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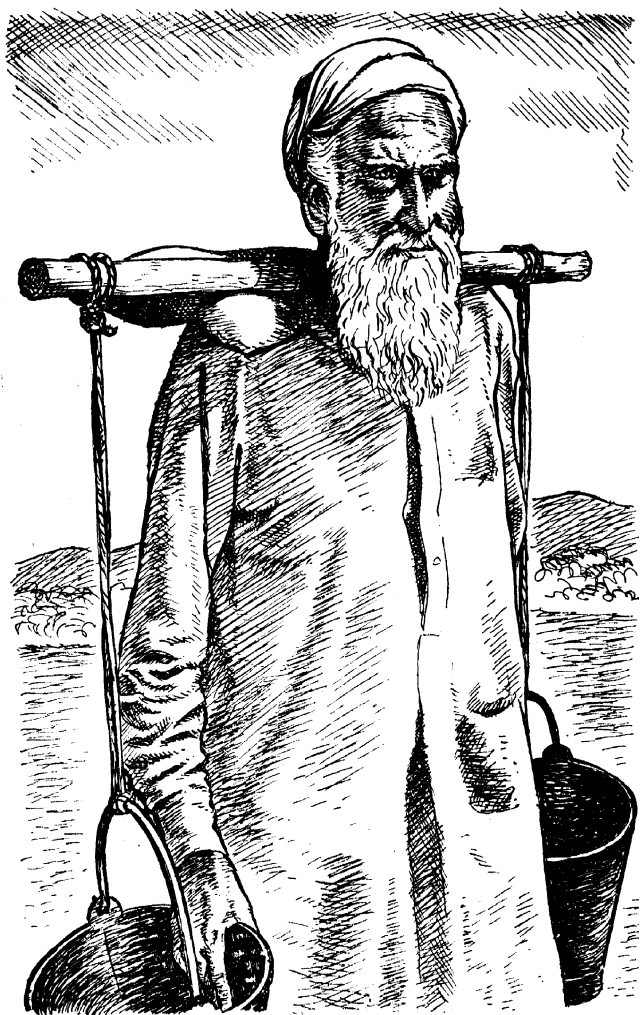
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UNCONQUERED BY ADVERSITY (see p. 55)

NEW CITIZENS OF INDIA

HORACE ALEXANDER



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P R E F A C E

THIS book could not have been written without the generous help of many men and women, official and unofficial, who have been working during the past four years to rehabilitate refugees from Pakistan; nor, indeed, without the insight that I have been able to obtain, to some extent at least, from men and women who are themselves displaced persons. To ~~Shri~~ A. P. Jain, Minister for Rehabilitation in the Indian Government, and to many officials of his department, I wish to express my thanks for the time and attention they have given in response to my inquiries; also to Ministers, officials and others in the Punjab, Bengal, Bombay and other States.

I cannot but recognize that some who have generously put time and petrol at my disposal may not like some of the comments I have made; some may resent criticism from a foreigner and an Englishman. But am I a foreigner to India? That is just what I do not know. For years now my life seems to have been so closely identified with India that I often forget that I was not Indian born. Some years ago an Indian friend described me as 'an Indian with a white skin'. Though the compliment was too generous, I sometimes think it was not far from the truth.

But I am still also an Englishman. Therefore I have wished to show my fellow-Britishers—indeed, any westerner who will read these pages—what a huge job India has had to tackle during the years of independence, since 1947, and how well she has tackled it. Then, as an Indian by adoption, I find myself turning round to my fellow-Indians

PREFACE

and saying: 'After all, we might have done the job better still. Here and there, there is still room for improvement.' So, where I have ventured on criticism, it is not an outsider's criticism, but rather the criticism of one who is himself partly to blame, and who still hopes to be allowed to help.

H. A.

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1

THE BACKGROUND

It is impossible to discuss India's refugee problem without some account of the circumstances out of which it has developed. And the moment one tries to fill in this background, one is faced with 'facts' that bristle with controversy.

I can hardly hope that the following paragraphs will be entirely acceptable to all Indian, Pakistani and British readers. It is not merely a question of stating facts correctly. This I hope I have done. But one must select one's facts, and in so doing one may easily betray unintentional prejudices. Some people, for instance, believe that communal conflict in India was largely instigated or at least stimulated by the British. Many English people would with equal sincerity and conviction repudiate these charges. It is not easy, when we live so near to the event, to say just where the truth lies.

At least it will be agreed that India's refugee problem is the outcome of prolonged communal tension, that is to say, tension and conflict between Hindus and Muslims, and, in north-west India, between Sikhs and Muslims, culminating in mass attacks in 1946 and 1947.

When the British began to introduce representative institutions into India, the Muslim community, with its hundred million adherents, was given completely separate representation from the rest of the population. Muslim electors voted only for Muslims; Hindus and those of other faiths voted in a separate electorate. In the

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territorial constituencies no Hindu voted for a Muslim; no Muslim voted for a Hindu. Thus, the religious cleavage, which was already intensified by differences of social custom, including, in some parts of India, differences of dress and food, became also a political cleavage. As self-government drew near there was a growing tendency for communal parties, such as the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha, to demand rights and privileges for each community as against the other. The one important national party, the Congress, gradually lost a good deal of the support it had at one time claimed from Muslims. Indeed, the Muslim League tried, though unsuccessfully, to force it to admit that it only represented Hindus.

Communal riots between Hindus and Muslims occurred in various towns and cities during the 1920s and '30s. But it was only after 1944 or 1945 that these two main religious communities, who had hitherto lived peacefully side by side in the hundreds of thousands of Indian villages, began to fight each other also in rural areas.

In the early months of 1946 General Elections were held throughout British India. Except in the North-West Frontier, where the Congress was still strong, the Muslim League won almost all the Muslim seats; and by that time the Muslim League was demanding the division of India and the establishment of a completely sovereign Muslim State to be called Pakistan. The 1946 elections, therefore, suggested that the Muslim electorate as a whole (the electorate was of course only a small fraction of the total population) wanted to have a separate national State. But in most parts of India the Muslims were heavily outnumbered by Hindus. The only provinces of British India where Muslims were in a majority everywhere were the North-West Frontier and Sind. Although they were

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the majority community also in the Punjab and Bengal, large areas in both these provinces had non-Muslim majorities. Therefore the Muslim League's claim that both these important provinces should be included in Pakistan was challenged.

Finally, after much debate, the leaders of the Congress Party agreed, reluctantly, to the establishment of Pakistan. Mahatma Gandhi disapproved of the partition to the end. The British Government, which had still the last word, decided that division of the country must involve the division of Bengal and the Punjab, and boundary commissions were immediately appointed. During the later months of 1946 and early in 1947 there had been terrible communal outbreaks in Bengal, Bihar and the Punjab. Indeed, the city of Calcutta was in a state bordering on civil war, sometimes open, sometimes latent, from August 1946 to August 1947. It was widely hoped that partition might put a stop to this violence.

In Bengal it did, largely owing to the heroic action of Mahatma Gandhi. But unfortunately there were not two Gandhis. If he could have spent the fateful days of late August 1947, with some Muslim colleague at his side, in Lahore or Amritsar, as well as in Calcutta, perhaps a different story could have been told. He had to remain for those decisive three weeks in Calcutta to ensure the peace of Bengal and Bihar. Meanwhile, the Punjab went up in flames. From West Punjab all Sikhs and nearly all Hindus were driven from their homes or slaughtered. From East Punjab, especially the northern half, Muslims were equally terrorized and killed. On the Pakistan side the flames of communal violence and fear spread north into parts of the North-West Frontier and, later, south into Bahawalpur State and Sind. On the Indian side, the flames

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spread into Delhi and parts of Rajputana, and to some extent also into the United Provinces. It is to the lasting credit of the Governor (the late Mrs Sarojini Naidu) and her Ministers and some of the chief officials of West U.P. that the contagion was arrested there. This is, indeed, the more remarkable, since the idea of Pakistan had been largely nurtured among the wealthier and educated Muslims of West U.P., some of whom did in fact leave for Pakistan; but they left their homes out of choice (not unmixed with fear), in some cases no doubt also from economic pressure, but not under the instant threat of mob violence.

Although communal violence did not spread all across India and although for the time being the two Bengals, both Indian and Pakistani, were at peace, the upheaval of 1947-8 gave both countries a huge refugee problem to cope with. Later Bengal and Assam were also involved.

In the following chapters I have tried to describe the fate of those who came to India. At first it had been my plan to include Pakistan also. But the ground to be covered proved to be too vast. It has taken me a year to collect (amid many distractions) the material for describing the work of rehabilitation in India; and I am conscious of how incomplete it is. My main purpose has been to see the problem not as a matter of statistical success or failure (though here and there I have included statistics), but rather as a problem of human suffering and its redemption. Thus, where I have found a gallant effort, whether on a large or small scale, to start the refugees on a new creative life as good citizens of free India, whether this has been due mainly to self-help or to the inspired efforts of officials or others, I have written at some length and have attempted to give a picture of what is happening in these bright

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spots. I have found a good number of them and I am sure there are others that I have not been fortunate enough to visit.

The Indian reader will also notice serious geographical gaps. At the time of the Hyderabad affair (1947-8) there was a large movement of population there, first of Hindus fleeing from the Razakars, then of Muslims leaving after Indian troops marched in. But the latter either returned or went to Pakistan. Today, there seems to be no refugee problem to speak of in Hyderabad or other parts of the south.¹ Kashmir is another gap in my story. On both sides of the cease-fire line there are displaced persons, who hope that when the political problem is settled they may return to their old homes. If I had included Pakistan a special chapter on this might have been required. The number of refugees on the Indian side is much smaller and their relief is being competently handled by Sheikh Abdullah and his colleagues in the Kashmir valley and in Jammu. I am also conscious that too little is said in what follows about refugee resettlement in the United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh) and some other areas. It is indeed a huge canvas. I could not fill it all.

A word on the word 'refugee'. I have used it throughout. Some people have a violent antipathy to the word. They say: 'These people are not refugees. They are displaced persons.' According to the dictionary definition they certainly are refugees; that is, they are people who have fled from a place where they felt unsafe to find *refuge* in a place where they expected to be safe, and to be cared for. That they should not be treated as aliens is, however,

¹ I have reports on my desk of rehabilitation provided for refugees from Pakistan in both Hyderabad and Mysore. But the numbers involved are small.

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quite another matter. When they declare to their neighbours in India: 'We are flesh of your flesh, we are blood of your blood. Please do not treat us as aliens and foreigners,' then surely they are right. It is true, perhaps, that in Europe the term 'refugee' is commonly used of aliens seeking refuge, whilst a 'displaced person' tends to mean one who has been driven out owing to changes of frontier. But the term 'displaced person' has in Europe almost superseded the term 'refugee'. It is long and ungainly, and is therefore readily contracted to 'D.P.s'. I do not think it is any nicer to be a 'D.P.' than to be a 'refugee'. I am conservative in this matter and prefer the older term. I assure my refugee friends that no discourtesy is intended.

2

EAST PUNJAB, 1947

IN THE first official report published by the Government of India, dealing with 'evacuation, relief and rehabilitation' for the period September 1947 to August 1948, the statement is made that 'The partition of the country was followed by an orgy of violence and transfer of population on a mass-scale—unparalleled in the history of the world'. There must be many examples in the bloody history of mankind where the extent of violence has been as great or even greater, but it is probably true that there has never been such a huge exchange of populations even though there have been greater mass-migrations in one direction.

Europe in the past half-century has been the witness of terrible upheavals of population. The number of displaced Germans in the past ten years is perhaps greater than the number of displaced Punjabis in 1947. But the very fact that one must insert the word 'perhaps' will bring home to Western readers the extent of the Indian tragedy. Just as the displacement of Germans is only the largest item in the forced movement of Europeans, so the displacement of Punjabis is only the major item in a widespread movement affecting some part of the population of almost every Indian Province or State.¹

¹ Before 1947 the main administrative divisions of British India were called Provinces and the territories ruled by Indian Princes were called States. The latter have now been joined together into several Unions and under the new Constitution of Independent India the former Provinces and the Unions of States or single States are all called States. The official name today for the primary administrative division is a State; there are no Provinces left.

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This is not the place to describe the brutal massacres that caused terror to spread through the minority groups during 1946 and the early months of 1947, so that those who were not slaughtered fled in terror from their homes. The provinces of Bengal, Bihar and the Punjab in turn were stained by fratricidal blood. It was a member of the Pakistan Government who suddenly startled me with the question: 'Tell me frankly, do you think we Punjabis are the most brutal people on earth?' Recalling the Nazi gas-ovens and other recent horrors I could truly reply: 'No, I do not think so. We Europeans are no better.' But the brutalities committed during the two years were so fiendish as to be unfit for print. We may recall the comment of the poet who was taken to see the scene of a famous victory: 'Here men slaughtered one another; but God made the grass to grow and hide their shame.' The grass is growing over the places of shame in the Punjab and Bengal. Those who saw even a corner of those horrors cannot wipe the memory from their minds; from those who suffered unspeakable things and who yet survived the scar can never be effaced. But even here the healing power of time can achieve more than would seem possible. But it is better not to stir the memories of that time of terror more than is necessary.

According to official figures published by the Government of India, between September 1947 and March 1948 a little more than one million people crossed out of Pakistan into East Punjab on foot, just over one and a half million by rail, 464 thousand by motor transport, and some 28 thousand by air. This includes some thousands (perhaps forty to fifty thousand) Hindus and Sikhs from the North-West Frontier Province. About one and a half million further non-Muslims had to leave Sind before April

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1948. The chief migration in the Punjab in both directions took place in the last four months of 1947. In Sind, the chief evacuation (with little or no corresponding movement of Muslims out of India) occurred in the first three months of 1948.

The worst hardships were naturally endured by the foot-passengers. To quote the official report already referred to: 'The biggest foot-convoy, 400,000 strong, of the uprooted non-Muslim population, started from the Canal Colonies of Lyallpur on September 11, 1947. As the convoy took the 150-mile road to East Punjab it was swelled by tributary refugee streams from Gojra, Sumandri and Jaranwala. Leaving their ancestral holdings,¹ the rich canal-irrigated fields, the colonists came with what they could carry. With them came petty shopkeepers, artisans, village menials, landlords, businessmen, doctors and lawyers. [The great majority were cultivators.] The major portion of men, women and children walked, while a few who had brought their carts or tongas made their journey in these vehicles. So vast was the unhappy stream of humanity that it was estimated that it would take eight days for it to pass a stationary point. Halts were made from time to time for rest and food; fires were lighted and meals prepared and the few cows brought were milked for the babies.'

On the East Punjab side of the border I witnessed the sorrowful pilgrimage of many of these convoys, large and small, both outgoing Muslims and incoming Hindus and Sikhs. Often there were many thousands travelling together. The outgoing population was provided with military protection. The incoming migrants naturally did

¹ The word 'ancestral' seems questionable. A fair proportion of the agriculturists from the canal colonies in West Punjab were recent settlers, who were now returning to their ancestral homes.

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not need protection. They were coming into a friendly country.

Generally, in both columns, there were sufficient farm carts for the great majority of women and the small children to ride. But many girls and children of no more than eight or ten must have walked long distances, with occasional lifts while some other member of the family walked.

Long columns of outgoing Muslim refugees sometimes met columns of incoming Hindus and Sikhs on the roads. They showed no trace of hostility to one another. All alike were victims of misfortune. As so often in human history, the many suffered for the sins and the folly of the few. Hindu or Sikh cultivators and other simple people might be stirred up to attack their Muslim neighbours, especially where fear or religious frenzy could be aroused; but there was no deep widespread enmity. If there had been no evil-minded instigation of violence, probably there would have been no violence. It was not spontaneous.

In the early weeks organized attacks on train-loads of refugees or on moving columns were not infrequent. But these were soon controlled. After the end of September such attacks were few.

Near the end of October there was an attack on the border upon some Hindus, many of them Harijans or 'untouchables', who were leaving Pakistan. A few days later I went in company with a Sikh doctor to the place where the survivors had been received. Already most of the injured had been taken to a hospital at some distance. But a few were still at this first resting-place, including one man with a badly slashed hand who, somehow, had missed the first visit of a medical unit. His wound, after four or five days, was in a nasty condition. The Sikh doctor dressed this and a few other wounds and we listened to

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the story of how the train had been attacked when the refugees were dismounting to cross the border.

As we were driving back to our starting-place, the doctor decided to visit a local hospital near the road, and we stopped some passers-by to ask the way. However, the chief man in the party we stopped was not a local man but a refugee Hindu lawyer, who had lately crossed the border, having lost all his property and seen his life's work ruined. He was on his way to the home of a brother, having already sent his wife and family ahead. He was full of bitterness. He concluded his story by saying: 'Anyhow, we know what we must do now. We must kill every Muslim we can find.' My white-bearded Sikh companion responded quietly: 'Well, my friend, I hope you will go to your brother's home and think about that. Perhaps you will change your mind.'

The evacuation of the refugees, after the first few weeks, was taken in hand by the Military Evacuation Service, who did their work, as a rule, with promptness and efficiency. But the whole undertaking, the removal of several million people across the border, involving for most a journey of a hundred or two hundred miles, inevitably took a long time. Meanwhile, on both sides of the border the outgoing refugees were gathered together in large camps waiting their turn for evacuation along the roads or by rail or motor transport.

Conditions in such improvised camps were bound to be miserable. It was impossible to provide tents for all, and many had to live under very inadequate improvised shelters made of old bits of material that they could put together from the scanty possessions they had been able to snatch away before leaving their homes. By an agreement entered into between the two Governments, adequate

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shelter, food, protection and medical attention were guaranteed. Seeing that normal transport had largely broken down, and the roads were often blocked for hours by the long lines of travelling refugees, it was no easy matter to ensure the effective discharge of all these obligations. On the whole the camp authorities did their work well. But there were exceptions.

I several times had to visit a large transit camp for outgoing Muslims near Jullundur, where the population of the camp might unexpectedly be increased one day by twenty or thirty thousand owing to the arrival of a column whose movements had not conformed exactly to schedule. On such occasions there was not enough food to go round, and for two or three days some thousands might go unfed—though many had brought grain of their own, which they naturally tried to conceal when free rations were being distributed.

One corner of this camp was set aside as a burial ground. So demoralized had some of the refugees become by their long march and their sufferings that when they saw some old man or woman in the last stages of collapse they would bring him or her to this end of the camp—presumably at night—and leave him or her to die, so that no awkward questions could be asked.

One day I saw a young man going about among these dying people, so I asked him if he was a camp doctor. 'No,' he replied, 'I too am a refugee, a Hindu from across the border. Many of my family were killed there, but I escaped. As I am a doctor, I thought I could give some help in this camp.' Day by day this young Hindu, himself a sufferer from Muslim violence in Pakistan, was bringing what succour he could to the dying Muslims in this camp: surely a sweet revenge. I did not revisit Jullundur till

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April 1951. Passing along that road I could see no trace of the camp-site. Everywhere were waving crops of ripening wheat; it looked as if the land had been cultivated year by year for a thousand years, without a break. And the graves? There was no trace. The ground was level again. Blessed are the healing qualities of nature and of man's fruitful toil.

In one Muslim camp that I visited near the end of October 1947, a camp that was far from any large town, appalling things had happened. Apparently the camp commandant had allowed some local contractor to arrange the food distribution and he, instead of issuing free food, had tried to sell it. Some of the refugees could buy from their own resources, but others were destitute, and simply starved. The death-rate in this camp, especially among children, was very high. The District Magistrate, when he learnt what was happening, tried to put things right, and he sent special supplies of powdered milk to be distributed free to the children. But this too was offered for sale.

On the day of my visit the evacuation to Pakistan was due, but the train had not arrived. It afterwards appeared that the local railway authorities had allowed some technicality to interfere with the running of the train. The order had come from the military or from the District Magistrate, not from the proper railway authority. So, for two or three days, the train could not be moved and the refugees continued to die of starvation. As I approached the camp, over a mile away from it, I saw refugees who had risked their lives, perhaps, by wandering along the road, and they were desperately searching the roadside for any scraps of food that could be discovered—possibly the best they could hope to find was a few roots.

This was the only minority camp that I visited in East

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Punjab that had obviously been manned by seriously incompetent or even hostile authority. All others were at least tolerable and some were better than that. A great deal depended on the outlook of the Camp Commandant.

As if man's inhumanity to man was not enough, late in September nature lent a hand. There were torrential rains in the Punjab Himalayas and in the plains. Rivers rose rapidly. The river Beas overflowed its banks and descended as a vast flood on a camp of refugees close to the main trunk road. The camp, the road, man and beast alike were swept away. How many of the several thousands in the camp were drowned no one knew. For weeks after, as one crossed the three miles of bumpy track that replaced the road, one's nose was assailed by a horrible stench, although efforts were made to collect and burn corpses, carcasses and all else that remained.

