

Report On K a s h m i r

BY

SADIQ ALI

Madhu Limaye

241⁶ N5
J4

A PRAJA SOCIALIST PUBLICATION

REPORT ON KASHMIR

by
SADIQ ALI
MADHU LIMAYE

The National Executive of the Party decided at its Delhi meeting on 16th, 17th and 18th September to send a delegation to Kashmir consisting of Sadiq Ali and Madhu Limaye to make an on-the-spot study of the situation in the State and submit a report. The delegation arrived in Srinagar on September 25, It stayed in Kashmir for a fortnight.

This little pamphlet contains the Report of the delegation and the Resolution on Kashmir passed by the National Executive at its meeting in Patna on 15th, 16th and 17 January.

A PRAJA SOCIALIST
PUBLICATION

LIBRARY BOOK
SERVICE
(MADRAS, P.L.)

WE WERE IN Kashmir from the 25th September to 10th Oct., 1953. Almost the first person we met was the Prime Minister. The other Minister, we had long talks with was Mr. Saraf. The two together gave us a background of the crisis resulting in the dismissal and arrest of Sheikh Abdullah. The talks we had a little later with Mr. Sadiq, President of the Assembly and Mr. Dhar, Deputy Home Minister, were just confirmation of what the two Ministers had already told us. They were, however, at pains to emphasise the large part foreign powers played in the events leading up to the crisis. This round of interviews was succeeded by talks with spokesmen of the National Conference unconnected with the Government, with Omar Bhatt of the Awami Conference, representatives of Minority Organisations, officials and other odd individuals. Reactions of that section of the public which did not feel free to speak out were hard to get at but we did make an attempt for what it was worth and got a glimpse of their hopes and fears.

We were in Jammu for just two days. We had little trouble in getting to know what people, there, thought and felt. The representatives of Jammu Parishad, Democratic Socialist Party and the People's Party gave, especially the latter two, free expression to their reactions to the situation in the state with particular reference to their province. Refugees also met us and told us their tale of woe and misery. The National Conference is very weak in Jammu but some of its members did meet us and gave their version of the situation in the province.

We were in Baramula for a day when we had occasion to see

how and in what mood people chose to greet their new Prime Minister.

Almost on the last day of our stay in Kashmir we met the Lama of Ladakh. He appeared satisfied with the scheme of things in Kashmir but had many local grievances to which he demanded early attention.

To facilitate understanding of the situation in Kashmir we shall divide our study into three sections; one, events leading up to the crisis; two, the existing situation—its possibilities and dangers; and three, the balance of forces in the State. We shall later briefly touch on the economic situation in the State, land reforms, cottage industries and the like.

II

KASHMIR CRISIS : THE OFFICIAL VIEW

In the narration of events the Prime Minister gave in our first talk with him the main emphasis was on Sheikh Abdullah's increasing association with Americans and the growing differences in the Cabinet and the Working Committee in regard to the interpretation and implementation of the Delhi Agreement. This American business, according to him and his colleagues, started as far back as 1949 when in an interview with a correspondent of the "Daily Express" Sheikh Abdullah referred to the existence of a third alternative before Kashmir in addition to accession to India or Pakistan. In answer to criticism in the Indian press and from his own colleagues in Kashmir and presumably in response to a threat from Sardar Patel he explained away his interview by saying that it was just "loud thinking". His visit to America for attending the UNO Assembly and the contacts he made there possibly pre-disposed him to the idea of "Independence". The matter, however, did not stop at the interview and its explaining away later. He recurred to the idea in subtler forms. Mr. Adlai Stevenson's visit gave renewed life and more precise shape to it.

Stevenson stayed longer than he had originally intended to and had long talks with Sheikh Abdullah. None of his colleagues knew what the talks were about. Stevenson's main idea was that Kashmir was composed of disparate units. It possessed neither cultural nor territorial unity. The 'Independence' idea was pursued by Mr. and Mrs. Henderson whose visits, particularly the latter's, were frequent and by no means brief. A host of American correspondents and visitors, male and female, also surrounded the Sheikh and sought to influence his mind. The Britisher was not much in evidence in this development.

We asked the leading spokesmen of the Party and the Government whether they had any documents in their possession which proved that the Sheikh was in secret collaboration with America for carving out an independent Kashmir Valley. We asked this question because some statements had appeared in the press which hinted at the existence of such documents. They all denied that they had any such documentary proofs. They were, however, clear in their minds that the trend of Sheikh's idea was definitely pro-American and pro-'Independence' and there could be no mistaking it.

As this charge came with special force and emphasis from the Communist or pro-communist elements in the administration and the National Conference, with their well-known and ineradicable bias, we were not over-hasty in accepting it. What exactly transpired between the Sheikh and his American friends and how far the former went in his bid for independence nobody in the Cabinet or outside knows with any degree of certainty. The secret nature of confabulations, however, did justifiably rouse suspicions. Making allowance for the exaggerations of the Communists, in particular where international power-politics are concerned, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that Sheikh Abdullah was lending a sympathetic ear to the American counsel. The direction in which his mind was moving under the stress of certain events in his State and in India coincided with the American ambition to have a foothold in Kashmir. Evidence of a regular organised conspiracy is, however, lacking. The over emphasis on the American part in the 'Independence' move is Communist-in-

aspired and a cover for the kind of propaganda the Communists wish to carry on and divert the public mind from inconvenient aspects of the situation.

But more important for us to know was the provocation which accounted for this growing desire for independence on the part of Sheikh Abdullah and his increasing coldness towards India. It is worthwhile to go into this matter a little more fully as it has a bearing on our future handling of the situation in Kashmir. More than one explanations were offered. The explanation which found most favour with the top-ranking people we met was to the effect that Sheikh Abdullah was rapidly losing his popularity on account of his continuing misrule and the worsening condition of the people. To regain his popularity, he raised the alluring cry of Independence and diverted the attention of the people from the evil result of his six year's misrule. This hardened the opposition of Hindus but it brought him plaudits from the majority community with which for his new purposes he was primarily concerned.

He welcomed whatever helped him to this end. He welcomed, extraordinarily enough, the Jammu Parishad agitation. He could point to it as convincing evidence of the truth of the new stand he was seeking to make popular. He was not over-anxious to bring to an early end the Parishad agitation. Throughout he displayed indifference to it. The Law and Order aspect of the situation was being firmly handled by Bakshi but there was no attempt at all on the part of Sheikh Sahib to handle with care and sympathy the political and communal implications of the agitation. He was often heard to remark in his private talks that if Jammu wanted to go out of Kashmir it was welcome to do so; in fact it would be good riddance. Its merger in India would serve just the purpose he had in view, namely an Independent Kashmir.

III

SPEECH OF SHAIKH ABDULLAH

Whether it is the Praja Parishad, American influence or diversionary tactics to take the popular mind off grave administrative failure, signs of a change in his basic attitude were available more and more first to his colleagues in the Cabinet and the working committee of the National Conference and later to the large body of workers and Government servants and finally to the people. People talked openly and covertly of growing differences between Sheikh Sahib and his colleagues and the leaders were at pains to emphasise the close identity of views and outlook which though it did not exist, it was necessary to maintain that it did. The whispering campaign about the reported difference disturbed the general atmosphere and caused doubt in the public mind about the general drift of affairs. The public speeches which Sheikh Abdullah made, particularly in June, July and August, 1953 also reflected first in a guarded manner and then more openly the change in his approach to the problem of Kashmir and growing differences between him and some of his colleagues.

