India; he still has a motley retinue of Native States and princes, if a pitifully dwindled band since the days of his imperial Durbars. He has not yet fully recovered from the moral anaemia of the 'thirties that made him unequal to the effort of transforming relationships when they had grown intolerable to one side and useless to the other.

Nehru, who was visiting Britain off and on in those years, quickly came to the correct conclusion that neither Liberalism nor Social-Democracy would ever translate pious principles into practice by giving solid support to the cause of Indian freedom. Even men who were warning Britain against Fascism struck him as perversely unwilling to see that India was suffering from something not entirely unlike Fascist rule already. Britain was similarly incapable before 1939 of the effort of 'facing realities and changing relationships in Hitler's Europe. When war came, no better leadership could be found than Churchill's, that of a man as firmly resolved to deny freedom to India as to rescue freedom for Europe. "The British and French ruling classes have lost grip", Nehru wrote clear-sightedly in 1940 as he watched the Nazi triumphs, "and do not understand the world we live in. They seek to hold on to something which belongs to a past age, and everything slips from their hands." He was amazed that in spite of their defeats they continued to behave in "the old

lordly way" in *Asia*.<sup>5</sup> Materially, for the war-effort against Fascism, this arrogance was ruinous. Psychologically, it was for men like Churchill a compulsion; imperial pride, for want of anything better, enabled them to face the enemy without counting the odds. India, which long ago had helped Britain to make the Industrial Revolution, was rendering its last service to its conqueror.

The cost to India was heavy, and it is not mere antiquarianism to recall it at this time of day. By undermining the old imperialism, the Second World War hastened independence, but brought it about under the most unhealthy conditions. Indians were involved without their consent in a conflict that Britain might have averted, and in a world situation where, with Fascism on the brink of success, there was only a choice between British frying-pan and German or Japanese fire. Nehru and the Congress leadership retired from an insoluble dilemma, after token defiance of the Government, into jail, leaving history to take its course. The years of wartime frustrations and embitterment had lamentable effects on the national fibre. The hardships of the Depression, scarcely passed away, were repeated; there was the profoundly demoralizing spectacle of the Bengal famine, which no one seemed able or anxious to prevent, while profiteers were allowed to pile up easy fortunes. Fascism, the malady of the age, had seeped into India in the form of intensified communal bitterness; wartime strains helped to turn this into violence. In the end independence meant partition, and partition meant mass murder. As in many other such cases, communal strife was distorted class hatred; the resentment of the poor against all their exploiters turned by sectarian propaganda into a blind outburst of destruction. Considering their terrible baptism, India and Pakistan might both have done far worse than they have.

It was a saying of Vallabhai Patel, who was regarded, not always justly, as the watchdog of conservatism in the Indian Government after 1947, that the country got its independence too cheaply: a sharper struggle would have forged a stronger nation.<sup>6</sup> Nowadays many Indians can be heard saying this, from one point of view or another; and Pakistanis might say it with still more reason, since they came by independence without any serious struggle at all—as a reward, according to Indians, for the Muslim League's toadying to British imperialism. The British, it may be, gave up either too late, or too soon. If they had handed over power earlier, communal rivalry might not have reached the explosion-point. If they had refused to hand over power after the war a revolutionary tidal wave, drawing into itself both Muslims and Hindus, might have laid communal strife to rest. There was after all conflict between Muslim and non-Muslim in nineteenth-century China on an incomparably greater scale than any India has known. As it was, gaining freedom by Britain's weakness more than by her own strength, India escaped the sacrifices of a

revolutionary contest, but the price had to be paid in another form, with the bloodshed of 1947 and the envenomed relations it left behind, and without the reward of a radical transformation of Indian society. This, rather than the drawing together of all classes that **Patel** imagined, would have been the likely outcome of another five or ten years of the British presence.

