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A CRITICISM OF "COMMUNISM IN THE MUSLIM WORLD"

IT is fair to ask, when reviewing a statement of facts such as the one given by Mr. Jafri in his "Communism in the Muslim World,"* what it is the author has tried to tell us. In this case apparently the answer must be that Communism has been gaining ground in the Muslim world because the structure of Islam has for long been rotting. The proposed remedy is that as the basic truths are sound they must be reverted to and it is upon them that the new social order of Islam must be firmly founded.

To illustrate these points he describes the rebuilt structures of Turkey and Indonesia, inferring that because Islam has been revalued and re-orientated "there you find the least danger of Communism." Leaving aside problems such as the true extent to which social reformation has been carried out in these countries, it may still be worth asking just how much a factor such as Nationalism (anti-Russian in the first case and anti-Chinese in the second) affected this condition of least Communist danger.

Islam collapsed in Soviet Central Asia, according to Mr. Jafri, almost overnight. Yet history proclaims that such was the fury of Muslim resistance, the Soviet Russians, as ever ready to accede right to might, granted total amnesty to the so-called Basmadjis when years of strife failed to pacify the region. Even though this prolonged defence was led primarily and naturally by Mullahs and landowners, and therefore by reactionaries in the terminology of such as Mr. Jafri, it was nevertheless very real.

The story of Islam in China is not very well known, and on that account the author is to be excused certain errors. It must suffice to say that there are no good authorities for his quoted figures, nor would it have been practicable even if desirable to establish a Chinese Pakistan. The Muslims of that great land are divided into two main sections: the larger being composed of Chinese and the smaller of Turkic-speaking peoples. Between these two sections there is considerable mutual antipathy. Moreover, they are spread into every corner of the land. In the time of Yakub Beg an attempt by Western powers to create a Muslim State out of Chinese territory failed as soon as the central government was able to reassert itself over Sinkiang. And had such a Chinese Pakistan been attempted in 1946, whose, then, would have been the bitterest denunciation of such Anglo-American imperialism, may it be asked?

One is given the impression that Islam with its several hundred million adherents is akin to Communism. In this respect the author says that "as far as the creative objects are concerned there is little difference. The difference comes on the question of the creator . . .," etc.—that is, on theological grounds. It may be pertinent to add that this would apply more to Christianity than to Communism, and it is certain that Mr. Jafri could not

Jafri, Fareed, "Communism in the Muslim World," R.C.A.S. JOURNAL, 1953, vol. XI, pp. 261-8.

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have meant to associate relevant methods of proselytization in his comparison of the three systems.

Main causes for the decay of Islamic structure are stated to be the rigidity of Mullah influence and feudalism. If causal factors could be so easily discerned his may well be correct, but cannot surely be meant to be exhaustive. He probably realizes that it is very dangerous to initiate religious reforms and to eradicate feudalism if it is not borne well in mind that those aims are not ends in themselves. It would be useless, to draw an analogy from one of his examples, to destroy the palaces of the rich without first housing the poor. Once Islamic principles are questioned—and questioned they probably will be if some reforms are to be made—the whole authority of the Kuran may be doubted. Once the existing feudal economy is upset, if the change comes too quickly, there is danger of total disorganization. It is reasonable to suggest that some such similar reaction occurred in China when the absoluteness of Confucianism was felt to be no longer in keeping with the events of the day.

Another cause given is that of racial discrimination, and Mr. Jafri vividly illustrates his point with reminiscences of his own experiences, perhaps overdrawn, whilst studying in England. Where he admits only a taint of pink it is probably and shockingly true to say that a great proportion of today's African students return to their homelands more than a little injected with the virus of Communism. To their minds, so often immaturely swayed by youthful hearts, reasons for this reaction are manifold. One of the gravest is asserted racial discrimination, to which Mr. Jafri gives so much prominence.

It is true, of course, that "two wrongs do not make a right," and any form of racial discrimination is definitely wrong, but before undue horror is evinced at happenings in other people's countries let us concern ourselves only with what can be done constructively and immediately in our own. We in Britain are trying to broaden our outlook on such matters, and Mr. Jafri admits we are improved. With all due respect, then, may it be suggested that the great Indian subcontinent, Islamic and Hindu, first order its own house before becoming emotional about others'.

The creed of the Muslims is, according to the author: "... we believe in a democracy which has a spiritual basis. We do not have colour prejudices and racial bias, and we believe in the brotherhood of mankind." This is a truly beautiful belief and should be practised throughout the world. As the Christian is urged to be Christian, so let the Muslim be Muslim, and between us let there be universal happiness.