

INDEPENDENCE CEREMONIES

HISTORIC SCENES IN LONDON

NEW FLAGS UNFURLED

From Our Special Correspondent

The birth of the two new Dominions was celebrated yesterday in London by large gatherings of Indians. One scene of rejoicing was India House, Aldwych, headquarters of the High Commissioner for India; the second was Lancaster House, lent by the British Government for the occasion as a meeting-place for the adherents and well-wishers of Pakistan, which has not yet had time to set up its own offices in London.

Many non-Indians were present by invitation at both ceremonies. Among them were Mr. Alexander, Minister of Defence, Mr. Herbert Morrison, Lord Pethick-Lawrence, members of the Diplomatic Corps, and distinguished guests and representatives of organizations interested in Indian affairs. Great numbers of Indians not only attended and cheered the first unfurling of their own flag—and side by side with it the Union Jack—but also before or after their own celebration shared as guests in the other. The friendliness pervading both ceremonies was widely felt to be the happiest of auguries.

By mutual arrangement the events at India House began at 11 a.m., and those at Lancaster House at 12.15 p.m. Traffic in Aldwych was stopped, and crowds filled the pavements. Inside India House the principal guests were received in the domed library by the acting High Commissioner, Mr. M. K. Vellodi. Mr. V. Krishna Menon, who was to succeed him as High Commissioner an hour later, was also present, with the High Commissioner for Pakistan, Habib Ibrahim Rahimtoola.

Behind the platform was a full-length painting of Mr. Gandhi. The crowded scene was brightened by some white suits and the saris worn by many Indian women. Loud-speakers relayed the speeches to the people in Aldwych.

A PEACE-MAKER

Mr. VELLODI began his speech by welcoming the High Commissioner for Pakistan as an old friend, to whom he offered his hearty felicitations. As in the time of Asoka, he said, India proposed to function, as far as she could, as a peace-maker and peace-bringer.

It was a matter for deep thankfulness that her freedom had been effected by consent and in comparative peacefulness. In a speech punctuated by repeated applause, he paid homage to the leaders in the struggle for Indian independence, beginning with "one whose name is imperishable, Mahatma Gandhi, the greatest Indian of all time, and one of the world's greatest men, who led us with unflinching steps into the domain of independence."

Mr. Vellodi then read the King's message, which was also being given to the Indian Constituent Assembly, and a message from Mr. Nehru.

Mr. ALEXANDER read a message from Lord Addison, Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, regretting that his departure for the Canberra conference prevented him from being present, and sending his congratulations. The hoisting of the flag of India, Mr. Alexander said, was the symbol of so much ardent patriotism and meant the fulfilment of British rule and the attainment by India of her full political stature. It also meant the coming into existence of a new member of the British Commonwealth.

OPEN FUTURE

"The future now lies open before India," Mr. Alexander continued. "For our part, we pledge ourselves to do all that lies in our power to ensure a happy and beneficial relationship between this country and our new associate in the British Commonwealth."

Mr. Vellodi led the company outside the building to the west corner, where a guard of honour of Indian sailors and airmen was drawn up, and he hoisted the flag of India beside a Union flag. Before and after the unfurling of the flag two students, Miss Vijaya Patwardhan and Mr. Pandya, sang the "Salutation to the Motherland" and the "Salutation to the Flag."

The flag of Pakistan was unfurled inside Lancaster House from a flagstaff at one side of the landing of the great staircase. The assembly filled the hall, stairs, and gallery above, and many hundreds could not get into the building. A Muslim priest opened the ceremony by chanting a prayer from the Koran. Then the Pakistan flag was hoisted and, a moment later, amid renewed cheering, the Union flag on a second flagstaff. The King's message to the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan was read by the High Commissioner, Mr. Rahimtoola.

Mr. ALEXANDER, after conveying Lord Addison's message, said:—"The Indian Empire dissolves—the British Commonwealth of free nations welcomes two free peoples into their association." Speaking in similar terms to those of his address at India House, he expressed the British Government's satisfaction that in a world much troubled by dissension their last Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, had been able to work with such success with Mr. Jinnah, Mr. Nehru, and all their associates.

Mr. RAHIMTOOLA said that on the same day over 1,300 years ago the revelation of the Holy Koran was completed and Islam born, and it was providential that their new State should come into being on such an august day. There were great cheers when he said that they rejoiced in hailing Mr. Jinnah as the first Governor-General of Pakistan.

When Mr. Rahimtoola ended, the first to congratulate him on his speech and shake hands with him was Mr. Krishna Menon.

STUDENTS' CEREMONY

In the afternoon a celebration was held at Friends House, Euston Road, by the Indian Conciliation Group, which was formed when Mr. Gandhi was in London for the Round-Table Conference. The speakers were Mr. CARL HEATH, who presided, LORD PETHICK-LAWRENCE, Mr. VELLODI, DR. MAUDE ROYDEN-SHAW, and DR. ABDULLAH, of the Woking Mosque. Both new High Commissioners were present, and were warmly welcomed.

The flags of India and Pakistan were blessed by the Dean of Canterbury (Dr. Hewlett Johnson) in the presence of 300 students of all nations at the International Club, Croydon. The two flags were unfurled to a fanfare of trumpets by the band of The East Surrey Regiment. Mr. Krishna Menon was present.

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