

(Written at Aligarh, April 28, 1947).

Dear Mr. Rogers:

I have just come in from an early morning ride. Deciding that I needed some regular exercise, and also that it might be useful to have better command over a horse than I displayed in the Punjab last October, I joined the University Riding School about a month back. Gradually I note improvement; and the fresh air at dawn, the only cool part of the day, is refreshing. The student riding instructor and some of the other riders are the out-of-doors type. Though the instructor is the son of a former (Muslim League) Premier of the Northwest Frontier Province, his own concern with politics is slight. It is good to meet individuals whose activities and interests are self-generated and independent of the political emphasis which rules the campus.

The University has been in the grip of pre-examination fever for the past month. In common with other Indian universities, Aligarh has exams only at the year's end: no hour exams, no semester finals, but only the one six-day struggle at the end of a whole year's classes. Judging from the late hours of study these days, and the unceasing flow of students to their professors, seeking hints on probable questions and light on subjects discussed last January, few students have paid constant attention to their work during the year. Why should they, when a month's cramming will produce equal or better results, and when no periodical checkups are made? A bit extreme, however, was the case of one who came to his professor wanting to borrow the latter's copy of Geoffrey Crowther's "An Outline of Money". In my course on monetary theory, we spent nearly half a semester on this book, which this lad proposed to cover in two days. (It may interest Mr. Parkin, incidentally, that Crowther's book is required reading in the Economics course at both universities where I have worked).

Thus the examination system itself is not very satisfactory. In these times of political stress it has been especially difficult for Aligarh students to devote regular attention to education. Geographically, of course, Aligarh is in a province where Muslims are in the small minority of 14%. It is outside the proposed independent Muslim State or States - which, I should say in passing, raises a problem for Muslims to which I have heard no real solution. But because the original Aligarh College, founded in 1877, was a pioneer organizational effort in the regeneration of Muslim India, it always had a prominent position in Muslim development; its influence and contributions have continued. Students refer to the Muslim University as "the nerve-center of Muslim India", "the preserver of Islam in India", or "the arsenal of Muslim India". (These last are the words of Mr. Jinnah himself, quoted to me by an emphatic student leader). Perhaps the most apt characterization is that of Wilfred Smith, in his "Modern Islam in India". Aligarh today, he says, has become "the emotional center of Pakistan".

The concrete application of the emotion to the Muslim cause has been clearly shown in all important elections since the war. During the campaigns of 1945 and 1946, large numbers of students from Aligarh toured throughout north India. One student leader described to me the part played in the Sind elections last fall. "Mr. Jinnah

sent an urgent wire requesting volunteers for the campaign. Two hundred students went to Sind (which is 800 miles away). I myself headed a team of eight students; we spent a month in a rural district, talking to villagers. We achieved a complete victory for the League candidates". (When I asked him what the peasants themselves were thinking, his answer was significant. "They don't understand Pakistan", he said. "Even after we explain it they can not appreciate it fully. But they look to Mr. Jinnah as their protector, and affectionately call him 'Our old General'. I have seen old villagers weep when we appealed to them to support our Qaid-e-Azam, our Great Leader, who is saving the Muslim nation".) During the same months last fall, dozens of students were performing relief and restoration work in Bihar, after the slaughter of Muslims there. Another group, as a side activity while on campaign tour, collected 70,000 rupees toward the new hospital and medical college which will soon be established at Aligarh. Studies are put to one side. Two of the most alert students whom I have met told me that for their Master of Arts degree next year they will take the same History course that they majored in during their BA work at another university. "We won't have to do the reading again, so we'll have time for politics". Although many of their elders exhort them to put their studies first, they feel that the student movement in India, as in other political awakenings, has a definite job to perform.

