

THE TRUTH ABOUT KASHMIR

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WHATEVER may be the eventual outcome of Sir Owen Dixon's good offices on behalf of the United Nations in Kashmir, one fact stands out: that both of these two great States, the genuine dominion of Pakistan and the semi-dominion of Hindustan or India, are compelled to tear the guts out of their solvency. That, in addition to the "freeing of India" to the tune of massacres far vaster than any yet seen in the world, is another cruel blot on the record of our Cabinet and their Governor-General. To have deserted our trust before having settled the fate of this most beautiful and popular of all the world's holiday resorts is beyond all understanding, yet it was so.

Whatever may be the true story of all that happened in Jammu and Kashmir in 1947, and all that has transpired since—both sides are masters of propaganda—the British public at large has never had that true story, still less the geographical and racial side of this disputed territory. Here it is in brief. First it must be realised that the territory is the State of Jammu and Kashmir, of which the ruler is Major-General Sir Hari Singh, a Dogra Rajput, who was during the war a member of military councils in London. When Ahmed Shah, the Afghan world-stormer and founder of the short-lived Duranni Empire, conquered Northern India in 1761, Kashmir fell also into his ruthless hands. When eventually Ranjit Singh's genius for leadership organised the Sikhs, expelled the Afghans back over the Indus and even took the trans-Indus province from them in 1819, Kashmir became a Sikh province. It was, naturally, fairly ruthlessly administered under the great raj of Ranjit Singh.

His State, however, was but a one-man phenomenon. On his death, murder and evil unbelievable arose at his capital of Lahore. In 1845 his semi-European army, in the hands of a Bolshevik system of committees, as a measure of their own security by their own Government, was driven on to the bayonets of Sir Hugh Gough, in a causeless invasion of British India. After the fierce battles of the "First Sikh War," the British entered Lahore and dictated peace. It was decided to separate the recently acquired Moslem Kashmir from the Sikh State to which it did not belong. The invading Sikh Army had done much damage in India and an indemnity was demanded. This the Sikh Government could not pay. A leading personage in those days, much involved with his brothers in Sikh politics, was one Gulab Singh, the Dogra Rajput Rajah of Jammu. He had a largish army, semi-European in training. With him, during the Afghan War, we had had considerable doings; we had even offered him Jellalabad and the territory of the Khyber. He had held aloof during the Sikh inroad, and had earned our gratitude. He now offered to pay the default in the Sikh indemnity if we would give him the rule of the forfeit province of Kashmir. This was accepted, and he became the Maharajah of Jammu and Kashmir, which consists of the beautiful valley of Kashmir and the mountains beyond extending to the borders of China, separated from Jammu and Poonch by the great snowy range of the Pir Panjals, 15,000 feet, running south-east and north-west. The country on the south side, lower hills, is practically part of the Punjab in geography and ethnology. Kashmir itself, with a Hindu and Buddhist population, was conquered by Moslem invaders and converted to Islam many centuries ago and was part of the Mogul realm of Delhi.

It cannot be said that Gulab Singh ruled Kashmir well, which brings us to the real "nigger in the woodpile" today, viz., the existence in Serinagar, the capital, of a considerable Brahmin population known as the pundits, who for some obscure reason have escaped conversion to Islam. The pundits have the keenest brains in India. Pandit Nehru himself is one of them, and what to do with his fellow pundits in Kashmir if that country goes to Pakistan is a problem, especially as Lord Mountbatten's measures have allowed of mass massacre as the solution of mixed antagonistic populations.

Gulab Singh being a Hindu, his rule was a Hindu one, and most of his officials were Hindu, and pundits at that, in Kashmir itself. Under them, the peaceful Moslems of Kashmir fared ill, until the British Government, fifty years ago, insisted on sending Walter Lawrence (so well known in later years in London as Sir Walter) to remodel entirely the system of agrarian taxation and administration, which he did, to the great satisfaction as well as to the advantage of the State.

In the cis-mountain province of Jammu and Poonch, Hindu and Moslems were mingled, mostly of the same ethnological stock, actually admitting cousinship and having the same tribal names. The word "Dogra" means the country of the Do-gar (two lakes). In Poonch, however, Moslem peasantry of the Sudan tribe are in excess, and of late years have in large numbers served with credit in the British Army. To all of these, Lawrence's settlement brought prosperity and content.

Before coming to this modern tragedy, a word on our friends the Russ, who impinged on the Kashmir frontiers. In the early 'nineties, Russian officers and Cossacks were trickling from the Pamirs into Kashmir territory, both by the Baroghil pass and by the Dora into Chitral, and all the Indian bazaars, then full of Russian gold, were much exercised. To combat these adventurers, the Kashmir control over their khanates beyond Gilgit was tightened up and the Kashmir Army (Hindu and Moslem Dogras) was reorganised and trained by British military missions (*quorum pars fui*). Hindu and Moslem served together in the happiest accord.

Then came the hooded horror, which destroyed the age-old policy of Hindu-Moslem good will that the British rule had so long striven for. Mr. Lloyd George despatched Edwin Montagu, a politician of a race in no repute in the East, to frame an advanced policy for India. The extremely divergent peoples of India made this an almost impossible task, but when Mr. Montagu produced a Parliamentary scheme based on the ballot box, he threw an apple of discord into a peaceful scene. The fat boiled into the fire. Never would the once powerful Moslem community be content to be dominated by a Hindu ballot-box majority. Discord and hatred arose, enhanced as the years rolled on by the anti-Moslem outlook of the Congress majorities in the provincial Governments. The coping-stone to all this was the incredible Attlee-Mountbatten massacres of 1947, massacres beside which those of Hulagu and Genghis Khan pale. However, long before this, the animosity between Hindu and Moslem spread from India to the province of Jammu, when the worst massacres of 1947 occurred. In Poonch, viz., western Jammu, the peasantry are largely Moslems, and they had furnished many soldiers for our armies in 1939-45. Feeling was intense, and units to fight the Hindu easy to raise.

It is, thus, easy to see how the foolish and evil haste in separating the two Indias led to the impasse which has now arisen. The massacred thousands—children, mothers, ancients—lie in their graves and must be allowed to lie there.

Lord Mountbatten has recently unveiled a memorial to his soldiers dead in Burma, but there is room for another, to those British officers, aye and ladies, murdered in the attempt to save Indian lives in the holocaust.

HONOUR THE WARRIOR

For Ernest Graham-Little

Faithful in service, neither private grief
Nor loneliness in battle bore him down.
Midst unbelievers, steadfast in belief,
Shining beyond the Cross he saw the Crown.
Trumpets, now utter! Voices, now ascend!
Honour the warrior, as we mourn the friend.

KENSAL GREEN