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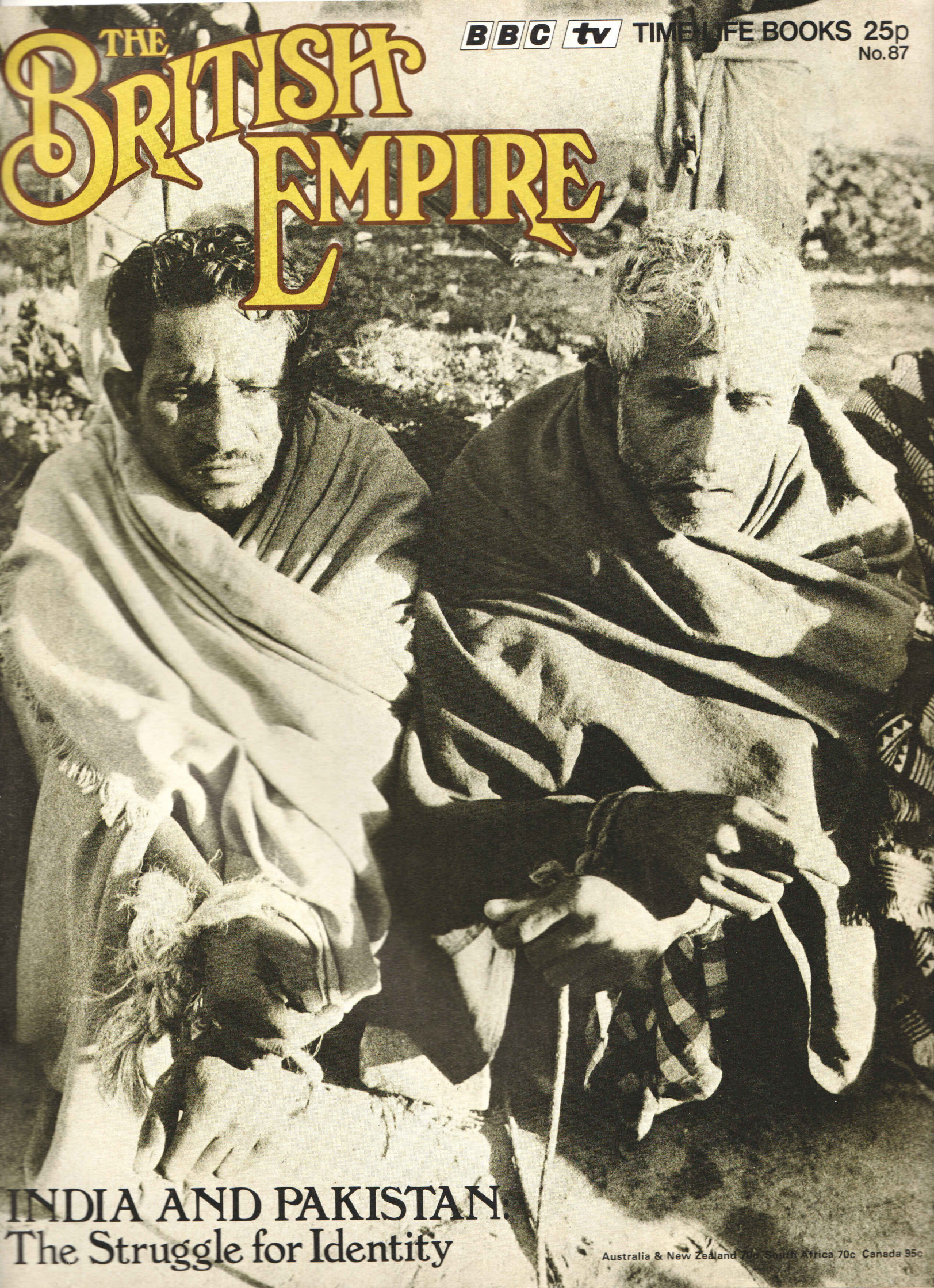

INDIA AND PAKISTAN
The Struggle for Identity

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THE BRITISH EMPIRE

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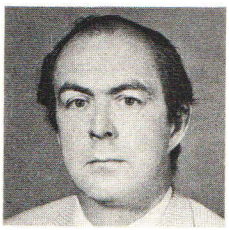

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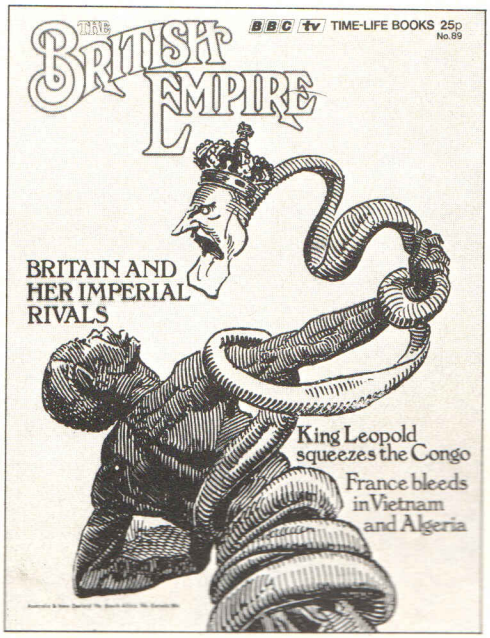


CONTENTS

Cover: Two Bengali collaborators with the Pakistani Army during the bitter war between East and West Pakistan wait fearfully for the summary justice they can expect from their angry countrymen.

INDIA AND PAKISTAN THE STRUGGLE FOR IDENTITY

The two centuries of British rule in India had imposed a unity on a sub-continent that had been divided racially, religiously, linguistically and economically for most of its history. The departing overlords left behind them two countries, India and Pakistan, who had, somehow, to come to terms with these differences. The story of the new states is one of a constant struggle by the inheritors of the Raj to preserve the national identity it had unwittingly fostered. Though the Indian government had to make some concessions to the demands for more autonomy by the states, she still remained one country. Pakistan, on the other hand, was torn in two in one of the bloodiest wars the sub-continent has ever known.

By Neville Maxwell

On the morning of January 30, 1948, a young Brahmin, Nathuram Godse, stepped forward from the crowd that surrounded Mahatma Gandhi, for so long the symbol of a unified and independent India, and shot him four times in his chest at point-blank range. The Mahatma died almost instantly.

It was the end of an era. Gandhi, who almost alone in India was working desperately to get Indians of all classes and creeds to live together peaceably, had been killed by a Hindu extremist. Even more ominously, Godse was for many a hero. When he and his accomplice were hanged for their crime just under two years later, their ashes were secretly thrown into a river and the ground where they were cremated ploughed over, so that nothing of them would be left from which to make relics.

Gandhi himself knew that his ideals were doomed. "There was a time when India listened to me," he noted bitterly in his diary a few weeks after independence. "Today I am a back number. I have been told that I have no place in the new order."

The unity he had symbolized turned out to be an artificial unity, imposed by the need to fight a common enemy, the British. Once the Indian nationalists had gained their objective – independence – there was nothing more to hold them together. The post-independence history of India and Pakistan is the story of two countries trying desperately and increasingly unsuccessfully to come to terms with the manifold forces – religious, linguistic, economic and racial – that were working to tear them asunder.

When the British flags came down for the last time in August, 1947, the country that had been the corner-stone of the Empire split into two halves politically, though on the map they appeared as three. The vast central peninsula of the sub-continent held together as India, but from its flanks on the west and the east was born the state of Pakistan, a nation born out of the Indian Muslims' desire to escape Hindu domination. Some saw Partition as the bloody and convulsive climax of a century of the British policy of "divide and rule." Others believed it to be rather the inevitable result of the reassertion of the profound cultural and historical antipathies between Hinduism and Islam, a clash that had been building up since the 1920s, when it was already becoming clear that the days of the British Raj were numbered.

But there is a third explanation of the Partition of British India, one that is suggested by the facts of India's early, pre-British history. The sub-continent had been unified before, but only as it had been under the British, by an alien, invading force. When that unifying force lost its power, the constituent elements that had been welded together always broke apart. The British arrived just as this process was beginning, when the Mughal Empire was collapsing. They reversed the process and assembled an empire wider than any before them. However, as had not happened in the other Indian empires, British power was withdrawn abruptly, and the post-imperial dissolution was accordingly dramatic. After Partition had created Pakistan it took nearly another quarter of a century before another clear break came; but the forces pushing the country towards the split were remorselessly gathering strength throughout that period.

Seen in this context, the fact that Britain's India split into two was less remarkable than the fact that it split into no more than two. At the beginning of the century no one thought that the British would leave behind only two political entities when they left. The most common belief was, as Sir John Strachey, a great servant of the Raj, had put it: that "there is not and never was, an India, or even any country of India, possessing . . . any sort of unity, physical, political, social or religious; no Indian nation, no 'people of India.'" India was a name, Strachey went on, "which we give to a great region including a multitude of different countries," and the differences between the countries of Europe were less than those between the countries of India. "Scotland is more like Spain than Bengal is like the Punjab." This was not just a British view. The Hindu nationalist leader, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, wrote in 1901: "It is wrong to conclude that the Marathas, Punjabis, Bengalis, etc., all these different peoples, have one nationality." But, as the century wore on, these views were submerged and until a few years before the British left, both they and the nationalists alike expected that an independent India would be a united India.

This new sense of a pan-Indian national identity was as artificial as the entity it opposed. It was the reflection of one of the most notable artefacts of empire, a whole new class tailored quite consciously by the rulers to meet their administrative requirements: "a class of persons," as the civil servant Lord Macaulay had prescribed it in the 1830s, "Indian in blood and colour but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect."

This class was not born of resistance to foreign rule. Quite the contrary. It was a service class, an élite that had been created by the British overlords. It was almost as varied and diverse as India herself, but its members' several nationalities of birth and language were submerged in what became a common will to evict and replace the foreign ruler. And it was, basically, a falling out between Hindu and Muslim members of this successor class over the division of the power-spoils on independence that led to Partition. The first decades of independence in India as well as Pakistan have been patterned by the clash between the successor class's special form of nationalism and the older and far deeper nationalisms that began to emerge almost immediately after independence.

The collision of nationalisms came early in Pakistan. On March 24, 1948, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the dour creator and stern father of the state founded just seven months before, was delivering the convocation address at the University of Dacca, in the eastern "wing" of the country. He took up the subject of language and (speaking, as usual, in his customary English) rebuked those, especially strong among the students whom he was addressing, who demanded equal status for Bengali with Urdu, the common language of north-west India. "Make no mistake about it," he said, with the cold arrogance that was his hall-mark, "there can be only one state language" for Pakistan, and that "can only be Urdu."

Considering the prestige and authority of the speaker, the reaction was astonishing. An instant murmur of dissent swelled

into uproar, so that Jinnah, pale with anger, had to cut short his address. One of those who stood up to shout down the President was a tall student leader named Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rahman. The father of one state was being challenged by the father-to-be of another – Bangladesh – and from that defiance would grow a political force that in 23 years would destroy Pakistan.