What has been the result, politically, of this sacrifice of education to the more exciting, and perhaps more practical, demands of the day? From Aligarh I can't accurately judge the influence of students on the electorate, for they tend to overestimate the importance of their role. Yet their ardent campaigning must have reached many a village where the message of Pakistan had failed to penetrate in the past, and they are undoubtedly entitled to much of the credit which they claim for League victories in Muslim constituencies. Now, having been important votegetters for the Party, Aligarhians are not at all bashful in making their opinions known in high League councils. You can imagine my surprise, early in my stay here, when a junior member of the History Department asserted that the Aligarh Student Union would have a more decisive voice than the prominent national League leaders - such as League members of the Interim Government and provincial leaders - on any policy decision in which Mr. Jinnah chose to remain neutral. This statement appears to me to exaggerate student power rather heavily; it is difficult for me to believe that these campus leaders, despite their several years' political experience, have the maturity or stature to exercise a decisive influence in the Muslim community at this point in their lives. Yet it is true that combined student opinion on an important subject has been felt by national leaders in the past. The Chairman of the History Department, Professor Haleem, who has been Secretary of the Planning Committee of the Muslim League, emphasized to me the intensity of student opinion during the Cabinet Mission talks a year ago. The students wanted no retreat from their unshaken demand for Pakistan; they opposed acceptance of the long-range constitutional plan as well as any participation in an Interim Government in which Hindus would form the majority party. In the face of this opposition, and that of much more prominent Leaguers, Mr. Jinnah accepted - and persuaded the League Working Council to accept - the Cabinet Mission plan. Professor Haleem was in close touch with Jinnah during the talks. "It was a difficult decision," Professor Haleem said, "and required great courage. I knew the mood of these young people. Only Jinnah could have kept their support while rejecting their demands. He displayed bold leadership". "And", added another senior professor, "even Mr. Jinnah was worried".

That was a year ago. Mr. Jinnah still has their loyalty and obedience. His picture hangs in nearly every room, they lend me books by him or about him, and refer to him in such terms as "the shining genius of our nation". Aside from Jinnah, I think it is true that none of the other prominent League leaders commands important respect among Aligarh students. They will hope to find new faces, or produce them, if Jinnah passes on. At the moment, when League policy is being worked out by top rank negotiators in Delhi or is displayed in active measures in the Northwest Frontier Province and the Punjab, the students apparently are not very active in the national scene. Nor do they display much constructive initiative in thinking through the problems of Pakistan. But I will try to describe what positive thoughts they have in my next letter.

Meanwhile they keep up the emotion locally. When nationwide duties abated, elections to the Student Union swayed the excitable campus. I was not here during these elections, but have heard much of them. It is felt that local campaigning and debate is good training for the young leaders whom every generation must produce. Candidates hire horse-drawn 'tongas' with loudspeakers and move from hostel to hostel. Oratorical ability is considered an important test of a leader: the audience may readily hoot down a poor speaker. The newly elected Secretary of the Union admitted to me a bit ruefully that it has become something of an Aligarh tradition that a man whose oratory is weak is not heard for long. His thoughts command less attention than the volume or beauty of his words. Indeed, when no one can win who does not extol Pakistan, there is not much scope for independent thought. Printed campaign posters adorn university walls. Candidates give tea parties for dozens or even hundreds of friends, and vie with each other in the choiceness of sweets served. Their expenses run into hundreds of rupees. The participants apparently consider it worth the output, for the prestige of Aligarh Union office is very high. The men elected become the spokesmen for the students in contacting League leaders. And they invite outside men of note to address the Union: this provides full opportunity for demonstration that the demand for Pakistan is unanimous.

