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BY

THE NORTH-WEST FRONTIER OLD AND NEW

By SIR OLAF CAROE, K.C.S.I., K.C.I.E.

Report of a lecture delivered to the Royal Central Asian Society on Wednesday, April 26, 1961. Chairman: Group-Captain H. St. C. Smallwood, O.B.E.

The CHAIRMAN: Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am the bearer of an apology from the Chairman of the Council, Sir Richard Gale, who has unfortunately had to go to hospital today. He said if it was possible he would come on, but he has not been able to come and I am afraid I will have to ask you to put up with me in his place.

We are extraordinarily fortunate to have today Sir Olaf Caroe, who does not need introduction to anybody except the very newest member of this Society. He has been a member of the Society for thirty-three years and is a member of the Council, and his advice and help are of immense assistance to the Society. He has addressed you on several occasions; the most recent was in October, 1959, when he stepped into the breach to talk instead of Mr. Hugh Richardson on Tibet, the latter having been called at short notice to represent the Tibetans at the United Nations.

Sir Olaf will speak on the North-West Frontier he knew from 1916 to 1947, and also about the Frontier as it is today. Few men speak with greater authority on a subject which is not well known enough to members of this Society. The size of the audience shows how much importance everybody attaches to this lecture. Sir Olaf, who was a District Officer, then Viceroy's Secretary, and then Governor of the N.W. Frontier Province, went back there on a visit four years ago. I will now call upon him to address you.

MR. CHAIRMAN, Ladies and Gentlemen, we as a nation have not been associated with the North-West Frontier now for about fifteen years, and to start with I want to show you a map showing its position in relation to the Punjab and Afghanistan.*

Pathans or Afghans? Which is it and what is the difference? From the sketch-map you will see that the Afghans and Pathans dwell in a territory intersected by an international frontier, the Durand line, drawn in 1893. In Afghanistan they occupy a far larger area, but in Pakistan they are much thicker on the ground. Before 1747, when the great Ahmad Shah Abdali founded it, there was no such country as Afghanistan; the territories inhabited by people of Afghan stock were divided between the Persian and the Mughal Empires. The results of this political division, which endured for more than two centuries, was that the Western Afghans of whom Ahmad's tribe, the Abdalis—called Durranis from this time—were the leaders, developed with a Persian bias and became Persianized, even to their language. Even today Persian is preferred to Pashtu in Kabul. The Eastern Afghans—now mainly Pakistani subjects—on the other hand developed a bias towards Delhi, over which (as we shall see) they three times ruled as Sultans before the Mughals came. They kept their Pashtu. Thus the Persian designation *Afghan* was applied to Western tribes, while *Pathan*, a Hindi form of the native name Pakhtun, was used

* See page 295.

for the Eastern tribes who looked towards India. So Pakistan is heir not only to the British, but to a much older Mughal association in its dealings with its Afghan tribes.

Here let me interpose a comment on a remark made about me by my friend the Afghan Ambassador. For giving expression to these facts of history he calls me in *The Times* a somnaloquist—a new coinage for which he deserves the fullest marks! But even he, were he here today, would be unable to deny the Persian affinities of the Durrani rulers of Kabul, and the orientation of the Pakhtun (Pathan) tribes towards Peshawar and the Indus.

It would be a good analogy to state that all Pathans are equally entitled to the name *Afghan*, wherever they live, just as Highlanders are all Scots. But all Afghans are not entitled to be known as *Pakhtana* or *Pashtana*, any more than all Scots can claim to be Gaels. It is only those who live by Pashtu who may aim so high; it is necessary to live by a highland code. And Pashtu means far more than the language; it implies a code of chivalry and a way of life from which those who dwell in cities are apt to be estranged.