Jinnah and his Muslim League had succeeded in their cause in 1947 and the Muslims had their own homeland – Pakistan. The name was an acronym composed of the first letters of Punjab, Afghans (from the North-West Frontier Province) and Kashmir. Since many Muslims and the state of Kashmir were not included, the new country was indeed "a moth-eaten Pakistan," as Jinnah himself had called it. It consisted in the west of roughly half of the Punjab, the old province of the five rivers; the North-West Frontier Province between the Khyber Pass and the Indus, scantily peopled by the fighting Pathan tribes whose political leadership under the "Frontier Gandhi," Ghaffir Khan, had vehemently opposed Partition; Sind, which had been separated from Bombay only ten years before; and – after the Khan of Khalat's separatist movement had been crushed – Baluchistan. And on the opposite side of the sub-continent was East Bengal.

The two wings of Pakistan were separated by, not only 1,000 miles and the intervening bulk of India, but also by a deep cultural abyss. West Pakistan, with its desert and rough hills as well as the fertile plains of the Punjab, was an annex to the Middle East, its people stalwart, light-skinned and wheat-eating. East Pakistan, however, was part of South-East Asia, its territory the delta of the confluent Ganges and Brahmaputra, densely populated by a people alien in every way apart from their religion, smaller, darker, quick and voluble, living on a basic diet of rice. While religion had shown itself as a force strong enough to split British India, it soon became clear that it was not very effective as a unifying force. But the first challenges to Pakistan's survival did not come from the inherent rivalry between the country's two wings. Chaos was the first, and independent India was the second.

The Indian Muslims who became Pakistanis on August 15, 1947, were to begin as citizens without a state. Not only were they faced with the task of creating the apparatus of a state from scratch, but they had to do so under almost impossible conditions. The territory that was Pakistan had been carved out of British India with little regard to the economic needs of the new state and, as a result, patterns of trade and communication were destroyed. For example, many of the headwaters supplying the intricate river and canal system in the Pakistan half of the Punjab were left under India's control. Very little of the machinery for provincial administration passed to Pakistan and, of course, there was no central machinery at all. That had to be created; and of the 550 Indian members of the Indian Civil Service at the hour of Partition, only 100 were Muslim, and six of these opted to join the new Indian government. Pakistan got 83 I.C.S. officers, and of those – a significant pointer to the future – only one was an East Bengali. Into this chaotic situation, millions of refugees poured over the new boundaries, destitute, fearful – often searching for Hindus to kill in revenge for their treatment in India. On their way they passed similar hordes of Hindus, driven to flight, as they had been, by massacre and pillage.

As if such problems were not enough to cope with, Pakistan faced the enmity of India from the moment of its birth. "The present Indian Cabinet are implacably determined to do all in their power to prevent the establishment of the Dominion of Pakistan on a firm basis," Field-Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck reported to the British Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, from Delhi. The Congress leadership had finally agreed to Partition rather than delay the departure of the British; but they had done so confident that Pakistan would soon founder and disintegrate, its fragments returning to India. The first clash between the two countries occurred over the border state of Kashmir.

The believers in Pakistan had always assumed that Kashmir would form part of a Muslim homeland. Logically, it seemed obvious. Kashmir was overwhelmingly Muslim in population and, as well as bordering the western territory of Pakistan, it was strategically and economically vital to it. But in the 1840s the British had sold Kashmir to a Hindu adventurer who had served them well, and his descendants still ruled the state in 1947. In other instances where a ruler's religion differed from his subjects', the Indians were in a position to overrule their attempts to opt out of India.

In Junagadh, a tiny state on India's Arabian Sea coast, and in the biggest and richest princely state, Hyderabad, they simply marched their army in when the rulers were slow to opt for India. But the situation was different in Kashmir. There, too, they marched, or rather flew, their army in, but in this case the ruler had opted for India, albeit rather reluctantly. He had joined India only after a revolt by his Muslim subjects and an invasion by the tribesmen of the North-West Frontier had forced him into a decision. Lord Mountbatten had told him that he would get no help until he acceded to India.

At the very least the government of Pakistan had connived at the tribal invasion of Kashmir and this had, in fact, played right into India's hands. The Indians seized the opportunity to wrest Kashmir from Pakistan, against the whole logic of Partition. Nevertheless, it can be said in India's favour that Nehru, himself of Kashmiri stock, at first genuinely believed that the people of Kashmir wanted to join India. The state's popular leader, Sheikh Abdullah, certainly did, and no doubt convinced Nehru that he could carry his people with him.

Accordingly, Nehru committed himself to holding a plebiscite in Kashmir to put a popular seal on the ruler's decision to accede to India. Realizing within a few months that the Muslims of Kashmir would opt overwhelmingly for Pakistan in any free vote, Nehru, by now convinced that an Indian Kashmir was vital to his country's security, had to find an excuse to wriggle out of his pledges.

With most of the best legal brains on the sub-continent to handle this brief, he had no real difficulty in finding adequate pretexts. India was, in fact, able to dictate

the conditions she wanted since she held the greater part of the state. The Pakistanis had moved in troops to prevent India occupying the whole of Kashmir, but after a short, sharp war a U.N. ceasefire left the Indian Army holding the vital Valley of Kashmir and the passes that led to it.

That Pakistan survived the trauma of its birth and the immediate challenges to its existence is a credit to its founders – as it was confounding to those in India who had expected a short life, if not a still-birth. The towering figure of Jinnah, *Quaid-i-Azam* (Great Leader) as he was by then known, was a source of strength and stability at the beginning. However, stricken by cancer, he lived barely a year after the foundation of Pakistan and, in that time, by his very predominance, the power structure of the Pakistani government was heavily distorted. The Muslim League politicians who succeeded to power in Pakistan on the departure of the British, spent no time pondering over what basic form of government they would adopt; it would be parliamentary, on the model of Westminster. It was the system to which they were accustomed. It suited the political class with its layers of Westernization, and its adoption was an assertion of equality with those who had ruled them. No one in Pakistan asked seriously whether a system that had evolved over centuries in a totally different social environment would easily lend itself to transplantation to a wholly alien culture whose political experience had been autocratic when it was not downright despotic.

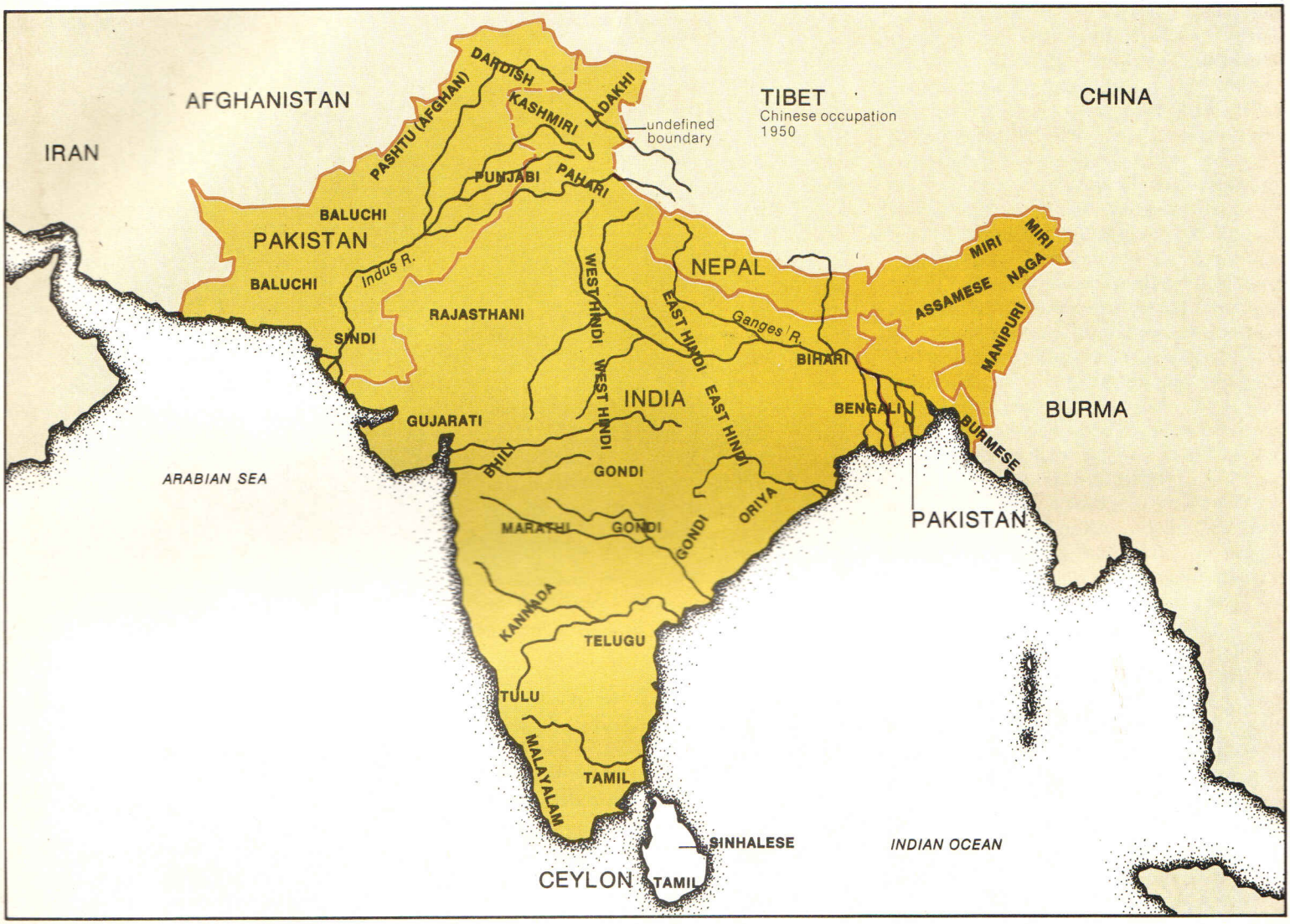
But Jinnah was inconsistent in this regard. He was in every sense the political leader, but he did not take up the office that the Westminster model made the centre of authority, the prime-ministership. He left that to his loyal but rather colourless lieutenant, Liaqat Ali Khan, and, spurning Mountbatten's eager offer to assume the governor-generalship of Pakistan as he had that of India, became governor-general himself. This choice meant that during Jinnah's life Pakistan's system of government was very like the viceregal pattern it had replaced, and Liaqat Ali Khan had neither the authority nor the time to assert the prime-ministership as the centre of power before he was assassinated, three years after Jinnah's death.

Deprived of its two pre-eminent political figures after only four years of its existence, Pakistan became the arena for a squalid game of political musical-chairs, centring round the struggle for power between the prime ministers on the one hand and the governors-general on the other – with the prime ministers usually the losers. Members of the national and provincial assemblies were unimportant in this pseudo-parliamentary game: the real players were a small and recognized group of men, about 20 politicians and senior civil servants who in fact made all the key decisions at every level of government. When these people fell out among themselves chronic instability was the inevitable result.

The Muslim League did not long survive the attainment of its goal in Pakistan. Basically its unifying principle had been the determination not to become subject to a Hindu majority in an independent democratic India. Jinnah's leadership had been a burning-glass, focusing all energies and attention on this goal, and thus leaving aside all constructive consideration of social reform or the means to economic progress. Furthermore, the torrent of enthusiasm that had brought the League to power obscured the profoundly different interests within the party. For it had started – and continued – as the vehicle for the protection of the interests of the Muslim landlords of north India and of the class of Muslim professionals and civil servants, very often also closely linked with the land. The leadership of the party was highly Westernized and far from devout, their commitment to Islam more political than personal, a tactic to arouse the Muslim masses into assertion against the Hindus and therefore into support of the League. As such, the tactic had been highly successful, but it had left the League leadership with a commitment to the establishment of a polity where the teachings and traditions of Islam would be supreme, at the cost of the secularized politicians. They solved this problem in a constitution that gave verbal response to the demands of the devout, but in effect set up a secular state. But this compromise set up a further contradiction. If Pakistan were basically secular, the claimed reason for its existence as a Muslim homeland became irrelevant. The symptoms of those inner strains can be seen in the early disintegration of the Muslim League into quarrelling factions.