A few of the incoming refugees were quickly settled on the land, where in many places the crops had been left standing and badly needed some attention. But the great majority of the incoming refugees had also to be taken to camps in the first place. Numbers of such camps were opened in or near the main towns, including the capital city of Delhi. Then plans were made for a monster camp, to house some hundreds of thousands, at Kurukshetra, a hundred miles north of Delhi.

Kurukshetra is a famous name in Indian history. Here the prince Arjuna was leading the Pandavas into battle against the Kauravas when, according to tradition, he paused to question his charioteer, who was none other than the Lord Krishna himself, about the rights and wrongs of such fratricidal strife. The ensuing discussion has been developed into the sublime teaching of the *Bhagvadgita*, which has brought spiritual sustenance to millions of men

and women through the ages. 'I find a solace in the *Bhagvadgita*,' wrote Mahatma Gandhi, 'that I miss even in the Sermon on the Mount. When disappointment stares me in the face, and all alone I see not one ray of light, I go back to the *Bhagvadgita*. I find a verse here and a verse there and I immediately begin to smile in the midst of overwhelming tragedies.'

Kurukshetra has been a place of pilgrimage for Hindus for many centuries, and there is a large open space where accommodation for half a million pilgrims can readily be arranged. Here, accordingly, it was decided to house the largest single concentration of refugees until they could be resettled. But many of the refugees had their own ideas. Those who were townsmen—and they were many—were determined to get somehow to Delhi. When they found a train going towards Delhi they crowded into it, many travelling on the roof. But the train stopped at Kurukshetra. They were ordered to detrain. They refused. They had had enough of camp-life before leaving Pakistan. They wanted to fend for themselves on the streets of Delhi. After all, in a big city there is always room for a few more. The district railway officials did not know what to do. They were reluctant to take extreme measures. The soldiers must not be put into the train to force the refugees to get out. So, once at least, the train went back north again still carrying nearly half the refugees who had been brought south.

Kurukshetra is low-lying. Within a fortnight of the starting of the camp it was flooded by the rains. No wonder that, after such an unhappy beginning, the reputation of the camp was not too good in the first place. But, as the months went by, competent camp officers were appointed, supported by many first-rate voluntary workers, and the

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camp improved out of all recognition until it became an orderly town, with schools, handicrafts and other amenities that made life tolerable for a good proportion of its inhabitants.

During 1948 and 1949 the work of rehabilitating these refugees went forward. Resettlement of cultivators was comparatively rapid, since land had been vacated by large numbers of Muslim cultivators. But the rehabilitation of townsmen, traders and artisans was a much slower process. The occupations of the immigrants were not the same as those of the emigrants. Small shopkeepers, in particular, were far too plentiful. Comparatively few shopkeepers in north-west India were Muslims; most were Hindus, so when many thousands crossed the border, they did not find a gap to fill. They were merely a burden on a country that did not need them.

Thus the rehabilitation of many 'unwanted' refugees has been a very slow process. Kurukshetra camp could not be closed for over two years. The story of the rehabilitation of those who were first given shelter at Kurukshetra and other camps is the theme of the next two chapters.

3

PUNJAB : LAND SETTLEMENT

WHEN THE full flood-tide of refugees burst upon the two Punjab Governments, East and West, neither had been in office for more than a week or two. In Pakistan, there were at least the old Government offices that could still be utilized in Lahore, though, even so, new offices had to be opened all round the city. In East Punjab (India) there was still complete uncertainty as to the new seat of Government. Up to the last moment, it had been hoped in some quarters that Lahore would be retained by India.

At the very time when the maximum speed was needed to cope with the incoming refugees, the new Ministry had not been formed, and the officials had no offices. There were not wanting those who urged that the East Punjab Government should be suspended, and that the Central Government at Delhi should take control. But Delhi decided against such an encroachment on democratic forms. They offered to help, and in the end they gave very substantial help. But the task of resettling the incoming agricultural workers fell wholly upon the new East Punjab Government. The premises of a former Muslim College in Jullundur were requisitioned and rapidly turned into Government offices with telephones, and here, during the months of October and November 1947, the newly appointed Director-General of Rehabilitation coped almost single-handed with a never-ending stream of refugees, who besieged his room at all hours of the day demanding land. When he needed fresh instructions from his Government

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he had to make the awkward, tedious, roundabout journey all the way to Simla, where the Premier of the new Province was housed, for the time being, in the palace which had recently been the Viceroy's Lodge throughout the summer months.

A further administrative complication had to be overcome. The territory from which Muslim refugees had gone and into which Hindus and Sikhs came was not a single territory, all administered by the new East Punjab Government. A glance at the map will show that the territory is broken up into several States. At the time of the division, the hill country and the eastern plains of the Punjab included several States under the rule of Indian Princes, in no respect subordinate to the Punjab Provincial Government. Within a short time the States were brought into two units, one (in the plains) called Patiala and East Punjab States Union (for short PEPSU, which sounds as if it were a patent medicine), the other in the hills, Himachal Pradesh; Himachal Pradesh was not so vitally concerned with the refugee problem as PEPSU. But the PEPSU territories are completely mixed in with the several plains districts of East Punjab, and are separated from each other. Until the resettlement policies of East Punjab and PEPSU could be co-ordinated progress was bound to be hampered. In any case, once it was decided to respect the autonomy of these units and not impose the authority of Delhi over the whole resettlement, the best that could be achieved was parallel action in the two territories. Happily, this was achieved.

It does not sound like a promising beginning. The officials who undertook the resettlement would probably be the first to say that the whole job might have been far better done if they had been given time to work out a

PUNJAB: LAND SETTLEMENT

plan. Too often Indian Government offices have their pigeon-holes choked with plans that await execution. Here was an occasion when action could not be delayed while some plan was prepared; the plan had to be worked out while it was being executed.

Under the circumstances, it is remarkable that the re-settlement of some three million persons was completed in just over two years.

A rough-and-ready scheme of distribution of land for the first harvest was drawn up. Many of the incoming refugees were fairly recent settlers in the canal colonies of the West Punjab, who had gone west because of land hunger, and who now, returning to their ancestral lands, had to be content with smaller holdings and poorer land. But they could be and they were grouped according to their former localities and status. Land was allotted in groups to owners as well as tenants. Agricultural refugees were advised to proceed to the headquarters of the several tahsils (sub-districts) as far as possible in groups in which they had lived or in groups in which they wished to settle. To each person the area cultivated by a pair of bullocks, sufficient for a worker assisted by a family averaging six, was to be allotted. If a family had more male adult workers than two, additional land was allotted for the additional men. When a group allotment had been made, the members of the group were expected to divide the land amongst themselves for cultivation. Group allotment in the first instance, which was only a provisional measure, tended to ensure quick distribution of land, to enable refugees from particular villages and areas to remain together as much as possible, and to enable cultivators to pool their resources both for sowing the next crops and for harvesting the crops that were standing in the fields. These objects

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were largely secured, and within two months no less than two million acres of land had been reoccupied by incoming refugees.

But this was only a first stage. Some of those concerned in resettlement might have liked to try permanent experiments in common ownership of the land or at least in co-operative cultivation. But the East Punjab authorities as a whole did not care for such revolutionary innovations. They argued that it was an unfamiliar method for the people themselves, and that each man, each family unit, would expect to have his own piece of land. The final settlement was accordingly planned on lines familiar to the people, in which each got his own bit of property, his own separate fields.

Within a few months, close co-ordination between the East Punjab and PEPSU authorities was achieved; the available land in the whole area covered by these two authorities was treated as one pool. Although numbers of the refugees from West Punjab were finding their way into other Indian States, especially into the United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh), the Central Government in Delhi decided that all displaced landholders from West Punjab, and others of Punjabi extraction from other parts of Pakistan, were to be assigned land in East Punjab and PEPSU only. So the total amount of land assignable was fairly soon ascertained. Then the two new Punjab Governments, East and West, agreed to prepare copies of their revenue records for one another's use. Finally, at considerable inconvenience, the Government of East Punjab and PEPSU placed almost all the revenue staff at the disposal of the rehabilitation department. Fifteen months of concentrated work at a central camp, where at one time more than eight thousand officials lived and worked under

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canvas, made it possible to accomplish what might otherwise have taken several years. Thus, by the middle of 1950, the permanent resettlement of those who had been evicted from the land in West Punjab had been accomplished.

In the period between September 1947 and September 1949 about 22 million rupees were spent in settlement of these refugees. Nearly one million was spent for purchase of food, over half a million for seed and a similar amount for bullocks, smaller amounts for fodder, for implements and for the support of rural artisans and village servants. These amounts are repayable. Loans and grants for repair of houses and wells were not so successful. It should be noted that 34 per cent of the evacuated houses were found to be beyond repair; and another 19 per cent were needing considerable repair. Only 62 per cent of the wells on abandoned land were in working order. Thus, mere resettlement was not enough, even for those who were able to provide the cattle and implements and seed that they needed. A great task of repairing the holdings has had to be undertaken, and this is not nearly completed yet. Other displaced persons are being brought into this work of rehabilitation of the rural economy.

It must not be supposed that each landholder could be provided with as much land in India as he had vacated in Pakistan. After full assessment, it appeared that the land vacated in East Punjab totalled 5,015,616 acres, whereas the total vacated in West Punjab was 6,729,050 acres. Of the latter, 1,464,281 acres consisted of uncultivated land; in East Punjab the uncultivated land covered 894,795 acres. Thus the cultivators of 5,264,769 acres had to be fitted into 4,120,821 acres. But the four million acres

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were, on the whole, less fertile than the five million. In the western districts that had been left behind no less than 4,306,568 acres were irrigated, chiefly by recently constructed canals; in the eastern districts only 1,325,853 acres were irrigated. The proportion of perennial irrigation was even smaller. Consequently, some scheme of proportionate reduction of holdings became necessary. To do this with even approximate fairness was clearly a matter of the utmost difficulty, and many factors had to be taken into account and balanced one against the other. Ingenious calculations of the comparative value of different types of land were made and the result was worked out in terms of what was called a 'standard acre'. On this basis, a system of graded cuts was applied to all claimants for land.

The radical device of allotting equal land to each claimant, whatever the extent of his holding in Pakistan, was rejected as unfair; so, too, the simple method of cutting each man's holding by an equal percentage—which worked out at 38 per cent. The graded cuts were applied as follows: for those whose holdings had been less than ten standard acres, the reduction was 25 per cent; those who held between ten and thirty acres, 30 per cent; thirty to forty acres, 40 per cent; up to sixty acres, 50 per cent; and so on until those who had had holdings of over 500 acres lost 90 per cent and those who held over 1,000 acres, 95 per cent. There has been loud complaint from some refugees that the land allotment has been very unfairly executed. It may perhaps be surmised that the loudest complaints came from those who had the biggest holdings. But it will be seen that they are still far better off than some of their companions in misfortune. This permanent, or at least semi-permanent, settlement, has been carried through with the minimum of disturbance of those who

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had had land temporarily allotted to them two years previously. And to a large extent, migrants from adjacent villages and districts in West Punjab have been settled in adjacent areas in East Punjab and PEPSU.

Some of the complaints made by the settlers were, no doubt, justified. Not every official who had to decide on land allocation was a personification of wisdom. In some cases families were separated. In others those who had lived on the best irrigated lands in West Punjab found themselves assigned to land inferior to what others received. Such things, no doubt, were bound to happen. But it seems clear that, in a situation where much might be excused by the vastness and the urgency of the problem, the administration did a remarkable job, and did it with considerable human feeling and insight. Their work is subject to revision where injustice has been done, and a Land Resettlement Manual has been published, showing how such revision can be sought.

One small pioneer experimental project should be mentioned. Some 22,000 acres were allotted in the form of co-operative garden colonies. These garden colonies promise to grow into prosperous rural settlements with fruit preservation industries of their own. In a country whose economy is essentially rural, and where the need for restoring a better balance to rural life is urgent, any such experiment in developing rural industries is a step along the road to national health and true prosperity.

But there is a serious debit side, and it would be wrong to suggest that, because a good job has been done, all is well. It is far from well. First, there is the need already referred to, of rebuilding many thousands of damaged houses and wells, of re-equipping the settlers and of supplying cattle and other farm animals. Then, it has to be

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noted that in some areas there is a grave shortage of essential rural personnel, in such occupations as artisans and village servants, specially weavers, blacksmiths, potters, dyers and those who slaughtered animals and prepared hides, skins and bones. Most of these occupations were in the hands of Muslims. They have gone, and they cannot easily be replaced.

But even this is not all. What has been written in this chapter is based largely on a series of articles written by Sardar Tarlok Singh, formerly Director-General of Rehabilitation in Punjab (I) and published in the *Calcutta Statesman* in July 1950. Indeed, I have ventured to quote whole phrases and sentences from his articles. Let me also quote part of his conclusion. 'Altogether, reduced holdings and poorer lands, a fall in the number of actual workers on the soil, insufficient immigration facilities, slender capital resources and the rise of tenant interests, combine to produce a picture of increasing economic pressure. . . . The migration has brought East Punjab a peasantry uncommonly rich in experience and progressive in outlook, whose record of achievement over sixty years of colonization is truly remarkable. They are unlikely to accept the state of relative poverty which fate has thrust upon them. New means of irrigation, reform in the management of land, investment of capital in agriculture and the growth of new occupations are certainly necessary.'

These are not the only defects of the present rural resettlement. Land has been assigned to all men who held land in West Punjab, but to no others. Landless labourers have been overlooked. It was assumed, perhaps, that they would find employment on the land in East Punjab as they had done in the West. But, with the reduction of the size of the holdings, this has not happened. Many of them

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settled on vacant land when they first arrived; but in course of time this land has all been assigned to those who had been land-holders. In West Punjab and the landless labourers have been evicted. The Government of India has undertaken to settle landless labourers from Sind, Bahawalpur and other areas on uncultivated land in other parts of India. But the Punjab landless labourers are still (summer 1951) unprovided for, whether by the Government of India or by the East Punjab Government. This problem seems to demand urgent action. Perhaps it will have been tackled before these pages are in print. Some tens of thousands seem to be involved.

The impression one gets in the summer of 1951 is that the rural resettlement in the Punjab is by no means complete yet. Many villages are fully resettled, and are prospering. But others, perhaps especially in some border districts, are centres of unrest and dissatisfaction. Much rebuilding of houses and wells has still to be carried out. Litigation is common. A good deal of land, formerly cultivated, has not been reclaimed yet. Scrub jungle has grown so densely in some places where the land has been neglected for years that it can hardly be reclaimed without tractors. And the majority of small cultivators cannot afford tractors. Direct Government action, or the formation of co-operative societies, seems to be urgently needed. But if the newspapers are to be trusted the political leaders of the Punjab are only interested in intrigues against one another or in winning the forthcoming elections. Political democracy seems to be showing some of its worst features in Punjab (I)—as it should now be called. Let us hope that men will soon appear there who have not forgotten Mahatma Gandhi's life-long call to selfless service of the dumb rural masses.

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Not all the agricultural refugees from West Pakistan have been settled in the East Punjab. The United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh) have received a number. Nearly twenty thousand, for instance, are now living on reclaimed land at Hastinapur, where the Ganga river, in the course of centuries, has changed its course, moving six miles eastward, and thereby leaving an area of fertile soil which, until 1950, was inhabited chiefly by wild pigs and tigers and other beasts. Now over twenty thousand acres are being reclaimed by tractor-ploughing, and nineteen villages have been settled. A large area is being reafforested. Instead of impenetrable jungles of ten-foot-tall elephant grass there are many acres of wheat. The villages are not attractive yet, as the houses are mere lines of wooden sheds; but in due course no doubt better housing will be provided with or without Government assistance.

Still further from their old homes, some enterprising stalwart Punjabis have found land in the new State of Vindhya Pradesh. This is a territory formed out of several small States whose standards of administration were probably, on an average, about the worst in the country. One of the most reliable authorities on 'backward areas' in India, the late A. V. Thakkar, after a visit there two or three years ago, declared that he had seen no area in all India so impoverished and backward. Here the Punjabis are producing crops four times (or is it six or even ten times?) better than their neighbours. Perhaps they will be the true reformers of that part of India—beginning from the bottom and demonstrating what self-help and hard work can achieve.

Before concluding this chapter something must be added about the resettlement of a hundred thousand Muslims in the southern Punjab. Resettlement of Muslims in India



By courtesy of THE STATESMAN

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sounds rather startling. What can be meant by it? The story in brief is as follows.

At the beginning of September 1947, opposite the great Jumma Masjid mosque at Delhi, many thousands of uprooted people were encamped. When I visited the camp I was told the people were Meos—they were Muslims, rough or even tough customers in many cases, tillers of the soil from the neighbouring Gurgaon District of the southern Punjab and from the adjacent Alwar and Bharatpur States.

During August and September 1947, a hundred thousand or more of these people were driven from their homes by their Hindu neighbours. Some went to Pakistan, but the great majority refused to go, and insisted that they should be allowed to return to their lands. Mahatma Gandhi, who was then living in Delhi, promised them that he would do all he could to get them back on their own lands. Then he was assassinated for being too friendly to the Muslims; but the Government did not forget his promise.

It seemed doubtful, however, whether their Hindu neighbours would tolerate their return, and during 1948 efforts were made to settle them on other lands near the desert. But this scheme was not very successful. Early in 1949 a fresh survey of their vacated lands was made. The soil was so poor that very little of it had been taken up by incoming migrants from Pakistan; moreover there was evidence of a change of heart on the part of their neighbours, most of whom seemed very willing to see them return. Indeed, it appeared to be to the interest of all that they should once again cultivate soil which they alone seemed capable of saving from infertility.

Accordingly, during 1949 large numbers returned to their former houses. 'Incidents' with their neighbours had been feared; but few, if any, have been reported. The resettle-

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ment was watched over by the fatherly eye of one of Mahatma Gandhi's closest associates, Shri Vinoba Bhave, and some of the best 'constructive workers' lent a hand in easing the return of the Meos. The success of this resettlement is certainly a triumph for Mr Jawaharlal Nehru and for those in India who, like him, refuse to discriminate between man and man because of the communal labels that are attached to them.

4

REHABILITATING TOWNSMEN IN THE PUNJAB AND DELHI

AS ALREADY noted at the end of Chapter II the rehabilitation of the townsmen and artisans who came from West Punjab in the last months of 1947 has been a much slower business than the rehabilitation of the peasants and farmers. This was only natural. Lands had been vacated and were waiting to be recultivated. The farmer had only to transfer his ancestral skill to different soil. Often, it is true, the soil was inferior, and some amount of adaptation was required. But at least he was not bound to go to school again, to learn a new craft. In many cases the townsman has been obliged to do so.

In the towns of India, and indeed even among the craftsmen of the villages, more often than not Hindus and Muslims follow different occupations. This does not mean that no Hindu ever works as a mechanic, or that no Muslim ever runs what in the West would be called a 'general store'. In the lesser crafts, the communal division may vary village by village. One day in November 1947, the Commissioner at Jullundur (East Punjab) read out to me a list of the occupational gaps that had been left in the north-eastern Punjab by the disappearance of the Muslims. It was a surprisingly varied list. Some of the occupations were such as are commonly reputed to be typical Hindu or Sikh activities. Probably these gaps were readily and quickly filled. But some of the gaps have not been filled yet, whereas, on the other hand, many incoming refugees have been

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unable to fit themselves into any gap. Every inhabitant of Delhi who owns a car has been lamenting the disappearance in late 1947 of the skilled Muslim mechanics. Sikhs are busily engaged in trying to fill this particular gap; and some Hindus and Christians are also training themselves to become skilled mechanics; but the number who really know their job is by no means sufficient yet to cope with the demand. This is but a single instance. It shows how necessary it has been to provide training centres for incoming refugees.

The nature of the problem, so far as the Punjab is concerned, is shown by the following general facts. According to an East Punjab publication, some 51,000 shops were abandoned by Hindus and Sikhs leaving West Punjab; but only 17,000 were abandoned by Muslims in East Punjab. This excess of refugee shopkeepers, hawkers and traders has had a disastrous psychological effect in India. In every town and city refugees put up booths or wooden shacks along the streets and began to compete with the local shopkeepers. Having no rents to pay, they were able in many cases to undercut the resident traders. Therefore, the sympathy that first met the refugee on his arrival rapidly dried up. He came to be regarded as a nuisance and even a menace.

Attempts by local Governments to check these developments were not immediately successful. Indeed, they could not be. Vast numbers of refugees were in camps, living on doles, becoming demoralized, waiting for the long-hoped-for rehabilitation. If some, instead of remaining idle and becoming a burden, started to rehabilitate themselves, how admirable! Surely they should be encouraged. To provide them all immediately with good permanent quarters for carrying on their trade was quite

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impossible. Therefore their ugly shacks must be tolerated for a time, even in the capital city itself. The unhygienic arrangements for many of these 'squatters' were for a time a grave menace to health, but fortunately no serious outbreak of cholera took place during the first two summers. By the third summer the problem was being brought under control.

The bulk of the Muslim urban population in East Punjab and adjacent parts of India consisted of artisans, craftsmen, mechanics and labourers, while the vast majority of the incoming refugees, other than agricultural workers, belonged to the trading classes. Herein is the essence of the problem of urban rehabilitation, as north India had to face it in 1948.