Communal fratricide was a miserable substitute for social revolution. Yet it is a curious illustration of the salutary effect that a great convulsion of any sort sometimes has, that in the **Punjab**, which suffered more than any other province, there has since been a striking release of energies formerly untapped. Its people, who used to be looked down on good-humouredly as rustics born to rejoice the recruiting-sergeant, were uprooted by the million and scattered far and wide, and under the spur of necessity many have prospered far better in their new homes than in their old. With less turn for abstract thought than the Tamilian, less for art than the Bengali, they have much more than either for hard work. Business in **Lucknow**, a city still elegantly perfumed by memories of a vanished court and its *dolce far niente*, is today largely in Punjabi hands. They have a good share of activity even in far-off Calcutta, while Sikhs, even more than in old days, drive India's taxis and lorries, to say nothing of manning its army. Thanks largely to these Sikhs whose homeland it is, East **Punjab** has been making more headway than almost any other State: not in big industry, for which it lacks capital, but in small-scale production by resourceful craftsmen, and in agriculture. Everyone looks forward to his children having a better education than he had—even his daughters, because it will help them to marry better; colleges have multiplied, students cycle to them from twenty miles round.<sup>7</sup> West **Punjab**, likewise leavened by an influx of refugees from the other half of the province and elsewhere, is the political driving-wheel of Pakistan, leading or dragging the rest of the country in a fashion to surprise anyone who knew it in bygone days. Government, army, and (**Karachi** partly excepted) industry, are all essentially Punjabi.

In January 1947, Nehru was offering the princes "a very large measure of freedom" within an Indian Union.<sup>8</sup> It was **Patel**, as Home Minister, who dismantled the old crazy structure of the princely States and made India one country. The cataclysm of later 1947 may have helped to turn Nehru, without his fully realizing it, away from drastic change in any shape; his reformism must have been accentuated by the premature challenge in 1948 of a Communist Party which had been going from strength to strength, but which has never since recovered its old unity and energy. Under his aegis, much good was done, but there was no demolition of the old State, no breaking up of the old machinery, in Lenin's spirit, to make room for a new one. In the eyes of many who had suffered in the national cause, the new

dispensation was—to paraphrase the disgruntled royalists of 1660—very much a matter of pardon for the king of England's friends and oblivion for his enemies. A bureaucracy remained intact, efficient and conscientious by its own lights, better at the top than lower down, but keeping to this day much of its British-made rigidity and ponderousness, and little capable of quick adaptation to new needs. Inevitably, it provided an ally for vested interests bent on slowing down or deadening the social reforms to which the Congress was committed, and without which even India's survival as a nation would in the not very long run be dubious.

Nehru's decision, unpopular with many of his countrymen, to keep India in the Commonwealth set the seal on a policy of cautious, unadventurous advance. The outcome has been an India far superior to the old Kuomintang China, far inferior in material achievement and moral fervour (and this would have to be said still more forcibly of Pakistan) to the new Communist China. Now that he is gone, Nehru is often depreciated, usually for bad reasons, too seldom praised; the time should come before long when he will be valued more as he deserves to be, for what he did and still more for what he was. One of the sights of Delhi is the museum lately established in the official residence where he lived. Originally this lodged the British commander-in-chief, or as nationalists saw him India's chief jailer. This potentate, or a series of them hard to separate in retrospect, had eighteen years of the fag end of the Raj to dwell here; from these windows, across spreading green lawns, he or they surveyed after 1941 the vertiginous shrinkage of British power in Asia. Meanwhile, Nehru was residing chiefly in jail, and one of the rooms is now fitted up to resemble the sort of prison cell where he used to spin cotton and ideas and his bewitching English prose. The house he took over as premier made a strikingly exotic setting for an Indian leader; his successor, more exclusively an Indian, chose to live modestly elsewhere. Nobody while Nehru was alive to fill it thought the place too big, for he and his activities seemed equal to any volume of space. If however, as radicals believed, he took over from before 1947 too much of the British-trained personnel and official mentality, this very English park and mansion may be taken as a symbol of error. He died in some ways conscious of failure; the study where he worked is hermetically sealed up, to be stared into through a glass partition; the epoch he presided over has ended, and no one knows in what direction Indian history is moving now.

The failure of a true social revolution to get under way in twentieth-century Indo-Pakistan can be traced back, on one side, to long ages of history super-saturated with religion. Such over-religiosity, akin to Counter-Reformation Catholicism in southern Europe, does not inhibit individual appetites for wealth, power, women, but it asphyxiates any social impulse towards collective betterment. Not

only in our day, but all through its lifetime, this part of Asia has been a mutant from the norm represented by China, Russia, Europe; while peasants and artisans everywhere else fought for emancipation from the burden of feudalism, in India they prayed for emancipation from the burden of existence. If the peasant in old China had always an honoured status, in theory at least, it may have been because he was so often ready to rebel against oppression. The single grand peasant revolt in pre-British India was that of the Sikhs, as a result of which the most respected figure in the East Punjab countryside is not the Brahmin but the Jat ploughman—and in a land where beggars are legion, no one ever saw a Sikh begging. There has been no agrarian rising in Pakistan, none in India except in the special case of Telengana in 1947–8.

