Greatest, and Youngest, of Moslem Lands

Pakistan builds a new federation based on an old religion and faith in itself.

By RICHARD SYMONDS

THIS week, a burly, genial, but somewhat taciturn statesman, who usually wears horn-rimmed spectacles and a gray lambskin cap, will arrive in the United States. He will spend most of May here, visiting Washington as the guest of President Truman and then going on a good-will tour of several large cities. His good-will chores aside, he will study what he can of American technical and industrial achievements.

The statesman is Liaquat Ali Khan, Prime Minister of Pakistan, one of the world's newest nations, its fifth most populous and the largest dominated by Moslems. Liaquat Ali has not been in the United States before. He will probably find few difficulties with the language, for he is a graduate of Oxford and a barrister of Lincoln's Inn. Doubtless, however, he will find difficulty, as most newly arrived visitors do, in understanding many aspects of a civilization which, in its bustle and clangor and material progress, provides a startling contrast to the far-off land he comes from.

Yet the first impressions of a Pakistani in America could not be more startling than those of a Westerner on his first visit to Pakistan. For the Westerner would find a nation of 80,000,000 which had been deliberately created not on an economic, a linguistic, or a racial basis, but on the basis of religion. Even more remarkable is its geographical structure, consisting as it does of two separate areas divided by a thousand miles of foreign territory. It is as though, in the United States, a sovereign nation were created out of Massachusetts and Texas, separated by the territory of the rest of the Union and able to communicate only by sea and air.

Indeed, the traveler who flies from Karachi to Dacca finds a far greater contrast than he would between Boston and Houston, for in a few hours he passes from the desert of the Middle East to the tropical vegetation of Southeast Asia.

WESTERN PAKISTAN, though by far the larger area, has the smaller population. From its huge mountain ranges, the famous five rivers of the Punjab flow swiftly through the dry plains. Rainfall is fitful and scanty. Vital wheat and cotton crops are dependent on an artificial irrigation system which is the most extensive in the world.

MMR JALAL

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In the mountains live tall Pathan tribesmen, picturesque in enormous baggy trousers and magnificent turbans, inseparable from their rifles, traditionally given to family feuds but openly hospitable to strangers. In the Punjab canal colonies live the richest farmers of Pakistan, plowing their own wheatland with their own bullocks, a sturdy people, forming the backbone of the Pakistan army. In Sind, long known as the "Unhappy Valley," farmers, who for generations have been ground between rapacious landlords and the cruel desert, are now acquiring a new independence and self-respect; their cotton crops have been trebled and quadrupled in value by the irrigation canals which radiate from the Indus.

Eastern Pakistan's problem is too much water rather than too little. Through flat alluvial plains and islands, the Ganges and Brahmaputra meander to the sea, covering the land with their fertilizing silt. Rice and jute grow quickly in this rich soil. Coconuts and pineapples are abundant. In the monsoon rains, water surrounds the villages and one passes from house to house by boat. Here the Moslem cultivator is short and bearded, and wears a colored *lungi*, or skirt, and white skull cap. On his way down the river he has a cautious eye for the crocodile, and in the jungle for the leopard and the Royal Bengal tiger.

THE foreign visitor wonders how and why two such different areas and peoples came to be welded together in the political remaking of what was once the British Indian Empire. The immediate answer is, of course, that these were Moslem areas. When Moslems from Arabia and Central Asia first invaded India, they conquered, converted and settled the lands which now comprise western Pakistan.

Through the rest of India they scattered out thinly—except in remote East Bengal. Here their missionaries found whole occupational groups—fishermen, hunters and low-caste agriculturalists —who felt themselves doomed to perpetual subordination under a strict Hindu rule which had but recently replaced the mild sway of Buddhism. These groups quickly and enthusiastically embraced Islam; their descendants constitute a majority of the present inhabitants of eastern Pakistan.

Why, in the face of their vast geographic separation, did the Moslems of India insist on the creation of a single Moslem state? Partly, their insistence arose out of a fierce determination to maintain a culture and a way of life very unlike *(Continued on Page 46)*

 MMR JALAL

Greatest of Moslem Lands

(Continued from Page 13)

that of India's Hindu majority. Pakistan's first great leader, the late Mohammed Ali Jinnah, once declared:

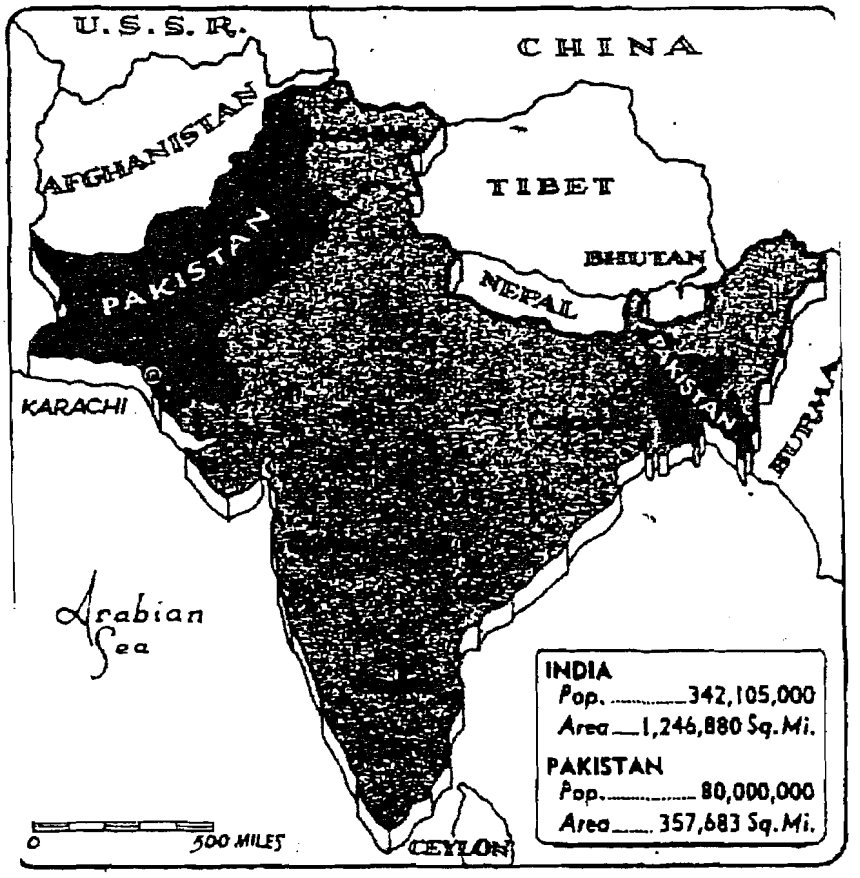
"The Hindus and Moslems belong to two different religions, philosophies, social customs, literatures. They neither intermarry nor interdine, and indeed belong to two different civilizations which are based on conflicting ideas and conceptions. * * * To yoke together two such nations under a single yoke, one as a numerical minority and the other as a majority, must lead to growing discontent and the final destruction of any fabric that may be built up for the government of such a state."

THERE were other factors. The Moslems, proud of their Persian culture, had been slow to learn English, so that in trade, industry and government service they were surpassed by the Hindus. Even in Sind and East Bengal, the merchants, money lenders and often landlords were Hindus. A desire to be free from the economic control of Bombay and Calcutta, and the aspirations of individual Moslems for advancement in careers blocked by Hindus, both contributed toward the demand for independence.

When the independent Dominion of Pakistan was finally established in 1947 (simultaneously, of course, with the establishment of an independent Dominion of India), it became a federal government with a capital at the western seaport of Karachi. Its chief components were Sind (with a population of 5,200,000), the Northwest Frontier Province (3,200,000), the West Punjab (19,700,000), East Bengal (46,700,000), and Baluchistan (500,000). Princely states and tribal areas with a total population of about 4,800,000 also joined the federation.

The task of setting up a new government, difficult at any time, was immensely complicated by uncontrollable riots which soon broke out be-

MMR JALAL



Pakistan—East and West—and the India that lies between.

tween Moslems and non-Moslems in the Punjab. On either side of the Indo-Pakistan border the minorities spontaneously gathered up a few belongings and made their way to safety, the greater part on foot or in bullock carts, the more fortunate in trains and trucks.

The infant state was inundated, almost submerged, by about 6,500,000 Moslem refugees from India, mostly destitute agriculturists and artisans. On the other hand, perhaps 4,500,000 Hindus and Sikhs left Western Pakistan. Among them were most of the money lenders and traders who controlled the economy of the rural areas, the clerks who staffed Government offices and banks, the sweepers responsible for the sanitation of the towns, and the professional classes—doctors, nurses, lawyers and dentists.

THE Pakistan Government faced the situation bravely. Refugees were fed and clothed as well as resources would allow. Farmers among them were settled on lands vacated by Hindus and Sikhs, and loans were advanced until the first harvests came in. Bank clerks and accountants were hurriedly trained in night classes. Middle-class women came out of *purdah* (seclusion) to help staff hospitals.

Yet hardly had the Punjab crisis eased when Pakistan faced another crisis in Kashmir. There, a Hindu maharajah ruled a population of 4,000,000,

(Continued on Following Page)

4 MMR JALAL

(Continued from Preceding Page)
of whom 3,000,000 were Moslems. Faced with a rebellion among some of his subjects, who together with Pathan invaders, wanted to join Pakistan, he acceded to India. Pakistan refused to recognize the accession and threw troops into western Kashmir to support the rebel party in skirmishes with the Indian Army. By now, the United Nations has stopped the shooting in Kashmir; the future of the state is to be determined by a plebiscite. Meanwhile, Pakistan has had to feed 500,000 Kashmiri refugees, and almost every aspect of her economy and government has been affected by the possibility of open war with India.