Demoralizing stagnation on the surface was bad enough, but the deeper political strains in the new country were in fact more ominous. Essentially these concerned national unity – even national identity. The Bengalis of the eastern wing made up a majority of the population, 54 per cent, but, as the attempt to make Urdu the sole national language showed, the central government, dominated by west wing influences from the beginning, was determined to deny the Bengalis the dominant position their numbers should have given them. The Muslims of East Bengal had strongly supported the cause of Pakistan, seeing in the new country the way to emancipation from the Hindu community that monopolized jobs in commerce and administration in their area, and, in addition, held broad acres of precious land. With Partition, the dominant Hindu classes had left for India, or been driven out, leaving only a mass of the poorest Hindu peasants, about 12 million; but the empty positions they left had been taken over to a large extent by Pakistanis from the west wing, predominantly Punjabi. The Bengalis very soon began to feel, and to complain bitterly, that in achieving Pakistan they had only exchanged one set of exploiters for another. Provincial elections in 1954 brought the various opposition parties in East Pakistan into a united front which campaigned on a platform for "full autonomy and sovereignty" for the province, a slogan that won them a landslide victory. However the legislature thus elected had no chance to meet. The centre dismissed the new provincial government and imposed direct rule, citing the danger of national disintegration as a justification for its action.

A pattern for the future had been set: however solidly the Bengalis might vote for autonomy, the centre, acting for the dominant groups in the west wing, would nullify the results if those appeared to threaten the unity of the country. A



This map shows the many different language groups – many of them potentially dissident areas – gathered under the umbrella of the new countries. In 1971, the Bengalis of East Pakistan won their independence as the new country of Bangladesh while many other groups were agitating for theirs.

united and democratic Pakistan might be the aim, as it was the slogan; but when that began to appear to be a contradiction in terms, there was never any doubt about which way the ruling group would opt – always for unity at the cost of democracy.

The struggle between the east and the west occupied the main arena in Pakistan, but the west was almost equally divided among itself. If the Bengalis feared domination and exploitation by the Punjabis, so also did the smaller provinces of the west wing; and the divisions between the western provinces magnified the influence that, in theory at least, the block of Bengalis in the national assembly could enjoy by virtue of its size and solidarity.

In 1955 the central government, using all the manipulative and coercive powers at its command, acted to remove at one stroke both the disunity of the west wing and the representational advantages of the east by merging the western provinces into one, West Pakistan. The intention of this "one-unit scheme" was barely disguised: to devalue the political influence that otherwise sprung from East Pakistan's numerical superiority. Now the two blocs had an equal strength. It also, however, worked to confirm and enlarge the Punjab's already resented dominance in the west wing. Complaints of "Punjabi Raj" began to be voiced there as well as in East Pakistan.

Thus, towards the end of the first decade of Pakistan's independence it could be seen that the force that had held Indian Muslims together, a common fear of Hindu domination, had already lost much of its impetus. The Raj, and even more the manner of its going, had created a sense of Pakistani nationality, strong enough to achieve the Partition of what Britain had ruled as one. But the strains of independence had quickly shown how shallow was Pakistani nationalism, and alternative nationalisms, more positive and certainly more basic, had begun to assert themselves. The institutions of Westminster democracy, transplanted without the conventions and attitudes that,

more than rules and procedures, gave them life, had atrophied in their irrelevance. While the splintered political parties acted out their parliamentary charades, power was exercised by the senior civil servants, who from the beginning, and increasingly, held themselves responsible to the governor-general, who was made president by the 1956 constitution, rather than to the Cabinets.

By October, 1958, the parliamentary game had become too much for the President, General Iskander Mirza. "You do not raise the prestige of your country by beating the Speaker, killing the Deputy Speaker and desecrating the National Flag," he sternly told the Bengalis in one proclamation. (These events had been the results of a recent riot on the floor of the Dacca provincial assembly.) "For the last two years," said the President, "I have been watching . . . the ruthless struggle for power, corruption and shameless exploitation of our simple, honest, patriotic and industrious masses, the lack of decorum, and the prostitution of Islam for political ends. Democracy," he went on, had become "a dictatorship of the lowest order." Accordingly, he had decided to repeal the constitution; dismiss the provincial and central governments; ban all political parties; and impose martial law. In due course he would have a new constitution devised, more suitable to the genius of the Muslim people and to the interest of the masses – "finer men than whom it is difficult to imagine."

General Iskander Mirza's record was not as unimpeachable as his high moral tone might have suggested. What he described in this proclamation as his "labours to bring about coalition after coalition" had appeared to others as purposeful meddling aimed at nothing so much as to maintain his own power. Much the same conclusion had been reached in the Army less than three weeks after Iskander Mirza's intervention. Three generals waited upon him late at night with the message that he had been "too much associated with politicians responsible for bringing about the state of affairs in the country," and was therefore unfitted, in military eyes, to continue as President. He was offered, and took, a one-way ticket to London. His successor was General Ayub Khan, Commander-in-Chief of the Army, whom Mirza had just appointed Prime Minister and Chief Martial Law Administrator; now Ayub Khan made himself President – and in due course promoted himself to the rank of Field-Marshal.

Indian troops, invited into the Himalayan state of Kashmir to counter the threat from Pakistani tribesmen in November, 1947, consolidate their position as they push back the invaders.

With this, the first chapter in the brief and troubled history of Pakistan was closed: there were only two more to follow. To hold the new country together, and to establish effective governing institutions, the Army had taken power. The new régime moved quickly to get the troops back to barracks and to legitimize itself, and the public response to the generals' move was more one of relief than of opposition, far less outrage. Nehru, it is true, described the régime in Pakistan as a "naked military dictatorship." But Nehru was speaking from the proud perspective of his seat at the end of the front bench of India's Lok Sabha, House of the People, as the established – indeed, entrenched – parliamentary leader of a working democratic polity, and India seemed at that point to be on an entirely different, and altogether more salubrious, road of political development.

"I am convinced," said Jawaharlal Nehru in 1936, "that the only key to the solution . . . of India's problems lies in socialism. When I use this word I do so, not in a vague humanitarian way, but in the scientific, economic sense. . . . I see no way of ending the poverty, the vast unemployment, the degradation and the subjection of the Indian people except through socialism, [which] involves vast

The vacillating Maharajah of Kashmir suffered conveniently from "colic" when Indian and Pakistani officials came to persuade him to join their respective nations.

and revolutionary changes in our political and social structure, the end of vested interests in land and industry." That was the characteristic voice of the Nehru of the independence movement, assertive, bold and radical, and consistent enough to put the imprint of his radicalism on to the Congress Party. But with independence achieved, and power at last in his own hands, his tone quickly changed. "One has to be very careful that in taking any step the existing structure is not injured too much. In the state of affairs in . . . India today any attempt to have a clean slate, that is, a sweep away of all that we have got, would certainly not bring progress nearer, but might delay it tremendously. If we spend large sums of money on [nationalizing] this and that we would be acquiring things which were 90 per cent obsolete today."

That was less than a year after independence, but Nehru had already learned how "all manner of difficulties crop up in implementing a theory," that, as he regretfully noted in this speech, "there is a great deal of difference between theory and practice." His colleagues in the Congress Party, of course, had always been aware of that truth, and so they had always been ready to agree when young Jawaharlal committed them to radical social reform. They still agreed as Nehru grew older, and his 17 years as Prime Minister of India were regularly punctuated with fresh, and often more radical, Congress commitments to socialism. In fact, however, the Party's commitment to fundamental change, to social revolution, had been buried the moment it achieved power.

The impact of the Raj on Indian society was superficial. The British had attacked only those social manifestations, such as suttee, child marriage and the worst pains of enforced widowhood, which they found morally intolerable; but, particularly after the Mutiny of 1857, they had been careful not to interfere with the main stream of orthodoxy, and the life and thought of the Indian masses, the peasantry that makes up the overwhelming majority of the population, was largely untouched.

The Indian life that Nehru himself compared to a "sluggish stream . . . moving slowly through the accumulations of dead centuries" had not changed under the impact of alien rule. Westernization had penetrated only the upper layers of the society, and even there the penetration was partial. "I have become a queer mixture of East and West, out of place everywhere, at home nowhere. Perhaps my thoughts and approach to life are more akin to what is called Western than Eastern, but India clings to me . . . in innumerable ways; and behind me lie, somewhere in the subconscious, racial memories of a hundred . . . generations of Brahmins."

That was Nehru again, complaining wistfully of the "feeling of spiritual loneliness" with which his bi-cultural experience had left him. It was hardly the self-portrait of a revolutionary leader, braced for the task of smashing an old order to let in a new. It was, however, characteristic not only of Nehru himself, but also of the class of Westernized Indians whom he represented.

The momentum of the independence movement certainly carried India further than it had Pakistan. Like their opposite numbers in Pakistan, the members of India's constituent assembly opted for the parliamentary system on the Westminster model. There were some who warned that the system was inapposite to a traditional, hierarchical and politically primitive mass society; they were over-

Liaqat Ali Khan, Jinnah's loyal supporter and successor, was assassinated in October, 1951 in mysterious circumstances. His killer was shot down immediately and no one ever found any motive for the murder.

whelmingly overruled and the Westminster pattern adopted, in the full belief, as one member put it, "that the introduction of democratic government on the basis of adult suffrage will bring enlightenment and promote the well-being, the standard of life, the comfort and the decent living of the common man." The constitution itself seemed to make a good start in that direction, with its banning of Untouchability and commitment to secularism as a principle of the new state.

The 1950s in India are remembered as years of promise. The Congress, having successfully converted itself from an opposition movement into a ruling party, monopolized office in all the states as well as in the centre, and thus provided an extra-constitutional brace to the federal structure. The language question had been answered with a compromise that gave English a 15-year lease of life, and provided for its replacement after that by Hindi, the language of the biggest block of the polyglot population. The absorption of the princely states into the Union of India erased the patchwork-quilt pattern left on the map of India by the Raj, and seemed to confirm the unity that underlay the federal form adopted in the constitution. But the shakiness of this foundation showed up in the problem of linguistic states.