On another side the failure may be seen as another consequence of British rule, if of British rule in its more ingratiating aspect. In the 'twenties and 'thirties there was a distinct chance—visible to cautious men in both camps—of a really revolutionary movement growing out of civil disobedience. A mobilizing of the masses on economic as well as political issues would have forced the British Government and its Indian partners out into the open, and might have swept away the vested interests that now hold back progress. Whatever may be said of Nehru's hesitations after 1947, the future of independent India was predetermined in a great measure by his inability in earlier years to carry the national movement beyond the limit prescribed by Gandhi; at decisive moments like that in 1930, for instance, when Nehru wanted to give civil disobedience a further impetus in his own province, the U.P., by broadening it into a no-rent campaign. For the peasantry to turn against their more or less feudal landlords, along with the government that harboured them, would have been a natural next stage in the mass awakening. But Gandhi, who on other subjects (birth-control, for instance) was eager to condemn any tampering with "nature", would not hear of this.<sup>10</sup> His dogmas of non-violence and social conservatism bottled up crowd instincts and frustrations which erupted in 1947 in violence far more extreme, and far worse because senseless and futile.

Gandhi in his sandals and loincloth looked the quintessence of Indianism, a Hindu as Nehru said in every fibre. This is what he wished to be, and to be held by the millions to be: it may be fair, as every leader of men must be in some degree an actor, to say that this was the part he acted. It was as the archetypal Indian that he impressed and often imposed his ideas on Nehru, who was uneasily conscious of being, or being considered, only half-Indian, and who therefore at crucial points could be induced to conclude that Gandhi's divination was more trustworthy than his own political philosophy. And no doubt Gandhi did inherit much traditional Indian mentality. Yet he as well as Nehru was a product of the British empire and the

hybrid psychology it bred. A penetrating observation of Nehru on his mentor was that Gandhi added nothing to his stock of ideas after coming back from South Africa.<sup>11</sup> It was in Africa, not in India, that his political outlook formed itself. There, Indians were an ill-used minority, and British power was their protector against Boer high-handedness. At the time of the Boer War he could write to a newspaper insisting that Indians were entitled to the "enchanted" name and rights of British subjects.<sup>12</sup> In the African context, imperialism could not be for him the irreconcilable enemy, the power of darkness to be resisted at all costs. After his return home, it may be not too fancifully conjectured that black Africa transposed itself in his mind into the unknown myriads of the Indian peasantry, and benevolent foreign tutelage into the reassuring ascendancy of landowners, mill-owners, and (if it could be persuaded to co-operate with them and gradually withdraw in their favour) the British magistracy. It is true that this returned exile went round and about in India, visited numberless villages, acquired an uncanny insight into the rustic mind. It may be equally true that what he was learning about these peasants, from whom by birth and class, as a Gujerati *bania*, or burgher, he was deeply separated, was their weaknesses and limitations, instead of their less apparent but more fundamental strength as a class, as a force capable of revolution. When he summoned them to action it was action of a symbolic kind, which he could call off when he thought proper; not the struggle *à outrance* into which Mao Tse-tung was leading the Chinese peasants.

*Satyagraha* had a real though partial success; it did not bring independence, but it brought a keener desire for it, stronger self-respect and self-reliance. Again, however, while it had a very Indian appearance, it was in another sense, like Gandhi himself, half English. It takes two to play any game, and the British Raj was on the whole (even allowing for the tendency towards brutalism that Nehru complained of in the 'thirties,<sup>13</sup> a reflex of the savagery into which Europe was relapsing) ready to play the game of non-violence with the Congress. There was shrewdness in this recognition of kinship between *satyagraha* and Britain's domestic mode of political life, its reduction of strife and hurlyburly to a well-regulated procedure, a contest of gesture and ritual. More to the credit of British rule, it had become in course of time a rule of law: law that might be prejudiced and inequitable, but was none the less binding on government as well as subject, and could not be arbitrarily set aside without the whole moral fabric of the Raj being shaken.<sup>14</sup> Islam had proclaimed the sanctity of law, but only of a sacred code, beyond human disputing but restricted in scope and affording no real protection to the citizen. The concept of a reign of law (along with that of a legal profession) was first brought into India, and Asia, by Britain. It was in the name of British principles of justice and civil rights that Nehru challenged the

