

# Weekly Notes

## Nature Spins the Plot

NEWS from Pakistan other than official is hard to get and harder to interpret. The temptation to speculate, in the absence of reliable information, on the basis of what little one knows or imagines, largely of the past, should therefore be resisted. For such speculation is inevitably coloured by the predictions of the individual and far from clearing the air, it obscures and misleads. The basic data are limited though they are not unimportant. One is the geographical separation of the two wings and the distribution of population, resources, burdens and benefits which, under the best of circumstances, would make reconciliation of differences difficult. Federation calls for just this and it is highly unstable when it is attained, not on a clear perception and careful balancing of costs and benefits, but on the call of religion which cannot survive for long the impact of reality.

The situation in Pakistan is, therefore, fluid and inherently unstable. This is understandable. If nationhood springs from the desire to remain together, it has to be reinforced by a common past to be a strong enough binding force. Statehood demands something different, contiguity of land area, for instance. East Bengal has a population which is more than 50 per cent of the total, though it has only a third of the area of Pakistan; it contributes much more in taxation than it gets back in benefits; similarly in foreign trade, it exports much more than it imports and the excess of exports goes to pay for the import surplus habitually drawn by the West. Even if one does not put the uncharitable interpretation that the peasants of East Bengal pay in taxes and exports for the maintenance of West Pakistan, equality in the shares of benefits is hard to establish, notwithstanding the researches of a Fulbright scholar presently engaged in developing the theory that comparisons are not possible, because a large part of the contributions in taxes and exports goes to defence and maintenance of foreign relations, the benefits of which are shared equally between East and West. Add to this the differences in language, mode of life, food habits and climate, unequal development and pull in political affairs. The things that affect day to day life matter

much more after a time than big dreams. What pinches East Bengal most today is the domination of non-Bengalis in the administration and the disastrous fall in the price of jute, which means shrunken money incomes.

That the new Pakistan Premier should be from East Bengal is a recognition of the above. Whether it is an adequate recognition or not, will depend on the economic policies and the political programme of the new Government. The new Prime Minister is as popular in East Bengal as Nural Amin is bated. But the latter has the MLAs in his pocket which the former has not.

Super-imposed on the children of the soil and economic life of West Pakistan, is the burden of refugees and the political leadership and personnel of the administration largely drawn from outside. The complexion of religious fanaticism is itself a matter of geography and past history. Forces that lie dormant can be readily worked up and brought to the surface with consequences quite unsuspected by those who play them up. For a while the cry of Islam may unite but agitation against Ahmediyas can spread of other groups. There is the old conflict between Shias and Sunnis, the former largely owning property and the latter, poor and more fanatical. There are deeper layers of stratification, eg, Momins of East Bengal, numbering some: 40 lakhs, who have been King low for some time but had been active in their hostility to the Muslim League not so long ago.

These are the ingredients. What sort of broth will nature and man cook from these? Speculation from a distance can prepare various broths for the delectation of gullible people who are not too fastidious about what they swallow.

The one hopeful development is the desire of the new Premier to

come to a complete understanding with India and eventually to discuss proposals for the joint defence of the two countries. The right man to present them is Abdul Gaffar Khan and if the gesture were really sincere, it should have followed the release of this martyr for freedom, instead of the latter being made a subject of bargaining. The Indian Finance Minister had anticipated the proposal of joint defence and had referred to such a possibility, though in a very guarded manner. But of all the speculations, the most disturbing is the one that Khwaja Nazimuddin had been removed by the same unseen hand that put Mohammed Ali in his place. One should not read too much into the reports in the American papers nor forget either that what little contact the two countries have been able to maintain has also been possible only through its mediacy.

## Employment Exchange and Unemployment

BARRING Ministers of the Cabinet no one should be allowed to quote or use the statistics of employment collected by the Employment Exchange. An exception has to be made for busy Ministers who finding them handy, cannot be prevented from using them any way. The aid of these statistics of employment can be invoked to prove a point, as the Finance Minister did some months ago in support of his statement that the employment situation was satisfactory. Ministers, however, are immune and cannot be hoisted with their own petard, not even by enterprising copywriters of their own or other ministries.