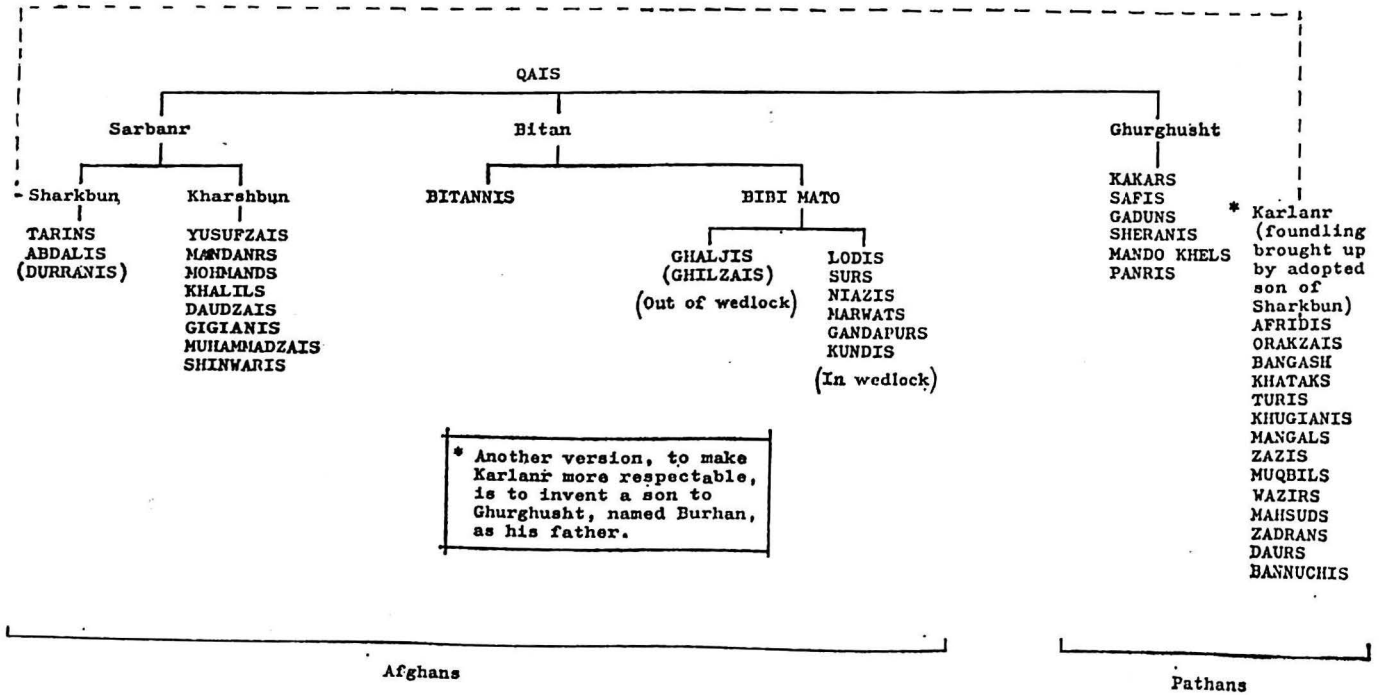
There is, however, another distinction deep in the people's minds. There is no race in the world more conscious of descent and affinity than the Afghans. On the chart you will see a much simplified family tree. Its beginnings are shrouded in myth, for Qais himself and his three sons are said to be descended from Saul in the thirty-seventh generation and their very existence is only part of a fable. But the table does reflect what the tribes themselves believe to be their relationship one to another; it sorts out and categorizes affinities and disparities traceable today in the appearance, habit, dress, language and so on, of this whole group of societies.

Note that in this genealogy all the hill tribes are shown as of doubtful ancestry. This is surprising for they include what are, to us at least, the most famous names, Afridis and Orakzais of Tirah, Mahsuds and Wazirs, the finest guerillas in the world, Khataks, so steady under fire or at their leisure whirling in the dance, sword in hand beneath the stars. It is certain that this tradition enshrines a truth that the hill tribes spring from a much older and indigenous stock, never disturbed in their mountain homes. They are the true Pakhtuns or Pashtuns—the difference here is one of dialect—as opposed to the Afghans of the open plains, descended from a mixed Turco-Iranian strain of later invaders.

Let us complete this initial survey by looking at a map showing tribal locations, and see how the various branches are distributed. It will be observed that the heartlands of the Pathans are in the central area of which Thal on the Kurram River is the nodal point. These are the hill tribes, the Karlanris, and they include Afridis, Orakzais, Khataks, Turis, Wazirs and Mahsuds. They are interposed between the Persianized Durranis and the Ghalji Afghans to the west, and the Peshawar tribes, Yusufzais, Mohmands and so on, to the east.