British courts;<sup>15</sup> and although they sent him to prison fourteen times, between alien government and national movement there was only at rare moments that total alienation, abolition of common humanity, which has been witnessed in so many colonial conflicts and is being repeated in South Vietnam. Indians could stay in government service with a good conscience, or not too bad a conscience; and in India and Pakistan now, amid a welter of suspicion and mistrust that very few public characters or institutions escape, the higher law-courts, inheritors of the British legal tradition, are believed to stand above corruption or intimidation.<sup>16</sup>

Underlying the tactical disagreements between Nehru and Gandhi was a deeper dissension about the kind of India they hoped to see emerge. Gandhi was a great shaker-up of nationalist minds, in his earlier and fresher years, because he made them aware of poorer brethren in need of help, especially the untouchables whom he saw in a new light after his African sojourn. But at bottom he was trying, as India has tried with fatal pertinacity through the ages, to find a religious solution for social problems, and thus in effect stow them away in one more of Hinduism's countless pigeon-holes. There was a good deal of St. Francis in his preaching of "the art and beauty of self-denial and voluntary poverty",<sup>17</sup> and St. Francis too lived in an age of incipient social revolution and sought (too successfully) to quench the fire with holy water. Both these saints disliked property, both were ready to defend to the last gasp the property-owner's right to keep it. "I would strain every nerve to prevent a class war," Gandhi wrote.<sup>18</sup>

Nehru, who was chronically bewildered by his fellow-Indians, was always trying to find out what Jinnah meant by "Muslim culture", and what Gandhi meant by his doctrine of trusteeship, his picture of landowners, millowners, even princes, as natural or divinely-appointed guardians of the common folk. Gandhi would ingenuously protest that he was not anti-Socialist but simply unable to understand what Socialism stood for.<sup>19</sup> Really, one must suspect, he understood perfectly well. He and Nehru exchanged revealing letters in 1945, on the brink of independence, about social questions. With the innate pessimism of religion about human nature, its assumption that men will only be good when they become as little children, or are treated as children and kept in the nursery, Gandhi argued that mankind must go back to the village and lead a simple life, free from the snares of civilization and technology. His ideal village, somehow purified from the old dungheaps, was a very hazy Utopia, and Nehru might well inquire why truth and non-violence should grow more palmily in the countryside than in the town.<sup>20</sup>

Gandhi wanted to renovate the old order, Nehru to get rid of it; the latter was taken aback particularly by his defending landlordism at a time when the Slump was already shaking its foundations.<sup>21</sup> He

was denouncing untouchability, but this meant only ridding Hindu society of its most archaic feature, no longer of practical importance compared with property issues. Gandhi's non-violence towards the British was the other side of his anti-revolutionism; he wanted the Indian masses to be non-violent towards the wealthier classes. Nehru condemned the trusteeship idea as mere tinkering, and might have pointed out that Britain could just as easily claim to be India's "trustee", but he himself was prone to stop short of logical conclusions. He would utter a stern warning to landlords, ending in a facile hope that some of them would see the light and help to dismantle **landlordism**.<sup>22</sup> In 1935 he praised Gandhi's influence for canalizing the nationalist ferment and resentment at economic miseries, and so preventing a nation-wide **jacquerie**.<sup>23</sup>

With Nehru on the seesaw between liberalism and socialism, it was Gandhi's philosophy on the whole, however much modified and modernized, that was to prevail, despite his death soon after independence. Gandhi, rather than Nehru, was the destined father of the nation. The Nehru era created a great deal, from the new dams and canals that have kept a bursting population alive, if not much more than alive, to the imposing buildings in New Delhi that house the academies of arts and letters, institutes of medicine and physics and economics. And it must be allowed that free India fell heir to more than a fair share of staggering difficulties. One of these is a backward sixty-five million people of aboriginal ancestry; their fellow-Indians might claim more credit than they have been given—or have sought—for agreeing to reserve 17½ per cent of all civil service posts for these "Scheduled Castes and Tribes".<sup>24</sup> This, in a job-hungry country, is true abnegation, but it can benefit directly only a minute section of the depressed classes. Unlike Pakistan, India has built up a large public sector, including most of the basic heavy industry so far developed. But as left-wing critics frequently point out, this does not amount to socialism, any more than in Britain; at most it implies a foundation on which socialism might possibly be built. In agriculture, it may have been wise to keep clear of collectivization, but the current proposal to allow big-scale capitalist farming is a confession that co-operatives and **panchayats** or village councils, loudly advertised as the alternative to Chinese methods, have failed to renovate the old decrepit soil-scratching.