Employment exchange returns do not prove or disprove anything. They give little indication of the employment situation in the country. Since it was pointed out in

	Monthly registration	No placed in employment	No on register at the end of the month	No of vacancies outstanding at the end of the period
1952:				
October	.. 130,459	29,159	413,498	26,106
November	.. 127,996	27,101	420,722	25,672
December	.. 126,745	25,135	437,571	22,783
1953:				
January	.. 114,617	20,378	NA	25,912
February	.. 99,352	18,013	NA	23,172
March	.. 110,293	17,785	NA	NA

these columns that they cannot be quoted to prove the employment situation was improving, it is only fair to enter a caveat that they cannot be quoted to prove the opposite. What has happened, after all, in March that can be made into a story? There was for the first time in six months a small increase in the number of job opportunities notified to Employment Exchanges. Assuming it was so, what does it mean?

The definitions and explanatory notes to the Monthly Abstract of Statistics issued by the Central Statistical Organisation says that "Number of vacancies outstanding relates to vacancies that have been notified to Employment Exchanges but are not known to have been filled at the end of the month. It includes vacancies against which names of suitable applicants had been recommended to employers, the result of the recommendations, however, not being known. All the vacancies shown, are therefore, not necessarily unfilled".

Perhaps more significant is the number placed in employment during the month. This has been going down since October last. (Table on page 508).

Assuming, however, that the gap between vacancies for which suitable applicants have been recommended and those that might have been filled up in the meanwhile does not vary significantly from month to month, it is possible that more vacancies are being notified to the Employment Exchanges because the Directorate General of Re-settlement and Employment had woken up and become very active all of a sudden. If more private employers are approached and systematically badgered, they may notify more of the vacancies to the Exchanges than they would do in the normal course. Perhaps this drive has slackened of late, due to cuts in the grants to this department on grounds of economy or change of personnel and hence, the decline in vacancies. Conversely, perhaps some one was pulled up somewhere and the Directorate became more active. And more job opportunities were reported to the Employment Exchange in March.

The most deceptive item in these statistics is the number of unemployed on the live register. One would think that this number is swollen month by month by the difference between the monthly registrations and placings, in which case the progressive total on the live register

would be mounting at an alarming rate. For monthly registrations exceed placings by a lakh every month on an average. But the numbers of the unemployed at the end of the month shows no such violent change. It continues to grow but at a slow rate. This is because the total is little affected by the excess of monthly registration over employment. This total is "the number of persons on the register who are known to be still available for employment on the dates specified. The live register is constantly scrutinized with a view to eliminate all those who have ceased to seek employment"—'from sheer despair or resignation? What happens to them then—a lakh a month—is a better story, from the human angle, for the copy writers to cover.

Advertisement copy writers have taken the place of philosophers these days in tutoring men's minds. This is what Aldous Huxley said about the USA. But as agencies of instructing the public are expanded and multiplied, the statement is becoming applicable to other countries also. This is perhaps, inevitable because in the process of popularisation truth gets diluted. HUT adulteration can still be prevented with a little vigilance.

"The Government of India has, however, set up a Planning Commission to formulate a comprehensive plan for the most effective and balanced utilization of the resources of the country. The preparation of such a plan will include an assessment of the extent of unemployment, actual and threatened, the devising of measures to avoid unemployment and exploration of the possibilities of extending the opportunities for employment to urban and rural areas". -Problems of Unemployment and Inflation 1950-51 United Nations.

The Planning Commission has no knowledge of any such plan.

## The Two Worlds

BY signing the Planning Report, Shri Chintaman Deshmukh had associated himself generally with the recommendation—or is it a directive?—that so much more raw jute should be grown. But when the same Shri Chintaman addressed the House of the People, he was assailed with doubt about the wisdom of the measure. Though he did not say so in so many words, it comes to the same thing. If cultivators are to grow more jute, they should be given a price which covers their cost. But if this price is paid, where are we to sell the goods manufactured out of that jute? It is not within our power to sell all those jute. So says the Finance Minister now.

It would be more charitable to assume that Shri Chintaman had no doubts on this score when he signed the Five-Year Plan. Otherwise, being the kindly man that he is, he would not have been a party to leading the poor jute growers up the garden path and encouraging them to grow something on which they would not be able to recover cost. Shri Chintaman is modest enough to disclaim being *Sthitha Pragna* he is only on the way to it. but Shankara is just as much in his blood as in that of his fellow country men. Living in two worlds is a feat which he can perform with the same effortless ease and dexterity with which he can compose verses in Sanskrit.

## In Plato's Garden

"Jo ideas hain aur jo technique ham un men exchange ho . . .

" Music ki zabau ck universal zaban hai . . .

In men apas men co-operation ho, aur co-ordination ho . . .

" Ek bara field lite rature ka lijyic "

—From Maulana Azad's speech at the inauguration of the Sangeet Natak Akadami [sic] in Parliament House.

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