

## ASIAN NATIONALISM

MR. K. M. PANIKKAR is a distinguished writer, statesman, and diplomat. He is the author of several original historical works, was the first Ambassador of independent India to Communist China, and now represents his country in Egypt. His latest book\* is an essay on the period of European domination in southern and eastern Asia, which began with the voyage of Vasco da Gama to India in 1498 and ended with the victory of the Chinese Communists in 1949. These four and a half centuries possess, in Mr. Panikkar's view, a basic unity that has been largely ignored. As he rightly points out, the voluminous literature on the history of Asia during this period consists almost entirely of studies of individual countries. He has set himself the task of restoring the larger perspective, in what he calls "perhaps the first attempt by an Asian student to see and understand European activities in Asia for 450 years."

Mr. Panikkar is painting on a vast canvas, and it is not surprising that the colours are more vivid in some parts than in others. His profound knowledge of India, both past and present, has been reinforced by a thorough study of China. His treatment of Japan relies to a far greater extent on the work of other scholars, and his references to South-East Asia are very thin, except where the interests of India or China are involved. Of the European nations it is, of course, the British whom he knows best. From an Indian nationalist the British reader will expect harsh words, but Mr. Panikkar gives credit where he thinks it is due: for the traditional adversary he shows respect, and at times affection. One also detects a certain admiration for the Portuguese pioneers, the first of the European invaders, whose contact with the author's first home, the coast of Malabar, formed the subject of his first considerable historical research. For the French and Dutch he shows no sympathy and little understanding. It would be flattering to British pride to regard this as proof of British superior virtue; it seems, however, more likely only that Mr. Panikkar has had little opportunity to

acquaint himself with France or Holland. Of Russia it must be said, with regret, that Mr. Panikkar shows hardly any understanding or knowledge. He appears unfamiliar, not only with Russian sources, but with European secondary works on Russia. This, as will be argued later, is not a minor gap.

NATIONALISM, the author believes, is "the most significant development in Asian countries during the last hundred years of European contact." He disagrees with those European writers who claim that nationalism is an idea imported into Asia from the West. "In China, Japan and to a lesser extent in India, the sense of patriotism was strong and deeply imbedded in people . . . The development of nationalism in Asia . . . was a parallel growth to the same movement in Europe and arose out of similar circumstances, that is, resistance to foreign rule."

But nationalism, after all, is something distinct from patriotism. Patriotism is as old as the human race. Its object may be home, family, country, or dynasty. Nationalism speaks in the name of The Nation, an invention of the 18th century and the French Revolution, an invention detested and combatted by the monarchs and ruling classes of that time. In 19th century Europe, nationalism became indissolubly associated with the idea of popular sovereignty, with the idea that loyalty to the people came before loyalty to the ruler, and that the people were always noble and good. These were the ideas of Mazzini and the Irish patriots, who, as Mr. Panikkar rightly notes, influenced Asia as prophets of nationalism. Nationalism has gone a long way since then, and the people and those who speak in its name have revealed unsuspected features. But it was surely this nationalism, derived from Rousseau and his diverse intellectual progeny, which arrived, ready-made, in Asia, and gave direction to the discontent and the patriotism that had long been there.

Not only was nationalism imported from Europe, but those who propagated it were a European product, the special social category, so difficult to define yet so vitally important in

\* *Asia and Western Dominance*. By K. M. PANIKKAR. George Allen and Unwin. 30s.

the history of “underdeveloped countries,” which first received a name in Russia, the first “underdeveloped country”—the *intelligentsia*. Of the general importance of European education in Asia, Mr. Panikkar is of course well aware. Through European schools on Asian soil, and by study in Europe and America, young Asians entered the cultural world of the 20th century. In this field perhaps more credit should have been given to the Christian missions, to which Mr. Panikkar devotes some of his most brilliant and tendentious chapters. But if educated Asians lived in the 20th century, their peoples lived far back in the Middle Ages. The contrasts between their own lives and the lives of the peasant masses, between the democratic ideas that they learned as students and the reality of the Asian villages, largely explain the frustration and radicalism of the Asian intelligentsia. Their position was similar to that of the Russian intelligentsia at the turn of the century, or of the Balkan intelligentsia in the 1920's. It has no real parallel in the history of Western Europe or North America. There too, of course, there has been mass poverty and social injustice in the 20th century. But whereas the British or American worker was merely much poorer than the lawyer or the teacher, in Asia the masses and the intellectuals belonged to different worlds and different centuries.