In urban areas in the Punjab something over 104,000 houses were vacant. By September 1948 nearly all of these had been occupied and 900,000 refugees were thus provided with roofs over their heads. A building scheme was drawn up, providing for new 'model townships' to be built in the suburbs of seventeen different towns. Some of these have now been built and are occupied.

In May 1948, some 430,000 refugees were still in camps controlled by the East Punjab Government and another quarter of a million or rather more were in Kurukshetra camp, which was still under the direction of the Government of India. At Kurukshetra there were not only Punjabi refugees, but also most of those from the North-West Frontier (whose rehabilitation is described in the next chapter) and some from Bahawalpur State. In August 1948, when the number was already reduced to 160,000, the East Punjab Government took charge of this camp. They speedily transferred most of the Punjabi refugees to other camps and then handed the camp back to the Government

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of India. By the spring of 1949 the total camp population in East Punjab (excluding Kurukshetra) was down to 143,000. Less than 100,000 were still receiving free rations. Of these some 60,000 were agricultural workers; the rest were urban. Most of those who left Kurukshetra were merely transferred to other camps. It was largely a sorting-out process. But from these other camps they were gradually being rehabilitated. How was this process achieved?

Within the camps work centres were started. The crafts that were taught at these centres were mainly cottage crafts, which could be started in villages and not only in cities. Woodwork, spinning, weaving, smithy, hosiery, leather-work, tent-making, tailoring, cycle-repairs, paper-making, mat-making, oil- and soap-making were among the twenty-five or more crafts thus established in the camps. As the refugees became proficient at these crafts, they were able to leave the camps and make their way in the outside world.

A second major factor in the work of rehabilitation was the granting of loans. Up to September 1948, a total of nearly seven million rupees had been sanctioned as loans to refugees setting up in business and professions and over half a million rupees in direct grants. By the end of 1949 these sums had been increased to twelve and a half million and one and three-quarter million respectively. These sums apply to the Punjab only. On a smaller scale similar loans and grants were made through other local Governments. Loans up to Rs 5,000 were permitted for individuals, up to Rs 20,000 to a group of four or more refugees, and up to Rs 25,000 to a Co-operative Society. Grants were limited to Rs 500 to any one individual. These have been given chiefly to widows and unattached women who are destitute. All are provided for some specific purpose.

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Financial aid has also been provided on a large scale to students. Up to the end of 1949 the Punjab Government had provided over two million rupees in loans and three and a half million in grants to students. Most of this has been provided for students to complete ordinary college courses which had been interrupted by the events of 1947. In a few special cases aid has also been provided for boys and girls of proved ability who wish to undertake courses in engineering, medicine or agriculture. Such special assistance for refugee students is to continue till March 1953.

One is tempted to halt at the end of each paragraph after describing some Government scheme, to interject: 'Remember all those who have been no burden to the Government, but who have rehabilitated themselves, or have been helped by the private assistance of their relatives and friends.' What the proportion of these may be, compared to those who have needed Government assistance for months or years, it is impossible to say. But, before proceeding to describe some of the main efforts undertaken officially to start new towns for the urban refugees, it seems right to pause and remind the reader that many of those who are refugees in the literal sense that they lived in Pakistan till 1947 and now live in India, and many of whom have terrible stories to tell—if you care to dig them out—of suffering and losses at that time, have for long been self-respecting citizens of the new India, from whom the stigma sometimes attaching to the word 'refugee' has long been erased. Again and again in Delhi in the past two years I have found myself purchasing an article in a well-established shop, when some chance conversation reveals that the salesman formerly lived in Lahore or some other place across the border. Let one typical story stand for many. A high Government official in Delhi offered some

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TOWNSHIPS PLANNED FOR DISPLACED PERSONS

Township ▲

Figures represent the proposed population



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servants' quarters behind his house to a refugee and his family at the end of 1947. He gave him no other material help either then or later. The grateful refugee, on the other hand, has several times given presents to his benefactor. He has prospered so well that he is now able to send his sons to an expensive boarding-school. It might also be remarked that one of the largest biscuit factories in India, a factory newly erected at Gwalior, is owned by a refugee who formerly had a factory in Lahore.

This reminder of the many who have made good without official aid is not to be interpreted as comparison of virtue with vice. That a certain proportion of refugees have made little effort to rehabilitate themselves; that some have been demoralized by long months of enforced idleness, and have considered themselves cruelly used by a heartless Government when their doles were finally stopped (after many warnings and threats); that some have lent an ear to those interested parties, professed friends of the ill-treated refugees, who have instigated agitations against the Government and its policies: all this no doubt is true; as it is also true that there have been official blunders and muddles against which protest was natural and reasonable. But the vast majority of the so-called 'hard core' of urban refugees who can only be self-supporting when new towns have been built and new industries developed are neither shirkers nor 'unemployables'. They are the victims of misfortune, having lost their homes and their other capital assets, whether in money or goods, and having found themselves in a land that did not need their special skills. Until they had learnt fresh skills and until they could find someone to help them to utilize those skills, they were bound to remain impotent victims of misfortune.

To help these many thousands to become useful citizens

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again, the Central Government and the Punjab Government have planned, separately or together, some ten industrial townships. One of these, Faridabad, sixteen miles south of Delhi, now the concern of the Government of India, is described at some length in the next chapter. Another is an area near the new capital of the Punjab, which is being built in Ambala District on some 8,000 acres of land. There are eight other areas, four of them with 1,000 acres of land each, the other four of smaller dimensions. The sites have been chosen where adequate vacant land was available and where it was hoped that electric power could readily be made available. They are also well scattered in several different parts of the State. Industrialists who had come from Pakistan were invited to apply for land on these sites and 2,715 applications were received, requiring the allocation of some 3,500 acres. By the end of 1949 nearly a thousand plots had been sold.

But enough of statistics and generalizations. Let us look more closely at some of these new townships.

The name of Nilokheri has become famous in India in the past two years. Why? Perhaps because it symbolizes the fulfilment of a dream. Perhaps because it shows that dreamers are sometimes the most practical men. Perhaps because it shows how human beings, by making good use of their minds and their muscles, and by working in co-operation rather than in competition with each other, can rebuild their lives after undergoing ruin and catastrophe.

The real creator of Nilokheri, Mr S. K. Dey, does not figure in the published reports. In a broadcast script that vividly describes the birth of the idea of Nilokheri he is an anonymous 'farmer's son' with the training of an engineer. Fortune brought him to the huge Kurukshetra refugee camp in the autumn of 1947, and before the end

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of the year he had succeeded in starting a small vocational training centre in the camp. To him, rehabilitation of refugees could be achieved if three principles could be fulfilled. First, rehabilitation must be built on manual labour—or 'muscle can do it'. Next, men and women must be trained. Third, conditions must be created so that full use could be made of their acquired skills. The training-centre opened in December 1947. Weaving of cloth was to be the central occupation. But there were no handlooms to be bought. So, first, looms had to be made. They were made. But there were not enough tools for making them. So tools had to be made. They too were made. Thus, tool-making, carpentry and weaving, dyeing and tailoring rapidly grew up side by side in the Kurukshetra occupational training centre.

In April 1948, the Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, visited Kurukshetra. His imagination was captured by what he saw at the training centre. He declared that he wanted to see 'springing up across the expanse of India a thousand townships humming with the music of the muscles as at this centre'.

Land was sought where the work could be expanded, and where it could be built into the life of India by relating it to the soil, to land reclamation, to the growth and improvement of crops. Such a site, on land largely uncultivated, was found a few miles from Kurukshetra, at a hamlet called Nilokheri; and thither, in July 1948, the training centre was transplanted, to become the nucleus of a new town—what in England might be called a Garden City. The main task of the first nine months (August 1948 to March 1949) was the clearance of undergrowth and the draining of swamps. Then came construction. Roads were made. Worksheds were built for the Vocational

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Training Centre. Offices were constructed. Industrial plant, obtained from disposals and salvage depots, was set up. Facilities for electricity were installed, including, at a rather later stage, a power-plant—a most necessary part of any such construction. Tube-wells were sunk. A dairy farm, a poultry farm and a piggery were all started. And most of this work was undertaken through co-operatives. Thus, by 1950, a new township was in being. At the end of 1950 it was inhabited by about 7,500 persons. Ultimately it will have many more.

Nilokheri has had one great advantage, by comparison with most other refugee townships. Instead of having a large population, say twenty, thirty or fifty thousand, who must somehow be housed and rehabilitated, it has been more or less free to keep its numbers within the limits of its own capacity of absorption. Men and families have gone there to work, or to learn a new craft. They have fitted into a growing plan. As time goes on, the town grows; but it grows by natural development, as it can absorb more.

Even Nilokheri has had its growing-pains. Refugees sometimes indulge in self-pity. They are victims of misfortune not of their own making. Therefore the Government must provide for them. But the gospel of Nilokheri is the gospel of self-help, not of dependence on Government or any other outside agency; but of independence: not, 'the Government will show us', but rather, 'we will show them'. The Administrator and his colleagues believe in the possibilities of a co-operative commonwealth for all India. Here in Nilokheri they are showing a way, blazing a trail.

The Central Producers' Association of Nilokheri controls a number of co-operatives, including agriculture, the

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engineering workshops, cottage industries, the printing press, the power-house, the water-supply, a tannery, a wood-working shop and several more.

One of the interesting side-lines at Nilokheri involves the chemical processing of saltpetre. Anyone who has toured in the East Punjab and West Uttar Pradesh must be aware of the large amount of land which is becoming salinated, covered with a deposit of white salt, and thereby going out of cultivation. Round Nilokheri the peasants are being encouraged to collect this salt from the surface; they are paid for it, and it is then submitted to various chemical processes in vats and turned into explosives. So far, no one seems to have learnt how to turn saltpetre into anything else. Is it better to have miles of land uncultivated, or to increase the manufacture of explosives for the next war? In a wise world, I suppose the answer would be that the explosives would only be used for blasting rock and for crackers and fireworks, as in China when the Chinese followed their ancient wisdom. Now that India and China both prefer modern folly to ancient wisdom, explosives will primarily be used for blowing human beings and their houses into fragments. But it is a good sight to see the land cleared of its white plague. It would no doubt be worth while to pay the peasants to clear their lands of this saline leprosy, even if it were only built into a great white mountain and never processed at all.

Visit the tannery at Nilokheri and you will find young Brahmins at work as shoemakers—outcastes' work. Such is the measure of the social revolution that such a town is bringing to birth. Nor is it all utility. Visit the art school and you will find young artists at work. Some do wood-carving, some do batik-work, some make ornamental leather-work, some are becoming skilled in embroidery.

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Those who are planning Nilokheri have their own ideas of what constitutes a good workman. If a man is going to spend his time making machines (and in India, as in the West, many young men today are machine-minded) he must learn every process towards the building up of the machine. He must not be a mere cog in the machine shop, repeating one mechanical process without understanding its relevance. The Nilokheri trainee is not considered fully trained until he understands the whole mechanism—until he can 'feel with' the machine he is helping to make. He should identify himself with the machine. Far from becoming mechanized himself, he must try to impart 'soul' into machines. He must become proud of their 'finish'.

So far the farm is only two hundred acres in extent, but it will soon be three times the present size. It will provide the town with all its vegetables and half its foodgrains.

One might go on to write of the many activities centred in the Polytechnic, of the Vocational Training Centre, the schools, the Health Centre, the development of local self-government. Every aspect of the life of a healthy town seems to have been developed. Let no visitor miss the little room where the Nature Cure Therapist will take you in hand, if you will give him the chance, and show you how to reduce your weight or do whatever else may be required to give you a healthy body. And when he is not curing his patients of their bodily defects, he is growing flowers and vegetables on demonstration plots.

Such is Nilokheri. It has been expensive, but after the end of 1951 it should be paying its own way. After that it may repay all that has been spent on it—and more. Travel fifty miles further north up the Grand Trunk Road and you will find another new town called Rajpura. If Nilokheri has been petted by the Prime Minister and

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received all the financial aid it has required, Rajpura, so you will be told when you go there, is the neglected step-child of the Government. Certainly the impression the visitor to Rajpura gets is by no means so rosy. The houses are miserable by comparison with Nilokheri. There is an air of neglect. Some of the people are still living in tents. There is a good vocational training centre but not all who train can get employment. There are no new factories to absorb the available labour. Here are some forty thousand people, mostly refugees from Bahawalpur State, between Sind and the Punjab, who need to be rehabilitated. Some are very enterprising merchants, such as the man who bought several maunds (hundredweight) of dates in Bombay and sold them at a good profit in scores of Punjab villages. But not all can make profits by such means. What is to be the ultimate fate of the majority? They cannot all be shopkeepers. What then?

Their present plight is not simply due to shortsightedness on the part of the Government. Its plans had not included a town at Rajpura. This was only the site of the temporary camp where the Bahawalpuris were concentrated on their arrival in India. The plan was to disperse them into several more convenient centres. But they would not go, they were determined to stick together. And so, in the end, the Government gave way and agreed to build a town just where the camp had been. It is not badly situated. It is on a main road and main railway, so communications are good. The water-supply was deficient but that has been remedied. Employers have been invited to start new factories in Rajpura. Already there is a large biscuit factory which gives employment to a few of the refugees. Why not some more factories? Several employers have been to prospect. But they go away again,

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because there is no cheap power available. The biscuit factory has its own power plant, but it is either unable or unwilling to sell it to other manufacturers except at a prohibitive cost, and unless some extraordinary measures are taken by the Government it may be two or three years before cheap power becomes available. Meanwhile, what is to keep the people from starvation?

Rajpura raises in an urgent manner the problem which recurs again and again in some of the following chapters. When houses have been built and loans have been provided to help the traders and shopkeepers to rehabilitate themselves, what happens to those who, for the most obvious economic reasons, cannot reinstate themselves in their own occupations? So far, this question has not been satisfactorily answered.

Basic education, which is in full swing at Rajpura, and occupational training centres, of which Rajpura can also show a good example, give an important part of the answer for the next generation. But the urgent question is not, What will the young people and children do in five or ten or twenty years' time?—but What are the heads of families to do in 1952? And in some places, as we see here and as we shall see again in later chapters, the only answer yet available appears to be: They must beg or steal or starve.

Of course, where there is an expanding economy, the answer is not so depressing. Delhi, for instance, has been growing at a huge pace in the past four years; and it will go on growing. As the capital city of a 'new' country, with rapidly expanding services, it can absorb many thousands of new hands or brains year by year. A few years ago there were two Delhis, Old and New. Then, to the north of the Ridge, arose Karolbagh and Subzimandi. Towards the end of the war, to the south, Lodi Colony

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was growing. That was the situation five years ago. Today there are about a dozen Delhis, including Sardarnagar, Sarojininagar, Lajpatnagar, Malaviyanagar, Rajendranagar and half a dozen more. Some of these are new townships or suburbs, built by the city for Government servants or for the general populace. Others are built by the Rehabilitation Department for refugees only.

At the end of August and in early September 1947, already a number of Hindus and Sikhs from West Punjab and the Frontier were housed in disused barracks by Kingsway, the great avenue that was laid down when New Delhi was planned to be built north of Old Delhi, instead of south-west, as it was finally located. Here, as the autumn went on, a great refugee camp developed. Some of the wooden shops set up that winter along Kingsway are still (April 1951) doing business; and the passing motorist may jump to the conclusion that Kingsway camp remains as it was three years ago. Leave the main road, however, and move a little way off along side roads, and you get a very different picture. Not only have many of the temporary booths in fact gone, to be replaced by decent shops, but behind these busy shops is a well-planned, well-architected (I hope also well-built) area of tidy little houses, some with two rooms, some with three, some with four; and all with good drainage, good water-supply and other conveniences—including a garden.

Similar well-planned new suburbs have grown up or are springing up all round the north and west and south of Delhi (on the east is the Jumna river, and as it is only spanned by a single narrow bridge, it would be unwise to start building beyond the river). Some of these new suburbs are five or seven miles from the city, in rural surroundings. For these, new bus services have been started.

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Some are on the almost uncultivated high, stony ground that extends beyond the much older Delhis to the south-west, new model houses growing up among ancient ruins. Here, water-supply and tree-planting are among the most urgent problems. They are being rapidly solved.

Much ingenuity has been shown by the authorities in finding space for new houses so that the most determined squatters could be moved from the highways, where they were covering the pavements and even pushing out into the roads. Month by month, during 1950, the pavements were cleared; and if you asked where the people had gone to, usually you could find them in new quarters just round the corner—where their customers can still easily find them.

Anyone who knew Delhi in 1947 would be inclined to say, on the evidence of appearances, that even now, after all that has been done to clear up the ugly mess of wooden and tin shacks, there must be far too many new shops in Delhi. But apparently it is not so. Careful estimates have been made of the proportion of shops needed for a given population. It appears to be somewhere in the neighbourhood of one shop per ten families. And permanent licences are only issued to the appropriate number. What the casual observer is apt to forget is the astonishing increase of population. But he will begin to realize that for himself if he crosses the Ridge behind the Birla Temple and looks out over what used to be the wilds round New Pusa Agricultural Research Station. Here alone something like a hundred thousand people are living on land which four years ago was nearly all under scrub jungle.

As we wander from new suburb to new suburb, we may find, tucked away behind Humayun's Tomb, an occupational training centre called Arab-ki-Sarai. This, as an American might say, really is something. It was started

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in November 1949. When I visited it a little more than a year later it had sent out 299 students after a full year's training, and all had been helped to find work, nearly 250 of them in Delhi. Jobs are found through advertisement and through Employment Exchanges. Here are boys and men—the range of age being from 14 to 38—doing all manner of things, making paper-clips, or pins, or string, or shoe-laces or elastic; they learn paper-making or fibre-making from certain local trees and stems. Others learn carpet-making. There is a blacksmithy and a foundry, a carpenter's shop. Some do basket-work, others confectionery. The list can be extended. These are but samples. Such a list is dull, but the work does not seem dull. Teachers and pupils alike seem to have a sense of purpose. Here again, the new India is being built.

Probably rehabilitation is seen at its best in or near Delhi. The rapid expansion of the city has eased the problem of absorption. Numbers of able and experienced officials are available. Independent members of Parliament and other weighty critics are at hand to castigate or to raise awkward questions if things go wrong. Even so, the process has been fairly lengthy. By the end of 1952, or early in 1953 at the latest, at the present rate of development, rehabilitation in and around Delhi will be complete.

5

HINDUS FROM THE FRONTIER : FARIDABAD

OFFICIAL reports on the evacuation of Hindus and Sikhs from north-western Pakistan in 1947 and 1948 do not seem to differentiate those who came from the Punjab and those who came from the Frontier. But the latter are a very distinct people.

In the West, it is customary to think of the North-West Frontier as inhabited by Muslims. The typical Pathan is a rugged, bearded, virile man, ready at any moment to take up arms at the cry of 'Allah-o-Akbar' or of 'Islam in danger'. The Hindu shopkeepers and merchants who lived among them did so, it is commonly supposed, on sufferance and as an inferior community. Anyone who believes this should visit Faridabad, a new township that has sprung up sixteen miles south of Delhi. Here are assembled some twenty-five thousand Pathans, people whose ancestors have lived on the Frontier for centuries. By faith most of them are Hindus, a few are Sikhs. But, apart from occasional difference in dress, it would be hard to distinguish them from their former Muslim neighbours. In physique, in their bearing and way of life they are Pathans of the Pathans.

What is their story before 1947? According to the 1941 census, nearly 92 per cent of the three million people in the North-West Frontier Province were Muslim. The Hindus were mostly concentrated in the towns. Their

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financial strength was such that they paid 80 per cent of the total income-tax of the province. A few were land-owners and farmers.

Towards the end of 1946 and during the first six months of 1947 supporters of the Muslim League in various parts of the province, especially those bordering the Punjab, which are largely Punjabi-speaking, attacked and burnt Hindu property. After 15 August 1947, when the Frontier Province became part of Pakistan, and Dr Khan Sahib's Congress Ministry was dismissed from office, these attacks became more serious, especially when news was brought of the Punjab disturbances. A great deal of Hindu property was destroyed in Peshawar and elsewhere and nearly all the Hindu population had to evacuate. Hundreds were killed. In a few of the semi-independent States the rulers protected their Hindu subjects and these have remained and are unmolested to this day. The rest suffered just as the minority populations did on both sides of the Punjab frontier. All who could get away finally reached India and were put into camps in various places.

By the beginning of 1949 the great majority of these refugees were existing in a vast camp along the Delhi-Mathura (Muttra) main road, sixteen miles south of Delhi and five miles west of the river Jumna. Here an area of six square miles was allotted for the construction of a new town, close to the village of Faridabad.