At present there is no effective pressure towards socialization; on the contrary there is mounting pressure on the Congress government from the Right, which has displaced the fragmented and confused Left as the real opposition. It ranges from the demagogic Hinduism of the Jan Sangh, whose affinities are with the clerical Fascism of Catholic Europe, to the respectable **Liberal-Conservatism** of the Swatantra party. The Congress Party, while annually in its resolutions a party of the Left, has for the rest of the year been

hardening into a party of the Right, with no fixed boundary separating it on one side from the Jan Sangh. It is a worsening of this creeping reaction that is feared by progressives, much more than a take-over by the army. The officer corps is far more mixed than in Pakistan in its provincial affiliations. It is said moreover that the junior officers, though un-political, are not *unprogressive*.<sup>26</sup>

While India has failed to grow beyond capitalism, Pakistan has been growing into it; the narrowing gap has not yet had time to diminish their rooted sense of incompatibility. For most purposes, this means West Pakistan, which started with as big a lead over East Pakistan in capital and technique as India over Pakistan as a whole. Until fairly recently the eastern wing was little more than an undeveloped colony of the western, a fact of which some of its inhabitants are fully aware. There is as much mutual ignorance between the two as between Pakistan and India: in spite of lectures sponsored by an official council for National Integration, the mental gap that separates them is wider than the geographical. As time goes on, the East is bound to loom larger; at present the uneasy combination of two territories linked chiefly by mutual dislike or fear of their common neighbour makes them a predicament, not for themselves alone. There is more independent thinking in the East than in the West, and a gallant endeavour to keep an independent Press alive, but scarcely more of a workaday opposition, especially after the Kashmir war. The handful of Muslim Communists or Socialists who were available in 1947 did not grow into a movement in Pakistan, partly because of repression, partly according to their critics because they could not bring themselves wholeheartedly to accept the new nation and its divorce from India. In any case it could not have been easy to come to terms with a nationhood avowedly derived from one of the most dogmatic of religions. Socialism survives on the plane of conversation; the demialliance of 1965 with China enabled it to talk louder for the time being. A substitute known as Islamic Socialism enjoys mild official approval; as nobody knows what it means, any more than Christian Socialism in Europe, it does nobody any harm. Mohamed Iqbal, the national poet and philosopher of Pakistan, which regards itself as his posthumous child, was a descendant of Brahmin converts and advocated something curiously similar to Gandhi's trusteeship as the panacea for all social ills." Islamic Socialism has nevertheless sincere and earnest adherents, and may yet come to have a meaningful programme.<sup>27</sup>

The impression made by the present régime in Pakistan (and in Persia: the collaboration envisaged by the two has a logical basis) is that it is engaged in pushing the country forward from medieval to modern, away from a feudal centre of gravity towards a bourgeois centre. President Ayub began as a small landowner of the Frontier district, where opportunity within the old-fashioned framework of

society was very limited. He embarked on a professional career in the army, his son is a business magnate. The land reform which his Government set about promptly, after its predecessors (in West Pakistan) had done nothing but shilly-shally, was not a forced concession to a militant peasant movement, such as hardly existed. It was intended much more—and the same may be said of the Shah's more recent land reform—to undermine the political ascendancy of the bigger landlords. These were mostly creations of the British, but, like all others planted in Asiatic soil, feudal in instinct and outlook. At the same time, it was calculated to draw capital away from rural parasitism into the modern industry that was necessary if the country was to remain viable, and the upper classes to remain prosperous.

