

Indo-Pak Borders

THE lighting on the borders between India and East Pakistan in the Cooch-Bihar district and elsewhere has served to remind us once again of the unsettled problem of India's relations with Pakistan. The problem is never really forgotten for long; almost every other month there is an incident along either the cease-fire line in Jammu-Kashmir or the borders between India and the two parts of Pakistan. Then there are the outbursts against India from Pakistan's politicians and Ayub Khan, which take place with a certain regularity and without any specific provocation from the Indian side. (Whatever India's other faults in her relations with Pakistan, her ruling politicians do refrain from similar cold war propaganda).

Providence, of course, could not possibly have been more unkind to the possibility of sustained happy relations between the two countries. One doubts if any other two religions have kept up a mutual animosity for as many centuries as have Hinduism and Islam. (Incidentally, this historical conflict also moulded certain persons into some of the world's greatest humanist philosophers; one thinks here of names like Kabir, Nanak and Akbar.) Then, when the Partition did come, there were the nettles of Hyderabad and Kashmir: Hyderabad got settled somehow; but Kashmir has continued to sting the sides of both countries. As if this was not enough, the principle of partition according to the majority community has left along the border, particularly in the East, a number of little islands of one country inside the other.

One such enclave is Dahagram. It is a little (Muslim-majority) Pakistan about 150 yards inside the Indian territory. The Muslims *here* naturally need to communicate with Pakistan mainland, just as the Hindus of a little Indian enclave inside Pakistan need to communicate with the Indian mainland. The rules, regulations and procedures for this movement: of men and to some extent materials—have not yet been settled between the two countries. The present trouble in Dahagram started when the West Bengal Government, took some steps to prevent what Swaran Singh described as "smuggling and the illegal movement of Pakistani nationals". These steps were promptly condemned by the Pakistan press and radio as an economic blockade of Dahagram. Then the two sides started shooting about midnight of March 13. This led to the Hindus from Dahagram fleeing into

India and the Muslims into Pakistan; large numbers of residents soon turned into evacuees.

When the trouble in Dahagram started, there was ready speculation in each country about the other country's hidden motives. According to Bhutto of Pakistan, India had started border trouble in order to "side-track world opinion from Kashmir" where there was a "good deal of trouble... and the people were trying to liberate themselves". On the Indian side there were suggestions in the Parliament and the press that the renewal of border lighting was in some way connected with Aynb Khan's recent visit to China. Though everything is connected with everything else in life—particularly perhaps in the Indo-Pakistan relations one does not need to look beyond the character of the mutual borders to appreciate the causes of recurrent fighting.

Kashmir, of course, is itself a large disputed area between the two countries; but along their other borders too there are small disputed or undemarcated areas. There has recently been trouble in Kanjorkot along the Sind-Kutch border; and Kanjorkoi is a disputed area. Then the recent fighting in Assam has been in Lathitilla-Dumabari, where the border has not been demarcated yet. So, disputed areas, undemarcated borders, and enclaves are the three categories of trouble spots. The Nehru-Noon agreement of 1958 had envisaged that the Pakistan enclaves in Cooch Behar (such as Dahagram) should be exchanged for certain Indian enclaves inside East Pakistan. A part of that agreement also laid down that Berubari—which at present wholly belongs to India—should be divided between the two countries. A stay order passed by the Indian Supreme Court regarding the division of Berubari has delayed the execution of that agreement. Now it is alleged that Pakistan has been recently trying to intrude into Southern Berubari.

Each of the recent border skirmishes, then, has been in an area where there are some physical reasons for disagreement. Of course, even with the presence of such reasons there need never be any fighting if the relations between the two countries were really cordial. Unfortunately that is not so. The heroic attempts of J P, culminating in the goodwill delegation he led to West Pakistan last year, have borne but little fruit. Similarly,

the Shastri-Ayub meeting of three hours in Karachi on October 12 last year—though it resulted in a fairly hopeful joint statement—failed to ring in a detente between the two countries.

Be that as it may, for us there is no rational policy other than that of injecting as much goodwill as possible into our relations with Pakistan. No doubt it is a difficult policy; there are the flirtation of Pakistan with China and the rather grotesque misrepresentations by Pakistani spokesmen of our dispute with China. Nevertheless, we have to ignore Pakistan's lapses and be extraordinarily tolerant towards her. There are at least 50 million Muslims in India; the logical conclusion of prolonged hostility between India and Pakistan would be that these Muslims must all go to Pakistan, and all the Hindus in Pakistan must come to India. While Pakistan, given the principle on which it was created, can happily contemplate the later eventuality (and does not seem to be trying to bring it about) no sane Indian can feel happy about the former. There are some Hindus who would like that eventuality to occur sooner or later; but for us to give in to their persuasion would be as tragic as it was for Germany to listen to her Jew-haters. Moreover, since we need to devote so much of our strength to promoting our economic development, our aim ought to be to keep the friendliest possible relations with our neighbours and thus minimize expensive distractions.

There is the basic problem of Kashmir which no doubt defies any easy solution; however, our minimum aim in relations with Pakistan should be to settle permanently as many other mutual problems as possible—after the fashion of the settlement of the Indus Waters dispute; then, contrary to the commonly held view, the solution of the Kashmir problem itself is likely to become easier. Swaran Singh pointed out in the Rajya Sabha, "a major part of the Indo-Pakistani border has been settled through talks and actual demarcation has taken place". This gives us hope for the talks between the two countries on the 4-point plan for Dahagram, which began on 31st March. It will be in our interest to try to persuade Pakistan to broaden the scope of these talks and settle all the trouble spots along the borders once for all. Any generosity we display in such talks is bound to pay high dividends over the long run,

- S K Nath