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Indo-Pak Talks

INTER-GOVERNMENTAL talks may at times be diplomatic ends in themselves. Such were the series of Indo-Pak talks on Kashmir held during the winter of 1962-63. Neither side expected any results and then, was no disappointment at their failure, at least not in this sub-continent. But the recent talks between the Home Ministers of the two countries appear, in retrospect to have been of a different order. Not only had India come to the conference table with the genuine desire and hope of arriving at certain agreed decisions for the "restoration of communal harmony and the establishment of conditions of security and confidence for the minorities of the two countries", Pakistan, it would seem, had also come with the expectation of some results. It had hoped to persuade India to stop the eviction of Pakistani infiltrators into Assam.

It has not gone back with empty hands. While India did not gain any substantial point on the question of facilities for the migration of Pakistani minorities into India, Pakistan managed to extract from the Indian Home Minister the promise to suspend serving quit notices on Pakistani infiltrators for two months to give Pakistan time to suggest modifications or improvements. As a matter of fact, Pakistan's intransigence, in the matter of the eviction of infiltrators in Assam and the argument with which it repudiated the Nehru-Liaquat pact lends strong support to a theory regarding Pakistan's intentions that has not been very widely held hitherto. It would seem that Pakistan is not really interested in driving out its minority population, however much events indicate the contrary; nor, of course, is it interested in the exchange of populations. Its objective seems to be to leave the minorities in the two countries where they are, but transfer some of its Muslim population to India.

Behind Pakistan's interest in retaining the Hindu minority in Pakistan there seem to be two conflicting factors at play. There is, on the one hand, the desire on the part of the Government to continue to use the minority population as hostages that may be tyrannised whenever political expediency demands it; on the other hand, there is a genuine apprehension on the part of East Pakistani Muslims that any vacuum created by the migration of the minorities would be followed by a corresponding immigration of West Pakistanis. It is this that explains the very remarkable opposition that a large section of the press and public in East Pakistan offered to the fomentors of trouble during the recent communal riots. The East Bengal Muslim, it is well known, finds himself nearer in many matters to the Bengali Hindu than to his Islamic overlords from the Punjab Or Sind.

Of alarming significance is the importance Pakistan is attaching to the Muslim infiltrators being not repatriated. Does this fact, coupled with Pakistan's total lack of interest in encouraging any migratory movement from India into Pakistan reveal a design to increase the strength of the Muslim minority in the border areas? Warnings sounded in Parliament by a Member about the possibility of Assam being made into a second Kashmir need not be dismissed as the wild fantasy of a Hindu extremist. Pakistan's rulers could well dream of a Sudetenland, knowing as they do that the Muslims in India are by and large safe,

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