We have no time here to refer at length to the great question of the origin of the Pathans and their place in history. It must suffice to say that before the Moghul conquest of India in 1526 two Pathan dynasties had ruled northern India from Delhi; and after the Moghuls came they were

GENEALOGY OF AFGHANS AND PATHANS
(Affinity by descent, not according to citizenship)



ousted from power for a period of some fifteen years by the Pathan dynasty founded by the man who was probably the greatest of all this race, Sher Shah, who built the Old Fort—the Purana Qila—at Delhi and the magnificent mosque within it. The slides will give some idea of the splendour of the Pathan heritage dating from those great days of empire.

The glory of Muslim architecture, brought into India by the Pathans, has always been the arch and the dome. These pictures will show you in what a functional manner these features are developed during the Pathan period—in a style to my mind much better suited as an inspiration for modern days than the onion domes and pretty pinnacles of the Moghul period which lend themselves to meretricious treatment and plaster copy-work reminiscent of that horror, the Pavilion at Brighton! It is for reasons such as this that I have suggested in a letter to President Ayub that it would be a pity if the architects of the new Pakistan capital, proudly named Islamabad, were to omit from their designs those features of the Islamic heritage, the arch and the dome. And since these appear in their most functional form in the old Pathan masterpieces, let those be the inspiration. Let me say, that the President's reaction has been most encouraging.

Here, too, you can see a picture of the Tomb of that very great man, the co-founder of the Islamic College at Peshawar, Sir Abdul Qayyum. It is simply built in marble within a wooden-arched cloister in admirable taste. Sir Abdul Qayyum was a very great man, and above all others of his people was responsible for impressing on a wide circle the important place to which the Pathan character and attainments entitle them in the sub-continent. There is a delightful story about him. When it was suggested in London at a Round-Table Conference that the N.W. Frontier was too small a place for representative government or a governor, he replied in his inimitable way that a flea might be a small creature, but in his country they found it very inconvenient inside their trousers!

Here let me say something about the Pathan character. The first thing to realize about them is that they are free men, first and always. One of the wonders about them is that they have preserved their independence all through the ages up to the present time, that is to say, even now there is no writ of law running in the tribal part of their country, no revenue, and they can pursue their blood feuds if they want to—and do. They regard that as the best way of maintaining law and order amongst themselves. They never have been administered in many areas, even by the Moghuls who tried to conquer them; not by the Sikhs, and not by the British, and Pakistan has wisely not attempted to extend its administration though it is extending things like education in the tribal areas.

I would like to take this opportunity of thanking Sir Evelyn Howell, who is here today, for some slides he has prepared. He was, ten years before me, the Viceroy's Foreign Secretary. I also have some extraordinarily good slides which have been lent me by Ian Stephens, once editor of the *Statesman*.

I must go back to the Pathans as a people. They are, as I say, very attractive, and no people in the world have a higher standard of good looks. They are hospitable to a fault. In the words of Mountstuart

Elphinstone, written in 1809, and which are as true today: "Their vices are revenge, envy, avarice, rapacity and obstinacy. On the other hand they are fond of liberty, faithful to their friends, kind to their dependants, hospitable to a fault, brave, hardy, frugal, laborious and prudent." Could one help liking such a man? It even makes one like his vices. It would be dreadful to have people without vices. Those few words show what the Pathans were then and are still.

Their language, Pakhto or Pashto, is very pithy and very expressive, but has been unkindly compared to the rattling of stones in a pot. The Prophet is said to have remarked, "Arabic is certainly the language of heaven, but yours is the language of hell." But even prophets may be prejudiced, and there is no doubt it is a very delightful language to learn and express oneself in. Sir Evelyn Howell and I have been engaged in trying to translate into English verse some of the verses of the Pashto poet, Khushhal Khan. I do not think the Royal Society's hall would be the right place for me to give you recitations of love lyrics, although Charles II —on the wall behind me—is obviously waiting and anxious to hear them! I can assure you they are the most admirable and moving poetry, a great deal nearer our English idea of verse than the Persian.