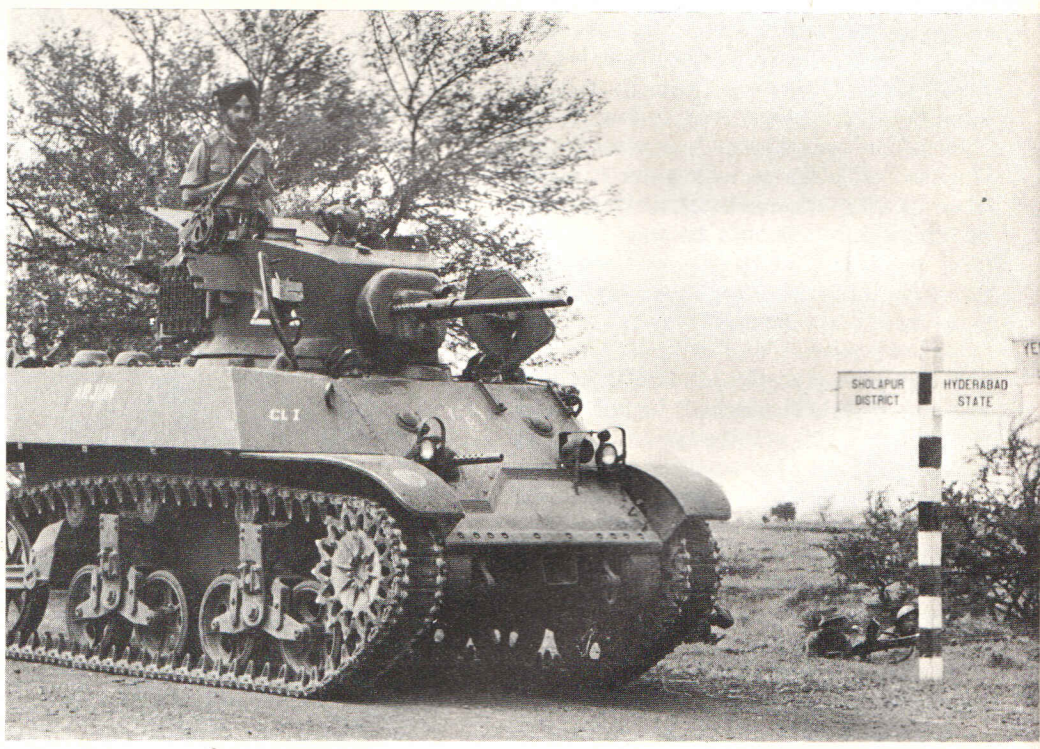
The British had ruled India through an *ad hoc* structure of provinces reflecting the stages of their progress as conquerors, and these provinces almost always included large population groupings speaking different languages. To the Congress, in their days of opposition to the British, this system denied the right of the masses to be administered in a language they could understand, and accordingly the Party committed itself to replacing the British system of provinces with a new pattern of linguistic states – states, that is, redrawn to coincide with the chief linguistic areas in the country. No sooner were they themselves in the seat of power, however, than the Congress leadership began to appreciate the dangers to which the linguistic reorganization of the states (as the provinces were now known) could lead – to the encouragement of local nationalisms which must in the long run lead to rivalry between the states and slow down the "emotional integration"

Eclipse of a Kingdom

The state of Hyderabad in the centre of India was the largest and most prosperous in the sub-continent. The Nizam, a Muslim surrounded by Muslim advisers, ruled over a mainly Hindu population. Though by no means democratic, it was not a badly run state and the Nizam confidently assumed that he would be allowed to remain independent when the British left in 1947. The new state of India was equally determined that Hyderabad would become part of India.

Almost immediately after the British left, disorder broke out in the hitherto peaceful state with the Hindu Hyderabad Congress Party – aided in the first place by the Communists – organizing a mass civil disobedience movement that quickly led to widespread violence. Not to be outdone, the Muslims replied in kind, with members of their semi-military organization, the Razakers, vowing to "fight to the last to maintain the supremacy of the Muslim power." Talks between the Nizam and the Indian government to hammer out a compromise continued against a background of an economic blockade imposed by India. When the negotiations finally broke down, India solved the Hyderabad question by simply marching in her 1st Armoured Division in September, 1948. The Nizam acceded to the inevitable and was created a constitutional monarch with a handsome pension of over £400,000 a year.

Enthusiastic Muslims join the



Indian troops await the order to cross into Hyderabad. Soon they advanced into the princely state, meeting no resistance, and set up headquarters in the old British Residency.

Razaker organization, many supplied with rifles smuggled in over the Hyderabad border.

Muslim children proudly sport the Red Cross uniforms and weapons supplied by the Razakers. In one year, the ugly communal tensions of north India had overtaken this peaceful state.

of the new India. So the party leadership reversed itself; and the Indian government refused to take up the promised task of reorganizing the states on linguistic lines – Vallabhbhai Patel, the tough and astute Home Minister, reportedly declaring that he would listen to no more talk of such action for at least 20 years.

Even after Patel died, in 1950, the central government refused to give a hearing to the demands for reoganization of state boundaries. The most insistent of these demands came from the Telegu-speaking area of Madras state in the south and, faced with yet another refusal by New Delhi to consider their demands, a local Congressman declared he would fast until he died – or until the central government gave way. He confronted Gandhi's former comrades with the dilemma into which the Mahatma's fasts had so often put their British predecessors. They reacted at first as the British had usually done, with a demonstrative shrug; but unlike Gandhi, this protester actually died of starvation – which put a very different complexion on the situation. Riots burst out anew in all the towns of the Telegu area, inflamed now with the moral confidence that came from the martyrdom. The intensity of the riots was not even then abnormal for independent India, and it is possible that if the government had firmly suppressed them, and refused the Telegu demand once again, it might have put an end to the linguistic agitation. Nevertheless, Nehru yielded. He praised the martyr's resolution and granted the Telegu demand, dividing Madras to create a new state called Andhra. With this capitulation, the floodgates were open, and through the 1950s and 1960s the administrative map of India was redrawn to match linguistic agitation. Nevertheless, Nehru's government attempted to stem the tide: by holding together a bilingual Bombay state, and by denying the Sikhs the right to have a state whose language was Punjabi. In both cases the centre gave way in due course, under the impact or threat of agitation and riot.

It had to do the same when the 15-year grace period for the English language expired, and the southern states expressed their rejection of Hindi in intense rioting. The result was another compromise, which

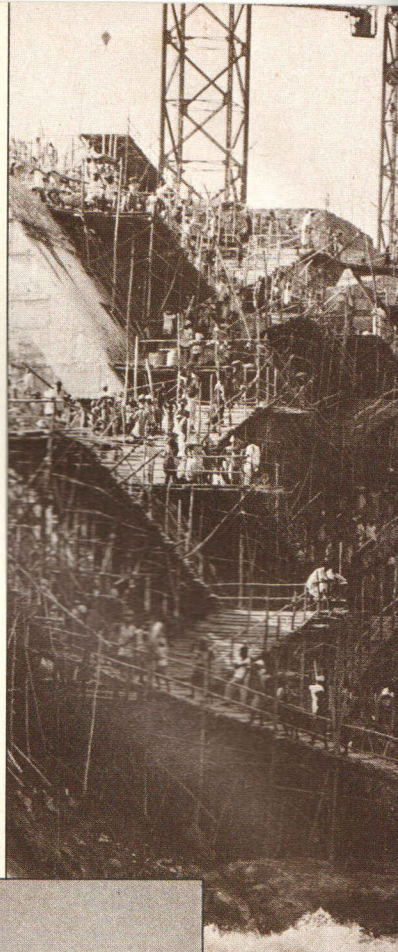
continued on p. 2420

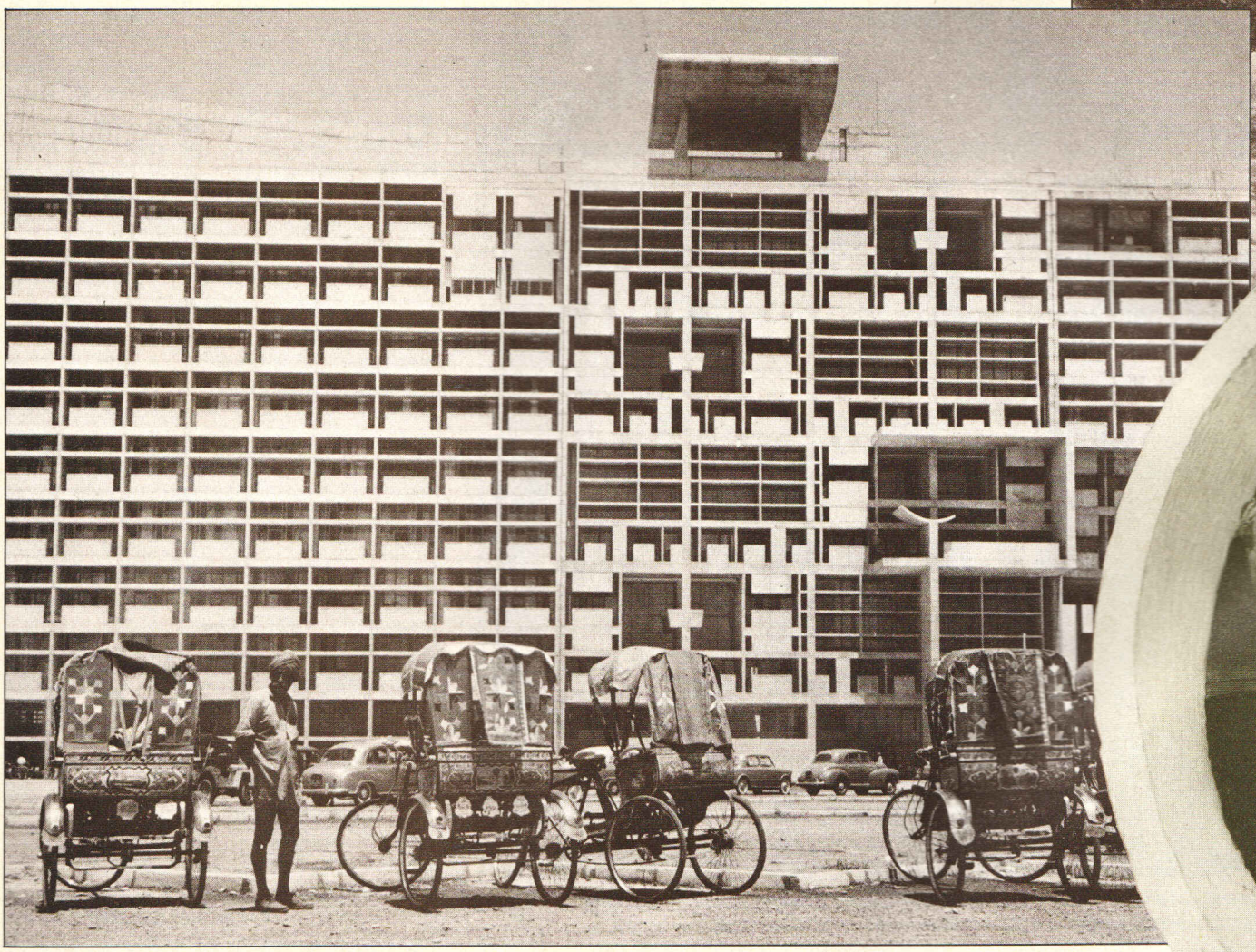
GROWING PAINS

Newly-independent India, eager to take her place in the modern world, at once committed vast resources to developing her own industries. Successive five-year plans laid down a rigid, and optimistic, national economic policy for the new country.