At first as an answer to rumours, there was re-affirmation in hyperbolic terms of faith in Sher-e-Kashmir. In a speech on 6th June, Ghulam Md. Bakshi, the present Premier, declared as follows: "It has become part of the faith of the workers of National Conference that Sher-e-Kashmir is their sole and greatest leader. This is no empty claim. We have shown by our action that we mean it. In future also we shall do the same. We may be hanged but like Majnoon our lips will utter just one word, Laila, Laila."

That all was not well with the National Conference and with Sheikh Sahib's relation with it will be apparent from just this one passage in a broadcast speech delivered by the latter on the 15th July :

"The real test of a political party comes when it is in power. If the members of this Party use power for the good of the people the result is a further strengthening of the Party. But often

it has happened that man, on account of the frailties of his nature, becomes its victim and uses it for personal enjoyment and for the benefit of his kith and kin. He also sees success in the encouragement of sycophants who shower extravagant praise on everything he does, good or bad. When a party has such men in its ranks it rapidly loses its power and popularity. It is thrown aside and another party takes its place. No member of the National Conference should forget these basic principles of the rise and fall of political parties. If they do, let them take it that the end of their party is close at hand. There is, these days, such a group of men in the National Conference who are in it just for achieving their selfish ends by all means fair or foul. The public should beware of the wiles of such men." (from **Khidmat**, the official Urdu Daily of Kashmir.)

In a speech on the 14th July, he said that everybody recognised the importance of self-determination but nobody created conditions in which it could be exercised. Pakistan would allow the right to be exercised when the decision was in its favour. India also appeared to be ready when it was absolutely certain that the decision would be in its favour. They had the solemn promises of Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru and Patel but "during the last few months the cry is raised from every part of India that Kashmir be put in chains of slavery to India." It was being propagated, he said, that the Sheikh hated India and loved Pakistan. What was it that would satisfy both India and Pakistan? 'Ask the people'. 'Confusion here is being assisted with Indian money'. In another speech he said that it was strange that he was called a 'nationalist' when he condemned Pakistan but a communalist when he ran down any communal organisation in India.

The speeches that followed referred to rumours, the contradictory slogans of 'Sher-e-Kashmir Zindabad' and 'Pakistan Zindabad', and the growing participation of services in 'Party Bazi'.

Sheikh Abdullah's speech of the 25th July contained more explicit references to the new direction in which his mind was moving :

"We have often declared that Kashmir will not be the tail—'dum challa'—of either India or Pakistan."

He stressed the extra-ordinary circumstances in which accession to India took place, meaning thereby that it was not a normal accession in normal circumstances. In the uncertain condition which the threat of plebiscite created no progress, he maintained, was possible. Nobody was prepared to invest capital. The connection with India was based on a principle which the Praja Parishad Movement had shaken. "The honest truth is that last year's communal agitation has shaken the foundation of this connection. It is not we who wish to break this connection. India wants it". He pointed out that neither Sheikh Abdullah nor the smallest worker of the National Conference had said one word in violation of the Delhi Agreement. It is the Jan Sangh which has all along been agitating against the Delhi Agreement. "Why are the masses against Pakistan?", he asked. Because we gave them an assurance that the Muslims would not only be protected but also treated with generosity. "We gave defence to India, operative command as well as administrative command. On the Indian army should be represented all communities. Compare the number of Muslims then and now!" Referring to the Post and Telegraph, he asked what exactly had been done to give encouragement to Muslims. The educated unemployed Muslims looked to Pakistan for employment. Why so? "When I am myself not convinced how can I convince others? I feel that we cannot build the structure of our connection with India on weak and shaky foundations. But let it not be understood that I want to get out of the ditch in order to fall into a well."

The two other important speeches were one at Chandarbal on 31st July '53 and the other on Aug. 8, on the eve of his dismissal and arrest. He emphasised again in his Chandarbal speech that the reported differences in leadership were just newspaper speculations. "The leadership was united on one thing, viz. Rai Amma (Public opinion, plebiscite). They wanted good relations with India and Pakistan and the good of Kashmir. Their internal problems were multiplying—refugees, lack of capital, bad communications, etc. Internal peace depends on external factors. The

two countries could afford to be complacent but not so Kashmir'. He also said that he would tell later, when the proper time came, what was best for the people of Kashmir. He would explain the pros and cons of every solution that was offered for the problem of Kashmir. Accession to India in 1947 was dictated by their need to seek aid in an extraordinary situation. The accession issue, he also said, was primarily to be decided by Muslims because the Hindus would naturally never vote for Pakistan.

In this final speech of August 8, he said that the choice of the people of Kashmir should not be confined to India or Pakistan. 'May be, there is a third alternative—an independent Kashmir with friendly relations with both India and Pakistan'. Referring to the Delhi Agreement he said that it was the people of India who had violated it. There was, he said, a suggestion in a paper that the Prime Minister be dismissed and President's Rule established. Referring in this speech to the Communist Party, he said that till yesterday it supported them but today suddenly they wished to deprive 'us of our freedom'. This change of front is significant. Some people desired that an alternative leadership be established. The people are free to do so.

The trend of these speeches was clear. The earlier effort both on the part of Sheikh and his colleagues to hide their differences began to give way to an open, though still cautious, avowals of differences.

There was no mistaking the direction in which Sheikh's mind was moving. There could be a controversy as to the causes for this direction and the importance that should be assigned to each cause and whether the direction was irreversible. Connected with it would be the controversy about the appropriateness and inevitability of the steps taken in the early hours of the 9th August 1953. Our investigation here was subject to one serious handicap and limitation. One of the two parties which could throw light and present its own version of the affairs was behind bars.

According to the party in power, the clash became inevitable when Sheikh's utterances began having a serious effect on the

situation in the State, and when it became apparent that he was attempting to alter the balance of forces in the Cabinet and in the Working Committee of the National Conference. The Indian Army was no unconcerned spectator of the whole disquieting development. The emergence of the Political Conference with Kara as its President in June was a fair indication of the way things were going. This Conference was a pro-Pakistan body which at the meeting raised pro-Pakistan, anti-Indian and anti-Indian Army slogans. Some Indian soldiers and officers were greeted with these slogans. There could have been unpleasant scenes but for the restraint our soldiers showed. The Indian military did not naturally relish the new role that was sought to be imposed upon it by the Political Conference and elements in sympathy with it. If the Conference was allowed to carry on its work unchecked many unpleasant situations would have arisen which it was only prudence to avoid. This became the subject matter of correspondence between the Indian Army and the Kashmir Government. There were other law and order and political aspects of the situation. The Cabinet took a unanimous decision to ban the Conference and put its leaders in jail. The present leaders hold the view that the Political Conference would not have come into being but for the favourable atmosphere Sheikh's speeches and actions created for it and other like-minded forces. They even go so far as to imply a bond of sympathy between the Sheikh or Mirza Afzal Baig and the Conference.

IV CRISIS AND AFTER

Trade and Commerce received a set-back as a result of these speeches and differences in leadership. Tourists business dwindled rapidly. The tourists at the slightest sign of trouble gave way and sought in precipitate flight their safety.

The minorities were becoming apprehensive. 1947 was a glorious page in the history of the National Conference when it went all out to protect the minority. The minority fears, however, re-

turned with the spread of rumours and increasing anti-Indian bias in the speeches of Sheikh Abdullah.