President Ayub and the Shah both present themselves as exponents of true democracy, or democracy properly understood. Peking, whose judgment of men and things has grown disconcertingly subjective, found a resemblance during the 1965 crisis between Pakistan's Basic Democracy and its own People's Communes. For less recondite reasons, Washington too has been favourable: American bankers and diplomats like countries they are doing business with to wear a democratic smile made of capitalist lipstick, and Basic Democracy as the varnish for a stable authoritarian régime was helping before the 1965 clash to induce American investment and give West Pakistan industry a surprisingly high growth-rate. Few governments can boast of credentials from both China and the U.S.A. All the same, no rational Pakistani pretends to take the electoral system at its official valuation. The best that is said for it is that local representatives (each Basic Democrat represents a ward of about a thousand inhabitants) may have a grasp of local needs, and be able to push usefully for village roads or clinics. Election depends however on personal influence or official backing, without reference to political principles, but sometimes with a supply of cash to anchor the floating voter; and a man wants to be elected because he will then enjoy a plenitude of parish-pump influence—all sorts of people will have to ask for his signature on all sorts of occasions—and because he can look forward in his turn to cash or favours when he has to consult his conscience about voting for candidates higher up.

Apart from this premium on venality, the régime has been heavy-handed at times (especially in East Pakistan in its early days); it has not enlisted idealism on its side, and it has been felt by the intelligentsia to be stifling and stultifying: academic life has been gagged by an oppressive University Ordinance, literature has wilted. All this has been accepted fairly philosophically by a public not much accustomed to anything better. In the presidential election early in 1965 the scratch coalition with Miss Jinnah for candidate required more than a dash of opportunism to bring some of its members together, since they ranged from Socialists to the ultra-Islamic

followers of Maududi, and offered no prospect of a viable administration.

Under the present regime, much in Pakistan remains medieval, but the same applies to India too, and to think of the country in general (as many Indians do) as a medieval theocracy, like the Yemen under the sway of the Imams, is a travesty. In many ways it belongs firmly to the modern world. Its urban element is vastly greater than before 1947: Lahore has one and three-quarter million inhabitants instead of half a million, Karachi three million; and a startling proportion of this increase, amounting to nearly half the total urban population in West Pakistan, is the result of Partition and mass migration. The multitude of newcomers has made for instability, like a loose cargo in the hold, but also for social and economic advance. In practice this Islamic Republic is often, for better or worse, very un-Muslim, and it keeps a sharp police eye on the Maududi fanatics. Its shops and offices close on Sunday (like India's), not Friday. It has got rid of the veil, or reduced it to a vestigial relic, a light gauzy thing scarcely concealing the face even when not drawn back from it, instead of the formidable burqa that every respectable woman in Lahore wore, or was loaded with, twenty years ago, a shapeless head-to-foot envelopment. What is more, it has abolished the sacred right of four wives, which India has not ventured to interfere with: there is a Hindu Marriage Act suppressing polygamy, not an Indian Act. It is indeed the strongest justification that can be urged for Partition that under Muslim or nominally Muslim leadership, Muslims can be led tactfully but firmly away from traditional Islam, whereas a Muslim minority under a non-Muslim government has a propensity to cling to the past with all its abuses, for fear of losing its identity. There are Pakistanis who hope to see their country the last fortress of hide-bound orthodoxy, standing firm amid the collapse of faith in Persia, Turkey, the Arab lands. It will be ironical if orthodox Islam and purdah find their last stronghold not in Pakistan but in infidel India.

There are other, less nostalgic Pakistanis who, acutely conscious of national shortcomings, are apt to console themselves by maintaining that India is really no better off, but only pretends to be. This too, so far as freedom of discussion and political alertness are concerned, is travesty, part of the barrier that pride and prejudice have built between the two countries. Nevertheless, between democracy as it is working in India and Basic Democracy as it is worked in Pakistan, there are doubtless more affinities than appear on paper. There is in both a prevailing absence of civic idealism, painful to men and women old enough to have shared in the enthusiasm and optimism of the independence struggle. Not a few men in public life do their duty from day to day, but more from force of habit than from fresh inspiration. In Pakistan, especially in the West, the Left is only a scattering of individuals living on memories of better, or at least more hopeful

days. But in India too, it appears to be taken for granted that no young man or woman of vision would dream of entering politics, or that if he or she did enter they would be quickly crowded out by professional politicians. Sordid greed in politics in a potent preservative of vested interests, because it fosters the deadening assumption that "politics is a dirty game", which decent people should keep out of. In both these countries public life seems in danger of degenerating into something ominously like the *caciquismo* of modern Spain, a bartering of votes for favours between local bosses and politicians higher up. Altogether there is a warning that Indians might profit by in the fate of nineteenth-century Liberalism in southern Europe, an exotic growth speedily withered by lack of vital contact with common people.