**I**N Asia as in Eastern Europe, the radicalism of the intelligentsia took many different forms, determined mainly by the degree of political freedom, and the resilience of the intellectual tradition, of each country. As Mr. Panikkar shows, in one of the most interesting sections of his book, both Indian and Japanese thinkers, in different ways, were able to adapt their religious and cultural traditions to absorb certain Western ideas and to meet the European challenge. Of the two, the Japanese were more quickly and spectacularly successful, but it may be that in the long term the Indian achievement will prove the more solid. In China, on the other hand, the old values crumbled, and a vacuum was created, which, after a chaotic interval, was filled by Marxism.

The political conditions of the three countries were also quite different. In Japan the brilliant military and industrial successes of the Imperial régime enlisted the support of most of the educated class, while police measures kept the

influence of social radicalism within narrow limits. Repression drove the Left into revolutionary action, but also made this action extremely ineffective. The revolutionary movement which had a substantial following in inter-war Japan was not “Left” but “Right”—a hotch-potch of religious traditions, anti-capitalist slogans, and militarism. It was MacArthur who first gave the Japanese political freedom, and the consequences of this experiment are not yet clear.

In China there has hardly ever been any freedom in the present century. It seems indeed doubtful whether any influential Chinese has thought in any but authoritarian terms. In India, under British supremacy, the rule of law and the liberty of the citizen were more than fictions. It is true that Indian nationalists were sometimes imprisoned, that troops sometimes fired on crowds, and that individuals were sometimes unjustly or even cruelly treated. It is understandable that the triumphant nationalist orators of today should seek to perpetuate the memory of their sufferings. Yet repressive actions by the British authorities in India were on a quite different scale, both in quantity and in quality, from those of the Imperial Japanese “Thought Police,” the Chinese warlords, or Mao's Communists. This difference in kind Indian opinion will in time recognise. Mr. Panikkar, who speaks of the “imposing and truly magnificent legal structure” in British India, recognises it already. He also knows that Britain consented to Indian independence, not only because Indian nationalists were strong, but also because the British people did not wish to refuse to the Indians the democratic rights which were their own most treasured heritage and achievement. Democracy, of course, is never secure: it has to be defended and reconquered by each generation. But that its roots are stronger in India than in China or Japan is a source of some small pleasure to British minds.

In Japan, China, and India, then, the forces driving the intelligentsia to revolutionary thought or action were not equally strong. But in all three countries the gap between the centuries, between masses and intelligentsia, remains even today, though it is less wide in industrial Japan than in agrarian India and China. It is perhaps widest of all in South-East Asia. The frustrated revolutionary intelligentsia is no less important, as a social and

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political force, in independent Asia than it was in colonial Asia. It is, as it was in Russia and the Balkans, the main force on which the Communist conspirators can rely.

MR. PANIKKAR emphasises that at least since the mid-19th century the European Powers usually acted together against Asians, especially in China, and that this unity of Europe created the idea of the unity of Asia, of what he calls "Asianism." The unity of Europe was, of course, an optical illusion. The unity of Asia is also an optical illusion. It is not only that, as Mr. Panikkar partly admits, the Moslem, Hindu, Buddhist, and Confucian civilisations are as different from one another as any of them is from the Christian civilisations of Europe and America. It is also that the interests of the great Asian Powers have conflicted, do conflict, and are likely in the future to conflict. Mr. Panikkar does not profess the curious but fashionable doctrine of the "inverted colour bar," by which no one can be an imperialist whose skin is not white. But he does appear to underrate Asian imperialisms. He admits the imperialist record of Japan in China, even if he half dismisses it by insisting that it was copied from British methods of conquest in India. Of the Kashmir conflict, of the potentialities of *Auslandschinesentum* as a "fifth column" in South-East Asia,\* and of the prospects of Burma between the Chinese and Indian colossi, he has nothing to say.