The administration was also becoming deeply affected by Party politics and the new trend in Sheikh's speeches. Officers belonged to one group or the other. No corrupt officer could be tried because there was always a group to protect him. An attack on the corrupt person was an attack on the group to which he belonged or inclined.

The differences also came in the way of the Delhi Agreement being implemented and other trade and financial arrangements made with India. Any fresh arrangement, even if it brought money to Kashmir coffers, appeared to the Sheikh a new threat to the autonomy of Kashmir. Nothing was settled. Officers and ministers would go to Delhi, hold consultations and finally come to some arrangement, but the Sheikh would withhold his consent leaving everything in the melting pot.

Sheikh saw that he was in a minority in the Cabinet as well as in the National Conference. To buttress his position in the latter he took to holding weekly meetings at Mujahid Manzil and cultivating the opinion of the workers. The workers' meetings were almost public meetings where he took the people into increasing confidence and gave them an inkling of the new direction in which his mind was moving. The speeches created a stir. Things came to a head when Sheikh took steps to reconstitute the Cabinet. Mr. Saraf had been a loyal colleague and supporter of Sheikh but lately, there were signs which indicated a weakening of his loyalty. At a workers' meeting Saraf gave expression to views in regard to Kashmir's relationship with India which were not palatable to Sheikh and which did not square with his new approach to the problem. There were some charges of nepotism which, according to the group in power now, lacked reality but which Sheikh made the basis of his demand for Saraf's resignation from the Cabinet. Saraf refused to resign. His two other colleagues who thought with him considered this step a part of a well-thought out move to reconstitute the Cabinet and make it more amenable to his (Sheikh's) wishes. Sheikh also desired to take the Law and Order portfolio in his own hands. The se-

quence of events subsequent to this demand for resignation is public knowledge. We need not burden this report with repetition of what has appeared in the Press. Our enquiries from Ministers did not bring us any additional knowledge. The joint letter of three Ministers to Sadar-i-Riyasat, the latter's talk with Sheikh, Sheikh's reported refusal to call a meeting of the Cabinet at Sadar-i-Riyasat's place and thrash things out are well-known. So also the dismissal and arrest of Sheikh. The present Ministry is clear in its mind that but for the arrest and dismissal of Sheikh the State would have ere long plunged into chaos.

Is there another side to the story? In our talks with some people, we heard repeated references to the Communists and their ultimate design. It was worthwhile for us to go more fully into the matter. It had been made out that the decision taken on the 8th night and 9th morning of August '53 were sudden decisions taken on the spur of the moment with no deliberate forethought preceding it. Is that so?

Towards the end of June three senior members of the Communist Party—P. Ramamurthy, Dr. A. Ahmed, and S. V. Ghate—visited Kashmir on a fact-finding mission. The Central Committee of the Communist Party met in Delhi towards the end of July and passed a lengthy resolution on Kashmir which deserves our careful scrutiny. We make no apology for quoting substantial parts of it.

"The Central Committee of the Communist Party of India views the reported move to make Kashmir an independent State to be guaranteed by India, Pakistan and the United Nations, as marking a very serious phase, as serious as it was at the time of the invasion of Kashmir five year ago."

"The guarantee by the U.N.", the resolution said, "means allowing U.S. military forces to occupy the strategic valley and turn it into a U.S. war base."

"This move will destroy Kashmir's vital link with India and will lead to further partitioning, encouraging the forces of communal reaction and their imperialist inspirers against whom the Kashmiri people have throughout fought."

"The Central Committee of the Communist Party of India calls upon the democratic forces of Kashmir and Jammu to save the people from these new designs of imperialists and their conscious supporters and misguided votaries.

"The imperialist agents and landlord reactionaries have been dangling the idea of so-called independence as a means to solve the acute economic hardships of the Kashmiri people with the alluring promise of U.N. and U.S. aids. Some of the Kashmiri leaders now want to hide the failure of their Government and divert the people's attention by this new slogan of independence. The reactionaries in Indian Government circles have also paved the ground by insisting on full accession with the Maharaja being retained and by trying to grab Kashmir's economy in the interest of India's big monopolists and refusing aid for reconstruction."

Referring to the Jammu agitation the resolution said: "The Jammu agitation feeding on the failure of the Abdullah Government to meet the just demands of the Jammu people in the matter of language, service, employment and administrative autonomy, has helped in its turn to sow the idea of a fresh partition in the minds of the Kashmir people."

The resolution supported limited accession of Kashmir to India and said: "By limited accession not only do they stand united in friendship with India but also stand to gain from the strength of India's economy retaining their own status of virtual independence within the framework of the Indian Union."

As for the role of the Indian Army in Kashmir, the resolution said: "The Indian Army must behave as a friend for defence against the aggressor—a task which was assigned to it by the free consent of the Kashmir people—and not as a police force against the people interfering in their internal affairs."

The resolution said that full financial integration between Kashmir and India should be resisted under the present conditions as "that will bring about the ruin of the weak economy of Kashmir by the powerful finance circles of India."

"The rights of the Jammu and Ladakh people in the matter

of language, services, local administrative autonomy and financial aid and civil liberties had to be met", it added.

The resolution concluded: "Only when the democratic forces, inside and outside the National Conference and the Kashmir Constituent Assembly, basing themselves on the Kisan Sabha and other people's organisations, build a powerful democratic front, and with the aid of their brethren in India develop a powerful democratic movement and organisation to solve the problems of land, rent, taxes and civil liberties will the State of Kashmir and Jammu progress on the road to prosperity and independence."

The resolution is a fairly exact mirror of the mind of the Communist Party. The very length of the resolution, the close analysis of the various factor at play in the Kashmir situation, the balance it seeks to strike in the existing context between conflicting forces, the clear and emphatic stand it takes against an independent Kashmir blessed by the UNO and the United States, the call it makes on "democratic" forces in the State to save the people from the 'new designs of imperialists', the weak language in which Kashmir's link with India is advocated, the stress on cultural and administrative autonomy of the various parts of Kashmir are all of a piece with the fixed central design of the Communist Party in India and Kashmir. We shall have a word to say later about each of the points referred to in the resolution, but for our present purpose it is important to invite attention to the call it makes on all democratic forces to defeat the design of foreign imperialists. This was a clear forerunner of the fateful decision taken later on the midnight of August 8.

The main worry of the Communist Party is not Kashmir's link with India and all the consequences that flew from it, but that it should be kept safe for the triumph of Communist strategy in the State. Support of, or opposition to any action, or movement in the State is not exactly in terms of Kashmir's link with India, secularism, minorities, economic betterment of the people and the like but whether it furthers their own grip on the Kashmir situation.

It is more than doubtful if the minds of Bakshi and his Com-

munist colleagues were working on parallel lines. It is true the phrases Bakshi used are not unlike those employed by the Communists, but this is, we suppose, largely because it saves time and trouble to have one's speeches and statements drafted by others. Mr. Bakshi is a strong man but it would be unrealistic to exaggerate his strength. The ideological source of the strength he displayed in the strong action he recommended for solving the crisis came, one has reasons to believe, from his Communist colleagues.

The long resolution which the Workers' Convention passed on 15th September has clearly on it the impress of the Communist interpretation of events. The marshalling of arguments and the selection of facts have all a Communist ring. All this is ignored today because for the moment the democratic element in Kashmir and the Communist Party want identical things.