West Pakistan so far has a slowly widening ring of big-business families, rather than a capitalist class, a *bourgeois* estate of the realm with its own collective ethos and political weight. In India a more developed *bourgeoisie* still shows many traces of an older mentality; one can hear it said for example that in the biggest enterprises there is more of a feudal, hierarchical tone, more unapproachability of higher by lower, than in the civil service, often charged with this failing. In some historical ways modern industry is closer in spirit to feudalism than modern bureaucracy is. Capitalism of this sort, whatever its growth-rate in material terms, can hardly be expected to generate the public spirit without which these countries are doomed to stagnation. In its youthful days *bourgeois* society could kindle idealism and embody progress, but those days—India had some vicarious share in them—have long gone by. Whether the *bourgeois* order here or there is old or new, it must partake of the moral exhaustion of the *bourgeois* world order—a debility quite compatible with technical vitality. From this point of view India and Pakistan have become middle-aged and used up while as nations they are yet in infancy with all their troubles before them.

#### NOTES

1. By Bithia Mary Croker (London 1913).
2. Mr. Jonaid Iqbal, of the Pakistan Council. I would have liked to thank by name all the individuals whose information or opinions I have quoted, but for a variety of reasons it seemed discreet to omit some names.
3. See *Nehru. The First Sixty Years*, a big collection of passages from Nehru's books, speeches, and correspondence, excellently arranged and edited by Dorothy Norman (2 vols., London 1965), vol. I, pp. 1014.
4. I trust that no client of Mr. Daniyal Latifi will read this, and that he will be free to resort to the same innocent stratagem again.
5. See Norman, vol. III, pp. 27, 32.
6. I heard this from Mr. V. Shankar, at the time his official secretary.
7. I learned much about progress in E. Punjab from two old colleagues, Sardar Jagjit Singh and Sardar Kishan Singh.

8. Norman, vol. II, p. 298.
9. Miss S. K. Gandhi, who knew the place in Nehru's time, was my guide and told me some interesting details.
10. On Gandhi's aversion to birth-control see D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma. Life of Mokandas Karamchand Gandhi*, vol. IV (Bombay 1952), pp. 55-58, 69-73.
11. Norman, vol. I, pp. 375-6.
12. Letter from Durban in *The Scotsman* (Edinburgh), 14 November 1899, p. 7, col. 5. Gandhi welcomes the fact that the authorities in Natal have now agreed to admit and assist Indian as well as other refugees from Johannesburg: we can once more feel that "we are British subjects, and that in time of danger the enchanting phrase has not after all lost any of its charm". He hopes Indians will be given the same equal treatment after the war, and dwells on the loyalty of the Indian troops.
13. Norman, vol. I, pp. 429, 448.
14. Cf. the study of a humdrum British magistrate compelled by his professional conscience to dismiss a political prosecution for want of adequate evidence, in Edward Thompson's novel *An Indian Day* (1927).
15. Norman, vol. I, p. 95.
16. In Burma too, I was told. The Rangoon press on 28 December 1965 carried reports of a conviction for murder being reversed by the court of appeal on the ground that the defendant had been coerced by the police into incriminating himself.
17. Norman, vol. I, p. 348.
18. *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 453 (1936).
19. *Ibid.*, vol. I, pp. 362 ff.
20. *Ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 177 ff.
21. *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 327.
22. *Ibid.*, vol. I, pp. 205-6.
23. *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 397.
24. I learned something from Mr. S. N. Chib of the administrative difficulties this may involve.
25. This view was expressed to me strongly by my old friend and teacher Mr. P. C. Joshi, formerly general secretary of the Communist Party.
26. See in particular his long poem *Majlis-i-shora-i-Iblis*, or "Satan's Parliament", of which there is a translation in my collection of poems from Iqbal in the *Wisdom of the East* series.
27. Dr. Usman, a lecturer in Urdu at Government College, Lahore, and Mr. Hassan Habib of the Administrative Staff College, impressed me as serious upholders of the idea and men capable of giving it a more distinct shape.