But it is in his references to Russia that the distortion of his perspective is most alarming. Apparently because Russia "is in Asia," Mr. Panikkar's "Asianism" causes him to slur over the record of Russian imperialism. He states that Russian expansion eastwards filled a vacuum, in much the same way as American expansion to the Pacific. This comparison is true only of Siberia. In the Caucasus and in Central Asia the Russian armies conquered ancient civilised states, often using barbarous cruelty. Nor is it true that Russia did not engage in religious proselytism. The Moslem

\* *Auslandsdeutschtum* (German minorities abroad) were an important weapon of Nazi imperialism in subjecting the small countries of Central Europe and the Balkans. The Chinese minorities in Siam, Malaya, Indochina, and Indonesia were designed to fill a similar role in Chiang Kai-shek's foreign policy. Mao Tse-tung is improving on the technique of his defeated rivals.

Tatars of the Volga valley were cruelly persecuted until the end of the 18th century, and in the late 19th and early 20th centuries the same process was continued by less cruel but no less energetic methods.

From the mid-1890's Russian imperialism in China was comparable to that of all other European Powers except in its greed, which was greater. Sometimes it took advantage of the aggression of other Powers against China (in 1858 and 1895), sometimes it acted on its own (in 1900). If the other Powers bribed mandarins, the Russians bribed Li Hung-chang himself. If the other Powers built their own alien city on Chinese soil at Shanghai, the Russians built the Russian city of Harbin in the centre of Manchuria. Mr. Panikkar seems to know nothing of the organisation of the extra-territorial zones of the Chinese Eastern and South Manchurian railways, ruled by the St. Petersburg Ministry of Finance with its own police force. He does not seem to have heard of the decade (1907-1916) of Russo-Japanese imperialist cooperation at the expense of China, during which the two Powers by mutual agreement carved up slices of Mongolia and Manchuria.

SPAKING of the Russian Revolution, Mr. Panikkar is of course quite right to stress the effects of the Soviet example on Asian thought—the lowering of West European prestige, the new emphasis on the economic factor and on social conflicts, the new literary trends. But he nowhere shows that he has grasped the difference between the myth of the Russian Revolution and the reality of the Soviet Union. He quotes Professor Lattimore to the effect that "there was a community of interests between the left-wing nationalists and the Bolsheviks" in Asiatic Russia. This may have been true in Outer Mongolia, on which Lattimore is a recognised authority, but of Transcaucasia, the Tatar lands, and Central Asia it is sheer nonsense. The left-wing nationalists of the Volga Tatars, the most democratic and socially advanced Moslems in the world, were ruthlessly suppressed by the Bolsheviks. Their fellows in Moslem Azerbaijan and Bokhara, and in Christian Georgia, shared their fate.

The same quotation from Lattimore distinguishes between British India, where "even British factory foremen and rank-and-file soldiers, with non-old-school-tie accents,

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identified themselves with their own ruling class against all 'natives,' and the Soviet Union, where such things could not happen. This again is nonsense. The Russian railwaymen of Tashkent, who formed the hard core of Bolshevism in Central Asia, distinguished themselves by their arrogance and brutality to the Moslem "natives," as official Bolshevik records amply show. In the years from 1921 to 1939 the degree of oppression of Asians by the Bolsheviks varied according to the general policy of the party. Its worst moments were the early years of the first Five Year Plan, when half the Kazakh nation (1,500,000 out of 3,000,000) were starved to death or driven over the Chinese border, and the Yezhov purge of 1937-38, when the Communist parties, the civil administration, and the newly created educated classes of the Asian nations were purged in their hundreds of thousands. During the Second World War whole nations were deported from their homes, on the ground that some of their number had cooperated with the German invaders and that the rest had not taken up arms against these traitors. One can well imagine what Mr. Panikkar would say had the British shot all members of the Burmese National Army which cooperated with the Japanese, and deported the rest of the Burmese nation to Arctic Canada.\*