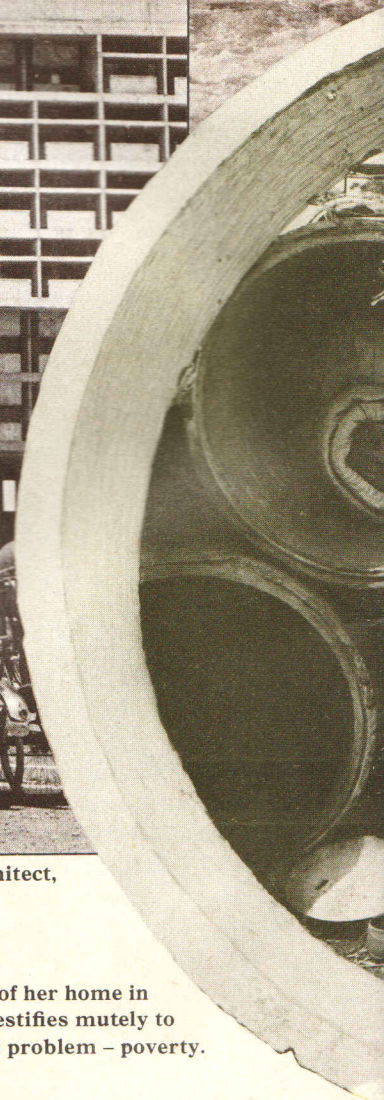
To construct the proposed irrigation projects, power schemes, steel plants and locomotive factories, the government decided to use manual labour wherever possible, both to provide employment and to avoid spending precious hard currency on expensive capital equipment. Whole new cities – outstandingly Chandigargh, the modernistic Punjabi capital that was to symbolize a new forward-looking India – were built by these methods. Even agriculture, it seemed, could be revolutionized: in the mid-1960s, the "green revolution," the development of new strains of wheat and rice that increased the yields four-fold, promised an end to the old problem of famine.

But India still seemed to be fighting a losing battle. Both an unforeseen population explosion of 2·15 per cent per annum and the inherent conservatism of traditional Hindu society meant that any benefits the masses might have gained from an economy expanding at only 3·8 per cent per annum disappeared almost without trace.





The new capital of the Punjab, Chandigargh, completed in 1953, was designed by the world-famous French architect, Le Corbusier. But, like several specially designed capitals of the world, it may become a dead city.



A young mother in front of her home in abandoned sewer-pipes testifies mutely to India's ever-present problem – poverty.

Thousands of Indians swarm over the timber scaffolding criss-crossing a huge dam in north India. Though the workers were enthusiastic, the project was late.

Fields of new strains of wheat – like the one shown below – and rice have changed the agricultural face of India, but do little more than keep pace with rising demand.

saw the 15 main regional languages of India taking on an importance which promised to prevent the establishment of Hindi or any other language as the official language to replace English. These concessions to linguistic patriotism had long-term implications for the unity of India. More immediately, they expressed a shift of political power from the centre to the states – and from the pan-Indian successor class to an entirely different class. This new power-class was rural, drawn from the rich peasants and landowners, and was almost entirely untouched by the Western influence which had produced the "brown sahibs" who took over from the departing British. "Aggressive, acquisitive, and not burdened by feelings of guilt towards the people they exploit" (as an Indian sociologist describes them), this rural élite was from the very beginning strong enough to prevent Nehru and others from implementing the land-reform measures to which they were firmly committed.

They made sure that in spite of all the legislation on the statute books, social life in the villages remained as it had always been, with the Untouchables and other poor peasants kept firmly and, if need be, brutally in their place. Congress had to bow to their wishes in domestic policies because this was the class with the ability to turn out and to a large extent direct the votes of the village masses. Its power has grown steadily, and in consequence the gap between the radical-sounding rhetoric of the Congress Party and the policies it actually implemented has widened. In 1972 it was said of Mrs Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister, that a division of labour had appeared between herself and the state chief ministers: she made the promises, they broke them. The same could have been said of her father, Nehru, although in his time the promises were more likely to have been buried than broken.

Universal suffrage, extended to the rural masses in a society which remained highly traditional in every other way, did not introduce explosive new forces, nor even slow-working dissolvents: it served only to strengthen and legitimize anew the authority of the dominant rural class. This in turn meant that the Congress and other political parties were drawn to serve the interests of that class, so that the pattern of political development in India since independence – as opposed to the policies articulated – has been in general strongly conservative.

On a visit to India in 1957, the Chinese Prime Minister, Chou En-lai (centre) celebrates the New Year with Nehru (left) on a train that was specially decorated for the purpose.

The Congress grip on power continued almost unshaken for 20 years after independence. With Nehru as its leader it was as if the party had a right to govern, and that confidence acted as a binding agent, holding its inevitable factions together through the 1950s and early 1960s. These were the years in which Nehru's policy of non-alignment earned India much prestige in the international community, and the reflected glow served Nehru and the Congress Party well at home. "It has been an amazing thing," Nehru reflected in the Lok Sabha at the end of 1959, "that India's voice has counted for so much in the councils of the world . . . since independence."

Through the years of the Cold War Nehru and India (almost identifiable in this regard) had stood apart and spoken powerfully as the advocate of a rational and civilized approach to the world's quarrels, of the use of the negotiating table as a universal lightning-conductor for international storms. As a result, at the end of the 1950s India occupied a unique position in the world's affairs, called on as referee, peace-maker or arbitrator from Gaza to the Congo and Korea, listened to with respect and courted for understanding. The first damaging slip from this stance of reason came with the annexation of Goa in 1961, an action that, however intransigent the Portuguese in retaining that colony, was a flagrant breach of the international principles which India had tirelessly preached to others.

At the same time India was refusing to negotiate another territorial dispute, this one with China, and although this earned India no international opprobrium at first – quite the opposite – in the long run her handling of this quarrel was even more damaging to her own image as a peaceable and reasonable power. This boundary question was one of the seamier bequests of the Raj. The British, for their own strategic reasons, had been nibbling at the territories of the Chinese empire which adjoined their own for a long time; and in spite of some attempts had failed to settle with China on a boundary line. The first international problem Nehru had to consider, in the first weeks after he took office as Prime Minister, arose from complaints from China that the parting British had snatched some of their territory – and events were to show that

Tibetan refugees cross into India in 1951 after the Chinese takeover of their country – a move that brought China right up to the very borders of independent India.

Nehru bungled his response. He proclaimed that the British boundary claims were the boundaries of free India. Most successor governments would probably have done the same. But from there he went on to dangerous ground when he decided that India would decline to negotiate her boundaries with China. It never seemed to have occurred to Nehru that the Chinese might resist such a unilateral approach and that their objections might be justified.

The Chinese Communists who took power in 1949 were not interested in expansion – unlike their imperial and nationalist predecessors. They decided to settle their boundaries as history had left them. They made no protest when, at the beginning of 1951, the Indians pushed Tibetan monk-officials out of their ancient administrative centre in Tawang, south of the British boundary claim known as the "McMahon Line," in the north-east; and a few months later Chou En-lai proposed negotiations to settle the boundary, stating that China had no territorial dispute with India. Neither side followed up the proposal on that occasion. But in 1954 India claimed a patch of Chinese territory which, although remote and desolate, was important to the Chinese as a link between Singkiang and Tibet. The Chinese had claimed that tract, the Aksai Chin plateau, since the 1880s (the British had never officially claimed it); and occupied it to such effect that in the mid-1950s they built a major road across it. Since the plateau was physically out of reach of the Indians at the time, they knew nothing of the road until the Chinese announced its completion. Then they protested. The Chinese again offered to negotiate a boundary settlement on the basis of the status quo. The Indians refused, demanding that China evacuate all territories claimed by India. The Chinese rejected that demand and when, in 1961, the Indians became physically able to do so, they began to move troops forward into territory claimed and occupied by China. Late in 1962 the Chinese struck back, broke up two Indian divisions and wiped out numerous frontier posts – and then withdrew to the positions they had occupied all along. Now it was Nehru and the Indians who were faced with a *fait accompli* and, humiliatingly, one they could do nothing whatever about.

For years the Indians, in skilful diplomatic language, were able to put the blame for this conflict on China. But even so, doubts about India's approach to the boundary problem and, after the débâcle, India's eager acceptance of military aid from the U.S.A. and other Western powers, permanently injured the Indian reputation as the leader of the non-aligned countries.

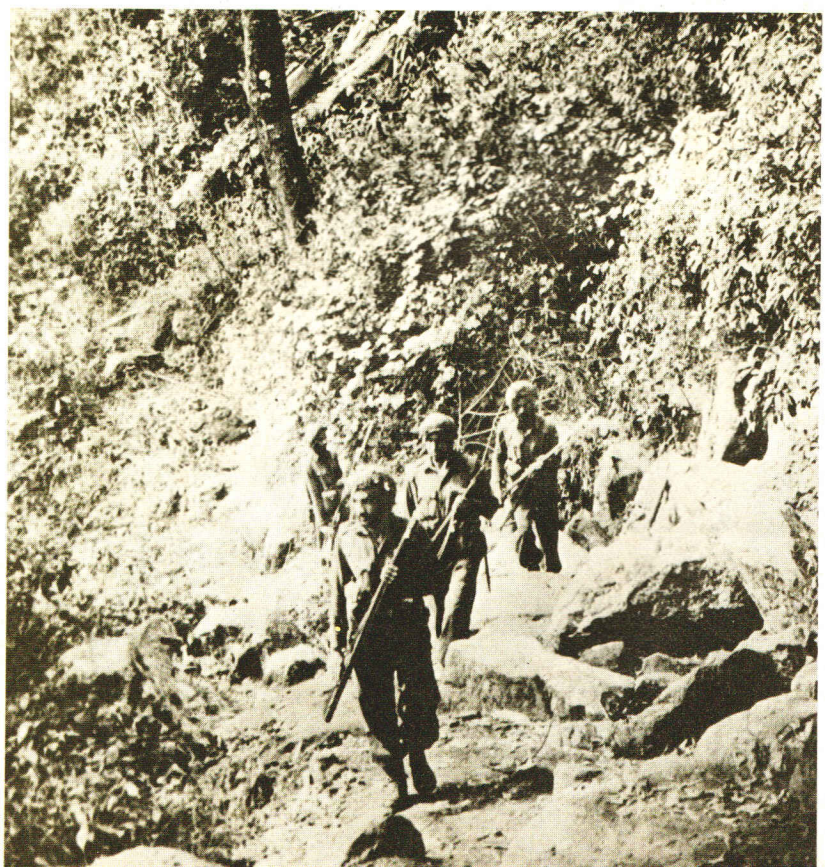
Nehru died in 1964, and the Congress Party smoothly negotiated the tricky problem of the succession, electing Lal Bahadur Shastri, a pragmatic, grass-roots politician, as Prime Minister. Shastri's brief tenure was dominated by a short, sharp war with Pakistan in September, 1965, brought on when the Pakistanis tried to shake Kashmir out of India's grip by infiltrating guerrillas into the valley. This attempt to precipitate an uprising failed, but it sparked off a classic escalation that climaxed in an all-out Indian attack on Pakistan's border near Lahore. Militarily the war was a draw, called off by U.N. intervention; but politically it was a defeat for Pakistan, one that intensified the forces that were to bring on that country's early dissolution