While we are convinced by what we saw and heard that the way Sheikh was going was fraught with danger, there are elements in the new situation which fill us with disquiet and anxiety. Conditions were normal when we reached Srinagar. They were normal wherever else we went. If somebody who had not heard of the events of August 9, visited the State in mid-September, nothing unusual would have assailed his senses. If per chance he experienced a sensation of something strained and unusual, it would have been dispelled by a look at the well-attended meetings which the new Prime Minister addressed everywhere with the sole exception of Srinagar. We were, however, not such ignorant visitors. We met Ministers, workers of the National Conference, representatives of minority organisations and others, but somehow we failed to get at the mind of that large section of the Muslims which had reacted so vigorously to Sheikh's arrest in the first fortnight but was now nowhere to be encountered. It soon appeared to us that this has been suppressed into silence. Its leaders were behind the bars and the police exercised constant vigilance. For a correct appraisal of the situation it would be necessary to bear this fact in mind. But to this we shall return later.

The Communists had, it appears, for their own reasons and in pursuance of their own strategy, made up their minds to take

some decisive action against Sheikh not just on the 8th night but earlier. The Central Committee's resolution, passed on the 31st July, gives a clear enough indication of this. It was, of course, not clear what that action should be, but the need for it was obvious to them.

From many accounts that we heard it was plain to us that Maulana Said Md. Masoodi, the General Secretary of the National Conference, played an important part in the events that preceded August 8. He was the principal spokesman on behalf of the large group which opposed the way Sheikh was going. Few among the National Conference leaders had the courage, we were told, to argue with Sheikh and tell him he was wrong if they felt he was wrong. Maulana Masoodi was an exception. It was he, principally, who took the stand against Sheikh in the Committee meetings on ideological grounds. He fought the 'Independence' idea of Sheikh on constitutional and other grounds. He was, however, a firm opponent of Communism and Communists in Kashmir. His advice was sought on every issue but in the crucial decisions that were taken on the 8th night, it was not thought necessary to take him into confidence. The plea is that the time was short. It may be so but a certain amount of suspicion is justifiable.

We record for what it is worth Mr. Masoodi's opinion that Sheikh was not in an irreconcilable mood, that the differences were due to come up for a frank and thorough discussion at a meeting of the Working Committee which Sheikh had already called and that the precipitate action of the 9th was not called for by circumstances as they then prevailed.

Mr. Bakshi admitted the vital role Masoodi had played in the fight against Sheikh but pleaded inability to consult him when time came for taking the fateful decision. Whether the inability was genuine or preceded from other considerations we have no sure means of judging.

Our principal concern now is not with the past but with the present. If we have referred in some details to the past it is because it greatly conditions the present. What is the new situation that is now facing us in Kashmir? What are its principal features?

The demonstrations that followed the dismissal and arrest of Sheikh Abdullah were serious and widespread. The new common cries were "Sher-e-Kashmir Zindabad, Pakistan Zindabad". In the first one or two days, even workers of the National Conference joined the demonstrations, so sudden was the decision and so stunning its effect. But soon they withdrew and left the field to the pro-Pakistan element and others who had no clear appreciation of the situation but who were very naturally affected by Sheikh's arrest. The police and the militia came out in full strength and did their job efficiently and fairly ruthlessly. The official estimate of the number of people killed by firing is between thirty-seven and forty. There is no reliable popular estimate. It varies from person to person according to his political sympathies. There was hartal in Srinagar for about fifteen days. The hartal was complete for the first seven or eight days. There were, according to official reports, some 500 arrests which included some members of the Working Committee, the Legislature and the National Conference. There have been many releases since then. The exact number of those detained now was not available to us. The crowds do not appear to have been very violent. Stone-throwing was about the only serious charge brought against them. There was, on a small scale, in Srinagar cutting of wires and pulling down of the telegraph poles. Firing could have been avoided in some places with a little more tactful handling of the situation. The police indulged in the violence; it did largely because it was a novel situation with unpredictable possibilities that they had to grapple with. They preferred to take no risks. Even if we accept the official estimate, forty is not a small number but the extraordinary nature of the occasion is the excuse of the Government.

Conditions now are normal. In Srinagar there are still sporadic demonstrations but the police is vigilant. The demonstrators are promptly dispersed before they increase in numbers and become a serious law and order problem.

The new government announced a series of economic and other reforms close on the heels of the arrest and dismissal of Sheikh Abdullah. These reforms have given appreciable relief

to the people besides serving to divert attention from the events of 9th August. Whether the reforms are economically and administratively sound is another matter but they have served, it is claimed, to rally the people to the new administration. A few of the reforms are :

FOOD

1. Abolition of compulsory procurement of grains.
2. Reduction in the price of rationed rice.
3. Removal of restrictions on the movement of rice from one district to another.
4. Compulsory buying by the State at the increased price fixed by the Government of any surplus that the peasant may wish to sell.
5. Peasant free to sell and others to buy rice at any price.

These reforms gave immediate and substantial relief to the hitherto much-harassed peasantry. These reforms were made possible by 9 lakh maunds of rice which the Centre made available to the State to build and stock the urban ration shops.

EDUCATION

Fixing of minimum salary of the teacher at Rs. 50|-; Abolition of school and college fee for students whose parents monthly salary is less than Rs. 100|-; Abolition of co-education; Course books to be made available to students at reduced prices; Supply of free books to poor students in the schools.

CO-OPERATIVES

Small traders will be allowed to resume their trade.

Cancellation of debts of those who are too poor to pay. A sum of Rs. 15 lakhs set apart, as a first step, to be made available to the peasants, small shopkeepers and boatmen.

The new government took little time to announce these and other measures. One wonders how within a few hours of the arrest of Sheikh Abdullah all these various reforms were conceived, elaborated and announced. The simple peasant in the countryside felt real relief at the lessening of his burdens. The

poor in the city also heaved a sigh of relief. A section of the population, while it is enjoying the benefits, is secretly cynical and sceptical about the new reforms.

It must be said to his credit that Mr. Bakshi is making a vigorous effort to rally the people round the new banner. He undertook a tour of the Kashmir Valley while we were there. We had occasion to attend one meeting at Baramula. We were surprised at the number of arches that were erected to greet the new Premier. The crowd that came to greet and attend the meeting was also great. Among the causes that brought the crowd were (1) curiosity to see the new Premier, (2) expectation of new reliefs and new reforms. They were not disappointed. The local National Conference Chief read out an address of welcome in which he enumerated the needs and grievances of the town and showered fullsome eulogies on the new Premier. The Premier when his turn came to reply announced one boon after another. Each boon was greeted with a burst of applause. If somebody in the crowd got up and voiced a grievance, personal or collective, it, too, was satisfied in some form. When the meeting dispersed a portion of the crowd pressed forward to have a closer look at and perchance to get some benefit or relief from the benevolent and compassionate Premier. In the procession or at the meeting we came across no visible sign of anger and resentment at the events of the 9th August, but there was one thing we could not help noticing, lack of honest and genuine fervour. Also it would have been a little cruel on our part to inquire too closely whether and to what extent the common people had contributed towards the expenses of the meeting which could not have been a very mean amount.

We received similar and better reports of other meetings and workers' conferences.