Since 1945 the Soviet régime has done its best to destroy even the dead heroes of the Asians. The Caucasian and Kirghiz leaders who fought the armies of the 19th century Tsars have been posthumously "unmasked" as British or Turkish agents. In Lenin's day, the fight against Tsarist imperialism had been regarded by Bolshevik writers as a "liberation movement." Today it is revalued as "reactionary," for conquest by Russia was an "ob-

jectively progressive" stage in the history of these nations, as it promoted their social development. The Victorian imperialist, even the Kiplingesque, nature of this argument should surely be apparent to an Indian.

ECHOES of Kipling are no coincidence. That there is a connection between imperialism and European industrialism has long been apparent, but its exact nature is not so clear. It has usually been assumed that the driving force behind both has been private capitalism and the profit motive. But there is no private capitalism in the Soviet Union, and the Soviet ruling class does not pursue profit, at least in the classical sense of the word. Rather, it seems that the process of industrialisation produces certain social types. The ruling group of a nation engaged in a rapid industrial revolution seems to possess specific tendencies—to exploit its workers, to despise and maltreat subject nations, to hate originality in thought or the arts, to surround itself with vulgar pomp and ceremony. These features marked the private bourgeoisie of Victorian England; they mark also the state bourgeoisie of Communist Russia. The differences between the two types of bourgeoisie are less important than the similarities.

The differences in the political framework are, however, decisive. The abuses of Victorian England could be gradually remedied because a free press allowed discussion of original and unpopular ideas, because freedom of association allowed workers to form and use trade unions, and because parliamentary government allowed British socialists, Irish Home-Rulers and Indian nationalists to state and pursue their aims. In Imperial Russia and Imperial Japan autocratic government made the limits of political action extremely narrow but did not completely exclude it. In the Soviet Union a totalitarian régime, which differs not only from democracy but also from autocracy of the classical type, suppresses absolutely all political or social action which is not directed by the government itself.

Totalitarian government differs from autocratic government of the classical type in two respects. First, it tells its subjects not merely what they must not do, but what they must do and say and think, in private as well as in public life. Secondly, it is restrained by absolutely no moral or religious inhibition: in practice as well

\* The fate of one of these nations, the Caucasian Chechens, recalls, in the manner of its execution, the notorious massacre of Glencoe of 1692. Mr. Panikkar, with his great knowledge of British history—especially of its discreditable episodes—will appreciate the parallel. There are, however, two differences. The Campbell troops of 1692, having abused the hospitality of their victims, killed 30 persons, and their crime was followed by long protests and official inquiries in London and Edinburgh. The NKVD troops of 1944, having similarly abused the hospitality of their victims, deported 700,000 persons, killing many hundreds and allowing tens of thousands to starve or die of exposure. The action was not followed by a murmur of protest.

as in theory, there is no limit at all to what it may do to any man or woman or child to further its aims. This is something new in history. European and Asian tyrants of the past were often cruel, but their field of action was limited by some rules, beliefs, or superstitions. Communism has no limits. The government established by the Chinese Communists seems, especially since the mass executions and inquisitions that followed the outbreak of aggression in Korea, to be following this path at a more rapid pace even than did the Soviet government which is its model.