The site of this town is at first glance almost as arid as the most desolate parts of the Frontier from which these families had come. To the west lies rocky, grim country, a southward extension of Delhi's famous Ridge, incapable of supporting the life of any living thing but a few goats and cattle and such wild creatures as jackals and larks and sand-grouse. The strip of land between this forbidding

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country and the shady mango groves of the old Faridabad village is sandy country, which yields only a poor return to the cultivator. It is even possible that, if each settler in the town cultivates his little 'cabbage-patch', the area will produce as much food when it is inhabited by 25,000 persons all dwelling in compact little houses as it did when it was all under the plough.

The task of building the town has been beset with many difficulties. All through 1949, including the fierce heat of May and June and the heavy rains of July and August, when the whole countryside becomes like sticky glue, the refugees remained under canvas. Houses could not be built until the brick-kilns were prepared. The brick-kilns could not be built until—well perhaps we need not probe into all the causes of all the early delays. What really matters is this. The progress since the autumn of 1949 is so good that the people themselves can now afford to forget many of their early troubles.

In 1949 a Faridabad Development Board was formed. Dr Rajendra Prasad, soon to be President of the Indian Union, became its President. Mr Nehru, the Prime Minister, has regularly attended its meetings; members include Lady Nye, wife of the United Kingdom High Commissioner, Ashadevi Aryanayakam, one of the best-known women among India's constructive workers; and other notable people.

The principles which the Board has tried to act by may be summarized under three heads: first, the town was to be built as much as possible by the refugees themselves; next, co-operative methods were to be adopted; third, mental rehabilitation was to be achieved as soon as possible, thereby opening the way to permanent industrial employment.

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The administrator, Mr Sudhir Ghosh, persuaded two or three of the best 'constructive workers', inspired by Gandhiji's spirit of service, to assist this great experiment and they have made an invaluable contribution.

Faridabad, during 1949 and the early months of 1950, had to pass through the agonies and growing pains of all the other refugee camps. Doles were stopped. The Government was determined to pay people only for work or to give them loans for setting themselves up in life. They had been supported in idleness for long enough.

In Faridabad, as elsewhere, the stopping of doles was strongly resisted by many of the refugees. Demonstrations were organized. Here, as elsewhere, those who had always lived by trading were indignant at the suggestion that they should become manual workers. A demonstration that the members of the administration were themselves prepared to use shovels had a good effect. But the trouble continued. Much patience, determination and goodwill were needed before the bulk of the refugees loyally accepted the new way of life and worked for wages as unskilled manual labourers, instead of living on doles while they strove to buy and sell to one another.

An important aspect of the new way of life was the prominence given to women's work. There were many women in the camp who had no menfolk to support them. Co-operative handicrafts were started. Training was given for the learning of various crafts. Thus women as well as men were learning the lesson of the dignity of labour.

At the risk of including an item that is disproportionate, it may here be mentioned that at the beginning of 1950 a group of six members of the *Service Civil International* from Europe—three Swiss, two British, one German—came to Faridabad at the invitation of Dr Rajendra Prasad and

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settled down to work on the toughest manual jobs side by side with the refugees. They worked in the stone-quarries, they worked in the brick-kilns. They worked at road-making and house-building. At the time of their arrival, not many of the refugees were coming regularly to do this hard manual work.

House-building is a job requiring much skill. They had not that skill. They must learn. And they did not learn easily. During those critical months the presence of that handful of 'intellectuals' from Europe who turned up each day and took their shirts off and worked through the heat of the day with crowbar, pick and shovel must have counted for something. They would be the last to claim that their presence, their example, was of decisive importance. It was not they, but some of the Gandhi workers, who were able to tip the scales when the whole co-operative principle was on the point of being abandoned as unpractical and too slow. But at least it is gratifying for people of the West to know that a small band of workers for peace and goodwill from Europe, with whom, let it be added, Indian volunteers co-operated, have had some part, even if only a small one, in bringing to birth what looks like one of the starting-points of the co-operative commonwealth of the future.

It must not be assumed that the people of Faridabad all take to the co-operative principle as ducks take to water. Quite otherwise. Too many of the co-operative societies have tended to become the private enterprise of one man too clever for the rest, who makes his own profits and exploits his fellow-members. Against such malpractices the administration must constantly struggle. One can but hope that the good sense of the community in general will be strong enough to keep such practices in abeyance when the

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administration ceases to be by appointed officials and becomes democratic. Already there are elections of a town committee, but authority remains with the officials and it must so remain until civic sense has increased. There are signs, I believe, that such a civic sense is coming into being. It is, of course, the most essential condition for the functioning of a democratic and co-operative community.

By the summer of 1951 what has been achieved in Faridabad and what remains to be achieved? About fifty thousand people have been registered for settlement in the new town. The plan provides for these to be settled in five units, ten thousand inhabitants each, surrounding a slight hill, which will be used for the town centre and on which the municipal buildings will be built. Space is reserved for a main shopping centre between Units One and Five. To the south of the whole town is an area reserved for factories.

Units One and Five were first completed and the houses were inhabited by the end of 1950; two good school buildings have been erected and are functioning in each of these units. Unit Two has also been finished just in time to be occupied before the 1951 monsoon. Unit Three is under construction. Unit Four may not be needed till later. Each house has two living rooms, kitchen and bathroom and lavatory accommodation. Each has a good patch of garden, and already a number of the people are growing vegetables and otherwise breaking the dull monotony of brick walls. But perhaps dull monotony is unfair. In fact the separate buildings and the whole lay-out have been very well planned, and the aspect is not depressing or forbidding as is usual in modern mass-built towns, or in the 'lines' in which so many Indian labourers must live on the dusty, foul, ill-drained edges of the great cities of India.

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Tree-planting was started early, but it cannot be said that the result is yet impressive. Beside the roads there are cages, each of which should enclose a young tree. Most of them do so, but in this poor soil where for long months there is no drop of rain, some have died and the rest are growing slowly. Let us hope that slow and steady will win the race by providing sturdy trees in the end. Trees *can* be made to grow here, as the big mango-groves nearby and the avenues of mixed trees along the main road bear witness. But it will be some years before the men of Faridabad can sit in the shade of the trees and gossip for hours on end, as the men of all India love to do. Tree-tending will be one of the more important and more difficult aspects of the growing life of the garden city at Faridabad. Ultimately the town centre will be fully planted with trees.

But let us return to the building programme. The shopping centre has now been built and the unsightly temporary wooden shanties by the roadside which marred the beauty of the scene till the spring of 1951 have gone.

As we move further south we find vast activity proceeding. Here is a huge power-plant, which came to India as reparation-payment from Germany. It is such a modern plant that no Indian electrical engineer could do anything with it. It was rapidly rusting in the Calcutta docks, till the bold administrator of Faridabad said: 'We will take it.' Backed by his Board he cut his way through miles of red-tape, got the plant transferred from Calcutta to Delhi, brought an expert from Hamburg to assemble it and to teach Indian electricians how to look after it; and today the main parts are assembled, though to the eye of the ignorant it looks as if many of the minor parts, still lying about in seeming disarray, are ruined with rust. However,

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expert opinion says that it is not as bad as it looked at first. Not many essential parts have had to be replaced.

In the absence of cranes men have been busy doing the heavy haulage work. Other men are busy in drawing offices and other places where they plan to mechanize human life. It is expected that the plant will be running at full capacity before the end of 1951.¹ And when it runs! Then it will produce 6,000 kilowatts of power, enough for all local purposes and also enough to sell quite a bit to Delhi which needs it and will pay for it. Nor is it to be supposed that there is no electricity in Faridabad till the great power-plant is working. Already all the main roads are lit by electricity.

Near the power-house, Bata's big new shoe factory is practically complete. This factory will employ two thousand wage-earners. No less than 225 other applications for factory space have been received. But until it is seen how much of the available labour will be absorbed in co-operative production most of the remaining factory space is not being assigned. Other factories already building or even in operation include a State Diesel engine factory, a private factory for the manufacture of chemicals, including chemical manures, and several co-operative factories, which will be controlled by some of the citizens; these include a power-loom factory, a button and hosiery factory and a cardboard-box factory. The total number of workers seeking employment is about 8,000. Of these 5,000 are now supporting themselves by house-building and associated activities. A lump sum is paid by the Board to each co-operating group which makes itself responsible for a group of houses.

¹ The Prime Minister switched on the first 3,000 kilowatts one day in June 1951.

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In the civic centre the central hospital is nearly complete. It will have modern equipment and 150 beds. It will serve over thirty neighbouring villages, not only the main township of Faridabad. Health centres are being opened in each of the five units and these will include recreation rooms and an outdoor dispensary. In course of time these services will also be extended to the surrounding villages. Every man and woman and child will be a member of one or other health centre and the health of each will receive a periodical check-up.

But we are going too fast. Some of this is in the realm of what is to be. At the moment we are looking to see what is. A good temporary hospital has been running for a couple of years. Have not the doctors had to tend old men hunger-striking because they wished to be put on the register (Faridabad is attracting other refugees beyond the 50,000 provided for)? Have they not tended members of the S.C.I. when they tried to work in the midday sun of the Indian summer? Have they not tended the writer of this book? He hereby testifies from first-hand experience that the medical services of Faridabad are good; but they are going to be much better.

There are services that are more vital than health services, more vital than industrial employment, possibly more vital than a shopping centre, certainly more vital than electric power. Man's first physical need is water to drink.

Faridabad owes its water, in the first place, to a water-diviner. He went over the ground and indicated where water would be found. Wells were sunk, and good water was found. Some of these tube-wells are housed in neat little square buildings, with pumping-engine inside; and by turning the engine for some eight hours each day 280,000 gallons are raised from each well, available for drinking,

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washing and irrigation. There are now six such wells working. They were the first thing built; they already serve the whole area, including the units not yet built.

One day in April 1950, when the shade temperature was 100°F, I walked out over the bleak and dusty plain at 9 A.M. to see my friends of the S.C.I. at work on the foundations of the Technical Institute (it has since become something else). An aged Pathan, claiming to have seen some 85 winters, formerly a landowner of some wealth, now employed as a water-carrier, saw the stranger standing out in the heat, and went to the well, filled two buckets with water, carried them across to me and offered me a drink as if I were a guest in his ancestral home and he was offering me the purest nectar. That drink was good. His portrait forms the frontispiece to this book.

But what of the future? The civic centre, where the hospital is already under construction, will also have the municipal offices, a people's theatre, playgrounds and two middle-cum-high schools. A technical institute is being built in the industrial area. Two hundred units of German machine-tools have been purchased for a big workshop that will be linked with the institute. The workshop will also be a production centre for certain essential parts needed on the railways.

All the educational institutions including the institute and the workshop will be open to children from the neighbouring villages, thus serving a second population of some fifty thousand, the permanent inhabitants of this part of the Punjab. The education in Faridabad is founded on the Wardha educational principle. That is to say, it includes training in crafts—education of hand and muscle goes side by side with training of the mind. The surrounding villages will also be brought into

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is to include physical training and recreation, the emphasis being on the promotion of health, not on curing disease. Sharing these educational and health services with their neighbours the Pathans will, it is hoped, soon establish friendly relations with them. Each will benefit the other. Relations of refugees and old inhabitants appear to be good already.

Does not the development of such a modern town for some twenty or thirty thousand people present a disproportionate capital outlay?, it may be asked. On the contrary, if all goes well, not only is it a great saving, but also a very effective means of adding to wealth and raising the standard of living of the whole neighbourhood. Great savings have already been made by paying the refugees for building their own town, instead of keeping them on the dole while wages were paid to an army of workers from outside. Some skilled masons and carpenters have of course been employed. The cost of the building materials has also been greatly reduced. And once the people learnt the joy of building their own town, the pace of the work, far from being slower, has been much faster than had been provided for. It is expected that the house-building will be finished well before the end of 1951. Provision is being made for the factories to be built in time to take over the labour as soon as it is released from house-building. There will be a gradual change-over.

In the end, by a hire-purchase system that favours the refugees, each family will own its house, and it will have free education and health services. The Government of India has provided Rs 20 million (less than £2 million) as a loan to be repaid over thirty years. The community must therefore earn each year one million rupees plus the cost of free education and health services, plus the cost of

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the maintenance of roads, drainage, etc. According to present estimates, the total annual revenue will in fact be something like two and a half million rupees. If this is achieved, and the Central Government takes one million, there will be a million and a half left for local use. It should be enough.

The administration is in the hands of young, honest men and women who believe that the future can be far better than the past. It may be hoped that the reality will not be much inferior to the dream they have dreamed. When it is realized, and the event is finally celebrated, the man the whole population of Faridabad would like to welcome, as the man best fitted to put the coping-stone on their achievement, is Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the 'Frontier Gandhi', the man who first taught the Pathans, Muslim and Hindu alike, the virtues of peaceful living. It has been his life's ambition to see a prosperous co-operative commonwealth rise on the Frontier itself, with Muslims and Hindus living in comradeship together. What he will see in Faridabad may well cause him a twinge of regret; for is it not a thousand miles from where it should have been? But at least it is the realization, in a new land, of some part of his dream—the redemption of the men of the Frontier from their age-long poverty and from the violent blood-feuds that accompanied the struggle to live.

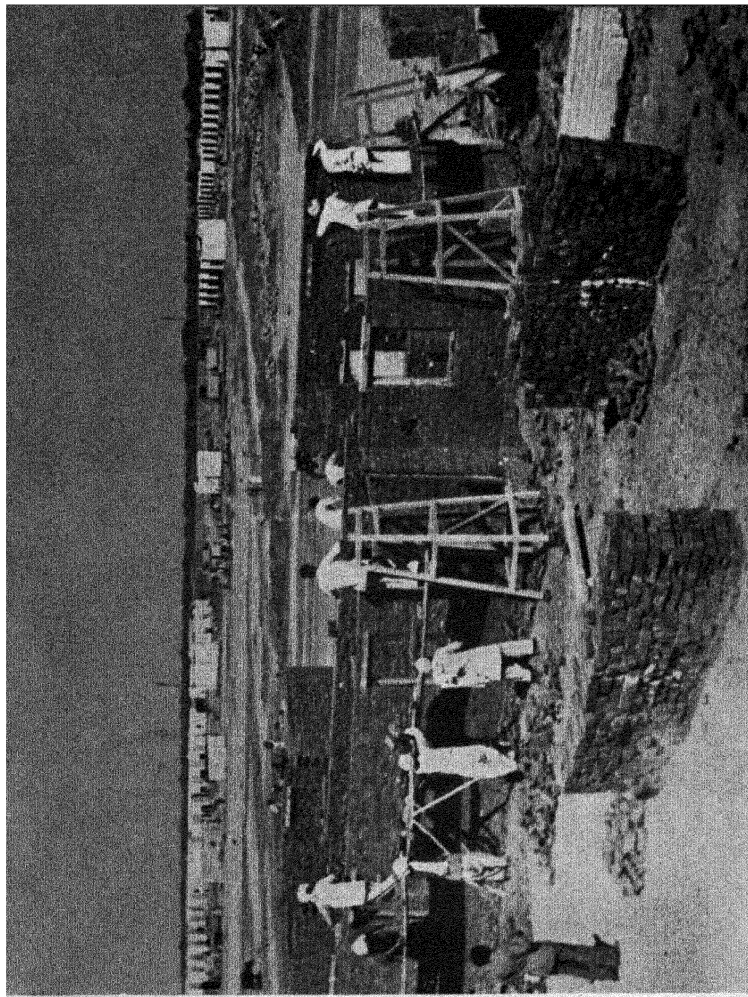
On my first visit to Faridabad, I was approached by a young man who said they had held a mass meeting and had decided to demand Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan's release. Should they send their demand to the Pakistan Government? He added that Sardar Patel had asked them not to do so, as it might do more harm than good. I thought the Sardar was probably right. But, as Indo-



By courtesy of THE STATESMAN

REFUGEES AT SEALDAH STATION, CALCUTTA

HOUSE-
BUILDING
AT
FARIDABAD,
NEAR DELHI



6

THE SIND REFUGEES

IN OCTOBER 1947, while the great migration was in full swing across the new Punjab border, the authorities in Karachi, chief city of Sind and capital of the new State of Pakistan, proudly boasted that, whatever might have happened in the Punjab, in Sind the Hindus were living in security. An attack on them had led to drastic measures, including the imposition of a rigid curfew. Even so, a number were afraid of what the future might bring, and day by day the steamers leaving for Bombay were crowded with families who decided to go while the going was reasonably good. Unhappily their fears were justified. In spite of the measures taken by the Government, worse outbreaks of violence occurred towards the end of the year, and in January 1948, Hindus left in very large numbers. Those who could do so went by boat to Bombay. Others found their way across the desert into Rajputana. The rest followed more northerly routes, and many finally reached Delhi, which was already overcrowded with refugees from the Punjab.

Ultimately the million and a quarter people who left Sind were more widely dispersed than those who came from the Punjab. The latter, as we have seen, were mostly absorbed in East Punjab though there was a considerable overflow into the United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh) and elsewhere. The largest number of Sind refugees went to Bombay and many, as we shall see, have remained in and around the city ever since; but many more were finally

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dispersed not only over the length and breadth of the large Bombay State but also into the Central Provinces (now Madhya Pradesh), and through Rajputana (Rajasthan) and Central India (Madhya Bharat) and even further afield. Such a wide dispersal may have certain advantages; small numbers may be quickly absorbed, so that they are no longer refugees, but ordinary migrants from one province or State to another, a practice that is not at all new to India, but is almost as common as removal from county to county in England, from State to State in America, or from one province to another in any other Western country. This, however, only works in an expanding economy. In a static economy it is not so easy to absorb even small numbers.

The refugees from Sind included no more than one or two per cent of cultivators. Nearly all were townsmen from the larger towns of the province. Some were professional men (a few of these, however, have stayed behind even to this day), but most were traders, petty shopkeepers, artisans. So they could not easily be absorbed by being settled on uncultivated land.

A small agricultural colony of a few thousand has been settled near Bombay. The rest have gone to towns. There were several possibilities of rehabilitating these people. Either they could be distributed in small numbers over many small Indian towns, or they could be settled in new towns with new industries; or they could be trained for new and expanding industrial occupations. All three methods have been, or are being, attempted and it may be well to see some of the results in each case.

Once again, it is important first to remind ourselves that large numbers fall outside all these three categories. They have rehabilitated themselves. There is widespread testi-

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present economy, many of the families living here are likewise living on rapidly disappearing Government loans. Soon, they will not be able to go on paying the rent that is supposed to enable them to buy their houses within a year or two. Then what happens to them?

A few of these houses, with a frontage onto the road from the railway station to the town, were given shop-fronts. But no one goes there to shop. Everyone goes to the busy bazaar half a mile away. A few of the more enterprising of these refugees have established themselves in the main bazaar. They are making quite a good living. But Hoshangabad, like most country towns in mid-India, is not increasing in size. It has no industry, no factories. So the refugees who have established themselves as successful shopkeepers must have done so at the expense of the old-established shopkeepers. Their success is therefore not unnaturally resented by the older inhabitants. Far from becoming absorbed, they are regarded as undesirable aliens.

In fact, the Sind refugees, as I have already noted, are in many cases men of very determined character, more enterprising than many of those who have been born and lived in Madhya Pradesh. So it is likely that a good proportion, say from twenty to thirty per cent of those who have been thus dispersed over the State, will prosper. But they will do so largely by destroying the trade of some of the local inhabitants. Many of the remainder will soon come back onto the Government—or they will thief or starve. Theft and violent crime are already very seriously increasing. Much of it is traceable to the Sindhis.

In other words, the policy of mere dispersal is short-sighted, uneconomic and vicious. It does not solve the problem of the refugees, it hides the problem for a year or two, but in the end it creates new problems. Far from

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leading to the early absorption of the refugees, it leads to widespread resentment at this incursion of 'foreigners'. And when it begins to show its inherent viciousness, scheming agitators are tempted to turn the rising resentment on both sides against the unhappy Muslim minority, who will be turned into scapegoats, like Hitler's Jews.

There is no reason to suppose that the Madhya Pradesh Government is any more short-sighted than others. Parallel examples to my Hoshangabad story can probably be found in all the States that are faced with the problem of absorbing many thousands of unwanted refugees from Sind and elsewhere. Thus in a Bombay State report I find the statement: 'Displaced persons putting up in temporary camps have been and are being shifted to the smaller towns where scope for their absorption exists.' But does it exist, or is it only conveniently assumed? In most States there is at least one new town being built where fresh industrial production is possible. In Madhya Pradesh, at the moment, there are none. It may not be too late to start one. Perhaps, too, the State Government may consider a land settlement scheme, or more than one. Otherwise it may be feared that the rising tide of anger that must follow the failure of the present policy will be exploited by some opposition group.

In the areas to which Sind refugees have gone, there have been two main training centres. The first is at Gandhinagar, in Bhopal State, where training is provided for 155 trainees, the second at Kandla, in Kutch, which only provides for thirty at a time. The former is under the direct control of the Ministry of Rehabilitation, the latter under an organization known as the Sindhu Resettlement Corporation.¹ I have not visited either of these

¹ Since this was written, Gandhinagar has been abandoned.

centres and I have not seen any special reports. Presumably they are comparable to the training centres at Arab-ki-Sarai (Delhi), Nilokheri, Rajpura and elsewhere, already described. The importance of such training centres can hardly be exaggerated. In Bombay's most recently published report on Rehabilitation in that State (January 1951) the sentence occurs: 'In the rehabilitation programme special emphasis has been laid on the provision of technical and vocational training.'