The Convention of National Conference workers was also a 'big success'. 5,000 workers attended the Convention. They came in trucks, among them peasants, who were temporarily elevated to the status of workers. Our Communist friends, it was freely said, took initiative in organising the Convention. In a two and half hours' speech—this is the usual length of speeches among

National Conference leaders—Bakshi narrated the circumstances in which he was obliged to shoulder the painful responsibility of Premiership and described the measures that he proposed to take to reform the administration and the National Conference. Mr. Sadiq gave, in a speech of equal length, the ideological background of the crisis. A large number of Committees were appointed to go into various problems and submit reports the very next day. A sense of urgency was sought to be instilled in all the activities of the National Conference.

There was a session of the Assembly on the eve of our departure from Kashmir. The Assembly passed a unanimous vote of confidence in the new Premier. Among those who spoke loud in praise of the new Ministry were those who were released the very same day or the day before. They were behind none in affirming their faith in the policies of the new Ministry.

Many Committees were appointed in this Session for doing things which the previous government had failed to do. Among them was a high-powered Commission to deal with corruption. A little while before a fairly generous scheme rising the salaries of low-paid employees was announced.

The foregoing few paragraphs are intended to give an idea of the speed with which the new Government proposed to go ahead. It is convinced that the main problem is economic. The battle is won if it is solved speedily and satisfactorily.

For what we have been able to see the bulk of workers of the National Conference has rallied round the new government. They regret the arrest of Sheikh Sahib but there is nothing they can do about it. The policies he advocated disturbed and confused them. We did come across workers who held that the Sheikh should be released and that for two reasons; one, he had not gone so far that accommodation with him was impossible; and two, he was too firmly entrenched in the hearts of the people to be easily dislodged. He alone can deliver the goods.

DISQUIETING FEATURES OF THE SITUATION

The new situation has some disquieting features which whether we can do anything about them or not it is well worth to keep in mind :

1. It was impossible for us not to feel that the Muslim population by and large has not reconciled itself to the new regime. It is not in position to create trouble but if it has an opportunity for showing discontent it would fain do so. There is no free expression of opinion so far as this section is concerned. Happily the food and other necessities of life have become cheaper. To that extent the sharp edge of their discontent is not allowed to get sharper. Their suppression and the constant vigilance of police is, however, not a safe foundation to build on.

2. Sheikh Abdullah had lost a fair measure of his popularity in the closing days of his tenure of office. Now he wears the crown of martyrdom. He has reinstated himself in the affection of the people. People are going about their work quietly and peacefully but they have not forgotten him.

3. The Hindus of Kashmir and Jammu—we are loath to speak of the people of Kashmir as Hindus and Muslims, but for purposes of analysis we are obliged to do so—welcome the new regime for the good reason that it has put an end to the uncertainty which Sheikh's latter day speeches created in their minds and lives. But in the Hindu intelligentsia, as organised in political parties, this uncertainty has been replaced by another fear, the fear of Communist domination. There are no organised parties in the valley of Kashmir but there are some in Jammu. In the Kashmir Valley sentiment against the Government takes on a pro-Pakistan form, whether open or concealed, but in Jammu it has been able to express itself both in communal and political forms. In the Kashmir Valley the National Conference is strong and widespread. No rival political organisation will perhaps be tolerated. But in Jammu, the National Conference has been traditionally weak. It gained strength in 1947 and 1948 but soon it

disintegrated. Many workers left; some to join the Jammu Parishad and some to form the Democratic Socialist Party and the People's Party. The latter two are not yet vital organisations but there they are trying to do something. We have had occasion to meet leading members of both these parties and the Jammu Parishad. They were all obsessed with the fear of the growing domination of Communists in the Government if not in the National Conference. The National Conference workers who are obsessed by a similar fear are by no means few. They welcome the disappearance of the Abdullah regime and the installation in power of Bakshi, but they fear that more and more Bakshi would be in the hands of Communists leading the State, God knows, where. They have all, therefore, to be on their guard and organise themselves against a danger which, according to them, is by no means remote.

We took pains to go into this matter as fully as our time allowed. The first thing that struck us was that there was no regular Communist Party in Kashmir and yet important National Conference workers and other Parties were obsessed with it. It was a habit with them to find out whether a member of the Cabinet was a Communist or just a plain National Conference man and what, in the total result, was the dominant composition of the Cabinet. The present Cabinet consists of 4 Ministers and some deputies. The Parties and many National Conference workers are waiting to see who the fifth minister will be. He will, they are convinced if he is a Communist, tilt the balance definitely in favour of the Communist element in the administration.

It seemed to us odd that there should be this obsession about Communism when there was no regular Communist Party. We did not find that the people were much concerned either with Communism or the pro-dominant colour of the Cabinet, but a politically conscious worker to whatever Party he belonged, did manifest a kind of obsessive interest in it.

Is the fear of a possible Communist domination well-grounded? We enquired. While the first thing that struck us was that there was no regular Communist Party functioning in the open, there was no getting away from the fact that it was there all the same

functioning fairly effectively and according to plan. The top leaders meet pretty frequently for an exchange of views, for concerting plans to strengthen the party and for giving a twist to Kashmir affairs suited to their overall strategy. The Communist leaders who come from India have a busy time, are sure of a warm welcome and have access to all facilities needed for going round and studying the situation. If any Communist leader wants to settle there for some bit of time, difficulties in his way quickly melt away. Every important Communist is in the National Conference and works through it. The Party has no large following either in the Conference or outside it but it holds and seeks to hold key positions in the Cabinet and administration. In other places in India the Communist Party derives its chief strength from its contacts with the people but here it is not so at all. Here the Communists are a part of the ruling Party and as such cannot identify themselves with popular grievances against the administration. Today Communist friends are loud in their condemnation of multitudinous wrongs and misdeeds of Sheikh Abdullah's Government but what did the Party do to expose them and fight them during this long period of six years. Nothing. They were just busy entrenching themselves in the administration and, through the patronage it makes available, spread out and create cells. It was also notorious that in Jammu, the Communists adopted a line which was not identical with the stand taken in the Kashmir Valley. Having regard to the different set of complexities in the Jammu situation, the Jammu wing did not go all out against the Parishad agitation. Local Communists even fraternised with it.

Apart from the Governmental influence, the other agencies through which they work are Kisan Sabha, the Democratic Youth League, Peace Conference, etc. Governmental patronage is always available to these organisations. When Conferences are held transport presents no problem. Funds also are not hard to collect.

Whether anybody in the Cabinet or holding an important administrative post, say that of a public information officer, is or is not a Communist may be a matter of controversy but the broad fact is incontestable that when these posts are sought to be filled

there is almost always a silent tug of war between the Communist and non or anti-communist candidates.

Bakshi appears to have no fear of the Communists dominating him or the administration. Many whom others consider Communist or pro-Communist in the Cabinet and elsewhere, he takes them as good National Conference workers. He feels he has the main strings in his hand and all fears are grossly exaggerated. Others do not share his optimism. They feel that in the new situation Bakshi has to lean more and more heavily on them. The Communists after overthrowing Sheikh have now advantage point which they will not hesitate to exploit to the full. They will do it clearly, cautiously, making sure of each step they take but there can be no mistaking their basic intentions.

The main difficulty in the situation is not that there is a Communist Party in Kashmir. It has a right to be there and function according to its lights. The trouble is it is there and yet it is not there. One cannot fight it openly. Today it is working under the National Conference cover. The opponent is at a grave disadvantage. One is not sure what the words used in the resolutions of the National Conference and the speeches of its spokesmen mean. The words used may be unexceptionable, but their hidden meanings are different. There are not many who can fathom these hidden meanings and save themselves from being misled.