The Pathans live against a wonderful background of scenic splendour. The late Lord Zetland said of people who walked and talked on the Frontier that "the circumstances of their lives were such that they frequently experienced that species of spiritual exaltation induced by solitude amid the grandeur of nature."

A great friend of mine, Sir Basil Gould, now passed, as the Tibetans say, to the heavenly fields, said "no man can recall without emotion his first vision of rosy-fingered dawn or the setting rays of the sun as they gild the coronet of hills which hems the vale of Peshawar." With its wonderful surrounding coronet of jagged peaks in the foreground and behind them the everlasting snows, this grand scene depends to a great extent on its contrasts of greenery and aridity, the astonishing difference between winter and summer. The Peshawar Vale, or Swat, or Kurram and other places, both highland and lowland, have their own beauty.

I have shown you the great imperial and architectural past. For 200 years the Moghuls were the nominal rulers of this country, but they never conquered all the tribes. Moghul rule on the Frontier was brought to an end in 1739 by Nadir Shah of Persia when he captured Delhi and took away from the Moghuls all these regions. Nadir Shah was murdered a few years later in his tent. Ahmad Shah, the Durrani Captain of his bodyguard, got away with the treasure, including the Koh-i-noor diamond, which is now in the Queen's crown, and with this treasure for the first time he set up an Afghan Kingdom in 1747. He succeeded—and it lasted through his son's life—in combining the Afghan tribes under one rule. Ahmad Shah's dynasty began to break up round about 1800, and the Eastern Afghans, that is to say the Pathans around Peshawar, reverted to their eastward look.

There is a great deal of Soviet propaganda, the British being accused again and again of having torn the Eastern Afghans away from Kabul and having brought them under their control. That criticism should be ad-

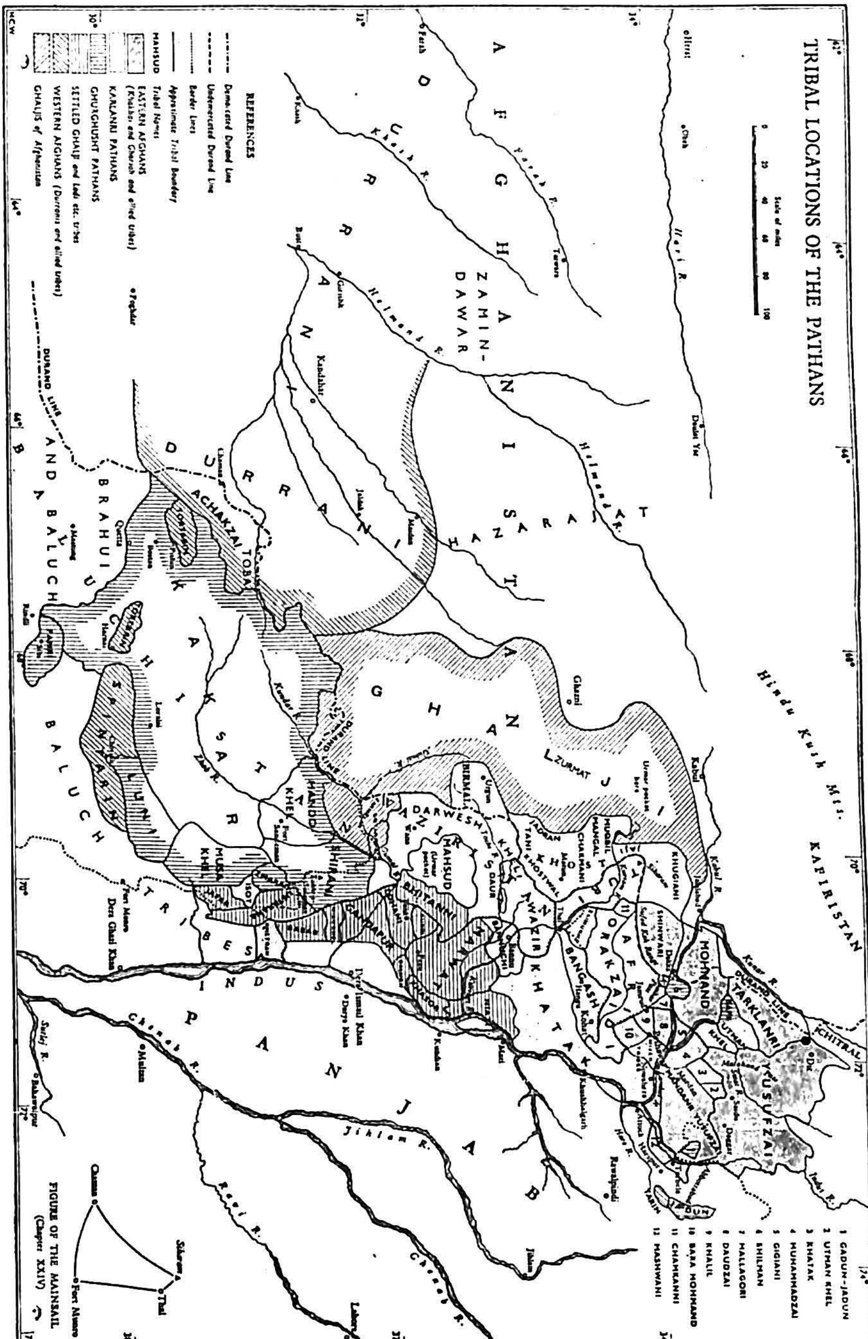
dressed to the ghost of Ranjit Singh, the founder of the Sikh kingdom, who took Peshawar from Ahmad's successor in the early years of the nineteenth century. The British, thirty years later, succeeded to the Sikh position on this frontier. They were in control for about 100 years, from 1846 to 1947, and it is justifiable for Englishmen to say that the Pathans as well as the British have benefited from our mutual association, and neither of us forget the 100 years of British rule.