Bombay has received the largest number of Sind refugees. Nearly half a million have settled in Bombay State territory. Let us see what the State is doing to absorb and re-establish them in its economy. Bombay made a false start. The refugees pleaded that they should be trusted to do the main job themselves. The Government thought well of the plan. It was democratic. The elected representatives of the refugees would surely themselves know best what the needs of the people were and how they could be met. Accordingly, sixteen men were elected to act as a rehabilitation authority for their fellows. But the machinery did not work. The elected sixteen (or most of them) proved totally unworthy of their trust. Supplies and funds entrusted to them found their way into the black market or into their own pockets. After a year the experiment had to be abandoned as a disastrous failure. Naturally it was not so easy to begin again when the refugees were demoralized from a year of living on doles and suffering from maladministration. They were disillusioned and bitter and ready to suspect further fraud. However, in the past two years much has been done to redeem the situation. First, it should be recorded to the credit of the Bombay Government that a model agricultural colony for refugees has been started south of Bombay city, but unhappily only

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a few thousand of the Sind refugees have been both willing and able to become cultivators. There is land available for others if or when they are willing to revert to the most fundamental and most necessary of all man's crafts.

By far the largest concentration of Sindhis in Bombay State is at Kalyan, an important railway junction only thirty miles from Bombay city—at present, however, very ill-served by roads. Here a large war-time military camp was vacant, and this was utilized for temporary accommodation. Officially, 80,000 people are to be settled in this new town. In February 1951, the number was nearly 100,000 and it may rise further. Doles were stopped in October 1949. Houses consisting of one room, two rooms or three rooms have already been built for a large proportion of the population. The building programme is due to be completed by the spring of 1952. Today (spring 1951) numbers of people are still in army barracks, and a few have lived (and still live) in great hangars, with leaky roofs and nothing to separate one apartment from another but tables and chairs set on their sides and other improvised wooden partitions. Only a few, however, still have to put up with this kind of existence—which is, of course, no worse than the conditions under which many Harijans (Untouchables) still live in almost every Indian city.

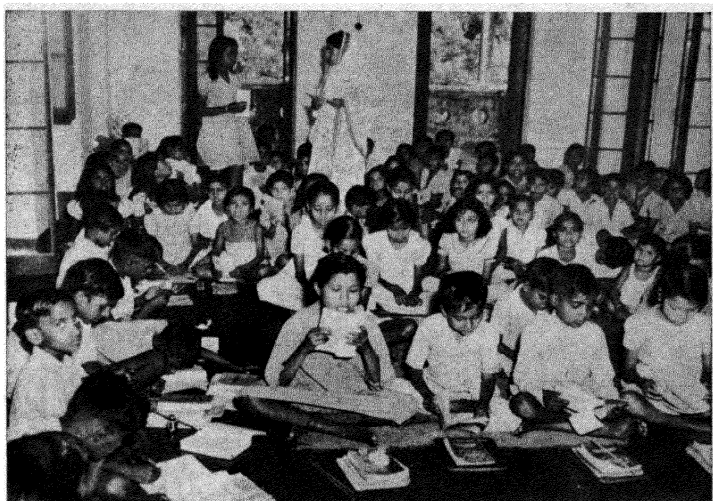
The people of Kalyan township (its official name is Ulhasnagar), have not, like those of Faridabad and Nilo-kheri, built their houses with their own hands. The effort to break them from their traditional preference for buying and selling, their traditional dislike of manual work, was thought to be too difficult. How, then, have they been able to live since their doles were stopped? The answer seems to be, by selling to one another. Such an answer appears fantastic. It sounds like the mythical town where

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all the people tried to live by taking in each other's washing. This, it is generally believed, cannot be done—unless a good proportion of the townsmen have some other invisible means of wealth. Are the people of Kalyan gradually using up the resources in cash that they brought three and a half years ago from Sind? Will the economic bottom soon drop out and leave them destitute? Or are they capturing the trade of their Bombay neighbours? Or what is the explanation?

In part, the explanation seems to be that they are surrounded by an expanding economy. Today, the cultivators living in the villages of the Konkan (the area between the Arabian Sea and the Western Ghats), like the villagers of many other parts of India, are better off than they were a few years ago; they have more security of tenure. Their indebtedness has largely decreased. They are getting higher prices for their produce. Therefore, not only are they eating more (which is one contributory cause of India's food shortage), they are also able to buy more consumer goods. The shopkeepers of Kalyan sell their cotton goods (mostly bought from the Bombay cotton mills) at a lower price than the price in the Bombay shops. The village people are accordingly buying more clothes. They come from villages thirty or forty miles from Kalyan to purchase cloth in the Kalyan bazaar. In Kalyan they have also learnt to buy ices and sweets—a new taste acquired.

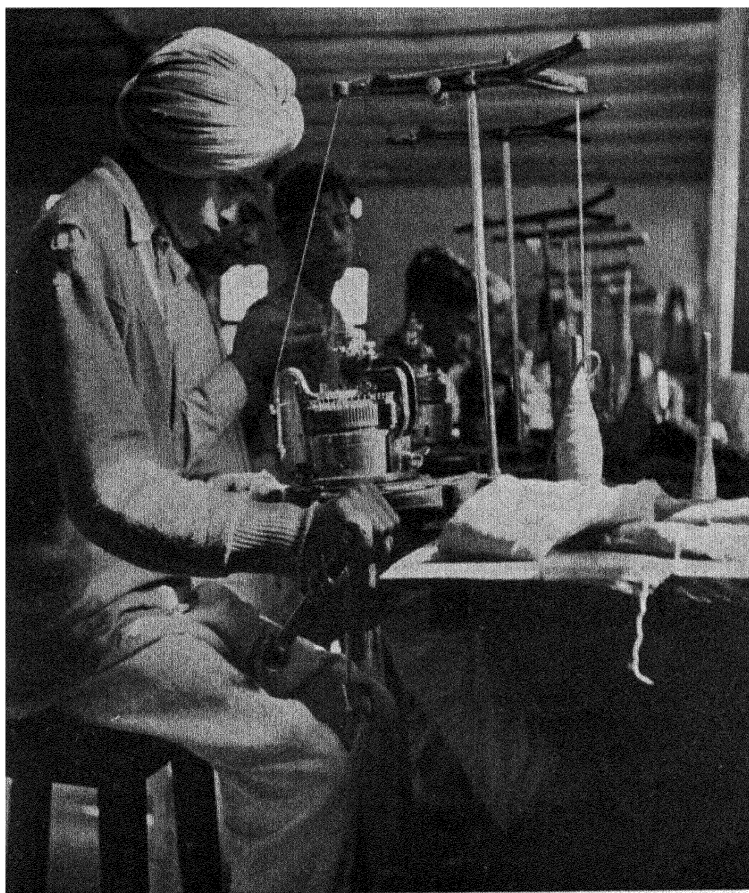
Even so, it is difficult to believe that a town of 100,000 can subsist for long chiefly by exploiting the market for consumer goods of villages scattered over a not very populous couple of hundred or even five hundred square miles of surrounding country. One is driven to the conclusion that, on such an economic basis, though 20,000 or 25,000 people (meaning four or five thousand families) might



REFUGEE CHILDREN AT DUM DUM, WEST BENGAL



Photographs by courtesy of THE STATESMAN
 GIRLS MAKING CLOTHES FOR REFUGEE CHILDREN,
 AT A RELIEF CENTRE IN CALCUTTA



By courtesy of THE STATESMAN

A REFUGEE SIKH AT NILOKHERI LEARNING TO
MAKE SOCKS

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flourish, a good proportion of the rest would sooner or later go to the wall.

What is being done to bring productive enterprise into the town? Little enough, it must be confessed. Here is a saw-mill, with its own small power-generating motor, employing fifteen men. A few other quite small industries of this character including 34 small ice-candy factories and 60 grinding mills have been started by the refugees themselves. But it is doubtful whether they employ a thousand persons among them all.

More important is the Government's own Production Centre. The number employed here is variable. In February 1951, it was about 250. Many of the orders—for wooden desk-trays, for waste-paper-baskets, for shoes and chappals, for tin pails—are from the Government itself. The quality of production seems to be good, and no doubt orders will continue to come.

The Vocational Training Centre, under direction no less ardent than that of the Production Centre, was giving instruction to nearly five hundred trainees, including some quite elderly men, and a number of girls as well as boys, when I visited it. A few of the occupations taught here, such as tailoring, draw many recruits. There seems to be plenty of room for more tailors. Many of the Bombay tailors were Muslims, some of whom have gone to Pakistan. Bombay city with its rapidly increasing population can certainly absorb young men trained in various handicrafts. But some of the other occupational training in the Kalyan training centre is not so eagerly sought after. In contrast to some of the training centres I have visited in the Punjab and round Delhi, the directorate here do not guarantee to place their trainees in work at the end of their course. Indeed, in some crafts, the director sadly

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confessed that they cannot reach a standard high enough to satisfy the demands of the Bombay mill and factory owners. Of nearly two thousand who had completed the training in the Kalyan training centre by February 1951, only about half had found employment and a number of these trainees have 'lapsed' from manual occupations to shopkeeping.

At the time of my visit not a single factory, apart from the few small affairs started by some of the refugees themselves, had opened, or even acquired a site. A large site for factories was pointed out to me, but it was a stony, desolate waste. It had not even been levelled. Many factories may be in the Master-Plan, but they will not be employing the citizens of Ulhasnagar for many a day. One explanation for what appears to be a most unfortunate delay in giving real backbone and substance to this great new town is lack of cheap electric power. One might almost say: the usual complaint. A great row of pylons runs right across Ulhasnagar; but at present the town does not benefit. There is hope that adequate electric power for new factories may be available by the beginning of 1952. In 1951 there is not enough current to give light to all the houses; and the street-lighting is scanty. The problem of adequate electric power seems to be as urgent at Kalyan as it is at Rajpura in the Punjab and in other new townships. Indeed, it is vital if these new towns are to live and prosper.

I have not been able to learn exactly how many of the inhabitants of Kalyan go to Bombay daily for employment. If the number is high, then Kalyan's economic problem is soluble. But from what I learnt, I do not think the number is large. One official with whom I discussed the matter hazarded the opinion that it is quite easy for a city of two

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millions to absorb another hundred thousand. Such facile optimism is only possible for those who live among files and statistics remote from the harsh despair that still confronts many who, having been provided with houses and loans, are listed as already rehabilitated. If the Bombay Rehabilitation authorities say, 'First we are housing the people, then we will find employment, through training schemes and in other ways, for those who cannot re-establish themselves through loans', well and good. But if the answer is 'Once we have housed them and provided loans, then they must fend for themselves'—then there will come a day of bitter reckoning. The sentence already quoted from the Bombay Government's most recent report, stressing the importance of training schemes, encourages one to believe that the first answer is the right one. But what I saw at Ulhasnagar left me questioning.

There are several other smaller refugee settlements nearer to Bombay. These are not satellite-towns, but true suburbs; the inhabitants are nearly all employed in Bombay.

Sardarnagar, a new township of thirty thousand, is being built close to Ahmedabad. Possibly its economy is being welded into that of the large and growing industrial town of Ahmedabad. If so, well and good.

Another large township, called Gandhidham, is being built in the State of Saurashtra, formerly Kathiawad. This, too, will absorb a large number of Sindhi refugees. I have not been able to visit it, but the published reports tell of houses built and similar material progress rather than of its permanent economic foundations.

Returning, then, to our first analysis, we see that the Sindhi townsmen have been assisted along all three possible lines. Many have been sent in small numbers to small country towns, in the hope that they would become

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absorbed into the local economy; a hope based, it would seem, more on wishful thinking than on any more solid foundation. Others are being settled in new towns, but, so far, with too little consideration of the occupations that will be available for them. Others are being trained to fit into new, or expanding, or under-staffed, manual occupations. This last seems to be by far the wisest course, the most likely to achieve lasting benefit for the refugees and for India.

7

BENGAL, 1947-9

THE DIVISION of India's most populous province, Bengal, into a predominantly Muslim eastern province (East Pakistan) and a predominantly Hindu western province, including the huge city of Calcutta, has been followed by different consequences from the division of the Punjab. Bengal had seen fierce outbreaks of communal violence in 1946; first, when Muslims and Hindus slaughtered each other in the streets of Calcutta for three days in August; then, in October, when Hindus were slaughtered and their houses burnt in parts of the Eastern district of Noakhali. For months during the winter Mahatma Gandhi toured the Noakhali villages, telling the Hindu minority not to run away in terror, and pleading with the Muslim majority to remember that the things that united them with their neighbours were far more important than the things that divided them. In East Bengal peace was restored, in spite of a section of the population that refused to be pacified. But in Calcutta the 'war' between the two communities dragged on all through the winter of 1946-7; in some areas no Muslim dared to show his face, in others no Hindu. Some streets were uncrossable. If a citizen of either community crossed to the other side he was likely to be stabbed. Shooting incidents from 'border areas' in the city were frequent. The Government, at that time controlled by the Muslim League, seemed to be unable to stop it.

As Independence Day drew near, the citizens of Calcutta viewed the future with anxiety. Although the Boundary

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Commission did not announce the boundary until a few days before the fateful date (15 August) it was generally assumed that Calcutta, being surrounded by predominantly Hindu districts, and having itself a majority of Hindus, would remain in India. Therefore it was bound to pass to a Government of the Congress party, which would mean a predominantly Hindu Government. What would happen? If the party of violence among the Hindus got the upper hand, and proceeded to terrorize the Muslims in Calcutta, undoubtedly millions of Hindus in East Bengal, under the new Pakistan Government, would suffer equally. For in Bengal, as in the Punjab, large minorities were bound to be left on either side, wherever the boundary might be drawn.

One day in July 1947 I called on one of the chief Bengal Congress leaders, Mr Kiron Shanker Roy, in his house in Calcutta. 'What will happen on the 15th of August?' I asked him. He handed the question on to a colleague who was sitting with him. His colleague, cautious and non-committal, said: 'Oh, perhaps there may be some trouble.' 'And what do you mean by "some trouble"?' asked Mr Roy, 'do you mean about ten thousand casualties?' Thus did men speculate.

But the pessimists were counting without Mahatma Gandhi. He had been away from Bengal for some months, trying to bring peace to Bihar and the Punjab, where fierce outbreaks of violence had also occurred. He returned to Bengal in time for the 15th. He had intended to spend the day in East Bengal, hoping that his presence might help to ensure peace there. But he was persuaded that his presence in Calcutta would be more effective. Having exacted a solemn promise from Muslim leaders that they would guarantee peace in East Bengal, he accordingly

remained in Calcutta. And his wisdom in so doing was shown at once by an angry crowd of violent-minded young Hindus who came and stoned the house where he was living in a poor neighbourhood from which all the Muslims had been driven.

But the effect of his action on the common people was magical. They were tired of living in two armed camps, weary of living in fear of their neighbours. If he, the great Mahatma, could make friends and colleagues of some of the most virulent Muslim communalists, and accept the hospitality of a Muslim house for the sake of peace and concord, why should not they all do the same? And so, on the evening of the 14th, when some Hindus were putting up a flag for the celebration of Independence next day, the Muslims, watching from across the street, offered to come and help. Fraternization began and it spread all over the city in a few hours. The 15th was a day of general rejoicing. 'Hindu-Muslim-ki-Jai' was almost as common a cry as 'Jai Hind'. For those who were in Calcutta on that day, after having lived there through the previous twelve months, the experience was unique and ever memorable. The storm-clouds that had filled the sky for so long had suddenly cleared. The sun of righteousness shone in full glory.

A small group of Hindus were still angry. They had been foiled of their intended day of vengeance. A fortnight later, encouraged by the bad news that came from the Punjab, they tried to break the peace. The Mahatma himself was again attacked. Some scores of Muslims were killed. But the populace as a whole refused to respond. They were sick of bloodshed. Mahatma Gandhi immediately began to fast. Within three days the Hindu leaders who had kept aloof from his peace-making effort were at

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his bedside together with other leaders of both communities. They all promised to work together for establishing peace in the city; and they kept their promise.

So, too, in East Bengal. The Muslim leaders did not fail. Peace was preserved. No incident of communal violence was recorded. All Bengal seemed to be peaceful.

Unhappily this is not the complete picture. Division of the country meant division of the services. In Bengal by far the greater number of civil servants were Hindus. Some of these might have been content to remain in East Bengal and to serve Pakistan. Indeed, an effort was made, a few weeks before partition, to get an agreement for stabilizing the services as far as possible. But the effort broke down. Consequently large numbers of Hindu officials left East Bengal. Many wealthy Hindus, whose houses were in East Bengal, owned property also in Calcutta. Some of these now left their old homes, doubting what life in Pakistan might mean, and continued to live in Calcutta. Others migrated across the new border to join relatives who had homes in Calcutta. Seeing the departure of many of the wealthy members of the community, others who were partly or wholly dependent on them, clerks, servants and many more, began to leave. Some of these also had relatives in West Bengal, so they did not arrive destitute. But as the evacuation from East Bengal continued, many of the Hindus arriving in Calcutta had no houses or relatives to go to. The new Government of West Bengal did its utmost to discourage this migration. Indeed, its lack of sympathy for the refugees was one of the main counts against the first Ministry, formed by Dr Profulla Ghosh, which had to give way to a new Ministry, formed by Dr B. C. Roy, before the end of 1947. This Ministry soon learnt that it too must not openly encourage Hindus to

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leave East Bengal, or even make life easy for those who did come over; else the stream would soon become an overwhelming torrent. Harassed officials tried to find accommodation for the destitute refugees, at one time arriving several hundreds in number each day. They were put in camps up and down the province and provided with shelter. But apart from keeping them alive, the Government would do nothing for them. Finally, by the end of 1948, the stream of incoming refugees was really stopped, but by that time it was reckoned that over a million had arrived. 800,000 of these belonged to the non-agricultural middle classes. Their rehabilitation obviously constituted a huge problem. During 1949 it was seriously faced.

It is important to recognize that this migration was almost entirely a one-way traffic. As time went on, in some areas of Calcutta, where refugees were clamouring for shelter, Muslims were obliged to leave. But the number thus affected in the two years from August 1947 was small compared with the number of Hindus who left East Bengal. It has to be remembered, in addition to the factors already mentioned, that, whereas Pakistan was created on the 'two-nation' theory by a party (the Muslim League) that consisted of Muslims only, the predominant party in India (the National Congress) had always repudiated the two-nation theory, and its membership has included a number of notable Muslims.

It is true that Congress India, since the establishment of Pakistan, has not always had the courage (locally at least) to live up to its principles. On the other hand, fortunately Pakistan has sometimes (especially in East Bengal) been better in practice than in principle. But the fact remains that, so long as Pakistan is a self-declared Islamic State, the Hindus (and for that matter Christians and Parsis) are

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inclined to regard themselves, and also to be regarded, as second-class citizens. No such stigma attaches to minority communities in India—at least in theory; and the leaders of India have done their utmost to uphold the principle of the secular State in practice as well as in theory.

In East Bengal, a large section of the Hindus have for generations been in fact almost the only 'first-class' citizens. They have tended to monopolize the services, the land, the schools, the chief professions. Suddenly to find themselves degraded to second-class citizenship has, therefore, been for many of them intolerable. Even if nothing had happened but the establishment of Pakistan, with its inevitable corollary of encouraging the Muslims to think more highly of themselves, many of the wealthier and high-caste Hindus would no doubt have left. The vital question for both parts of sundered Bengal was: Would the migration end with these few? Or would it become a mass movement? In that case, ten million Hindus would have migrated. And in that case, undoubtedly, Indian opinion (or rather Hindu opinion in India) would have forced the millions of Muslims remaining in West Bengal, in Bihar, in Orissa, and perhaps elsewhere, to leave too. There were nearly forty million Muslims in India after the creation of Pakistan. It may be doubted whether any of these could stay, if once the Hindus of East Bengal began to leave *en masse*.

In 1948 it looked as if the movement had stopped, as if the position could be stabilized. If that had happened, the remainder of this chapter would have been concerned with two years' work of rehabilitation of the million already received. Unhappily, at the beginning of 1950, events took place in both Bengals which threatened the

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huge upheaval of populations pictured in the last paragraph. This, and the larger problem of rehabilitation that has followed, requires a separate chapter.

8

BENGAL AND ASSAM, 1950

IN DECEMBER 1949, an incident occurred in East Bengal, the exact nature of which is still a matter of controversy. It is certain, however, that, rightly or wrongly, it was represented in Calcutta as a major attack on Hindus. Passions were aroused, and towards the end of January 1950, attacks occurred on Muslims in a number of districts of West Bengal, both in the city of Calcutta and in country districts, especially in some of the jute-mill areas to the north of the city. A few days later there were severe attacks on Hindus in Dacca, capital city of East Pakistan, and in Barisal and other parts of East Bengal. Terrible things happened on both sides of the border, and they lost nothing in the telling on the opposite side. In both countries it was generally believed that the majority on the other side was now resolved to exterminate its minority. Talk of war became common.

