

A. PAKISTAN - AFGHANISTAN. — Tension on North-West Frontier. - Afghan Demand for Independent "Pathanistan." - Repudiation by Government of Pakistan. - Bombing Incident on Afghan Frontier. - Afghan Approach for British Mediation. - Statement by Mr. Noel-Baker on British Government's Attitude

Tension arose during March in the relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan after the Kabul press and radio had launched a propaganda campaign against Pakistan demanding that the areas between the "Durand Line" and the Indus, comprising the North-West Frontier Province and the tribal territory, should be recognized as an independent "Pathanistan" and given the "right of self-determination."

The Durand Line, marking the Afghan frontier, was demarcated by Sir Mortimer Durand in 1893, and accepted by three successive Ameeris of Afghanistan. The areas between the Line and British India were recognized by both countries as "free tribal territory"; although under British sovereignty, their inhabitants were not British subjects, and retained their tribal autonomy. After the partition of India, Sir George Cunningham, then Governor of the N.W. Frontier Province, toured the tribal territory in November 1947 and met the *jirgas* (tribal assemblies) of the leading tribes, all of which stated that they were part of Pakistan and wished to preserve the same relations with Pakistan as with the British. Afghan spokesmen subsequently alleged that this agreement was



The Tribal Areas on the North-West Frontier. (*The Statesman, Calcutta.*)

strongly criticized a statement made by the Governor-General of Pakistan, Mr. Khwaja Nazimuddin, that the tribal territory formed an integral part of Pakistan, and described the statement as contrary to pledges given by Mr. Jinnah in 1948. Early in March the Kabul radio began to broadcast reports of alleged atrocities by Pakistani forces against the tribesmen, including allegations of bombing attacks, and on April 27 the Afghan Prime Minister, Shah Mahmud Khan, addressing a demonstration in Kabul, stated that the Government would rescue "our brother Afghans," if possible by methods of negotiation but if not "by other means." It was reported from Karachi on March 27 that Afghanistan had moved two divisions and part of her air force to the Pakistani frontier, it being claimed at the same time that Afghanistan's attitude had led to protest demonstrations in the disputed areas during March and April, and that tribal assemblies had passed resolutions affirming their loyalty to Pakistan and protesting against Afghan interference in their internal affairs. Sir Muhammad Zafrulla Khan, the Foreign Minister of Pakistan, stated on July 11 that neither the Durand Line agreement between Britain and Afghanistan, nor any subsequent treaty relating to the frontier, was open to question, but that Pakistan would welcome discussions with Afghanistan on matters of economic co-operation, such as the development of the hydro-electric and other resources of the frontier areas.

Tension between the two countries increased following an incident on June 12, when a Pakistani plane dropped bombs at Mughalga, in Afghan territory some 2,000 yards from the frontier, killing 23 people and injuring 24. Pakistan reports claimed that the bombs were dropped on the Pakistani side of the frontier, after the plane

had been fired on by a force including both Afghans and followers of the Fakir of Ipi, the Waziri tribal leader responsible for many local uprisings. After an investigation by a joint Pakistan-Afghan commission, however, Pakistan admitted on July 31 that the plane had flown over and dropped bombs on Afghan territory as a result of a "bona fide mistake," and agreed to pay compensation.

Afghanistan also alleged in June that Pakistan had arrested Agha Amin Jan (half-brother of ex-King Amanullah of Afghanistan), who, after living for several months among the Mahsud tribes of Waziristan, was said to have invaded Afghanistan at the head of a small force in an unsuccessful attempt to seize the tribal territory. Pakistan, strongly denying these allegations, maintained that the authorities in the tribal territory had dispersed Amin Jan's forces and informed the Afghan Government of his activities, and that counter-allegations that Afghan officials had welcomed the return of Ipi when he crossed the frontier from Pakistan in June, and planned to proclaim him King of "Pathanistan."

The Afghan Ambassador in London, Sardar Mohammed Zekria Khan, saw Mr. Bevin on June 29 and asked that H.M. Government should assist in settling the dispute. In the House of Commons on June 30 Mr. Noel-Baker (Lab.) asked Mr. Noel-Baker, Secretary for Commonwealth Relations, whether, in view of Afghanistan's "increasingly hostile" attitude, he would take steps to assure Pakistan that she could count on Britain's full support in the event of any aggression. Mr. Noel-Baker replied that the Government's view was that Pakistan was in international law the inheritor of the rights and duties of the former Government of India and of the U.K. Government in the territories on the North-West Frontier, and that the Durand Line was the international frontier. The Government had, he said, been in continual consultation with the Government of Pakistan, was convinced that there was no outstanding question between Pakistan and Afghanistan that could not be settled by peaceful means, and was confident that there could be no question of any aggression by Afghanistan.

The Afghan Ambassador, before returning to Kabul for discussions, stated in London on August 4 that his Government could not accept the British view that Pakistan had inherited the rights and duties of the former Government of India in the tribal areas, and added that, if negotiations with Pakistan for a settlement failed, Afghanistan would appeal to the United Nations.—(Pakistan High Commissioner's Office, London - *The Statesman, Calcutta - Times*)

(Prev. rep. 8704 A; "Pathanistan," 8690 A)

B. UNITED KINGDOM. — Report of Mineral Development Committee. - Government Acceptance of Principle of State Ownership of Certain Minerals.

The report of the Mineral Development Committee set up on August 1946 (see 8063 K) was published on July 29, its principal recommendations being as follows:

(1) State acquisition of the ownership in fee simple of all minerals falling within the committee's terms of reference, and transfer of ownership, together with the development value in these minerals now vested in the Central Land Board—to a Mineral Development Commission (similar to the former Coal Commission) to be set up by the Minister of Fuel and Power.

(2) The Commission to be responsible for (a) the management of property rights in minerals, and the fostering of development, and research; (b) establishment of a national scheme of mineral resources; (c) research into methods of prospecting, mining, extraction, and dressing, including the building and operation of pilot plants; (d) the fixing, with Ministerial approval, of conditions of working existing leases and supervision of all matters concerning mineral leases; (e) financial assistance, also subject to Ministerial approval, to private mining undertakings in the national interest; (f) recommendations as to necessary amalgamations to secure efficient and economical mineral development.

(3) Pending the setting up of the Commission, a joint committee to be formed representing the State and firms interested in mineral production, so as to ensure the proper development "as a matter of urgency" of potash sources now being explored in South Wales. The report stressed that the potential future importance of the discovery of potash in Britain "could not be over-estimated" since all domestic requirements of potash salts had at present to be imported.

One member of the committee, Mr. Peter Thorneycroft, disagreed with the nationalization of minerals and the setting up of the proposed Mineral Development Commission.

The chief mineral investigated by the Committee was (a) metalliferous group: tin, tungsten, lead, zinc, haematite, iron-ore; (b) non-metalliferous group: barytes, brines, fluorspar, china clay, gypsum, salt, potash, earth, talc, serpentine, glass sand.

Mr. Gaitskell (Minister of Fuel and Power) informed the House of Commons on July 25 that the Government had decided to accept the Committee's recommendation that the minerals included in its terms of reference should be brought into public ownership, that the necessary legislation would be introduced in due course, and that the other recommendations were being examined.—(*Times*) (Prev. rep. 8063 K)