Now Pakistan has succeeded to that heritage. You might like to hear something of what happened in 1946-7 when I was Governor in Peshawar. I had a very strange government for a Muslim province. It was affiliated to a Congress almost entirely Hindu, led locally by a remarkable man, Dr. Khan Sahib, a most lovable man whose memory I cherish, a man of immense charm, with all the Pathan virtues as well as some of their vices. He was a very difficult man to have as Premier in a Muslim province, with power about to be handed over, with a government which bore allegiance to Mahatma Gandhi and Mr. Nehru.

The Pathans did not believe for a long time that the British were really going, but when it became certain they were, the idea of a Hindu-affiliated government was inconceivable to them. Khan Sahib still maintained his sincere conviction in favour of the unity of India, and I respected it. His idea was that as the Pathans had ruled in India in the past, why should they not rule in the whole of India in the future? As time went on it became evident with the two streams, the Hindu stream and the Muslim stream, a unified India could not survive, and there must be some sort of partition. The two streams ran parallel and would never converge, so partition was at that time and in those circumstances inevitable. For that reason I urged on Lord Mountbatten it was absolutely essential to have some sort of test of public opinion, either by a fresh election or by referendum, otherwise there would be civil war; unless there was some test of public opinion, it would not be possible to hand over power at all.

The one positive thing that was done by the British government before partition was to hold this referendum, with the result that, although the elections were boycotted by the Congress Party, more than half the registered electors voted to come into Pakistan. It was possible to hand over the North-West Frontier in good order, with stability and without turmoil, and that I regard as the best thing I ever did politically.

I must go back a little and say that in 1900 the late Lord Curzon had created the North-West Frontier Province by carving it out of the Punjab. There was a tremendous hooha about it. The Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, Sir Mackworth Young, was very much opposed to it, and Curzon, being Curzon, a man fated by character to do the right thing in the wrong way, did not consult him properly. He did it because he was thinking of defence against Russia and so on. The real reason why he should have done it, and the reason why what he did was right, was that the new creation led to contentment and a feeling of self-esteem among the people, for the Pathans could now hold up their heads and say they were not only a province but in direct relations with the centre. They were in some ways the most important province in India. As another result of the partition it was possible to put the new province under the specialized care of officers