We shall have a word more to say about Communists when we deal with Jammu.

4. It has been an emergency situation in Kashmir all these six years. Its emergency character has been heightened by new developments. An emergency situation tends to concentrate all power in the hands of the ruling Party. The concentration does not stop there. Ultimately it is narrowed down to one individual and his group of confidants. How does the practical absence of democracy in the State affect Kashmir's relationship with India?

Sheikh Sahib has been, during his tenure of office, pretty jealous of autonomy but he did not take long to find that it could be a very inconvenient thing if it prevented the flow of money

from India. As our relations with the Kashmir Government and the ruling Party were extremely cordial and friendly we did not, where finances were concerned, interpret autonomy rigidly. We helped the State with plenty of funds. In 1947, '48 and '49 we helped them with outright grants. Then we gave loans. (The size of these grants and loans is perhaps a State secret). The State Government drew up a Five-Year Plan for which India generously set apart a sum of Rs. 13 crores. We also opened one or two Community Development Projects in the State. We helped in various other ways, too. The Government of India wanted to introduce an element of regularity in its financial relations with Kashmir, but there were difficulties from the State side on the score of autonomy. It would not countenance financial integration such as took place between the Centre and B Class States. The word 'integration' was dropped and replaced by a loose expression 'arrangements', but yet no settlement was reached. Sheikh wanted more funds without any lessening of the autonomy of the State. The present Government is much more accommodating in these matters. It is all to the good, but a question arises in this connection.

It is the Government's firm conviction that in the new situation that has arisen a vigorous and sustained attack on the economic problem in the State is essential. They must show results in a year or two. Six years of maladministration turned the people against the ruling party and weakened India's link with Kashmir. They have now to make good this neglect in a short space of one or two years, and turn the mind of the people from issues which disturb their emotions. For this they need funds whether for giving immediate relief or for creating fresh avenues of employment and a rise in the standard of living. India hitherto has been a generous giver. This generosity must continue on an ever-growing scale. For instance take customs. These customs, according to the trading community, are ruinous to the growth of trade and commerce. They must, therefore, be abolished. The Kashmir Government is also veering round to this view. The abolition of customs will create a big gap in the revenues of the State. It may be in the neighbourhood of a crore and a half in the total revenue of 5 crores. This loss has somehow to be

made good. In B states the arrangement is that within a period of 10 years the State Governments should develop other sources of income equivalent to the loss of income, the Centre in the meanwhile to return to them a certain proportion of the customs revenue according to a plan. The Kashmir Government wants to abolish the ten-year limit. They want the whole amount of customs duty to be returned to them from year to year till they are in a position to make good the loss. This may take twenty years, thirty years and more. Kashmir will need to have a generous deal from India in a number of spheres to be able to tackle its economic problems on a scale required by the immediate demands of the political situation. The various implications of this situation are clear. They impose on India fresh burdens.

5. The new Government has launched out on many schemes of reforms, among them the reform of administration. Considering the various factors it is more than doubtful whether these particular reforms, the reform of administration, eradication of corruption etc. would be much of a success. When it is made out that the old administration was corrupt but the new one is clean, the public is sceptical. In the public eye the whole administration including the present holders of powers are guilty of all the sins of omission and commission with which those behind the bars are charged. Whether any energetic measures would be taken to wipe out or even reduce corruption only the future can show. The continued flow of money from India, plus autonomy, would not exactly make for rapid eradication of corruption. There may be one material difference. The old administrative service was subject to different pulls making for an increase in inefficiency, nepotism and corruption. The elimination of these pulls may make a difference unless new pulls come into being.

6. We have had occasion to learn at first hand the working of the National Conference. Six years in office have greatly weakened its moral fibre. Its workers, the bulk of them, lost their old virtues and became engaged, like Congressmen in India, in the pursuit of narrow selfish ambitions. They lost contact with the people, in fact, through controls, permits, co-operatives etc., exploited and oppressed them. The organisation became loose but

there was at the top a kind of dictatorship which made difficult any democratic functioning of the organisation. Sheikh Abdullah was idolised. Bakshi and others would freely refer to him as Quaid-e-Azam, their sole and supreme leader. The slogan of "one leader, one party, one programme" was on everybody's lips. There were also in the Party groups and factions which pulled in different directions, but Sheikh Abdullah until a few months ago dominated the two groups and kept the unity of the party.

The new Government now wishes to rejuvenate the National Conference and use it for building the new Kashmir. It needs its services badly in the new delicate and difficult situation.

Active steps are being taken now to put life in the organisation and seek its help in consolidating the new Government. Many workers' conventions were held at the district level. They get a good attendance. It is too early yet to predict the results of this attempt at the reformation of the Conference.

Hitherto Maulana Masoodi has been the General Secretary of the National Conference. He is held in wide esteem by the rank and file of the party. They are today distressed at the fact that the Maulana is not with them. He is a good organiser and an effective speaker, the best after Sheikh. What is more, he has a reputation for integrity. Many workers who met us asked us if we could intervene and get the Maulana back in their midst. This request came from workers who are outside the Communist group. They value and admire Bakshi's strength and resourcefulness but there are certain needs of the situation, moral, psychological, even political which, according to them, Masoodi alone can fulfil in an adequate measure.

The Party, however, by its latest decision has deprived itself of his services. He has been relieved of his office because apart from his own 'conscious deviation from the settled policy of the party he is unfit to cleanse it of disruptionist elements.' The Working Committee has also been reorganised. In the resolution passed, emphasis is laid on unity, solidarity, removal from responsible position of all 'consciously disruptive politically undependable, opportunist elements who are trying to subvert or surreptitiously

sabotage the declared political line of the organisation.' The whole resolution is studded with phrases which one has learnt to associate with the Communist Party.

It is within the competence of the Party to remove its Secretary for good or bad reasons, but it is certainly disturbing that Maulana Masoodi should have been prevented from attending the meeting of the General Council by being detained without warrant at the instance of the Deputy Home Minister when the Prime Minister himself, according to the reports, was eager that Masoodi should attend and place his views before the Council. This little episode has many disturbing implications which believers in democracy cannot complacently disregard. This news has trickled into a section of the Press, but not all such doings of the Government or the ruling party are allowed to see the light of the day.

Whether we like it or not, the logic of the events will drive the ruling party to destroy all elements of democracy in the organisation and concentrate power in a small group of men, and this group of men will be dominated by the element which knows wither exactly it wants Kashmir to go. Dictatorship in the party will be followed up by dictatorship in the administration of the State. This is a disquieting development for those who believe in democracy and socialism. This development would be greatly accelerated, if India in the name of the autonomy of Kashmir refused to intervene and let things take their own course. This, in all probability, is the line India would take. It is, perhaps, for others to intervene and check an unhealthy development, not in the National Conference but in the political life of the State.

We have judged it necessary to indicate the weaknesses of the present situation so that we might avoid the fatal error of complacency. Bakshi is energetic and resourceful but he has undertaken a grave responsibility under unusually difficult circumstances. It is necessary in his own interest and in the interest of the larger cause we all have at heart to acknowledge the limitations of the present situation.