Under these circumstances it was inevitable that a large new migration should take place. Not only those who were directly affected, but many of the minority community in districts where there had been no open breach of the peace, decided to leave with their families—or else to send their families and follow as soon as they could dispose of their property. In March 1950, although, as far as I could learn, there had been no communal incident for three weeks or more, and the East Pakistan Government was taking vigorous measures to restore confidence, masses of people were on the move. The trains and the river

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steamers could scarcely cope with the crowds. At each quayside where the river steamer stopped on Bengal's great water highways crowds of simple peasants were waiting patiently with their bundles. When the planks were laid across there was a great press of human beings struggling to get on board the boat. The Steamer Company's staff held poles across to give old men and women some kind of hand-hold as they crossed the slippery sloping plank. It seemed miraculous that none fell into the water. Another miracle was the way in which, at each stopping-place, room was somehow found on an overcrowded deck for more and more and more people to squeeze on board with their scanty bundles. So, in the end, after long and painful journeyings, and possible harassment and inevitable delays at the border, the crowded trainloads finally arrived at Sealdah station in Calcutta. Here fresh sorrows began. The overworked rehabilitation authorities of West Bengal were quite unable to cope with the huge invasion. A great proportion of the refugees had to be kept on the platforms of Sealdah station for days at a time. Constantly evacuation to transit camps was taking place, but for months this evacuation could not catch up with the influx of refugees. Sealdah station, with a minimum of hygienic facilities—though numbers of young volunteers from many agencies were doing their best to help—remained a vast refugee camp. It was not effectively cleared till late August or early September 1950. One evening about that time I went with a Bengali friend to see if Sealdah station was really clear at last. When we got there, a few family parties were sitting in groups on the platforms. This, however, is a regular feature of every large Indian railway station. They might well be ordinary travellers, village people or others, who had come to the station and were waiting for

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the next train—possibly waiting for many hours. In fact, most of the groups did come into this category.

One group, however, proved to be a refugee family. Why were they there? They had arrived from Pakistan that morning, ten or twelve hours before we found them. All their fellow-passengers had been taken away to an evacuation camp, but they were left behind. Why had they been left? Well, it seemed that they were in rather unusual circumstances. The head of the family explained that he had a brother with land in West Bengal. Two or three months before he had come from his East Bengal farm, leaving his family behind, to see his brother. His brother had finally agreed to take him and his family and to share the land with them. He had accordingly obtained a special permit from the police, allowing him to return to East Bengal and bring his family back. He had returned to his old farm, sold up, and brought his family. When he learnt that all the refugees were being taken to an evacuation camp, he refused to go. He was afraid that they would be kept in the camps, that he might be sent somewhere else. He would go nowhere but to his brother's place. But he had no money to pay the fares. How could he go? So there he stayed clutching his precious police pass, unwilling to move till he knew the move was to the right place.

We sought all over the station for the rehabilitation officer. It seemed that he had gone to get his food. Finally we pointed the family out to a railway official, who promised to put the rehabilitation man in touch with them when he returned. What happened afterwards, I do not know. Probably the family reached its destination, possibly next day, possibly after a month. Their case is hardly typical, but at least it indicates the trouble and difficulty

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that many families had to face—many, indeed, far worse than this—in the perilous effort to find refuge after escaping from the terrors that had seized their minds in their ancestral homes.

It will have been noticed that this single family was part of a trainload that had reached Calcutta from East Bengal in early September 1950; the new exodus had begun in February and had been continuing in force all through the spring and summer. Yet in April the Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan had met and had entered into an agreement, known as the Delhi Pact, under which they solemnly agreed to provide full protection to minorities, especially in the two parts of Bengal and in neighbouring States. Was the Pact a mere paper agreement? By no means. The Pact itself deliberately allowed for continued movement of those who wanted to move; the events of January, February and March (for in March further violence took place in the mill areas about Calcutta and Howrah) had so shattered confidence and embittered feelings that the people of both minority communities (Hindus in East Bengal, Muslims in West Bengal) were reluctant to risk their lives by remaining. Whether in fact there were any further incidents of communal violence after the Delhi Pact is not quite clear. Each side alleged that there were some—on the other side. In any case nothing happened in the least degree comparable to the terrible events of February and March. Moreover, from May or June onwards a reverse movement began, and by the end of the summer the volume of this movement greatly exceeded that of the arriving refugees. By the end of the year, the East Pakistan authorities claimed that a million had returned.

It has seemed necessary to give this outline of the events

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of 1950, culminating in the return migration that was in full swing in the later part of the year, in order to make one important point quite clear. It is this. Whereas in relation to the Punjab, from September 1947 onwards, the agreed policy of India and Pakistan was to complete an exchange of populations, apart from any small pockets or odd families of the minority community who might hope to remain, in Bengal there has been no such agreement. Certain political groups in West Bengal have urged that some such agreement, providing for the reception of all Hindus from East Bengal and compulsory evacuation of a corresponding number of Muslims from West Bengal and adjacent Indian States, should be made with Pakistan, but such a principle has not been entertained by the Government of India. On the contrary, its principle has been to encourage the return of the East Bengal refugees to their homes as far as possible; the Government of India and the West Bengal Government have entered into agreements with Pakistan that neither State will assign refugee lands or immovable property to their incoming refugees. Accordingly, no one can say for certain how many of the recent migrants are to be treated as permanently displaced persons. This has added considerably to the difficulties in carrying out a consistent rehabilitation policy. It also makes it difficult to state how many refugees have in fact come from East Bengal. Some publicists give as high a figure as five million (including the million and more in 1947-8). The latest Government figure (November 1950) appears to be 3,398,000. In November 1950, the Government of India also gave the figure of 1,588,000 as the approximate number of Muslims who left West Bengal and Assam for East Bengal during 1950. Of these, some 772,000 had returned again by November 1950. 1,493,000

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are said to have returned to Pakistan during the later months of 1950. It would seem, therefore, that the 1950 migration has sent nearly two million Hindus into India from East Pakistan in the aggregate, as against less than one million Muslims who have permanently gone to Pakistan. Both figures may yet be reduced by further return of migrants to their former homes.

No less than fifty per cent of the 1950 refugees arriving in India have been agriculturists. This gives a very different complexion to the movement from the earlier migration. In November 1950, numbers were still in camps; 160,000 in West Bengal, 14,000 in Assam, 30,000 in Tripura State (south-east of Assam), 13,000 in Orissa, 20,000 in Bihar. Nearly a quarter of a million were still receiving doles, including nearly 50,000 not in camps.

As a result of a survey undertaken in 1942, it was claimed that 250,000 acres of land in West Bengal was cultivable waste. Absence of cultivation was due to three main causes: lack of irrigation, poverty of soil, and prevalence of malaria. But it was also claimed that a good deal of land could be readily cultivated if the landlords (zamindars) did not demand excessive rents. This, however, is perhaps hardly the place to discuss the great and urgent problems of Indian land-hunger and land-reform. General Government policy in this matter is not easy to ascertain. The Government has been criticized for not undertaking a bold policy of land acquisition and reclamation. From Pakistan, however, complaint has been made that some agricultural refugees have been settled in India on land evacuated by Muslims.

Whatever force there may be in these criticisms, at least it can be claimed that some highly successful land settlement schemes are being carried out. Let us look, for

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instance, at Chandipur Camp or township in Basirhat subdivision, close to the new border, as I saw it in December 1950.

The camp here was only opened in May 1950. Twelve hundred families, representing 5,600 people, many of them from Barisal in East Bengal, were provided with nearly three hundred bighas of land which had gone out of cultivation because of the very high incidence of malaria. By December, that is, after barely six months, these twelve hundred had built themselves over six hundred two-roomed bamboo huts with mud floors. They had constructed a fair four-mile road from the nearest railway station. They had cleared a great deal of undergrowth, especially along the roadside and near the camp, and this together with the use of some D.D.T. had so reduced the incidence of malaria that the local doctor declared that he had been reduced to idleness. They had also cleared a broad waterway of the clogging mass of water-hyacinth, an alien from America which, when uncontrolled, has been one of the major curses of modern Bengal. Each house had about an eighth of an acre of land attached to it, and on these patches of land vegetables were growing in profusion. Pumpkins and other fast-growing vegetables were already in fruit. Twenty-eight tube-wells had been sunk. New tanks (pools of water) had been built. Schools and night-schools were in full working order, manned by refugee teachers. Illiteracy among the adults had been reduced by 75 per cent. Some twenty men were supporting themselves in a local carpentry shop; others were producing artistic pottery. Weaving, soap-making, dairying, poultry-farming and other crafts and occupations were being developed.

The refugees were themselves developing consumers'

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co-operatives and co-operative transport. Co-operative production was being planned on additional land which the Rehabilitation Department hoped soon to put at their disposal.

The experiences through which some of these refugees had passed were still fresh in the minds of the older people. Here and there women came forward to pour out their tales of horror to the visitor. But for the younger generation mental rehabilitation, not only through schools, but also through music and drama, seemed to be proving effective. A wooden stage had been erected in the centre of the village. Here, a drama was enacted some weeks before my visit, and this drew thousands of spectators from the neighbouring villages, which are inhabited largely by Muslims. Moreover, a secondary school, already catering for the local village-people, had been developed to include a number of refugee children, so that the two elements in the population, old resident and newcomer, Muslim and Hindu, were being brought into close relationship.

While we were visiting one end of the village, a programme of music and dancing was rapidly improvised, and before we left we enjoyed, together with many of the local inhabitants, and not least with the children themselves, some charming Bengali dances performed by a dozen young children with 'rings on their fingers and bells on their toes'.

This aspect of rehabilitation has been vigorously encouraged by the Chief Minister of West Bengal, Dr B. C. Roy, one of the most brilliant doctors in modern India, who knows better than most men how important it is to foster mental health if one wishes to achieve peace and goodwill among men and to overcome the bitterness and hatred that so readily possess the minds of sufferers who

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have been driven from their homes.

The leaders of this refugee community had prepared posters declaring COLLECTIVE ACTION IS THE FOUNDATION FOR FREEDOM AND WELL-BEING. They were certainly trying to practise what they preached. Indeed, for once it seemed that the practice came before the preaching—as it should.

I asked the Rehabilitation Officer, who was responsible for this and several neighbouring refugee centres, if he had been responsible for shaping the life of the community. He assured me that it was not his doing. He had tried to foster whatever positive activities the refugees undertook. But he agreed that Chandipur was his model colony, and he hoped that the example of Chandipur would be followed in some of the other five or six camps for which he was responsible. One of these was a township of 50,000. Certainly, it would be much harder to apply the co-operative principle to a community of fifty thousand than to one of under six thousand. But Faridabad shows what can be done.

During World War II, when Bengal was threatened with Japanese invasion from Burma, villages in several places were rapidly evacuated, in order to plant airfields at several points in this frontier province. Little has been done so far to bring these derelict airfields back into cultivation. They are still derelict, covered with useless scrub. At one of these, called Habra, some forty miles from Calcutta, 35,000 refugees are being settled. Considering that it is intended for the older groups of refugees, not the 1950 migrants, development has perhaps been slow. The rural colony, with some land attached, is to house 30,000; but in December 1950 it did not seem that much land had been brought back under cultivation, or even that many

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of the thirty thousand had been permanently housed. Another section consists of substantial houses, each costing Rs 4,500, payable in twenty instalments; these are intended for refugees who have brought money with them from Pakistan and who have business or professional work in Calcutta. Indeed, it appears to be a satellite town in the strict sense, built to house some of the more wealthy refugees. By December 1950, some 200 families were living here. The total population will be about 7,000. The chief virtue of Habra seems to be that it takes a number of business and professional families well away from the vast, crowded, ill-planned city of Calcutta. But until fresh trees are planted and the derelict airfield has been brought back into cultivation, the rural surroundings will be unattractive.

Another new Bengal township is being created at Fulia. This will house some five thousand refugees. I have not visited it. Mr S. K. Dey, the founder of Nilokheri, is responsible for it; so it should be good.

Nearly a quarter of the refugees from East Bengal are shopkeepers and petty traders. It seems doubtful whether the present measures are at all adequate for their rehabilitation. Weavers, fishermen, carpenters, potters and some other craftsmen readily find employment. But the bulk of the shopkeepers and traders are likely to remain unassimilated in Bengal, as in the Punjab, Bombay and elsewhere, unless serious efforts are made to build small industrial towns. Occupational training centres in camps and other refugee settlements are the first step in this direction. It should be possible for the Government of India to decide broadly what industries are likely to expand in the next twenty years, and accordingly what occupational training should be encouraged in each State.

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Assam, the extreme north-eastern province of India, which lies to the north and north-east of Eastern Pakistan, was involved in the 1950 communal troubles, both by outbreaks of violence against Muslims, which occurred in some border districts early in the year, and in having to receive large numbers of fleeing Hindus who crossed into Assam as the nearest place of refuge from violent outbreaks in the Sylhet district of East Pakistan.

Already over 100,000 refugees had reached Assam during 1947, '8 and '9. In 1950 400,000 more were received. In the last months of 1950, plans were under way for resettling some two thousand seven hundred families (which means over thirteen thousand persons) on the land in three different areas. These are all agriculturists. It has not proved easy to find available land. A large proportion of Assam consists of what are called 'tribal areas'. These tribal people, mostly living in the hills, have a traditional suspicion of the plains people; indeed, the distrust is often mutual. In the past two years there have been serious outbreaks of violence between some of these hill people, whose land is their most precious possession, and the immigrants from East Bengal. This conflict became specially acute in the early months of 1950.

With such a background of recent trouble, it is hardly possible for the Assam Government to induce the hill people to assign lands for incoming refugees from East Bengal. The fact that the recent immigrants are Hindus, whereas the earlier ones, who were attacked and driven out by the hill people, were Muslims, does not seriously affect the position. So it is very much to the interest of the Assam Government to try to induce the recently arrived immigrants to return to Pakistan. And this does in fact appear to be their policy.

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In November 1950, I visited two refugee camps at Shillong, the capital of Assam, itself a town at five thousand feet above sea-level, in the middle of the Khasia Hills. Each camp contained a few hundred persons, who had been enduring a crowded camp life for six or seven months and who had little prospect of a change. In one camp, owing to an energetic camp officer, supported by voluntary workers, the refugees were busy making baskets, embroidery and a number of useful articles. Their living conditions were poor, but morale was high. In the other, scarcely a mile away, the people were living in almost total idleness (the women, no doubt, had children to care for and food to cook) and demoralization was acute. The camp officer seemed even to regard our visit as a possibly hostile act. Such are the effects of imagination, or lack of it, in one or two individuals. But even in the demoralized camp the answer to the question (asked, not by myself, but by an Assam social worker), 'Would you be willing to return to East Bengal?' was a fierce, 'Never'. Perhaps they will change their minds if, or when, they learn that others have returned and are living in peace in their old homes. Any other future for most of the refugees now in Assam—a State that has suffered more than most in the past year—will be bleak.

9

THE MOST NEEDY

ONE OF the darkest aspects of the recent communal conflicts in India and Pakistan has been the abduction of many hundreds of women. This, together with the killing of many young men, has given the two countries a heavy burden to carry: thousands of women without any means of support. The two Governments entered into an agreement at quite an early stage for the recovery and return of the abducted women, and the work of recovery, carried on by a few courageous women assisted by the police, has been largely successful. A Punjab publication of 1950 shows 4,580 women and children received from Pakistan in 1948 and 285 in 1949; while the figures of those recovered in India and sent to Pakistan are 9,991 for 1948 and 3,149 for 1949. In 1951 a few are still being brought back.¹

A number have been received back into their families, but many more have remained for months and years in special camps or homes, for mental and moral rehabilitation and for training in self-support. Some of the older ones are never likely to leave these homes.

In the Punjab there are four such homes. One at Jullundur is perhaps typical—so at least it may be hoped. This centre, known as the Gandhi Vanita Ashram, has accommodation for 1,700 persons, and since it was opened in February 1948, five thousand have been in it. That

¹ I leave unanswered the question whether the disparity of figures is due to greater vigour on the part of the Indian authorities or to more abductions by Hindus and Sikhs than by Muslims. In India, the former explanation is believed.

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is to say, although it was still full in the spring of 1951, it had sent over 3,000 women and children out into the world, with a renewed ability to make their own way. A few have been married. When first they came most of them were utterly dulled and lifeless, unable to respond to the friendship and help that was offered to them. Some continued like this for a year or more. But by April 1951, when I visited the home, an amazing change had taken place. Some of the women, indeed, bore in their faces the indelible marks of their suffering. Behind the cheerful and even hopeful exterior, one could see the remains of a dark terror that had possessed them. But many seem to have made a miraculous recovery. As I talked with the Principal in her office, three happy, smiling, eager girls came in to say goodbye as they were just leaving for a course of training as midwives in the famous Mission Hospital ('Dr Brown's Hospital') at Ludhiana. Whatever the case history of those three may have been, I detected no trace of suffering or terror in their eyes. Love and patience had healed the wounds.

As I walked among the flower-beds on that fresh April morning, and saw the gay masses of poppies and nasturtiums and marigolds and blue larkspurs and other annuals sown and tended by the women and children, it was hard to imagine that anyone could be wholly unhappy with such bright natural decoration to catch the eye and reflect the glory of the blue sky. But the interior of their rooms was a much surer testimony that life had recovered some significance for these women. Each room was perfectly tidy with its rows of shining pots and pans on a little shelf. When they came most of the women had only the bare minimum of utensils—perhaps nothing but an empty cigarette-tin to drink from. Gradually, from their earn-

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ings, they have been able to buy a few more personal possessions, above all, some brass pots, whose shining brightness is the pride of every Indian woman's heart. Some, too, have begun to decorate their walls with coloured pictures, or with their own designs.

All are at work today. Even the old and feeble are given some embroidery to do. Most are busy for six hours a day spinning or weaving cloth, embroidering bright saris or table-cloths, knitting, sewing, cooking, baking, happily absorbed in useful occupations.

In the Hindu *mandir* at one end of the campus, and in the Sikh *gurdwara* at the other end, you may find women chanting prayers and mantras, led by women. At the *mandir* they were not too absorbed, at the time of my visit, to notice the visitor. One came running with a couple of garlands composed from all the bright flowers in the garden.

Recently some of them performed the whole of the *Ramayana* on the occasion of a Hindu festival. There are boys too in the camp, sons of widows. They have their football and volley-ball clubs.

At first the girls were all given clothes of one colour. It was a good day when some discerning friends of the Ashram brought some gifts of cloth in many colours. The girls began to choose for themselves—one thought blue was a good colour, another preferred yellow. Interest in life, in the colour of life, was returning. Desperate expedients had to be taken, as I was told, to awaken some of the women from their torpor in the early months. They were even deliberately encouraged to be jealous of one another. Anything seemed better than indifference. But by 1951, it seems fair to say that most if not all have ceased to brood on their past sufferings. Confidence in themselves and in

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their future has returned. When they must form queues, they are no longer listless and ragged, but brisk and regular and disciplined.

At the end of a course of training which commonly lasts two years the trained women go out into the world. None goes out illiterate. For all children education is compulsory, and there are classes in literacy for all adults. The older children are in some cases helping to support their mothers. The school classes seem to be cheerful places, where solemn children repeat their set pieces with zest, or wag their fingers gravely at one another in brisk dialogue.

Most of those engaged in tending and training these broken bodies are themselves exiles from their own homes. Probably some could tell as terrible a tale as those they are training. All together are lifting one another back onto a firm foundation of good life. The overriding impression left by an hour in this camp is not so much a picture of human suffering and misery, but rather the overcoming gaiety or serenity of the camp officers and workers, from the cheerful young lady doctor to the wise head of the camp, Miss Thapar, who has been in charge from the beginning.

Similar to this camp in the Punjab is the camp known as Nari Seva Sadan at Kurla, a few miles from Bombay. The Sindhi women, with few exceptions, passed through no such fiery ordeal as the Punjabi women; and it is difficult to understand why there should be a large number of unattached women with children among the refugees from that province. Whatever the explanation, it is the fact that there were over 1,700 inmates of the Kurla camp at the beginning of 1951; nearly a thousand were women, and over seven hundred were children. In this camp a vigorous discipline is being taught. The visitor is greeted on arrival

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by a solemn parade of some of the smaller children, led and commanded by an infant of four who commands his troops with a severity worthy of a sergeant-major of forty. The same strict discipline seems to pervade the whole camp. The responsible officers of the Bombay Rehabilitation Ministry clearly believe that young India needs to learn to obey. Perhaps they are right.