Let me describe a Union meeting. Egyptian and Indonesian delegates to the Asian Conference, two South African Indian leaders on a tour canvassing support, and the Muslim League Working Committee of the United Provinces have been guests on separate occasions. The Union Cabinet sit in the center of the stage, adorned in flashy green satin robes. Around them on the platform sit the guests, garlanded with flowers. Above the rostrum hangs a map of India, with two huge distinct chunks, the Northwest and Northeast, dominating forcefully in the same brilliant green. Green Pakistan flags, with the Islamic crescent and star, hang along the walls. In a picture gallery of imposing Muslim greats, Mr. Jinnah's picture takes its place along with those of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, founder of Aligarh College, Sir Mohamad Iqbal, Muslim India's outstanding modern poet, and - Kemal Pasha, the Ataturk. With flowery praise, the Vice-President introduces the visitors, welcoming them as guests of Muslim India. The student crowd, overflowing the hall, gives them a clear message in signalled and unisoned shouts: "Pakistan Zindabad"; "Qaid-e-Azam Zindabad" (Long Life to Pakistan ! to Jinnah !). In highly emotional, long-winded phrases, the Secretary further emphasizes the unity of the Muslim demand. Then the guests speak.

The Indonesians were commendably silent on Indian internal politics. They spoke as revolutionaries first, Muslims second. But

Mustafa Momen, representing an Egyptian organization, the Muslim Brotherhood, responded fully to the meeting's spirit. "Collect the rays of Islam", he said, "from Morocco, Egypt, Arabia, Afghanistan, Indonesia, and Pakistan (loud cheers), focus them through the Quran, and you will overcome not only the castles of foreign exploitation but also those of the internal heathen cultures". (More applause). In private talks with students I have seen no wish nor thought of forceful domination of "Internal heathenism", but in the excitement of the crowd the idea was not unwelcome.

At the next meeting, when he read the previous Minutes, the Secretary repeated the phrase with emphasis. This was a bit rough on one of the guests, for Dr. Naicker of South Africa is a Hindu and a Congressman! I wondered how the 'heathen' and the crowd would get on together. Naicker didn't weaken: he greeted the students with the characteristic Hindu "Namaste". And, to their credit, they heard him not as a Hindu but as a fighter for his people's freedom; he was warmly applauded.

Dr. Dadoo, the Muslim delegate from South Africa, on the other hand, was told a thing or two. Dadoo has strong Communist sympathies. While not advocating Communism by name, his description of the South African and world situations contained strong and obvious Marxist appeals. They were met with cold silence. And to him the Secretary replied, "To Dr. Dadoo we would say that the solution for mankind's ills lies not in this ism or that ism. Islam is the only true answer". The Secretary was representative of student opinion here. I have heard not a few attacks on Communism, "a threat to Islam as well as to democracy". There are Communists here, but not very vocal. In the past few years, I learn, one or two who have spoken openly for their beliefs have felt the persecution - passive but tormenting - that goes with social ostracism. The Vice-President assured me that Dr. Dadoo would have been shouted down if he had been outspoken, and said, "The only force that will counter this Communist threat is a revival of spiritual values throughout the world - whether in Islam, in Christianity, or in Judaism doesn't matter to me".

The Vice-President is a very likeable person. I am sure his words were sincere. Brotherhood and friendship are of course strong at Aligarh. But on the campus there is just enough of the dogmatic in the statements, of mob exhortation in the Secretary's speeches, and of bitterness against such people as Gandhi and Nehru (men whom I also believe to be sincere) to create in my mind a faint sense of unreality, a feeling that the idealistic words are a little mechanical and their basis a little shallow. Dogmatism, assertiveness, the need for a leader, and resentment against strong opponents may, I suppose, be taken as signs of an inferiority complex, which many people have named as one of the reasons for Muslim nationalistic reawakening in India. Perhaps it is the nationalism that offends me: the virtues enjoined are to be Muslim virtues, the loyalty is to be toward Islam. When the nation is in danger, it becomes difficult to believe that strangers, or political or even intellectual opponents, can hold as sincerely the same ideals. So one's loyalty and ideals acquire a parochial tone, even an intolerant one.

Fortunately there is a lighter side to campus activity: tea parties and socials are frequent. Wafers, cakes, fruits and tea, taken in a friendly group, make the world seem much less grim than the tense words that are spoken. That only adds to the unreality!

Sincerely yours,

Richard Moore