PLEBISCITE : THE UNSETTLING FACTOR

Plebiscite is the most upsetting factor in the Kashmir situation. Those for India are not too anxious to have it, they would postpone it indefinitely; in fact would rather not have it at all. They would rather that the Constituent Assembly gave its final verdict and closed for ever this controversy. It is contended that even a plebiscite would not settle the dispute. Its result one way or the other would have profound repercussions not favourable to the peace and tranquility of either part of the Indian sub-continent.

There would have been appreciable lessening of tension and uncertainty if the Kashmir Constituent Assembly had been allowed by the Government of India to ratify Kashmir's accession to India. This ratification would have made almost impossible any move towards the so-called Independence. It should be understood that the whole situation in Kashmir in its internal, as well as international contexts, is such that it has pre-disposed rulers at least in recent history to toy with the idea of Independence. The Maharaja before deposition thought in terms of independence and so did, not so long ago, our Communist friends. Sardar Ibrahim and Choudhari Gulam Abbas have also indulged in the Independence dream. No such dream has materialised and yet the loose character of all arrangements and uncertainties inseparable from it leave scope for manoeuvres of ambitious politicians. We doubt if the Government of India took this feature of the situation into account when they came in the way of the Constituent Assembly of Kashmir with Sheikh Abdullah at its head confirming Kashmir's accession to India.

It would be interesting to recall in this connection a passage from the Sheikh's speech delivered in May 1951. "The mass of the State's people through their representative organisation, the National Conference had", he said, "opted for India as far back as 1947. And, now, the Constituent Assembly was being convened to ratify that accession and to prove to the world that the National Conference enjoyed the solid support of the people." He rejected "the idea of independent Kashmir as impossible and im-

practicable in the present international context. Except for Russia and the United States no truly independent State existed in the world today and for us to think in terms of independence with five powers surrounding us and looking at us with mixed motives will be suicide, pure and simple."

We are, in this report, not much concerned with the part Government of India played in the developments which culminated in the crisis of August 8. That requires separate investigation. It is, however, plain that the Government of India's record in regard to Kashmir is not, to judge it by results, a very flattering one.

People pose the question of Sheikh's release against the background of this plebiscite, apart from other possible backgrounds. We have reasons to doubt whether plebiscite holds the key to a satisfactory solution of the Kashmir problem. It is much the most democratic solution but the question is whether the five years handling or mishandling of the problem by India, Pakistan and Kashmir leaders has created conditions in which a peaceful plebiscite can be held and its verdict, whatever it be, will be willingly acquiesced in by parties concerned. The problem, however, must be solved both in the interest of the democracy in Kashmir and good relations between India and Pakistan. Human ingenuity need not be so resourceless as not to be able to devise acceptable alternatives to a plebiscite if fair conditions for the latter are wanting.

VII

THE [JAMMU QUESTION

A visit to Jammu was necessary to complete our survey. Friends there were eager to meet us. We began with the Jammu Parishad. From what we heard from them and others it was difficult not to see that the Parishad had made a place for itself in the political life of the province. It is an unhappy development. There need perhaps have been no Parishad, but for the wrong policies pursued by the State Government. One universal complaint was that the Kashmir Government had uniformly neglected Jammu.

The neglect, however, is of a much older date. In the struggle for freedom, too, there was no attempt to take Jammu along with Kashmir. It was, perhaps, taken for granted that for various economic, political and historical reasons, Jammu could not be expected to take any appreciable part in the struggle for freedom and the ending of princely rule. This created a wall of separation between the two vital parts of the State. This wall should have been pulled down well when the Dogra rule was brought to an end and a new Government based on nationalist, secular and almost socialist foundations was ushered into being. This, however, did not happen. It could have happened through the National Conference but the Conference unfortunately never could strike its roots deep in the soil of Jammu.

There was no National Conference worth the name in Jammu, but in 1947 and subsequent years it became a pretty strong organisation. Almost every politically conscious element joined it in the wake of tribal raids and a new sense of common kinship that it generated in Jammu and Kashmir. But the elements that joined the Conference in 1947 began to desert it, partly, on account of the arbitrary and high-handed ways of the National Conference bosses in Kashmir. There was no regular, democratic functioning of the organisation in the province. The will of certain individuals prevailed. This led to much discontent, which in the absence of any constitutional remedies led to large-scale desertions. Among those who left some are in the Jammu Parishad, some in the Democratic Socialist Party and some in the People's Party. All these three parties complained of uniform neglect from the Centre (Kashmir). This resulted in a separatist sentiment whose extreme expression was the Parishad. The agitation which the Parishad launched was no disorderly movement. A fairly large section of the non-Muslim public rallied round it and gave it their support. It was not uniformly peaceful and non-violent, it was not deliberately violent, either. There were cases of stone-throwing etc., but on the whole its leaders tried to keep it to peaceful ways and they achieved a fair measure of success. The total number killed by firing was round fifteen. The total number arrested was 2,500 of whom 500 were from outside the State—from the Punjab, U.P., Delhi etc.

We have no doubt in our minds that the principal slogan raised by the Parishad, 'Ek Pradhan, Ed Vidhan, Ek Nishan', was wrong and ill-conceived both in the narrow, limited context of State politics and in the wider context of India's relationship with Kashmir. But we also feel that the State policy of handling the movement lacked imagination. If the movement was going to have a disastrous effect all round, it was incumbent on the administration to make, first, a friendly approach to the Parishad leaders, listen to their grievances and make clear to them the various harmful implications of the Parishad agitation. Unfortunately, the agitation from the first day to the last was just a law and order problem. The agitation is said to have been a vital contributory factor in the growth of the 'Independence' idea in Sheikh's mind. Among the people we met, however, not a few told us that the Sheikh was not very unhappy about the agitation. He welcomed it as an additional proof of his new thesis.

As we have said earlier, the Parishad agitation was an unhappy event. The continued existence of the Parishad and its possible growth is also not in the best interests of the State. Any communal movement or organisation can do no good to the State. There are factors in the existing situation which are not calculated to win the enthusiastic loyalty of the Muslims for the new Government of Kashmir. It is elementary wisdom not to add to these factors and deepen the suspicion of the majority community, especially when the present Government is tender to all legitimate minority interests. The Parishad while it realises the need for caution and moderation does not yet, we are afraid, appreciate the full complexity of the situation. Another disadvantage under which the Parishad labours is its close dependence on elements associated with the old order.

The other two organisations we met, viz. the Democratic Socialist Party and the People's Party, contained, especially the former, some earnest young men. The main points they emphasized were (1) National Conference in Jammu, being very weak and disorganised, leaves scope for the Communist and the Communalist. (2) They came out of the National Conference on ac-

count of growing indiscipline and irregularities in it and their encouragement from the Centre and have formed these two organisations which are neither Communist nor Communalist. (3) Jammu is a neglected province. It is not considered an integral part of Kashmir by the powers that be, with the result that separatist tendency and bring about a closer union of the Kashmir Valley and Jammu. (4) They would welcome the formation of a branch of the Praja Socialist Party in Jammu and Kashmir that they may be better able to meet the opposition of the ruling party. This would also make them more acceptable to the people. To be a part of a big all-India Party is in itself a big source of strength.

Having regard to the various implications of the Kashmir problem the PSP had not been over-eager to establish a branch in Kashmir much as it has sympathised with democratic and socialist elements in the State. It is, of course, for the National Executive to decide the matter as and when it thinks fit but we have, however, no difficulty in suggesting that till a final decision is made, socialist comrades in the State should in their difficult work receive the counsel and guidance of the PSP leaders.