Delhi, too, has taken in hand the rehabilitation of many women. Very few abducted women have been brought to Delhi; but large numbers of widows or of young women lacking support, most of them from West Punjab, have been provided for. The Delhi State Women's Section under the Refugee Department has full responsibility for some 1,200 widows and orphans (or children of widows). It has additional responsibility for another thousand, many of them widows, others being wives of refugees who cannot at present make ends meet; these are under training. Some seven hundred have already been fully trained—training courses often take two years—and nearly a thousand can be found, day by day, busily turning the handles of sewing-machines or weaving cloth or sewing or knitting or tailoring in a dozen different work-centres all over the city. These seven hundred, of course, are earning good wages all the time.

When I visited the teachers' training centre, the women were busy painting flowers and birds. Some clearly had considerable artistic skill. Designs with roses or other bright flowers seemed to be special favourites. Some of these girls thought a flower looked prettier if it had a bright-coloured bird hovering above it or sitting on one of its petals. Many of the girls had included birds in their pictures, but whereas the flowers were nearly all nameable, the birds were uncontrolled efforts of the imagination.

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Flowers, of course, sit still in a pot on your table, so you learn, if you are observant, just what they look like. But most people, judging from the pictures they draw, have never really looked at a bird. In this respect the young widows of Delhi are no different from the artists of any other part of the world. In any case, this is a mere parenthesis. In the drab surroundings in which, perforce, the training school is at present housed, the sight of all those bright-coloured pictures was a comfort to the eye of the visitor. I hoped the budding teachers felt as bright and gay as their paintings. And perhaps some of them, in their dreams, are as fairylike as the purple and yellow bird, smaller than the smallest known humming-bird, which sat on the tip of a rose-petal without even causing it to bend.

What dreams fill their minds as these girls (or some of them) approach the specially organized marriage-bureau? And do their dreams ever come true?

It is surely time to turn from these idle musings and examine a few more statistics. Here, at Balniketan, the home of youth, a boarding-school in a requisitioned Hindu mansion, are 217 inmates, including a staff of 37 teachers, office staff, kitchen workers and all the rest. This is a girls' school. Not far from it is a boys' school, where a similar number of boys are living and learning. Only Rs 14 per head per month is spent on food (say, sixpence or eightpence a day). The children did not look half-starved, but one would think they would need to have access to some secret store of sweets to supplement their rations. The truth, no doubt, is that so many people in India go hungry all their lives that the children of the poor never expect to satisfy their appetites.

Apart from this, these little republics seem to be happy places. The management provide women teachers for the

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younger boys, and men teachers for the higher classes only. The girls are all taught by women. Several of the helpers are honorary workers.

The largest single concentration of widow refugees ('unattached women and children' is the official term, which is no doubt more exact) in Delhi is to be found at a specially constructed colony called Kasturba Niketan, at the southern extremity of the great new suburb called Lajpatnagar. Here are over four hundred women and children. Before long special school buildings will have been built and, as additional buildings are available, it is hoped that the seven hundred now housed in less suitable quarters in other parts of the city can be brought into this colony. It appears to be excellently managed. But two comments may be made, which will indicate that certain problems remain to be solved. The first is a simple problem—trees! The heat of Delhi from mid-April to the end of September is often intense. To live in Delhi all through these months in a 'nagar' that has no trees to give shade (Lajpatnagar is not the only one) is uncomfortable. Houses and water-supply, no doubt, take priority in an emergency even over trees. But trees do not grow as fast as houses, so they should be planted as soon as possible. Perhaps the first will be in the ground at Lajpatnagar before these pages are published.

The other comment raises a graver issue. Month by month women who have been living on savings brought from Pakistan, or from loans, come back destitute to Kasturba Niketan and similar centres. It seems possible that this trickle of 'old refugees', now destitute, will become a steady stream. The workers who are carrying the responsibility for these centres are fully alive to the dangers of this situation. It is not so clear that some of those in

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charge of the Rehabilitation Ministry, who soothe themselves with statistics, are facing this menace. It is not only women who are involved.

Although most of this chapter has been written about Jullundur and Delhi, it should be noted that even larger concentrations of unattached women are to be found elsewhere.

The largest single number is in Faridabad, where the total number is nearly two thousand eight hundred. Here, for over two years, a noble work of rehabilitation has been undertaken, largely planned by close associates of Mahatma Gandhi. The Widows' Home at Rajpura, a couple of miles from the main Rajpura camp, contains nearly two thousand five hundred. Devoted and successful work is being done there too. And so, no doubt, in the many other Homes for Women scattered over the whole north and centre of India.

One other centre which I have twice visited in Delhi seems to claim some reference here. The great migration from West Punjab included large numbers of Harijans (Untouchables). There was no corresponding movement from India to Pakistan and so the rehabilitation of tanners and others who follow the Harijan occupations has not been easy. The Government has helped by putting orders for leather shoes and sandals with the newly-started colony in Delhi. A fine co-operative leather-making community has grown up. In the late summer of 1949 I saw the men at work making shoes in their new building (still a 'kutchra' building—not a permanent structure) while the newly installed wireless brought Indian music to their ears as they worked—a rare event in India. 'Have you planted any trees?' I asked Mrs Rameshwari Nehru—for I could see none. 'Come and see,' she replied; and sure enough,

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some of these Harijans had planted trees, and were watering and tending them most carefully. Eighteen months later, hedges, neatly grown and clipped, were giving some shelter and privacy to the little plots where flowers and vegetables were growing. Some trees were eight feet high. Extra shelves, new brick enclosures, bright pots and pans, late-Victorian coloured prints, had been added to the houses according to taste by the inhabitants. I was told what profits they were making on their production. It sounded good enough. Many different sorts of leather articles are now being made. When the market for one temporarily dries up, it is possible to turn to another. The night-school has been well patronized, both by the Harijan refugees and by their neighbours, for over two years.

Some are still forced to live in squalid huts. The officers of the co-operative (some of them voluntary workers) do not try to hide this fact. Indeed, it was they who took me to see these hovels and asked me to note the contrast. They have had difficulty in getting the materials for rehousing some of the needy people. But they are striving to overcome the difficulty. Other, old-time Delhi Harijans live in equal squalor. But that is no comfort to the minds of these zealous reformers. All must have decent living accommodation—first the refugees, then the others. They refuse to grow weary in well-doing.

In one of the most depressing and dusty corners of this new section of Delhi, not far from the leather-workers' quarter, my guide said: 'Now you must have a look at the poultry-farm.' I wondered how there could be a poultry-farm in a place that had no sign of green, not even a blade of grass. But just round the corner we opened a wire gate and were met by the poultry-farmer. He was a Harijan, who had begged to be allowed to keep poultry.

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If some men have green fingers, this man evidently had feathered hands. In the space of a few square yards, with some old packing-cases and a little wire-netting, he had put together a hen-run where the white Minorcas (or whatever they were) looked twice the size of most Indian hens; and they were laying regularly. How he got the chicken-feed and how he achieved his miracle in that drab corner of Delhi I do not know. His pride and delight in the birds he was tending were manifest. Harijan he might be; but in that little backyard he was head of a new republic.

Cross the Jumna at Delhi and a couple of miles from the river you come on a poor little town that calls itself Delhi-Shahdara. Perhaps the inhabitants get some satisfaction from thinking that they belong to the capital city, but apart from its name and its location there is nothing of the lordliness either of New Delhi or of the Civil Lines or of walled cities and ancient tombs. It is nothing but a poor little town.

And again beyond it, in the year 1951, out in the treeless wilderness, is a new little settlement of 84 families of Harijans. These families all came from Pakistan. For over two years they lived in home-made huts on the Delhi pavements. Finally the late A. V. Thakkar, affectionately known as Thakkar Bapa, life-long servant of voiceless aboriginals and Harijans, planned this little colony—almost the last act of his long life. It is not very impressive yet to the outward eye. Each family has only one room and a veranda to live in, but there is a lot of space outside and when the salty soil has been cured and has become fertile, trees and vegetables will grow all round it. Already a number of women are busy spinning and they will soon also be weaving in a special weaving-shed. An oil-press,

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which will employ ten or twelve of the men, is nearly built. Other men are employed in local mills and in other occupations in Shahdara itself. Harijans can easily pick up work, for they are prepared to do the unskilled jobs. Hitherto, since these families came from Pakistan, their work has been uncertain. Before long their employment should be regular, and their living conditions are far better than the pavement life of Delhi. It is a fitting memorial—one of many scattered over the length and breadth of the country right away to Assam in the north-east and Travancore in the deep south—to one of modern India's greatest sons.

STATISTICS FROM THE WOMEN'S CAMP, JULLUNDUR

1. Women rehabilitated so far from Gandhi Vanita Ashram, Jullundur, Seva Sadan, Jullundur, and Mahila Ashram, Hoshiarpur	...	3,526	
2. Women who have received diplomas in Vocational Training Centres		1,309	
3. Women trained profession-wise:			
Tailoring	300	Women in police service	3
Embroidery and toy-making	300	Hosiery centres	61
Basket-making and khaji work	100	Laundry work	50
Weaving of cloth & durrie-making, ordinary and fancy	300	Rehabilitated on land allotted to them	90
Domestic service	120	Granted maintenance allowance, Jullundur and Hoshiarpur	55
Trained nurses, Dais	11	Granted sewing machines	203
Under training, Dais	43	Grants of Rs 250	336
Trained Dais	90	Purchased old machines	42
Probationary nurses under training	10	Post-matric training	4
Grown-up boys employed in army and navy	5		

10

VOLUNTARY RELIEF AGENCIES

AS SOON as the magnitude of the Punjab upheaval became known, people of goodwill from all corners of India made haste to offer assistance. Before the end of September 1947, at least a score of societies must have been at work. The Ramakrishna Mission, a religiously motivated society, notable through fifty years or more for selfless service, sent workers. The Marwari Relief Society, another body that has proved its mettle again and again, and which has large funds at its disposal, was quickly at work. All through the autumn its devoted workers were tending the stranded and destitute people who crowded the platforms at Delhi railway station. And this was only one of many of its undertakings.

The Congress formed a Central Relief Committee. This too was active both in Delhi and up and down the Punjab. It has continued to work ever since and some of its work is described on a later page.

Bengal, which proliferates relief organizations, sent teams of ardent young workers under many different banners. Others came from Madras and the South.

Early in September 1947, Lady Mountbatten, wife of the first Governor-General of Independent India, saw the need for some co-ordination of effort. With the backing of the Indian Red Cross Society and other concerned individuals and groups, the United Council for Relief and Wel-

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fare was rapidly brought into being. It has functioned ever since.

A first report published by the Council at the end of 1947 gives some idea of the varied activities and achievements of its constituent bodies during the autumn of that year. The Central Relief Committee (Congress) and the Ramakrishna Mission had opened camps for the receipt of refugees from Pakistan before the U.C.R.W. came into being. They continued these camps with increasing energy all through the autumn and for some time later.

The Red Cross Society provided medical supplies and comforts—especially such essential things as warm blankets—to many camps and hospitals. The Red Cross and St John Ambulance Societies together provided over two hundred trained personnel for work in camps, especially in the large Kurukshetra Camp. These volunteers, and also many who worked under the auspices of the National Christian Council, carried out large-scale inoculation. Health conditions in many camps were bad; the incidence of dysentery, especially, was very high in some places. Voluntary workers did much to combat this. Doctors and nurses were sent by the National Christian Council.

Some of the best workers were students under training at the Y.W.C.A. Social Training School (now the Delhi School of Social Work). From both Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. hostels in Delhi, young men and women went day by day, in any free time they could find, either by bicycle or by bus, to the large local camps to lend a hand.

A few miles outside Delhi there were two great concentrations of Muslim evacuees. Many thousands driven from their homes in Delhi were housed in Delhi's Old Fort or Purana Qila, and in Humayun's Tomb. Soon the cry was raised in some Hindu and Sikh circles in Delhi that

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the Christians were only helping the Muslims, and that the Christians too must be driven out. It was true that workers from such bodies as the National Christian Council, Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. and Friends Service Unit were giving regular help at Purana Qila and Humayun's Tomb. The main reason for this was clear. Bodies like the Central Relief Committee, the Marwari Relief Society, Ramakrishna Mission and others, most of whose workers were Hindus, naturally went to the Hindu and Sikh camps. Indeed, for some time Hindus and Sikhs were forbidden to enter the two Muslim camps for fear of possible consequences; so even if they wanted to help the Muslims, they could not do so. To their honour, certain individual Hindus defied the ban and did visit these camps to find out how they might help.

But the main burden of voluntary assistance in the Muslim camps, whether at Delhi or further afield, fell inevitably on the Christian groups, who might be considered neutral. They did not in fact confine their attention to Muslim camps. The large Kingsway Camp, to the north of Delhi, for example, was regularly visited and assisted by Christian workers.

When criticism of the Christians appeared in the press, it was sharply dealt with by both Mahatma Gandhi and Mr Nehru. It soon died down.

A few other special pieces of work undertaken by voluntary groups should be mentioned. Thus, Boy Scouts helped with a most necessary and unpleasant task, the removal of dead bodies from the streets during the troubles in Delhi in September 1947. The Rotary Club was one of the first agencies that began the all-important task of trying to find work for refugees. The All-India Women's Conference and the National Council of Women were among

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those who gave special attention to the collection of clothes and to the organization of work parties for knitting woollen garments. The National Council workers were specially concerned for what is called occupational therapy, and they arranged light film-shows in some of the camps.

This is by no means a complete list of work undertaken. During the chaotic months of late 1947 there was no doubt a tendency for each group to rush off to some camp where they might rather easily stumble over one another in their uncontrolled zeal to be useful. It was the task of the U.C.R.W. to co-ordinate these efforts, and as every properly established relief organization was represented in it, co-ordination was fairly well achieved by the end of the year.

Not less important, the U.C.R.W. could see where the chief gaps were left and could proceed to try to fill them. Thus, for political and other reasons, the Government as such could not undertake responsibility for relief of refugees in Kashmir. Certain refugee camps and, later, work centres there soon became a special concern of the U.C.R.W. and have so remained.

In the middle of 1951, we may look at the work of the United Council again and see what it has achieved and what it is still doing.

A number of the Societies that were busy in relieving the sufferers in 1947 and 1948 are no longer represented in the U.C.R.W. Rehabilitation is, of course, a long-term affair demanding different qualities from relief. So the Council today, instead of surveying the multifarious activities of some twenty separate organizations, represents the work of its agents, paid and unpaid, in work centres at a number of places.

Here are some typical activities that help refugees who are still in camps to make ends meet. At Panipat and

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Karnal, towns fifty and eighty miles north of Delhi, a number of people are employed in weaving; at Karnal others do basket- and cane-work. In Jullundur camp material is provided for embroidery and the finished work is sold readily through a depot in Simla.

Further north, help is being given both to Hindu refugees from the Frontier and to Muslims who have been in difficulties in Chamba, a hill state next door to Kashmir. Efforts are being made here to teach co-operative methods of production to some of the refugees. Medical aid has also been sent, in the form of cod-liver oil in particular, as the doctor in Chamba reported serious cases of malnutrition among refugees.

Several centres of rehabilitation have been opened in the past three years among refugees in the southern districts of Kashmir State (not in the valley)—Rajauri, Kathua and Poonch are the most important centres. The needs of this area are so great that recently the Council has agreed to send six additional workers to train the destitute people in handicrafts. Tailoring, spinning, soap-making and poultry-breeding are among the activities at Kathua. The Rajauri work includes tailoring, vegetable-growing, spinning and knitting. At Poonch there is not only a work centre but also a women's home containing some fifty persons. Both are the responsibility of the U.C.R.W.

A few refugees still come trickling through by road to Amritsar. Three paid workers try to care for them and to give them any help they may need on arrival. During March 1951, some two hundred people were received there and food provided. In April the number was over six hundred. Some seventy blankets were given out in March, in April shirts and pyjamas were provided. Train fares are purchased for the refugees if they have no funds. Such assis-

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tance may appear trivial in comparison with the millions who are in need; but it is the very fact that a voluntary worker is available to give personal attention and to supply the most immediate and urgent needs that often means most to a refugee who is dumped, destitute, in unfamiliar surroundings. Official machinery must nearly always be rather cold and impersonal. It is the human touch, coming from a man or woman who treats you as a person, not just as a number, that brings hope and comfort with it. This, it is believed, most of the U.C.R.W. workers provide.

After the Bengal troubles of 1950 a special section of the U.C.R.W. was started in Calcutta. It has given the same sort of assistance as was given to the Punjab refugees in 1947 and after. It has included a special section for helping distressed Muslims who had been driven from their homes in West Bengal.

It will be seen that the United Council has become directly responsible for work among refugees in various parts of the Punjab, Kashmir and Bengal. One of its constituent bodies, the Central Relief Committee, has undertaken a far greater volume of work and its work has been even more widespread.

The Central Relief Committee was established by Acharya J. B. Kripalani, then President of the Indian National Congress, in July 1947. It has been a sub-committee of the Congress throughout. Shrimati Sucheta Kripalani has been its very energetic secretary for most of the time, and it has appointed scores of workers to assist refugees throughout north and west India. In the first year of its activity it handled sums amounting to nearly a million rupees.

In the first months, the Committee, working through 150 volunteers, concentrated its activity largely in and near

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Delhi. It was responsible at one time for running some large refugee camps. But during 1948 these camps were handed over to the Government, and the committee was able to turn its attention from relief to rehabilitation. In her preface to the first annual report, dated December 1948, Sm. Sucheta Kripalani wrote: 'We then devoted ourselves more and more to rehabilitation of the refugees through cottage industries. Uptil now nearly three thousand refugees have [been] trained to earn their livelihood through cottage industries. Unfortunately, however, all of them have not become completely self-supporting. We cannot always give them living wages. To do this we must give them more work.'

These two notes—the determination to help refugees primarily through work; and a healthy discontent with the actual achievements recorded—mark the reports of the Central Relief Committee throughout.

During 1948, the Committee extended its activity far beyond Delhi and the Punjab. Even in those areas, many of its achievements are well worthy of record, but as a good deal has already been written about work, both official and unofficial, undertaken there, it is perhaps better only to give here a brief summary of work done in other States.

In Uttar Pradesh (United Provinces), where about half a million refugees had to be settled, Thakur Phul Singh of Saharanpur, a Congress M.L.A., with a band of fellow-workers, did yeoman service from the earliest days. Their work was marked by a total lack of communal bias. Meerut was the main base of operations.

During 1948, the following are some of the main activities undertaken in Uttar Pradesh. At Lucknow an industrial centre for women was opened. During the first year a hundred women were trained in embroidery and knit-

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ting, another hundred in spinning. In Meerut an institution was opened where sixty women and children were taught handicrafts. A similar home was opened in Mathura (Muttra); 'the objects of the institution are to provide for the refugees a place for residence, to enable them to learn some remunerative handicrafts, to improve the physical, mental and moral condition of its inmates, and to impart such other training as may make them useful social workers and teachers for social service among refugees and other women, specially those residing in villages'. This sentence, describing the purposes of the Mathura centre, typifies the spirit of much of the work. As one reads these reports, it becomes clear that the committee and its workers, while primarily concerned for the refugees, are trying to assist the welfare of the whole community. Sometimes one finds them easing dangerous local tensions, or looking after special needs of Harijans, or doing some other essential social work.

In the latter part of 1948 work had also been started in Hardwar, in Agra, in Kanpur and in Fyzabad.

In July 1948, work was started in Bombay. An industrial centre for women in the Kalyan camp was one of the first enterprises. Before long, a sales-centre in Bombay was added. Over 200 refugees were helped to find Government employment during 1948. Assistance was given to hawkers and stall-holders who were trying to get licences in Bombay. Unions were formed with over 2,500 members. Students were helped to enrol themselves in local colleges, and the Bombay authorities were persuaded to recognize the Sind University matriculation.

During 1949 the activities of the Committee spread far and wide over the whole Bombay State and adjoining areas—through Maharashtra, Gujarat, Baroda, Saurashtra

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and Kutch. At one time the committee was able to find employment for 700 men in the Bombay docks, but then a depression came and some lost their jobs. Elsewhere, small numbers of refugees were settled on the land, especially in Gujarat, and some were found employment in telephone exchanges and in various other occupations.

In Madhya Pradesh, again, the resettlement of refugees through small industries and handicrafts has been the main concern of the Central Relief Committee's workers. In 1949 they also assisted the Government's dispersal policy, trying to find out how many refugees each district could absorb, and where they could best be housed. No doubt the workers sincerely tried to ease the way for the refugees, but, as I have indicated in an earlier chapter, the whole policy seems to me to be short-sighted and ill-devised, and I am afraid the efforts of the Central Relief Committee to make it work have not been uniformly successful.

The Committee has also started several industrial homes in Rajasthan, as for instance at Ajmer, Jaipur and Udaipur; and it has helped to start a widows' home and a school for refugee children at Alwar.

The Committee has also been responsible for a considerable volume of work in West Bengal and in some other areas. It is easy to continue the catalogue of work done. By far the most important aspect of it is the central place given to work. Each refugee helped by the voluntary workers must be shown, if possible, that India has need of him or of her; where millions are involved, no voluntary organization can do this for more than a fringe, but it may still be a very important fringe. There are always some who do not fit into the official schemes. Some are victims of misfortune, some of their own past; some are simply misfits. But the good voluntary worker will not accept defeat

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because his 'client' does not fit into the official pattern. Something must still be done for him.