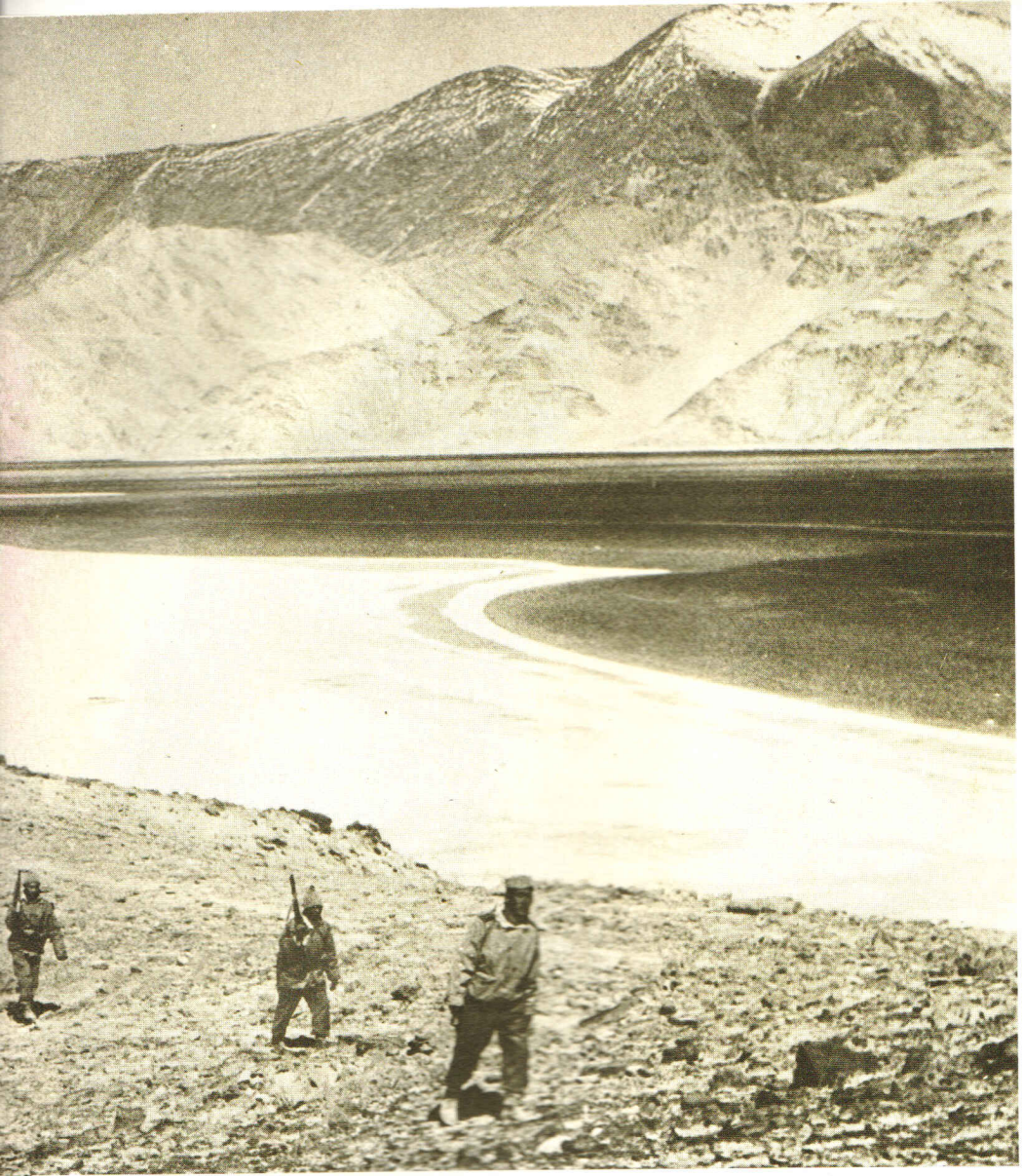
INDIA AT WAR

Though a constant advocate of peaceful negotiation, India has several times found herself at war with her neighbours, China and Pakistan.

Her first major war, with China in 1962, was caused largely by her own intransigence over the Chinese boundary question. The dispute had simmered since 1954 when India had claimed a tract of disputed territory, vital to China but inaccessible to India. In 1961, when the Indian Army was capable of advancing into the area known as the Aksai Chin plateau, they did so. Late in 1962 the Chinese struck back and astonished both the Indian Army and the world with the ease and speed of their advance. Having clearly demonstrated their military superiority, they withdrew to the positions they had previously held – a demonstration both of strength and restraint that was hurtful to India's pride as well as to her reputation as the world's peacemaker.

Crowds line up to enlist at a Calcutta government centre during the 1962 border war with China.





Wary Indian troops patrol the border with China after the Chinese had withdrawn to the positions they had declared were rightfully theirs all along.

Inhabitants of the Indian village of Dirang Dzong in the Himalayas (below) joyfully hold out white scarves, the traditional gift of friendship, to the Chinese soldiers as they return, mission accomplished, to China.

Indian troops march through a leafy Himalayan valley (left). They were to find themselves ill-equipped for the snow-bound mountains where they faced the Chinese.

Dispute over Kashmir

After India's humiliation in the Sino-Indian War, Pakistan took the opportunity to attempt an enforced conclusion to the continuing dispute over Kashmir.

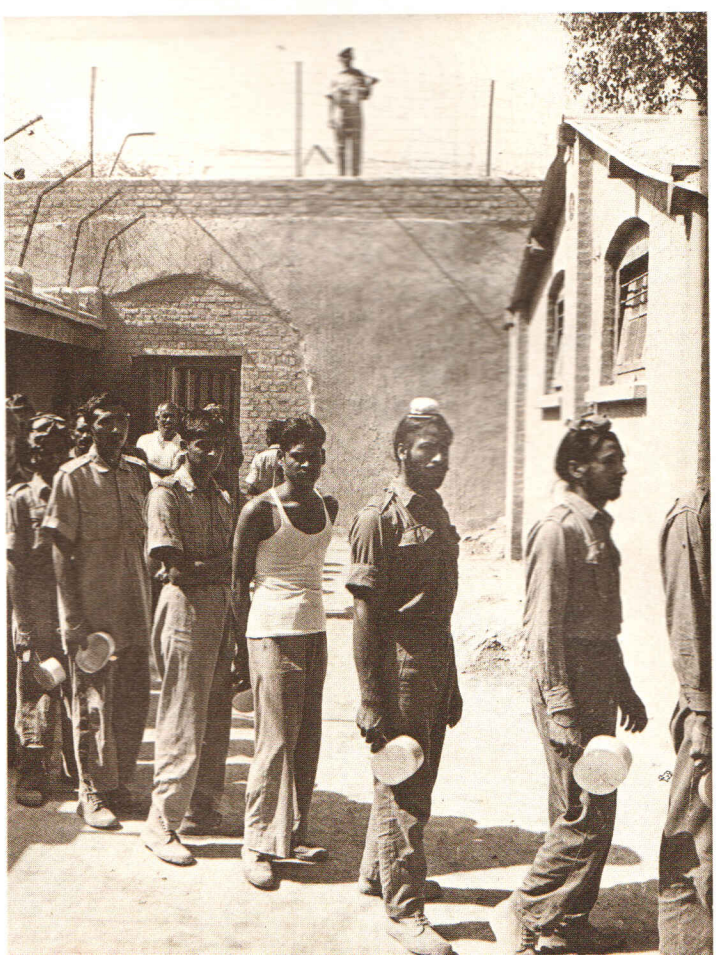
Ever since independence, Kashmir had soured relations between the two countries. The predominantly Muslim state had joined India, pending a promised plebiscite to decide which country the population wanted to join. The promise was never fulfilled. In 1949, a short war ended with India and Pakistan each occupying half of the territory.

In August, 1965, irregular troops from Azad Kashmir, the Pakistani-occupied half of the state, crossed the ceasefire line into Indian-held districts. Soon the two countries were at war. Indian troops invaded West Pakistan while the Pakistani Army marched into India.

The world's reaction was swift. Britain and the United States immediately cut off arms supplies to both sides, and the United Nations Security Council imposed a ceasefire. The Russian Prime Minister, Kosygin, invited the two sides to meet at Tashkent. There, in January, 1966, they signed an agreement to renounce the use of force, though neither side would agree to remove their troops and the question still poisons Indo-Pakistani relations.

Cheering Indians ride in one of the more bizarre spoils of the war – a Pakistani bus.

Dazed occupants search through ruins for their belongings in the Kashmir village of Batalu, after Pakistani infiltrators had shelled it.



Sikh prisoners, captured while fighting in the Indian Army, file dejectedly past a Pakistani guard on the wall of the Kohat Fort, on the Afghan boundary.

II. The Rule of Indira Gandhi

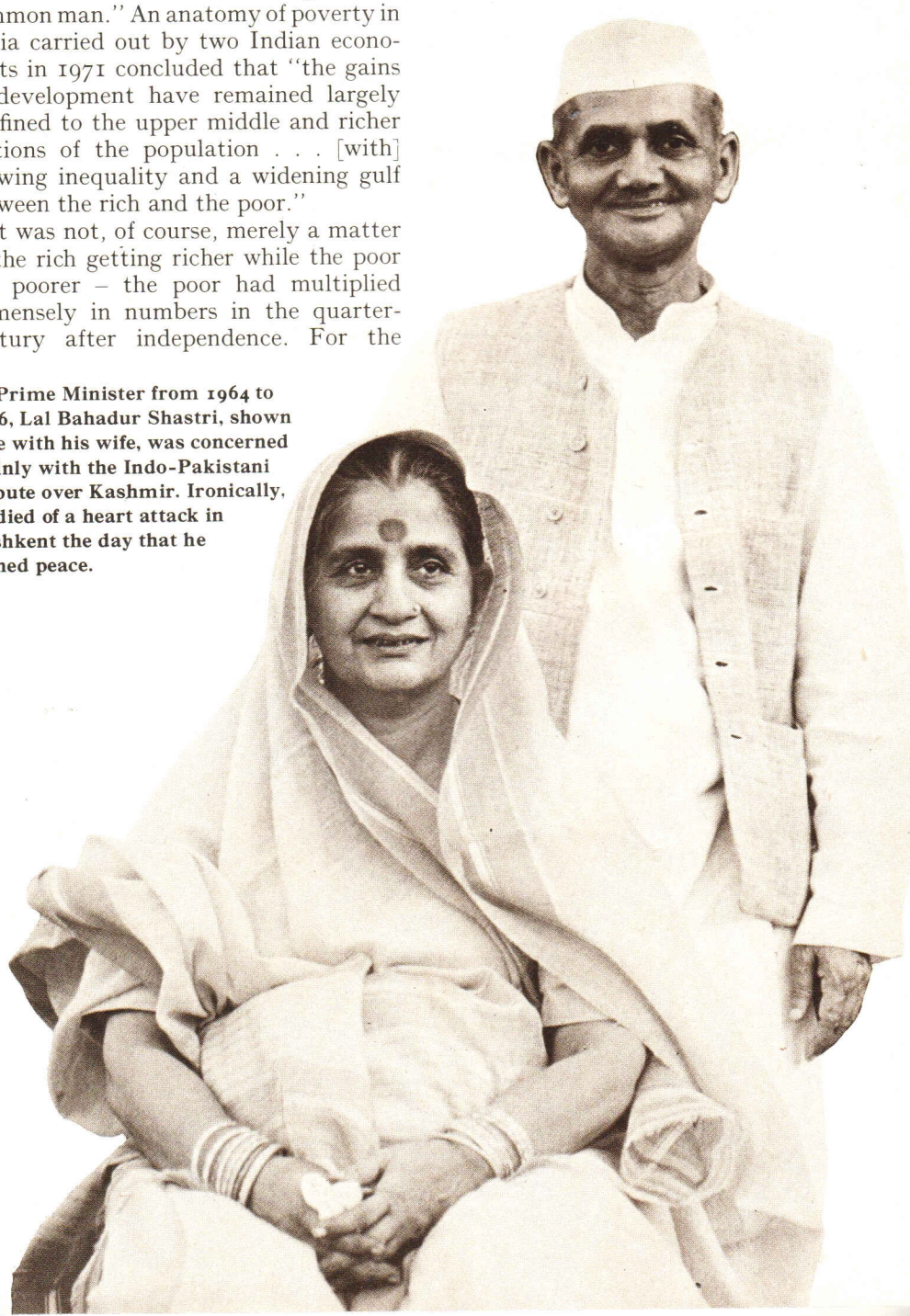
The unexpected death of Shastri at the Tashkent Conference which formalized the armistice of the 1965 war faced the Congress with another succession problem. They solved it smoothly again, but in a manner that pointed to the party's inner strains: they elected as leader Nehru's daughter Indira Gandhi, not because she had shown any outstanding qualities of leadership but simply because, as a Nehru, she was acceptable to a broad range of the Party's factions. (Her married name, incidentally, did not come from any relative of Mahatma Gandhi, but from a journalist named Feroze Gandhi, who died in 1960.) Indira Gandhi had been on the Congress Party Working Committee since 1955 and in 1957 she was elected party President, a post that had lost a lot of its early importance. She served as Minister of Information and Broadcasting under Shastri – again, not a post that would seem to lead directly to the premiership. This dynastic resolution of the leadership problem appears to be the most effective way in which parliamentary parties in south Asia can adapt to their social environment: with the brief exception of the Shastri interregnum – or regency – the Nehrus have been in power in India since the British left; in Ceylon, although there have been numerous governments of different parties and coalitions, all Prime Ministers have been drawn from only two families.