Since the National Conference in Jammu is weak, the Communist Party has had more scope for growth here than in the Kashmir Valley. If the Communist Party can make itself strong in Jammu and has a little strength elsewhere, it can wield a decisive influence in the politics of Kashmir. It is not without meaning the untiring emphasis of the Communist Party on not only the autonomy of the Kashmir State within the broad framework of India, but also the autonomy of the three units of the State. All these autonomies help greatly the purpose the Party has in view. It is interested in keeping alive sectional and territorial divisions. These sectional divisions can help the Party at any time they deem it expedient to press them into its services. Autonomy has no fixed meaning. Its content can vary from time to time, according to the exigencies of the situation.

Since the National Conference in Jammu is weak, the Com-

munist Party has had more scope for growth here than in the Kashmir Valley.

There are various organisations, such as the Kisan Sabha, the Democratic Youth League and Peace Conference, through which our Communist friends seek to establish contact with the people and create centres of influence and give a direction to events in the country. If the field is left clear for the Parishad and the Communists the latter can in course of time and with Governmental patronage at its command build up a good strong position, hold the balance of power and give any orientation to the policies of the State as would suit their national and international strategy. We, therefore, feel strongly that the socialist element in Jammu should be strengthened. How it should be done is for the National Executive to decide in the light of the various delicacies of the local and national situation.

VIII

LADAKH

We met the Lama of Ladakh. From our talk with him, it did not appear Ladakh has any serious problems to contend with. It has a population of 80 lakhs of whom, according to him, 45 lakhs are Buddhists and 35 lakhs Muslims. Ladakh did not react in any form to the events of 9th August. There were no demonstrations worth the name. The news also reached them late.

The frontiers, according to the Lama, are safe. They are being well guarded by the Indian troops.

The Lama said Ladakh was behind the Bakshi regime. It was all for accession to India. The population is scattered and there is not much political consciousness. Its main problems are more schools, more roads, and more facilities for agriculture and industry.

IX

LAND REFORM, CO-OPERATIVES ETC.

It would not be inappropriate to say a word in the report about land reforms and connected matters as they hold a lesson for us in India who are pledged to radical reforms in the system of India. All parties in India, the Congress, the PSP and the Communists each in its way and in differing contexts made much of these reforms and held them up as an example of what should be attempted in India. Little did we know till recently that these reforms have proved a flop and have given rise to so much trouble and vexation that they became a principal popular grievance against the Government of 'New Kashmir'. The reforms, in principle, were good. Its basic features were :

- (1) Abolition of big landed states. No proprietor to own more than 22 acres;
- (2) The expropriated land to be transferred to the tiller under whose cultivating possession such land was at the moment of the enactment of the new law. The tiller shall be the full owner of the land. No tiller to own more than 22 acres of land.

Other features provided for the security of tenure, lowering of rents, non-transferability of land etc.,

Under these reforms the peasants who had already cultivating right and who had some influence got the maximum of 22 acres, leaving little for the vast mass of landless peasantry. Where this class was given some land, it was a fraction of an acre apiece and that, too, of bad marshy land.

The maximum of 22 acres for the old landed gentry was fixed without reference to the quality and productivity of the land. Land is fertile in the Kashmir Valley but it is of poor quality in large parts of Jammu. The main trouble, however, came from the fact that the execution of the whole scheme of reform was entrusted to a highly corrupt administrative machinery. The minor official became the distributing agency of the expropriated

land. It extorted heavy bribes from peasants who wanted more land to reach the permissible limit of 22 acres. They also bribed to get good land. Bad land was reserved for the poor who had no resources. The worst sufferers were the landless labourers who either got nothing or got small plots of bad, rocky or marshy land.

The Government also ended the old class of creditors through debt conciliation and debt cancellation boards and the like. The new arrangements the Government brought into being were not only inadequate but became sources of tyranny and oppression.

Compulsory procurement of foodgrains and corrupt means employed for the purpose caused fresh hardship to the peasant, especially the poorer section.

Another prolific source of corruption was the co-operatives. It is extraordinary how even these co-operative agencies can become a terror and source of gross exploitation of the poor. These co-operatives obtained the right to procure, almost compulsorily, the surplus food that was left over with the peasant after the compulsory levy. Often the peasant had to buy rice at the black market rate in order to meet the extortionate demands of the Government and the co-operatives. The officials in these co-operatives piled up fortunes, but the peasant did not know where to turn for relief.

The National Conference as an organisation was a passive spectator of this tragic betrayal of the hopes reforms had aroused in the peasantry. It did not feel that it was its business to do educative propaganda and help in the honest implementation of the reforms. The peasants also, on their part, did not feel that what they got was their due, a result of their struggle and suffering. No educative propaganda had preceded the conferring of new rights on them and the extermination of unjust privileges. There were no regular peasants' committees to see that the reforms were properly implemented and the interests of the poor and landless adequately safeguarded.

The new Government is eloquent in condemning the manner in which land reforms have been handled. It is a little naive on

its part to seek to absolve itself from all blame for the poor results.

The Government wishes to keep intact the basic structure of the land reforms, but improve the machinery for implementing them.

We had occasion to study some other aspects of the economic situation, viz. the export-import position of the State, cottage industries and tourist traffic but we do not think we need burden the report with our observations on these subjects. Kashmir's list of imports from India is an impressive one. The exports, however, are far from impressive. This, they said, is due to the unsatisfactory economic condition of the State. Abolition of the custom is one of the ways in which the internal situation is sought to be eased. As for the tourist traffic the number of European tourist in 1945 was 18,890 and of Indian 18,407, but in 1949 the number of European tourist was 425 and Indians 3,321. In 1950, 1951, 1952 and 1953 the corresponding numbers were 898, 1,246, 225, 240, and 5,885, 9,333, 9,425, 7,853. Besides this heavy reduction in numbers the boatman's complaint is that neither Europeans nor Indians spend as freely now as they, specially the former, did in good or bad old days. The cottage industries, too, are on the decline but we may not go into any details here.

In the services, the minority community is still well-represented and we heard no complaint from any quarter on this score. During the last five or six years some ten thousand Pandits, we were told, have migrated from Kashmir and settled down in India, not a few fairly comfortably.

RESOLUTION ON KASHMIR

Mishandling and foreign interference of more than one variety have conspired to make the naturally difficult situation in Kashmir well-nigh insoluble. Yet a fair and wise solution is imperative not only in the interest of the two countries, but of peace and goodwill among nations.

A lasting solution of any human conflict must be based on just principles and the long view. India and Pakistan, whatever their present differences, have to live together; and they cannot but live in friendship. Persistent conflict is sure to destroy them both.

The Praja Socialist Party stands for the freedom of all peoples and their right to decide their own future. The National Executive of the Praja Socialist Party fully concedes this right to the people of Kashmir. However, in the present bedevilled situation it is doubtful whether the ends in view, namely Indo-Pakistan amity and the solution of the Kashmir problem would be achieved through a plebiscite.

The National Executive strongly feels that it would be very much worthwhile for both the governments to sit together determined to find a satisfactory solution. Representatives of the two governments, no doubt, have met in the past, but they did so under the shadow of third parties and relying on finding a solution with their help. It is necessary to lift this shadow and seek a solution without the interposition of any outside agencies.

The national Executive urges the peoples of both India and Pakistan to exert pressure on their governments to adopt this manful and right course.