TRIBAL LOCATIONS OF THE PATHANS
REFERENCES
Demarcated Durand Line
Undemarcated Durand Line
Border Lines
Approximate Tribal Boundary
MAHSUD Tribal Names
EASTERN AFGHANS
KARLANRI PATHANS
GHURGHUSHT PATHANS
WESTERN AFGHANS
GHALJIS of Afghanistan
1 GADUN-JADUN
2 UTMAN KHEL
3 KHATAK
4 MUHAMMADZAI
5 GIGIANI
6 SHILMAN
7 MALLAGORI
8 DAUDZAI
9 KHALIL
10 BARA MOHMAND
11 CHAMKANNI
12 MASHWANI
FIGURE OF THE MAINSAIL
(Chapter XXIV)
AFGHANISTAN
DURRANI
HAZARAJAT
GHALJI
KAFIRISTAN
CHITRAL
MOHMAND
TARKLANRI
YUSUFZAI
AFRIDI
ORAKZAI
BANGASH
KHATAK
WAZIR
MAHSUD
BHITANI
ZAMIN-DAWAR
ACHAKZAI
TOBA
KAKAR
BRAHUI AND BALUCH
BALUCH TRIBES
PANJAB
INDUS
DURAND LINE
Hindu Kush Mts.
Quetta
Ghazni
Kabul
Kandahar
Rawalpindi
Multan
Lahore
Dera Ghazi Khan
Dera Ismail Khan
Fort Munro

who could remain there, instead of being transferred to districts close to Delhi every other year. There is no doubt the experiment was on the whole a success.

People in the Punjab used to say our administrative standards had deteriorated. I do not agree, and I served in both Provinces. I think our administrative standards were quite as high on the North-West Frontier as in the Punjab. All of us, more or less, were good linguists; we could speak the language and talk to the people direct. You have to know the language well enough to be able to make a speech in it and take up a running argument; if you surrender yourself to your subordinates you generally get into trouble, so it was very important there should be a specialized corps of officers.

Coming on to the Pakistan period, in 1955 the Pakistan government decided they would not only re-amalgamate the North-West Frontier with the Punjab but would include all the Indus Provinces into one large Province of West Pakistan. They wanted to get over what they called "provincialism." I do not say for one moment that what was right when Curzon did it in 1900 would still have been right in 1955. There is no doubt a great deal to be said for what was called "One-unit," but it has led to a good deal of discontent among the Pathans.

Dr. Khan Sahib's surviving brother, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, started his own form of a Pakhtunistan movement in that part of the world. (This was a version different from the Kabul version which I will deal with later on.) Abdul Ghaffar's idea was there should be a separate Pakhtun (Pathan) Province in loose relations with India and Pakistan and Afghanistan. He did not think out the implications of an association like that or where it would get its money. As a practical politician he is hopeless. He is a man of great personality and very impressive to look at, but he has remained outside responsibility and his advice does not carry anybody very far ever.

When I was there a few years ago, I was asked if I saw great differences in the Frontier I then saw, as compared with the frontier I remembered. Certainly not in the people, not in the villages so much, but a good deal in the field of education. The college in Peshawar, a fine institution founded by Sir Abdul Qayyum and Sir George Roos-Keppel, had been turned into the University of Peshawar. There were many more schools, a great many of which were in the tribal areas. There had been very considerable extension of consumer industries in the way of processing local products. The Peshawar district is a wonderful garden and produces immense quantities of cane, tobacco and fruit. Two or three large sugar factories have been started.

They also process tobacco on a large scale. The local tobacco when I was there was used only for snuff, but it is now used for cigarettes. They also process woollens, and a great deal of beautiful fruit is grown there—oranges in winter—and who can forget those golden lamps glowing as in the garden of the Hesperides?—and in the spring all the stone fruits, peaches and plums; it is too hot for apples.

You will have heard a good deal about the Warsak Dam. At the point where the Kabul River issues from the mountains they have made a large

dam, with the dual purpose of providing hydro-electric power and irrigation. One great danger is that the Kabul River carries an enormous quantity of red silt, brought down from its tributary the Surkhrud in Afghan territory; and I am very much afraid as time goes on, the reservoir behind the dam will silt up quite quickly, or if the silt is carried down it may damage the turbines in the hydro-electric works.