The importance of this dynastic leadership was demonstrated very clearly after the 1967 elections. Successive elections had indicated Congress's declining support among the masses and this came to a head in 1967. Congress lost power in several states as well as being sharply weakened at the centre. The party then began to fall apart, splitting in one state after another and in due course at the centre too. Mrs Indira Gandhi, with a remarkable exercise in personal leadership, more decisive and certainly more effective than her father had ever been, was able to reverse temporarily this trend in the elections she called in 1971. Her opponents' slogan was "Abolish Indira," and she cleverly turned this to her own advantage by introducing the slogan, "Abolish Poverty," thus appearing to place herself above party politics.

Her victory in 1971 renewed hopes among the sanguine – or the gullible – that something new was about to begin in Indian politics. After two years, however, it was already possible to see that, in fact, nothing had changed, that however sincere Indira Gandhi might be in the radical-sounding socialism that she had espoused, rather late in her political life, the realities of constitutional and political power in India would thwart her, as they had her father.

India's experiment with parliamentary democracy had demonstrably failed by the late 1960s, if it is to be judged by the expressed hopes which accompanied its introduction – that it would "promote the well-being, the standard of life, the comfort and the decent living of the common man." An anatomy of poverty in India carried out by two Indian economists in 1971 concluded that "the gains of development have remained largely confined to the upper middle and richer sections of the population . . . [with] growing inequality and a widening gulf between the rich and the poor."

It was not, of course, merely a matter of the rich getting richer while the poor got poorer – the poor had multiplied immensely in numbers in the quarter-century after independence. For the majority of the rural population, who could be counted as "poor peasants," the conditions of life had slowly but steadily worsened since independence. The undoubted economic achievements of independent India had not benefited them. Many excuses are found in India for this, many culprits are identified – the British, the Chinese, the C.I.A., "reactionaries," the monsoons. But it is hard to refute the conclusion of a Bengali writer, an administrator of wide experience both under the Raj and its successors. The triple legacy of the British, he wrote, "novel political and administrative principles, equally novel constitutional doctrines, and a Western educational system based on Western science" was dissipated because



As Prime Minister from 1964 to 1966, Lal Bahadur Shastri, shown here with his wife, was concerned mainly with the Indo-Pakistani dispute over Kashmir. Ironically, he died of a heart attack in Tashkent the day that he signed peace.

Indira Gandhi smiles broadly as she learns of her triumph in the 1966 Indian elections.

it was not only alien to India's native political and cultural heritage, but because it was actively repugnant to it.

India under the Nehrus has not reached, or even approached, the point at which it can sustain its own modernization. This failure has not only been a negative one, the consequence of grafting an irrelevant political system on to a traditional society wholly unadapted to it: but also positive – the failure has lain in the success of powerful and strongly entrenched classes and groups, whose self-interest lies in keeping life in India as it has always been. And these people have never been obliged to do more than pay lip-service to contemporary ideals of progress and social change.

As India moves into the 1970s, deepening poverty and mounting discontent are the prospects. As early as 1949 Nehru had bravely declared that India must solve her food problems within two years because the government would import no more food. "Let us make up our minds to live on the food we produce or die in the attempt," he cried. Countless thousands have died since then from slow starvation – in spite of continuing and often massive food imports – and the danger of famine when the rains fail is as acute as ever and growing worse. The "green revolution," brought about by the new high-yield strains of cereal crops introduced from the early 1960s, has gone some way to solve the food problem, but it is by no means the panacea its enthusiasts have claimed, and has in fact had some detrimental effects. By multiplying the wealth of the rich peasantry in some areas, at the cost of the already impoverished village mass, it has further sharpened social tensions. Increasingly these are finding expression in violence, and the forces of law and order are, almost without exception, aligned with the landlord interests. Sputterings of armed revolt occurred in the late 1960s and early 1970s in India and Pakistan. In Burma they had begun much earlier; while the Ceylon government faced an organized revolutionary uprising in 1971. Until 1973, all of these had been quickly suppressed with all necessary ruthlessness.

The first arena, however, in which the great strains building up in the Indian political system are likely to express themselves is in the relationship between the central government and the states. The conflict between states and centre inherent in the nature of nationalism on the sub-continent was given an initial thrust by the formation of linguistic states, and received an additional boost from Indira Gandhi's 1971 victory over Pakistan that led to the formation of Bangladesh. Time alone will tell whether Mrs Gandhi's political acumen will be enough to contain disintegrative pressures, and whether her successor, with no dynastic connections to give authority to his position, will be able to do as much as she has done.

In 1968 President Ayub of Pakistan ordered the celebration of his first decade in power, under the slogan "the Great Decade." The country had, in fact, changed in many ways from the chaotic conditions of its infancy, since he seized power. The political system evolved by his constitutional advisers had entrenched the executive (not, incidentally, himself) and although Ayub had had to retreat from his first intention to make political parties a permanently prohibited species in his model state, the reprieved parties were well under the government's control. His electoral system had served him well, and in 1965 he had been re-elected against what under any different arrangement would have been the powerful challenge of a front of opposition parties united under the presidential candidacy of the frail, aged sister of Jinnah (the dynastic principle again). Pakistan had become the favourite of the international aid-giving community. The country's gross national product had increased at a rate of nearly 6 per cent a year over the decade, and despite the abject and continuing poverty of the masses, almost all the economic signs pointed to a rapid rate of expansion.

A closer look was less cheering. An economist of the planning commission noted that during this decade, in which the growth of the cities had accelerated, Pakistan had spent only about £7,500,000 on buses; while about 15 times as much had been spent on private cars. As this disproportion showed, the benefits of

development – and of the foreign aid that made it possible – were going to the tiny dominant class. As well as social disparities, the process of development was widening regional disparities, notably those between the western and eastern wings of Pakistan. The difference between the average income of an East Pakistani and a West Pakistani had more than doubled during this "Great Decade" – to the disadvantage of the Bengali. The "political stability" which Ayub and the Army had brought Pakistan was no more than a lid clamped tight on a pot coming invisibly to the boil.

The unsuccessful 1965 war with India had lost Ayub the sympathy of many supporters, notably in the Army itself, and had sent his former Foreign Minister, Z.A.Bhutto, into active opposition. Pressure against the President and his system mounted rapidly, until it needed only a pin-prick to release it explosively. This came in 1969, when some students returning from a shopping trip to a smugglers' town on the North-West Frontier had their purchases confiscated by customs officers. They demonstrated, rioted, and were charged and shot at by police. From that small beginning student disaffection snowballed through the country, and the political opposition parties moved quickly to associate themselves with it. The cry everywhere was for "democracy," for the destruction of Ayub's presidential system with its indirect elections and the re-establishment of Westminster parliamentarianism. But the real force behind the upsurge of discontent came from regional demands. The former provinces of West Pakistan had chafed long enough under "Punjabi Raj": while in East Pakistan the Awami League (League of the Masses) under Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rahman had registered a six-point demand for provincial autonomy that, if put into effect, would have left no real powers to the central government.

The agitation against Ayub was violent and widespread, but could perhaps have been suppressed by a loyal Army. The ultimate sanction for Ayub's power lay where it always had, with the troops; but now the senior generals were unwilling to allow the Army to be used against civil disorders simply to keep Ayub in power. They held against him both the failures of the 1965 war and the fact that Ayub's family had been seen to enrich itself grossly during his period of power, joining that coterie of 20 or so families who enjoyed unchallenged the lion's share of the country's wealth.

Ayub had no choice but to leave by the same door as he had entered. He was forced to hand over power to his Commander-in-Chief, General Yahya Khan, and himself went into what was in effect house-arrest. Yahya declared martial law, and the agitation instantly died away. Yahya, however, pledged himself to restore parliamentary democracy and forthwith re-created the original provinces of the west wing, undoing the "one-unit scheme." General elections followed, and Z.A.Bhutto emerged as the dominant political figure of the west wing, with a People's Party committed to a populist programme of "Islamic socialism"; while in East Pakistan Sheikh Mujib's Awami League swept everything before it on the six-point programme for full provincial autonomy.

Yahya Khan was now in the same position that Lord Mountbatten had found himself in when he became last of the viceroys. He was committed to handing over power to a democratically elected government, but he meant to keep the country together. As before independence, the rival political groups were divided over the question of the powers of the central government *vis-à-vis* the provinces. Sheikh Mujib and the Bengalis demanded a centre so weak that it would have virtually no powers at all; Bhutto (and the Army) were determined to retain central power as the guarantor of national integrity. It was an impossible situation – and, unlike Mountbatten, Yahya did not have the option of "divide and quit." That he was ready to relinquish power was doubtful: that he would never agree to divide Pakistan was certain, and he declared that determination in every speech he made. But it was as if no one heard him in East Pakistan. The Bengalis were bent on independence; two decades of domination and what they saw as exploitation by West Pakistan were enough. Although Yahya and Mujib continued to negotiate until March, 1971, in that month East Pakistan achieved a de facto secession. The writ of the central government no longer ran there, the province was governed by Sheik Mujib and his Awami League, although they held no offices – and it was governed increasingly as if it were a completely independent country.

At the beginning of March Yahya ordered the commander of the troops in East Pakistan to restore the centre's authority there: the latter reported that the task was beyond the capacity of the

Yahya Khan, who took over from Ayub in 1969, ordered his troops to impose order in East Pakistan at any cost, a command that they attempted to obey to the letter.

General Ayub Khan, who seized power in 1958 with military backing, was at first popular among Pakistanis who were tired of the cynical jockeying for position of his democratic predecessors.

forces at his disposal. Yahya simply sacked him, and replaced him with a general ready to repress at whatever cost, Tikka Khan. On March 26 the Army struck, making students and the local police their first targets and attempting also to crush all popular resistance by the draconian severity of their initial actions. Sheikh Mujib, who for weeks had been calling on his Bengali compatriots to be ready to die rather than surrender, surrendered quietly to arrest. His companions of the Awami League fled to India. Against almost no resistance, the Army bloodily set about stamping out all political opposition in the province. It is likely that if it had been allowed to continue its operations unimpeded it would have succeeded, holding together something called Pakistan for a few more years – but at this point, India entered the dispute.