**T**HE people of Britain and America and of Western Europe wish the peoples of Asia well in their new independence. It is no grudging spirit that prompts the reflection that there are pitfalls ahead. It is important that the Asian leaders and the Asian intelligentsia should distinguish between real and imaginary friends and foes, examples and bogies, highways and culs-de-sac. One may hope that they will learn that nationalism is not necessarily progressive,

that Asians are not necessarily brothers, or Europeans enemies, that workers can be exploited by persons who are not private capitalists, and imperialism can be the work of men not born West of the Elbe. Industrialisation, they will find, not only solves but creates problems, and first among these the problem of power: not only political, but also economic power requires its checks and balances.

Indians more than other Asians are aware of the value of liberty and of empirical methods. When Mr. Panikkar is writing of India the brilliance of his analysis and his style are persuasive. It is a pity that the wider perspective at which he aims should be distorted by his illusions regarding Russia, and by his too uncritical acceptance of scraps of Marxist or quasi-Marxist social doctrine. Perhaps only when the last vestiges of European belief in superiority to Asians, and of Asian resentment of things now past, have alike disappeared, will it be possible for European and Asian democrats to let dead dragons lie, and stand together against new, live ones.

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## ABOUT OUR AUTHORS

● Americans read British magazines, and the British read American ones. But there is a difference in the quality of the matter read. The American reads *The Economist*, the *New Statesman and Nation*, the *Spectator*, *The Listener*, the *Times Literary Supplement*, etc. The Briton reads *Time and Life* and *Reader's Digest*—at best, the *New Yorker*. Of *Partisan Review*, *Commentary*, *Kenyon Review*, *Hudson Review* and a dozen others, he may have heard, but only the members of a small group have read them. Perhaps it is the dollar shortage. In any case, it helps explain why the name of LESLIE A. FIEDLER is relatively unknown to the British public, a situation which, beginning in this issue, we hope to remedy. Mr. Fiedler is one of the ablest of the younger American literary critics. For the past two years, he has been lecturing on American literature at the University of Rome, and has just now returned to his regular post as associate professor at the University of Montana.

● With the publication of excerpts from VIRGINIA WOOLF's diaries (the complete text will be published in book form by Hogarth Press), we begin a practice which we hope to be able to continue. While we shall certainly be on the lookout for younger talent, we would also like to get hold of material by recent masters. They represent, after all, our literary heritage, which we either accept or rebel against, but which is indubitably—and creatively—there. Next month, we shall present some hitherto unpublished letters by William Butler Yeats.

● We are indebted to Edward G. Seidenstricker for the translation of the two stories by DAZAI OSAMU. Mr. Seidenstricker is in Japan on a fellowship of the Ford Foundation, to which we are therefore, we suppose, also indirectly indebted. He has promised us further

translations from modern Japanese writing for future issues of ENCOUNTER.

● About Djemila, the *Columbia-Lippincott Gazetteer of the World* gives the following bare information: "An ancient village in the Constantine department of north-east Algeria in the Tell Atlas, 20 miles north-east of Setif. It has Roman ruins, including a triumphal arch, a forum, and a temple dating back to the 3rd century A.D. Its ancient name was Cuicul." ALBERT CAMUS' essay on Djemila, presented here in English for the first time, is a work of his youth. It is interesting to observe, in comparing it with his later writing, both the development of his style from a cadenced lyricism to an intense austerity, and the permanence of his theme: death and the man.

● Belittling public opinion polls seems to be a favourite pastime of intellectuals, journalists, and politicians. This attitude is perhaps in some ways healthy, since it expresses an implicit protest against the mechanical-statistical approach to human beings and human affairs. But in part, too, it is mere snobbery, tinged with competitive envy. We do learn things from opinion polls that we would not otherwise know; and even if they are not always the most important ones, they are knowledge gained, nevertheless. NATHAN GLAZER, a leading young American sociologist, will report frequently on "What People Think." His next article will concern itself with an international survey of "the popularity of politicians."

● Photo acknowledgements

To JITENDRA ARYA:

Children at a pump

Indian street scene

Peasant girl

To PAUL POPPER:

Side chapel in the Nemnath temple