IN her desire to obtain Kashmir, Pakistan is not only motivated by sympathy for its Moslem population, but by the fact that three of the five great rivers of the Punjab, the Indus, Jhelum and Chenab, have their upper waters in that state. The other two, the Ravi and Sutlej have their source in India. Pakistanis maintain that if all these rivers were controlled by India, the latter would be able, by diverting them, to ruin the great wheat and cotton lands of the West Punjab.

In Pakistan's critical first year, the heaviest burdens of government were carried by Jinnah. He was not only Governor General and President of the Constituent Assembly, but *Quaid-i-Azam*, the "Great Leader," who had led the Moslem League in its fight for independence. Though over 70, he toured the provinces, preaching "Unity, Faith, Discipline," supervising law and order, rooting out corruption, urging the fair treatment of minorities, and endeavoring to weld the very different components of Pakistan into a nation.

When Jinnah died of a heart attack in September, 1948, his mantle fell naturally on Liaquat Ali. Besides serving as Prime Minister, the latter had been Jinnah's lieutenant for many years as Secretary of the Moslem League. Liaquat Ali, an aristocrat who has renounced his title, is an experienced parliamentarian and a former finance member of the Viceroy's Council. His outstanding characteristic as Prime Minister has been the serenity with which he has confronted both political crises and mass demonstrations. A weaker or more emotional man might not have been able to avoid war.

LIAQUAT ALI has been ably assisted by his Foreign Minister, Sir Mohammad Zafrullah Khan, whose advocacy, not only of his country's causes but those of other Moslem nations, has done much to put Pakistan on the map at Lake Success. Yet neither the confident leadership of Liaquat Ali, nor the skillful diplomacy of Zafrullah would have been effective had they not been based on a stable internal

(Continued on Following Page)

MMR JALAL

(Continued from Preceding Page)
economy. Balanced budgets, both in 1948 and 1949, have been the contribution of the Finance Minister, Ghulam Mohammad, despite many prophecies that Pakistan was an economic impossibility.

In fact, as an agricultural country, Pakistan's economy appears to be one of the soundest in Asia, having a favorable trade balance with the dollar area. She has a surplus of food grains; she supplies 70 per cent of the world's raw jute, and her long staple cotton commands excellent prices in international markets.

HER greatest need is for industrialization. At the time of partition, she had no jute mills, and only 10 per cent of her cotton was milled locally. Before any large-scale industrialization is possible, however, a great expansion of electrical power is necessary, for local resources of coal are meager, and oil, though being widely sought in Western Pakistan, is not yet available in any quantity.

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In all these projects, foreign technicians are in evidence. But foreign capital has, not unnaturally, been somewhat shy, waiting to see whether the new state was viable and whether its Government was firmly in control. Though satisfied on these points, foreign business men have remained cautious because Pakistan's disputes wth India have kept the two countries on the verge of war.

PAKISTAN'S critical relations with India and her preoccupation with refugees has to some extent diverted attention from normal political activities in a new state.

The Constitution has not yet been drafted, but a resolution incorporating its objectives was passed in 1949. The preamble stated that "sovereignty over the entire universe belongs to God Almighty alone, and the authority which He has delegated to the State of Pakistan through its people * * * is a sacred

trust." The resolution guaranteed the principles of democracy and social justice, the rights of minorities and the independence of the judiciary.

Pakistanis indignantly deny that their country is a theocracy, for there are no priests in Islam. But they affirm that it is indeed an Islamic state. Liaquat Ali has referred to his objective as "Islamic socialism, which in a nutshell means that every person in this land has equal rights to be provided with food, shelter, clothing, education and medical facilities. * * * The economic program drawn up 1,350 years ago [i. e., in the lifetime of the Prophet Mohammed] is still the best for us."

There is much discussion in Karachi and Lahore of the implications of introducing primitive Islamic laws into a modern society. Those which arouse most speculation are the *zakat,* or poor tax, by which Moslems are traditionally required to give one-fourth of their total assets, other than agricultural animals, to charity every year, and the prohibition of *riba,* or usury. The latter is not held to exclude normal trading.

Pakistan's social services are rudimentary by Western standards. But the Federal Government can now do little to assist the provincial administrations to expand them at a time when more than half of its budget is being spent on defense.

WHATEVER aspect of Pakistan is studied today, almost invariably the implications lead back to her relationship with India. Her social services and her industrial development are limited by the expenditure necessary to maintain a large army. Her civil liberties and her political institutions are restricted by the fear of treason. Foreign investment is curbed by apprehensions of war.

Pakistan has made encouraging progress. If the bitter disputes with India can be settled amicably, it may confidently be predicted that a hardy, industrious and enthusiastic people, in a land of rich resources, will go forward to make their country one of the most prosperous in Asia. If, on the other hand, the conflict continues, ruin faces both Pakistan and India, and the only likely beneficiary is communism.

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MMR JALAL

(7)