It does not seem to me to be a good thing to praise all these works as if they were the most marvellous things. If one is really friendly to a country, one should sound a note of warning, if necessary, as well. Nevertheless, here the Pakistan government have been extremely energetic and have done a lot to extend irrigation, to make more power available, and to support the processing of local products.

Now for the Afghan version of Pakhtunistan. Politically, the Afghan theory is that the Pathans (Pakhtuns) should form a separate State to be known as Pakhtunistan, and in due course amalgamate with their blood brothers in Afghanistan. I have given the reason earlier why a theory which sounds quite reasonable on ethnic grounds is not really workable. The Eastern Afghans and the Western Afghans have always looked in different directions, and that is something the Afghans must realize.

There is another point which shows up this Afghan scheme for what it really is. They also claim Chitral and Gilgit, neither of which are Pathan countries, and the whole of Baluchistan down to the sea as part of the new State. The great bulk of Baluchistan south of Quetta is not Pathan either; it is inhabited by Baluch and Brahui tribes. In fact, they are really trying to wrench away the whole of the Trans-Indus portion of Western Pakistan from Pakistan—and most dishonestly, because their case is not solidly based on ethnic grounds. This propaganda is strongly echoed in all the Soviet material that comes out about British and other imperialism and, at the same time, owing to the estrangement of the Afghan government from the West and from Pakistan, the Soviets have made great inroads into Afghanistan. The Afghan Army is supplied with Russian arms and Russian technicians, and generally the Afghans are receiving full support in this attitude against Pakistan.

Among the Pathans all this cuts very little ice—the nearer you get to the scene the less you hear about it—but as a means of international pressure against Pakistan it is most dangerous. China is pressing on the Himalaya through Tibet; Russia is pressing on Pakistan through Afghanistan, always under the ægis of this absurd beam in the eye, imperialism, whereas in truth the Russians and Chinese of today are the most ruthless imperialists there have ever been since history began.

This heavy Soviet infiltration in Afghanistan, and the pressure on the Pakistan government, is one of the reasons why the North-West Frontier is a vitally important place still. It is one of the touchstones in the whole of the world scene. The Pakistan government have been extremely wise in dealing with the tribes. They have done much better than we did over education. They have done extremely well over the organization of the Scouts, the irregular forces to keep order in those places, and have not had to use force very much. There are certain parts of tribal territory, Bajaur is one, where there has never been any occupation in British times, and

not until recently in Pakistan times, and these places are very touchy. I was shocked to hear some months ago that the Pakistan government had arrested my old friend, the Nawab of Dir, because they said he was dealing with the Afghans. I know the Dir Chief very well, and I find it hard to credit that he would be dealing with the Afghans. I think he was troubled about the position between himself and Swat, and the reactions of this old rivalry on the chiefs in the neighbouring Bajaur area. Neither of them has been averse from getting the other into trouble. How much of the background do the young Political Officers know? Dir is more important than Swat in many respects, for one reason because the road to Chitral goes through the former. One of the results is that there has been trouble in Bajaur, in which an old firebrand Badshahgul, son of the Haji of Turangzai, has come out as an Afghan agent, and his headquarters has been bombed. There is going to be a good deal of difficulty when the Pakistan government have to take action, as we had to do before them, to extend their authority in areas of tribal territory hitherto unoccupied.

Finally, let me say that the most moving thing that has happened to me in my life was when I was invited to go out again to the North-West Frontier and visit my old friends and make new ones. One went round the villages and small towns seeing one's old friends or their sons, and everywhere there was the most marvellous welcome, which was absolutely real and true. With the Pathans, once a friend always a friend. It was a most extraordinary experience and moved me very deeply. Others who have gone back have felt the same.

THE CHAIRMAN: Ladies and Gentlemen, you all realize we have to vacate this room at this time, therefore it precludes the possibility of any questions, hundreds of which I see trembling on the lips of the ex-officers of that part of the world. I do assure Sir Olaf we have had a most wonderful hour. I am sure there is a large proportion of people who have looked at these pictures and heard him talk with the greatest feeling of nostalgia. Next time we must ask for an edition of two volumes; it is impossible for him to get all he has to say into the time available. May I thank him very much on your behalf for giving us such a brilliant talk. (*Applause.*)