

An interesting luncheon party

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AN INTERESTING LUNCHEON PARTY.

To ask the editor of the "Swiss Observer" to attend a Swiss function is nothing out of the ordinary, and falls into the domains of his activities, but an invitation to be the guest of a gathering where Indian affairs are discussed, is an unusual occurrence, and therefore warrants special mentioning, in view of the recent political events which have brought these new dominions much before the public eye.

The luncheon took place on Wednesday, September 24th, 1947, at Frascati's Restaurant, Oxford Street, W.1, and was arranged by the "London Association of British Empire Newspapers Overseas," and the invitation came from our compatriot, Mr. J. H. Büchi, London Manager of "The Hindustan Times and Associated Newspapers," which belongs to the L.A.B.E.N.O.

This Association includes the London Managers and a number of London editors of all the important Dominion and Colonial newspapers. A feature of their monthly luncheon parties consists of entertaining prominent personalities with a view to making personal contacts as well as gaining up-to-date information.

The principal guests at the party were Mr. K. R. Krishna-Menon, High Commissioner of India, and Mr. Habib Ibrahim Rahimtoola, High Commissioner of Pakistan.

The gathering was presided over by Mr. Irving Douglas, the London Editor of the "Sidney Morning Herald," and amongst other guests were the High Commissioner of Australia, Dr. E. de Graffenried, Councillor of the Swiss Legation, and Dr. A. R. Lindt, Press Attaché, Swiss Legation, as well as a considerable number of business men who are closely connected with the Dominions.

In his opening address the Chairman mentioned that, although the Association had on former occasions the honour of entertaining High Commissioners, they never before had, as guests, at the same table two newly appointed High Commissioners of two newly created Dominions.

He pointed out that members and friends of the L.A.B.E.N.O. were mainly interested in business relations between Great Britain and the Dominions some of which also represented the editorial side.

In concluding his address, Mr. Irving Douglas, voiced his regrets that the Indian Government found it necessary to introduce a censorship on news referring to communal rioting which unfortunately was taking place at present.

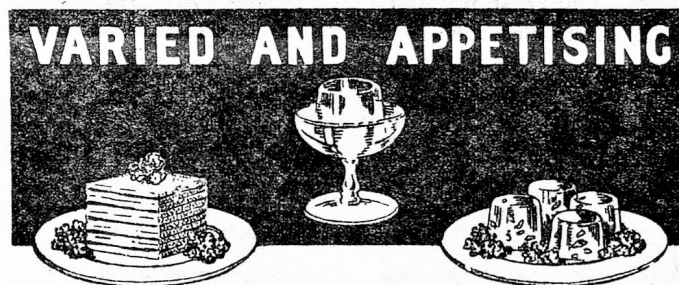
The Chairman was followed by Mr. Habib Ibrahim Rahimtoola, High Commissioner of Pakistan, who on rising, received a hearty ovation. He said that his Government had every intention to entertain good relations with the United Kingdom, and not only to continue, but to strengthen the satisfactory commercial relations which had existed between the two countries. He pointed out that the new Dominion of Pakistan was mainly agricultural at present, but they would endeavour to establish more industries.

The High Commissioner referred to the important irrigation schemes which are being studied, and which will be enlarged in the near future; he pointed out that what is now Pakistan, had, usually a surplus of food, but the floods had unfortunately destroyed much of this

year's crop in parts of the Punjab. In spite of this, he said "my Government will export to India the amount of food that had been agreed upon before the floods, and the recent rioting had occurred." (*Applause.*)

The Chairman then called on Mr. Krishna-Menon, the High Commissioner of India, who received an equally hearty reception; like his colleague, he assured the company that the Government of India was anxious not only to maintain but to increase business relations with the United Kingdom, saying that India had already many large industries and that an increased industrialisation must go on. "It is an established fact," he said, "that with industrialisation trade accordingly increases, though, of course, some changes in the articles that were to be imported will have to be made. India has no intention to cut itself off from the outside world."

Mr. Krishna-Menon then took up the friendly challenge thrown out by the Chairman in his opening address. He said, that, in the first place, there was no censorship on news messages to be published outside India. What his Government however expected, was, that correspondents report objectively, and not from hearsay alone. He agreed, however, that as far as censorship inside India was concerned, the newspapers themselves had agreed to a certain censorship as far as reports, about the regrettable happenings in the Punjab were concerned. "The press," he continued, "shared the view of the Government, that com-



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munal hatred should not be fanned by sensational reports about the riots."


Mr. Krishna-Menon, on resuming his seat, was loudly cheered, and, with a few words of thanks, the Chairman closed the Meeting.

* * *

On this occasion it might be opportune to add a few remarks about India and Pakistan, based on conversations overheard at this Luncheon Party.

In the first instance we gathered, that the riots are not widespread. Apart from some minor disturbances in Calcutta, causing casualties, the trouble so far seems to be restricted to the Punjab. In the neighbourhood of Amritsar and Lahore, the Punjab was split into its Pakistan and Indian parts. Unfortunately, however, the fixing of the frontier there, leaves pockets of Moslems on the Eastern side of the frontier and Hindus and Sikhs on the Western side of it. Wholesale migration from the one side to the other started

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to take place as soon as the day of partition drew nearer. Moslem mobs on the Western side of the new frontier started to attack the Hindu (mostly Sikh) population. A similar outbreak occurred on the other side where fanatical Sikhs attacked the Moslems. The result was that the two minority populations of these regions started to flee in opposite directions, a large number of Hindus took the road towards Delhi, the Indian capital.

It was this large migration into and near Delhi which caused the murderous disturbances in the capital. Emigrees by their stories infuriated the Hindu population in Delhi and soon a mob was found "to return the compliment." Thus the Moslems in Delhi were sought out as scapegoats, and many of them were massacred. According to the latest news, there has been peace in Delhi for some time now, but it will take some time to establish peace in the affected region of the Punjab.

The position seems to be still serious, both Governments are co-operating but labour, under the disadvantage of a formerly united army having been split up into new formations, resulting in the fact, that often army units will sympathise more with their religious brethren than adhere to the orders for law and order of their respective Governments.

As Mr. Krishna-Menon, the High Commissioner for India said in his address, such happenings, though deplorable, are the pains of child-birth of two new nations, and in reviewing the position it is necessary to keep things in proper focus.

The parts directly affected by these troubles constitute no more than, say, one or two per cent. of the population of the two countries. Admittedly, the repercussions are more widespread mainly because the two new Governments have, at present to concentrate all their attention in finding a solution for these problems, instead of on more important matters.

India, apart from the States which have, so far, not decided to join one or the other of the two Dominions, has a population of about 280 millions; she has most of the industries, the large iron and steel works are all on her territory, and she possesses the three main sea-ports; Bombay, Calcutta and Madras, and if necessary can build some others. She can, if need be, increase her food production and the production of cotton by raising the standard of farming, but is, at present short of grain and rice.

Pakistan, with a population of about 70 millions, is on the Western side of the sub-continent, and is, as previously mentioned, mainly agricultural; she produces food, and the greater part of the hessian crop, (much of this crop is manufactured into jute by factories in India) she has only one sea-port of any importance, namely Karachi. On the eastern side, east of Calcutta, there is Eastern Bengal, which has one port of minor importance, but which will be sufficient for the seaborne trade of that Pakistan province.—

As reported in a previous number of the "Swiss Observer," Switzerland is shortly appointing diplomatic representatives to the two Governments, and it is hoped that the hitherto lively commercial relations with this vast and important continent, will thus, receive a new impetus.

The future of these two Dominion states is watched with great interest in our country.

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