

# GALLIO IN KASHMIR

By PATRICK LACEY

"Kashmir, a land where, though nature is kind and generous, man has for centuries most foully and cruelly oppressed man."  
—Mulk Raj Anand.

"And Gallio cared for none of these things."—Acts xviii, 17.

TO remember all that he saw in Jammu eighteen years ago and all that his companion had seen and heard in other parts of Kashmir, is to think that Gallio's obtuse indifference was not unlike the British Government's attitude to the recent and present sequel.

Gallio was the diminutive mule whose travels with me in February, 1932, took us one day to the narrow crest of a lofty ridge from which we had an astonishing view. Northwards lay the gracious wonder of Jammu's green hills, woodlands and ravines, weaving themselves softly up and away to the gleaming majesty of the Kashmir Himalaya. Then, by a mere turn of the head, we could look southward over hundreds of miles of dead-flat, sun-parched, arid Punjab plain. We were seeing one reason for the sharpness of today's dispute between India and Pakistan for possession of Kashmir. The Punjab desert looks to its watershed for salvation. This can be denied it, and Pakistan's economy prejudiced, if India is to have and withhold its *aqua vitae*.

We had just left a Brigade Headquarters of the Kashmir State Forces, commanded by a Hindu Colonel of the same caste as the Maharaja but of very different and rare quality. Like us, he was there because some of Kashmir's huge Moslem majority had decided that for a couple of weeks, anyhow, they would not be "foully and cruelly oppressed by man." The Colonel was mocking a directive from the Kashmir Government, which he meant to ignore. It told him to kill as many Moslems as possible. He was instructed also to rush about the hills and valleys, reconverting "forcibly converted" Hindus. (Of these we had met two during our long tour: they pointed indignantly to neat partings of their moustaches as "proof" of their "forcible conversion.")

These were further omens. Sixteen years later, on August 10, 1948, an article in *The Times* newspaper told how other hands had implemented our Colonel's first commandment. It mentioned events in Jammu a couple of months after India and Pakistan had achieved separate sovereignty. It said that "237,000 Muslims were systematically exterminated—unless they escaped to Pakistan along the border—by all the forces of the Dogra State, headed by the Maharaja in person and aided by Hindus and Sikhs. This happened in October, 1947, five days before the first Pathan invasion and nine days before the Maharaja's accession to India." (My italics.)

Those massacred Moslems had been not British-Indian subjects but British-protected subjects according to a century old agreement. Our Labour Government tore up the agreement without consulting them. The slaughtered were not making vicarious atonement for the Pathan "aggression" of which India complains: it was the other way about. The Maharaja escaped the Pathans' rough justice by accepting India's pressing invitation to unite his State with her. For this his sole say-so sufficed, technically, and gave India her technical pretext for armed intervention against the Pathans. Pakistan retaliated, claiming both moral right and enlightened self-interest. Ever since then Britain has been docilely watching the United Nations' efforts to prevent open war between the two twin sisters of her Commonwealth.

She has an inescapable historical responsibility for the origin of the dispute. For five centuries the main part of Kashmir, as distinct from Jammu, had Moslem rulers. In 1819 it was conquered by the great Sikh warrior Ranjit Singh. The British evicted him in 1846, and promptly sold Kashmir (a country nearly as large as their own) to the founder of its present Hindu dynasty. The price they accepted was just over £500,000, and in token of Britain's continuing suzerainty the Crown was to receive annually "one horse, twelve perfect shawl goats and three pairs of Kashmir shawls." This "rent" was later reduced to five shawls. Payment and receipt of it implied Britain's right and duty to safeguard Kashmir's people from gross misrule. Her intervention in the Kashmir troubles of 1931-32 was moderately successful. There is no evidence that she did anything whatsoever to forestall the tragedies beginning in October, 1947. On the contrary, the Maharaja was insistently left to declare his own choice in accordance with his personal whim. (The massacre in Jammu is presum-

ably considered one of its legitimate manifestations, for he still has the highest British honours ever bestowed on Indian Princes.)

Our present Government's responsibility derives also from its sponsorship of the Great Divide of August 15, 1947. The Moslems were convinced there was no future for them if the Indian sub-continent's independence as a single whole were to mean their subjection to Hindu instead of British rule. Few things had done more to strengthen this belief than their treatment in Kashmir and the fury against them of India's Hindu newspapers when they had briefly and hopelessly resisted that maltreating. India was accordingly partitioned so that her peoples, not merely her geographical expression, might be self-governing. Hindu and Moslem was each to have a domain he could call his own. The two parties agreed on a provisional dividing line for what was called British India. On the valid ground that Hyderabad had an overwhelming Hindu majority, India was going to annex it from its Moslem Nizam by undeclared war. On precisely analogous grounds, Kashmir should have gone to Pakistan. India's claim to the State violates the basic principles of the agreement whereby India no less than Pakistan acquired separate sovereign independence.

The British Government's duty as a party to that agreement has been plain from the moment when the quarrel over Kashmir began. Even if, at the outset, it would not or could not do anything for the Kashmiris whom it was morally bound to protect, it had an unique historical right and obligation to give India, Pakistan and the United Nations a definite lead when the dispute was taken to Lake Success. It could and should have given at least a straightforward statement of the plain facts. It has said as little as it has done.

Britain cannot expect to keep her reduced place in the Commonwealth she founded if her Ministers and delegates wash their hands altogether of a dispute within the Commonwealth that prejudices the security of its frontiers. This prejudice remains at a highly vulnerable point as long as India and Pakistan are left to squander energy in a cold and sometimes hot war against each other for command of Russia's obvious gateway into both countries alike. Perhaps it is too late or unfashionable to insist on first principles—the principles of the Indo-Pakistan partition agreement of two and a half years ago. Vainer still is talk about a plebiscite among Kashmiris of whom 95 per cent. are illiterate and subject to awe-inspiring pressure. But if first principles must be compromised, we can and should initiate the strongest pressure by the United Nations, on both parties, to come to the next-best terms within a stated time. They share with each other, and with us, an acute interest in the security of Kashmir. Is it inconceivable that they can be persuaded to share the State's defence and oversight of its administration? I have friends, senior officers in both their armies, who were close friends before the Great Divide and hated the splitting of the old Indian Army. It is credibly reported that when Indian and Pakistan units were supposed to be fighting each other by political order, in Kashmir's glorious scenery, one side would sometimes warn the other and beg it to take cover when it was about to shoot. If such men and such a spirit were decently and firmly exploited by the United Nations, the result in Kashmir might be the beginning of still better things.

## OUR FEATHERED FRIENDS—III

A veterinary surgeon attributed the lameness of a swan to gout.—DAILY PAPER.

A swan who found it hard to get about  
Was diagnosed as suffering from gout.  
And now a bird that apes the ways of men  
Is classified as a "three-bottle pen."

A. S. M. P.

## CHANGE OF STANCE

Mr. Bevin held cotton wool to his nose and sniffed it on his visit to the Holy Tooth.—NEWS ITEM.

Cotton wool to the nose may occasion surprise;  
We're familiar, of course, with wool over the eyes.  
BERTHA JORDAN.