The possibility that East Pakistan would attempt secession one day had long been recognized in India. The prospect pleased some Indians. The Bengalis' secession would belatedly fulfil the expectations of those Indians who in 1947 had looked hopefully to the dissolution of Pakistan as the first step in the restoration of a greater, united India. But others saw the break-up of Pakistan as the start of the same process in India. Nevertheless, the circumstances in which East Pakistan's struggle for secession developed meant that all such Indian misgivings were forgotten. The opportunity to help end Pakistan was too open, too easy. Even before Yahya Khan began his attempt to suppress the separatist movement, India had actively started to support it by banning all Pakistani flights over Indian territory, to compound the supply and support problems already suffered by the Pakistanis.

Indian support for the Bengalis steadily increased and became more open through 1971. An irregular force was recruited and trained from among the huge flood of refugees that poured from East Pakistan into India to escape the operations of the Pakistan Army and, with Indian Army support and often leadership, was sent back into East Pakistan. With this the task of Pakistan became militarily impossible. The atrocities of the Army had generated intense public hatred among the Bengalis, and with Indian help in organizing this into active, armed resistance there was no way in which the Bengali independence movement could be suppressed. Even so, the situation could have dragged on for years, since Bengali irregulars, even with covert Indian support, could no more have defeated the Pakistan Army troops than they could have been crushed by them.

Sheik Mujib-ur-Rahman, shown here at a rally before the 1970 elections, was the focus for East Bengal's growing demands for greater autonomy.

BANGLADESH

Military squads charge forward through clouds of tear gas at Dacca University in East Pakistan. Students and intellectuals were their first target

On April 10, 1971, the 60 million people of East Pakistan declared themselves to be citizens of the Independent People's Republic of Bangladesh. It was the culmination of years of frustration at the way the central government in West Pakistan had seemed to ignore the problems of the East, one of the poorest areas on earth.

The war between the two halves of Pakistan was one of the bitterest ever fought on the sub-continent. The Pakistani Army carried out their orders to put down the rebellion with the utmost severity while Bengali refugees – estimated at 10 million – streamed over the border into India. By the end of the year, a new country – supported by the Indian Army – had been born.

Wives and children of Punjabi traders lie massacred by Bengalis.

Pakistani troops in Bangladesh wait for fresh orders before carrying on with their task of subduing the East Bengalis.

Refugees from the horrors of the Pakistani Army flee to India. There many of them were trained to return home and fight.

Aid from India

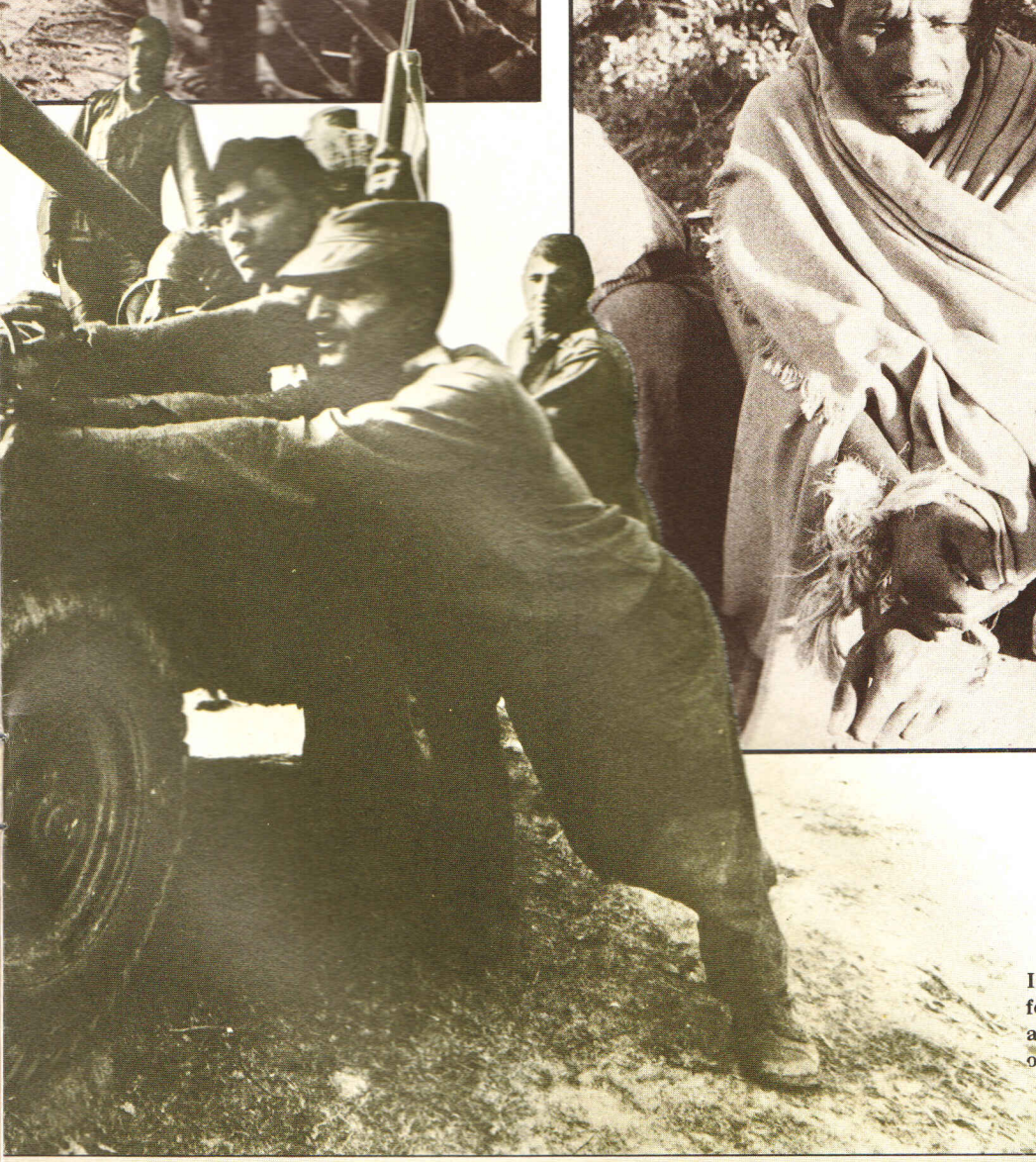
While the bitter fighting continued in Bangladesh, India was host, they claimed, to a staggering total of 10 million refugees – and faced a bill for feeding her guests of close to £500,000,000, more than the total amount of foreign aid she received in a year for the country's normal development programme. The words of one elderly refugee, suffering from both bayonet and bullet wounds, sums up what the Bengalis felt about the Pakistani Army. "Why have they done this to me? I am a Muslim. I have served the government faithfully all my life and this is my reward."

While the refugees were in India, the Indians provided training facilities for the guerrilla fighters, the Mukti Bahini, and supplied them with arms before sending them back to their own country. When Pakistan, goaded by India's opposition, attacked Indian air bases, India had no hesitation in invading Bangladesh in December. Within 14 days the war of independence was over.

Though the Mukti Bahini, shown above, were drawn first from the East Bengali fighters in the Pakistani Army, later they were joined by willing civilians of all ages.

Crowds of East Bengalis wait patiently for their cholera injections in an Indian refugee camp. Without these precautions, an epidemic would certainly have broken out.

Two Bengali collaborators, hands tied tightly together, cower under the guard of the Mukti Bahini, knowing that they could expect no mercy from their captors.



Indian soldiers pose confidently for a foreign cameraman shortly after Pakistan's attack on India had given them the opportunity to fight openly in Bangladesh.

Victory and its Aftermath

Once India had officially entered the war, the Pakistani Army collapsed. The war was over, and Bangladesh became an independent state. But the moment victory was assured, terrible reprisals started. A celebration rally in Dacca in January, 1972, like the one shown below, changed its mood abruptly when four bound prisoners, accused of raping Bengali women, were tortured in public for an hour before being bayoneted. It was not an isolated incident in the new reign of terror. It took weeks for the new government to persuade the vengeful Mukti Bahini to surrender their arms. A year and a half later, the country of Bangladesh was still struggling to rebuild an economy wrecked by the war, and thousands of prisoners held by both India and Pakistan had still not been repatriated.

III. A Continent in Collapse?

The Indian government had no intention of letting the military and political stalemate between the two wings of Pakistan drag on. The Indian Army had been preparing for war since April, 1971, and was ready for action by December. (The Indian Army commander, Field-Marshal Manekshaw, later congratulated Mrs Gandhi for the "cold judgement" that had given him enough time to "train, equip and deploy" the Indian Army for swift and decisive action.) Indian troops openly began to operate deep across the border into East Pakistan. Pushed into a trap, Yahya half-heartedly hit back at India in the west, thus giving India the excuse to invade East Pakistan openly and install in Dacca the *émigré* government of Bangladesh which they had just recognized in Calcutta. Once that was done, with the surrender of Pakistan's army in the east, India declared a unilateral ceasefire. Jinnah's Pakistan was dead, and two new countries had come into existence: Bangladesh and a truncated Pakistan.

The second breaking stage in Britain's ex-Empire had come under a quarter of a century after the first, and the second partition started shock waves that promised to accelerate the first. On his utter defeat, Yahya Khan stepped down (into arrest), handing over this time not to another general but to Bhutto – and left him with the same problem as he himself had faced, no less acute because the territory of Pakistan was now so reduced. The problem was again that of unity. Islam had proved a rope of sand when it came to holding the two diverse and separated wings of original Pakistan together; it could not serve any better to hold together the rest of Pakistan. The argument between Bhutto and his political rivals was the same as it had been between himself, Sheikh Mujib and General Yahya – the strength of the centre against the rights of the provinces – and the same as it had been between the Muslim League and the Congress in the days of Jinnah and Nehru. This was the constitutional expression of a profound political problem, the problem of nationality.

While Yahya Khan (right) looks on, Z.A.Bhutto is sworn in as President of Pakistan.

Fear of Hindu domination had given birth to Pakistan. Resentment at West Pakistani (that is, Punjabi) domination had given birth to Bangladesh. Now fear and resentment at the prospect of continued Punjabi domination in remainder-Pakistan gave birth to the "four-nation theory" – that Pakistan now consisted of the four nations composed of Punjabis, Pathans, Baluchis and Sindhis, and that any political unity between them could only be a loose one, some form of federation under a weak central government.

The disintegration of original Pakistan had released forces that from the outset threatened the existence of remainder-Pakistan. Bangladesh was a new kind of state in south Asia – or, in a longer perspective, an old kind, pre-British, pre-Mughal. Although Bangladesh does not include all Bengalis (another 50 million are in Indian Bengal) it includes only Bengalis: Bangladesh is fully a nation-state, state as well as nation. By its existence, and the circumstances of its birth, it throws out a severe challenge not only to remainder-Pakistan but to India, still aspiring to continue as a multi-national state but already threatened by the growth of regional and linguistic nationalisms. The continued existence of the two states of India and Pakistan depends almost entirely on the ability of their respective governments to keep the demands of the states in check. The challenge is more developed in Pakistan. But in both countries, mounting economic stresses intensify the problem of unity.

Late-Victorian visiting dress, 1901

Bell