The larger operations which such a body as the Central Relief Committee undertook in the first year or two have now, rightly, been taken over by the Government; but, until the very last refugee has been successfully rehabilitated, there will remain a very delicate and very human task which only voluntary effort can meet. The U.C.R.W., Central Relief Committee, the Red Cross and others must continue their good work to the end.

Let me reinforce this with a single example that happens to have come to my notice. It may well be typical of hundreds.

An elderly couple, now well on in their sixties, had to leave Lahore. Both had been useful citizens, caring more to give service to the world than to accumulate wealth. But they had some small savings—a thousand rupees or so—which were deposited in the post office savings bank. They have a son and a married daughter in India. They cannot live with the daughter. The son has such a meagre salary that they do not like to be a burden on him although he has, in fact, supported them for several years. They eke out a pitiful existence on some Rs 20 per month. They are liable to eviction from their house with nowhere to go. If the post office would allow them to realize their savings, at least they might contemplate an old age of decent poverty. Today they can only face total destitution. For the post office of India apparently refuses to recognize any obligation to pay a Lahore savings-account until there is an agreement with Pakistan.

It is difficult to believe that there can be a great many such cases. Even if all such savings-accounts were honoured by the post office (and surely 'honoured' is the right

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word) it would not cause bankruptcy. It would be far better that no new State capitals and no statue to Mahatma Gandhi were erected until such debts have been honoured. A policy of dishonour and cruelty to a few hundred elderly refugees cannot be excused on the ground that 'there is no agreement yet with Pakistan'. India can surely afford to be virtuous without waiting for her neighbour. At the time when this goes to press an 'agreement in principle' has been reached. But still the holders of these savings certificates can get nothing. Still they starve.

It must be hoped that the Central Relief Committee and other agencies will continue to knock on the doors of the post office or the Finance Department or whoever may be the chief sinner until such wrongs as this are righted.

11

THE FUTURE

THE STORY that has been told in this book is a story of solid achievement. Much has been done; though much remains to be done.

First we have seen a great migration of peasants. It is not easy to picture millions of human beings torn from the soil and resettled on other land. The agricultural resettlement is the least spectacular, the most difficult to break down from statistics into human life. Nevertheless, it may be the most important. India in particular and the world in general need more food. India's land can produce much more food. It may be that greater efforts should be made than are at present visible to deflect some of the many thousands of unwanted refugee traders and shopkeepers—or at least their sons and daughters—to agricultural occupations. It is disheartening to learn that Bombay cannot find enough refugees even for the small agricultural colonies that it has planned for them. But it may yet succeed. Persistence along this line is needed. Bombay is only taken as one example. What is true there is probably true in half a dozen other States. Serious efforts must be made, and no doubt will be made, to settle a much larger proportion of the refugee townspeople on the land. But, of course, this is a very difficult task. Men and boys can be taught to become carpenters, blacksmiths, tailors, shoemakers, pin-makers, even to build their own houses, in occupational training centres, or in the new townships in which many are to live. An agricultural training centre

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is not so easy to plan. However, the need is great, so the difficulty must if possible be overcome.

Not all the surplus population, however, will go onto the land. Towns such as Ulhasnagar (Kalyan), Sardarnagar, Gandhidham, Faridabad, Rajpura, Nilokheri, Fulia and others are going to be a part of new India. Most of them are already half built and most of them are full of men, women and children. They will hardly be deserted again. But as has already been pointed out, their future is still obscure. Some have been planned on a sound economic foundation. In other cases, the basis of their economy is yet to be worked out.

To some extent, this may be inevitable. The motto of the authorities, both at Delhi and in most of the States, seems to have been: 'First give the refugees adequate shelter and good living conditions. Then we shall have time to see how to rehabilitate those who have not been able to make good.' In other words, 'Let us leave as much as possible to self-help, knowing that a great proportion of the refugees are enterprising, clever people, who will set up shops or start cottage or small-scale industries. If this does not meet the needs of all, if some find there is no room for them as shopkeepers or traders, then and then only will they be ready to train for other crafts and at that stage the Government will be ready to help them, and will have plans prepared for fitting them into the developing economy of the country.'

The motto of 'Homes first, work later' has been pushed to extreme lengths in some places. Two examples have come to my notice. At Palwal, in the southern Punjab, a small town was built by the Rehabilitation Department. Then it was decided that some North-West Frontier refugees should go there. But they objected. Why should

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they go there? What would they do there? Why should they not join their fellow-Pathans twenty miles away at Faridabad? Surely Faridabad, which was a going concern, a town of hope and promise, could take a few thousand more? Yes, probably it could. But Palwal was there, built, empty and waiting. The State had ordered them to go there; so in the end, with much persuasion, they went. It may be that part of the clamour for Faridabad as against Palwal was the work of agitators; perhaps it was not all spontaneous. But, even if that is so, the authorities seem to have provided the agitators with a most convenient and plausible case.

I was hearing the praises of a beautiful new township in west Uttar Pradesh at Hastinapur, by the Ganga river (the excellent agricultural settlement in the old river bed I have already described in an earlier chapter). So I asked if I might see it, and the Rehabilitation Department most generously took me there. It came up to my expectations in all respects. The whole township was beautifully planned. Here was the beginning of a model dairy, here a health centre, here good municipal buildings, here the first of a thousand desirable residences nearly ready for occupation.

Factories were being brought to Hastinapur. Eighty per cent of the people would have employment provided in factories or in other specialized occupations. Only twenty per cent were to be in trade and shopkeeping. Here, at least, the economic foundations of prosperity were being carefully laid.

‘And where are the refugees today?’ I asked. ‘Are they in tents, or are they further away? Are they building these new houses?’ And then I learnt the almost incredible truth. This beautiful little town was not being built for

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any refugees in particular, but only for a mythical kind of animal, 'refugees in general', who might be induced to come. Far from having had the opportunity to build their own homes, earning good wages as they did so and regaining their sense of human dignity, the refugees who, it was hoped, might some day live there were today living (presumably) in squalor and misery in some camp hundreds of miles away, using up the last of the savings they brought from Pakistan, or trying to start life again with the help of a loan in Bhopal or Madhya Bharat, or wherever it might be.

I have tried to see the problem as the officials see it. Is it better to say to a group of dissatisfied refugees, who have been under canvas for three years: 'We propose to take you five hundred miles, to put you into a new camp, and to offer you wages while you build your own houses, which you will occupy a year hence'—or to keep them a year longer on doles in the first camp and then say to them: 'We have built a beautiful new town for you five hundred miles away. It is all ready—houses built, light laid on, good milk- and water-supply, livelihood guaranteed'? Are not most of the refugees, being traders not craftsmen, more likely to respond to the latter appeal and to resent the former? It may be so; but I think their response may depend largely on the kind of approach that is made to them.

There is a second point of view, which is: 'Work first, houses later.' This really means: 'At all costs cure the mental disease and stagnation that attacks many refugees. Give them a renewed sense of significance. Mental rehabilitation must come first. The needs of the body are really secondary.' What I have seen in Chandipur, in Faridabad, in Nilokheri, convinces me that this is the wiser approach.

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The whole Chandipur result, as I have described it, was achieved in six months—and why? Primarily, it seems, because mental rehabilitation—work for the men and women, schools and play for the children, drama and art for all—were put in the forefront. I believe the same priority has been followed in other parts of Bengal (and, for that matter, in Germany and elsewhere in Europe) and with good results. This method, where it can be successfully employed, is a great deal cheaper. The refugees rapidly become self-supporting; they build their own homes, co-operative production is fostered, the middleman's profits are eliminated; and the end in view, the remaking of good citizens, is more rapidly secured. The other method is slower and less satisfying. The refugees remain in idleness for a much longer time. Even when they are well housed in good surroundings, the battle of true rehabilitation has not really been begun. They have been learning all the time to look to the Government for help, they have been learning dependence, not independence. And it is a most demoralizing lesson.

But the problem is not an easy one. The Government has a part to play, as the refugee has his own part to play. The important thing is to be sure that each plays the right part.

Only the Government, for instance, can really see the picture of the developing national economy in true perspective, so it alone can see what new enterprises, what occupations and industries, should be fostered. Even where the excellent policy of encouraging co-operative industry on the part of groups of refugees is being pursued, by the granting of considerable loans for group enterprise, still the Government should be assisting to direct such enterprise into the most appropriate channels. Possibly it is doing so.

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At least there is reason to think that it is not encouraging capitalists on any considerable scale to use the new towns as reservoirs of labour for heavy industrial development. A Bata shoe factory here, a biscuit factory moved from Pakistan there, such enterprises for employing a few hundred workers may be good, but the main direction seems to be small industrial undertakings and especially such as grow naturally out of a rural economy.

Even in a country of 350 million people, even in a country where the annual increase of the population is four to five millions, the introduction within three years of six or eight millions from outside, though some of these are in a measure replacements, may profoundly affect the national economy.

Has it in fact done so? Or is it doing so? Is it even being allowed or encouraged to do so? And, if it is, in what directions? Here is India, still sunk in the depths of poverty, but her people are beginning to be restless. Millions are beginning to feel that their abject poverty is not inevitable; that it is not all due to some inescapable fate. Perhaps it is due to a failure of human wisdom, or to the greed and callousness of the few. The leaders of the new Indian Government are among those who care most for the welfare of the masses. Mahatma Gandhi's first concern, in public life, was for the abolition of poverty. 'God', he said, 'comes to the poor first of all as food.' How can the food of the poor in India be increased? Here are hundreds of thousands of men and women, driven from Pakistan, available for helping the fight against poverty. How can this human wealth be best used for the permanent enrichment of India?

Of course it is already being used in a great variety of ways, according to opportunity, to inclination and to apti-

tude. But how should the Government make use of those who are willing to go anywhere and do anything? What are the top priorities? Better hygiene, the battle against malaria and the other scourges that undermine physical and mental vitality, is one. Education—basic education—education of mind and body, is another. Prevention of soil erosion is a third. River-control and irrigation; multi-purpose damming schemes; better cattle-breeding. All these have very strong claims. None can be neglected. But where can these ready hands be best used?

Perhaps tree-planting and -tending comes near the top of the list of priorities. Some of my friends in centres of rehabilitation have, I suspect, become a little tired of my reiterated question: 'How are your trees getting on?' In the great delta of Bengal, trees are not the first need, but in many parts of India where refugees are settling, they are. Merely to plant trees is, of course, no more than a gesture. Tree-tending is more important than mere tree-planting. For without careful tending the loss of trees planted may even be ninety per cent in the first year. But the successful planting of some millions of trees in India in the next five years might transform India's economy in twenty-five years.

Where trees grow, whether in hills or plains, the denudation of the soil is largely stopped. Where trees grow, the water is conserved. Where trees grow, cattle-dung need not be used for fuel. Both the cattle-dung and the leaves from the trees help to renew the soil. Where trees grow, rainfall tends to increase. Two-thirds of India today is either semi-desert or for months in the year parched land. With the growth of trees it might become a green and pleasant land, producing two good crops in the year instead of one poor crop. When India has been re-afforested

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and other processes of land reclamation and improvement have followed, the desert will rejoice and blossom as a rose. So that one of India's first needs is men and women who will spend their lives in planting and tending trees. Among the refugees, why should there not be some hundreds and thousands of 'men of the trees'?

An intense effort on these lines might do more to raise the standard of living, in the long run, than industrial development. If it is a question of priorities, tree-planting, including re-afforestation of many of the hills, must come very near the top. But in a country as vast and varied as India it is always dangerous to suppose that any one remedy will cure the malady. Even in the realm of primary production and the conservation of natural resources, there are some men of experience who would put cattle-breeding first. Should not thousands of refugees be trained in animal husbandry? In Bengal, the problem of the water-hyacinth calls out for early solution. Hundreds of refugees might well be paid for several years to clear the waterways of hyacinth at the right time of year and to make compost of the leaves and stalks. Other such urgent needs will occur to those whose knowledge of India's economy is more intimate than that of the writer.

Then again, the great river-damming schemes, already well under way, such as the Damodar in Bihar, the Mahanadi in Orissa and several more, are likely to become one of the most important features in raising India's standard of living; whether any large population of refugees could be usefully brought into those developments is not clear, but the matter is no doubt receiving the attention of the Planning Commission in Delhi.

In any case it is clear that many thousands of the inhabitants of the new townships must be employed in occupations

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different from those they followed in Pakistan. It is not sufficient that they should be trained more or less haphazard and then employed in factories that happen to be available. The direction in which the economy of India should be moving needs to be clearly visualized and then these millions of men can be trained for the occupations that are essential to a healthy growth.

The solution of India's refugee problem depends, finally, on the marriage of two human qualities—vision and practical competence; idealism and common sense. These two qualities are not too often found in conjunction. But as I have moved round the country, I have found Sardar Tarlok Singh of the Punjab Rural Rehabilitation work, Miss Thapar at the Jullundur women's camp, Mr S. K. Dey at Nilokheri, Mr S. K. Ghosh at Faridabad—to mention only a few. Such men and women are not common in any land. Often they must fight against the inertia of routine officialdom; and against corruption and jealousy and stupidity. I have heard Mr Dey describe himself as a madman. Probably Mr Nehru, like the elder William Pitt in the case of the 'mad' General Wolfe, wishes he would bite some of the other officers. Perhaps he will.

Nor is it only among officialdom that these qualities are needed. The sense of service to the community, a vision of a great future and the capacity to endure hard manual labour over many months, are also required among the refugees. Many have shown and more will show that they have these qualities. Out of the wreck of their 1947 hopes these sons and daughters of India may yet create the thing they contemplate.

APPENDIX A

STATISTICS AT A GLANCE

(To the end of January 1951 unless otherwise stated)

MIGRATION

The number of persons who have migrated (net) to India from Pakistan is	8,085,000
Comprised of	
D.P.s from West Pakistan	5,000,000
From East Pakistan, upto December 1949	1,258,000
From East Pakistan, from 1 January 1950 to 28 February 1951	1,827,000

RURAL RESETTLEMENT

Under the quasi-permanent land allotment scheme in Punjab and PEPSU evacuee land (2,433,000 standard acres) has been allotted to claimants numbering	577,000
West Pakistan rural families settled in areas other than the Punjab and PEPSU	46,000
Displaced agriculturist families from East Pakistan reported to have resettled in eastern regions	181,000
In West Bengal in addition, the number of rural non-agriculturist families allotted home-stead plots	89,000
Amount of rural loans paid to displaced agriculturists, artisans, etc.	Rs 90,000,000

HOUSING

In the housing and township schemes:	
Houses/tenements completed	67,000
Houses/tenements under construction	26,000
Developed plots for private construction	50,000

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For West Pakistan displaced persons	26,000
For East Pakistan displaced persons	24,000

SHOPS

Business men and industrialists helped by allotment of business premises, shops, etc.	61,000
Includes	
Allotment of evacuee shops	34,000
New shops	27,000

URBAN LOANS

The Urban Small Loans Scheme provides for loans of amounts less than Rs 5,000 in the case of individuals, there being no such restriction in the case of groups and co-operative societies.

West Pakistan displaced persons sanctioned such loans	146,000
Loans sanctioned to West Pakistan D.P.s	Rs 90,600,000
Paid to D.P.s from both East and West Pakistan	Rs 97,300,000

Rehabilitation Finance Administration provides capital for industrialists and business men whose requirements are between Rs 5,000 and Rs 100,000.

Persons to whom R.F.A. sanctioned loan	5,396
Amount sanctioned	Rs 52,700,000
Amount paid	Rs 20,700,000

EMPLOYMENT

Persons to whom employment has been secured by Employment Exchanges	160,000
Displaced Government servants employed in Central Government services	15,000
Government servants absorbed in State Government Departments	17,000

APPENDIX A

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Imparted to	41,000
Number under training	14,000

HOMES

Homes, Infirmaries, former 'Camps', etc. provide shelter, food, education and training to aged and infirm men and unattached women and children numbering	76,000
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EXPENDITURE

Government's expenditure on displaced persons during 1947-8, 1948-9 and 1949-50	Rs 689,600,000
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APPENDIX B

STATISTICS OF KASHMIR AND BENGAL REFUGEES

The following details, taken from the official *Rehabilitation Review*, February 1951, give the latest particulars of Kashmir and Bengal refugees, two categories not fully dealt with in earlier chapters of this book.

RELIEF FOR WEST PAKISTAN DISPLACED PERSONS

With the stoppage of doles to all but Kashmiri displaced persons and unattached women and children, only the following centrally administered camps remained at the end of February 1951:

Nagrota, Jammu	12,800
Yole, Punjab	12,100
	24,900

At the end of January 1951 only 36,000 displaced persons from West Pakistan were on doles, and all these belonged to the category of the old and the infirm and unattached women and children who are accepted as the 'permanent liability' of the Government. Kashmiri displaced persons in Nagrota and Yole numbering 24,900 were also on doles. Nagrota camp is, however, being dispersed, and during the month of February 9,200 persons were moved out from the camp for resettlement on land. It is expected that the dispersal will be completed by the end of March 1951.

REHABILITATION SCHEMES FOR DISPLACED PERSONS FROM EAST PAKISTAN

Schemes of rehabilitation sanctioned up to the end of January 1951 were described in the earlier issues of the *Review*. Among the schemes since sanctioned mention may be made of the following:

ASSAM

(i) The number of seats allotted under the Ministry of Labour's training centre at Jorhat has been increased from

APPENDIX B

76 to 140. The additional 64 seats will include 16 seats for motor mechanics, 16 for carpentry and 32 for tailoring.

(ii) For displaced families to be settled at Ramkrishnanagar in Cachar, a 10-bed indoor hospital and an outdoor dispensary with quarters for the medical staff will be constructed under the supervision of the Controller of Relief and Rehabilitation, Silchar, at an expenditure of Rs 22,000.

(iii) The number of middle-class families to be granted house-building and business loans in Cachar has been increased from 1,500 to 4,000.

(iv) Sanction has been accorded to a scheme for the resettlement of 870 families of rural and semi-rural non-agriculturists in the district of Golpara. Each family will be allotted a homestead plot and given financial assistance at the rate of Rs 350 per family for initial settlement. In addition, business loans ranging from Rs 50 to Rs 450 will be granted to each family according to the individual requirements of the family.

BIHAR

Sanction has been accorded to six schemes submitted by the Government for the resettlement of displaced non-agriculturist families from East Pakistan at six places in Bihar. Provision has been made in each scheme for one-room houses and business loans. The total expenditure on these schemes is estimated at Rs 613,000.

ORISSA

(i) The number of seats allotted for the training of displaced persons at the Ministry of Labour's centres at Cuttack has been raised from 64 to 100. The additional 36 seats will be for training in general mechanics (16), turning (12) and welding (8).

(ii) Sanction has been accorded to a scheme for providing training facilities and general education to 10 displaced women in the Bidhava Ashram, Puri. The period of training will be two years. Each trainee will be given a stipend of Rs 30 a month and an initial grant of Rs 50 for bedding, utensils and clothing.

(iii) A sum of Rs 4,000 has been sanctioned for the dis-

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tribution of spinning-wheels and cotton, free of cost, to deserving displaced persons residing in the rehabilitation centres in the State.

WEST BENGAL

Sanction has been accorded to a scheme for setting up a colony at Bahrapur, Midnapore District, for the training and rehabilitation of 50 unattached women with 100 dependent children, at an estimated cost of about Rs 70,000.

In the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Assam, Manipur, Orissa, Tripura and West Bengal, 180,542 displaced families from East Pakistan are reported to have been settled on land. 88,600 non-agriculturist families have been allotted homestead plots in rural areas of West Bengal.

APPENDIX C

NEW TOWNSHIPS

In the 12 townships that are being developed especially for displaced persons, 15,820 houses have already been constructed. The present plans are to provide accommodation in the townships to nearly 400,000 persons as detailed below.

State	Name and location of township		Popula- tion to be cater- ed for	No. of houses com- pleted
Bombay	Ulhasnagar	(Kalyan)	130,000	1,380
	Sardarnagar	(Ahmedabad)	30,000	3,000
Kutch	Gandhidham	(Kandla)	25,000	2,500
PEPSU	Rajpura		15,000	2,400
	Tripuri	(Patiala)	6,000	1,100
East Punjab	Faridabad	(Gurgaon Dt)	40,000	2,600
	Nilokheri	(Karnal Dt)	8,000	870
	Chandigarh	(Ambala Dt)	60,000 ¹	—
Uttar Pradesh	Govindpuri	(Meerut Dt)	30,000	870
	Hastinapur	(Meerut Dt)	10,000	—
West Bengal	Habra Baigachi	(near Calcutta)	40,000	1,100
	Fulia	(Nadia Dt)	5,000	—
Total	12 townships		399,000	15,820

¹ Provisional. Final plans are still under preparation.

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