

Book Reviews

The Afro-Asian States and Their Problems. K. M. Panikkar. Day, New York, 1959. 104 pp. \$3.

The problems of economically underdeveloped societies in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and elsewhere have been receiving increasingly close attention from contemporary social scientists. The present condition of these lands, whose population comprises the larger part of mankind, is marked by the universal spread among their submerged masses of growing expectations of a better life, and their future is beset by too many unpredictable variables. Many of these societies have been, and a good many still are, within the shrinking area of colonial holdings in Asia and Africa. As they emerge from colonial tutelage and join the swelling ranks of new states, they add a new dimension to the changing scene of international politics and organizations. Whatever their ideology or traditional culture, they are engaged in building newly sovereign political institutions and, simultaneously, in speeding-up their economic growth in accordance with mounting pressures from below.

Most of the current research on these societies is undertaken by Western economists, political scientists, sociologists, and cultural anthropologists in terms of their special concerns and methodology, with much of it confined to the exploration of particular countries or regions. The present study, for all of its brevity, has a threefold interest: the author, in lecturing before the Institut d'Etude de Developpement Economique et Social at the Sorbonne (Paris), seeks to provide a synthesis of the problems these new states have in common; he views the problems as an experienced man of affairs (now a diplomat, formerly an administrator) rather than as an academic specialist; and his viewpoint is not that of a Western outsider, but that of an Indian

who is deeply involved in the efforts of one of these new nations, whose economic and political growth profoundly affects the delicate balance of Asia and the rest of the world. Firm convictions and a flair for the broad view, which Panikkar has demonstrated in former books (*Asia and Western Dominance*, *In Two Chinas*, and *India and the Indian Ocean*), have aided him in the study under review.

There are certain factors that Panikkar regards as having revolutionary significance for the 20th-century environment into which these new states have been cast: the political communities, unlike their 19th-century precursors, have become "coextensive with the totality of adult populations including women"; the new industrial revolution has caused unprecedented dependence on continuous scientific and technological support, along with vastly enlarged human and financial requirements; and this stimulates, especially in Asia, social changes so vast "as to make the period before the second World War look like a forgotten ancient regime." How Panikkar develops his theme in his concentrated discussion of the principal problems arising in the political, administrative, economic, educational, scientific, and social spheres cannot be summarized here. It would be difficult to find a comparable survey that, in nontechnical terms, succeeds in illuminating the whole complex of interrelated issues. Among the political questions to which Panikkar directs attention are the problems of responsible participation and consent which arise with the widespread adoption of republican, representative, and usually parliamentary institutions. "Generally accepted codes of political behavior," free-functioning and organized oppositions, truly independent thought, and respect for basic rights are not ordinarily part of the colonial heritage, nor is the natural submission of the execu-

tive to the control of an elected assembly. Panikkar does not hesitate to speak of democracy in most of the states as "a borrowed ideology, whose implications are little understood . . . text book democracies with but little relation . . . to the social and economic conditions of the countries concerned." Considering the scarcity of trained indigenous officials, administrative services suffer from the withdrawal of the colonial powers' top civil servants at the very moment when the demands of social and economic development everywhere call for expansion.

In his discussion of the economic problems, Panikkar touches on the standard phenomena of shortages in investment and relevant skills and draws attention to the perils besetting foreign financial assistance where there are no "regular or fruitful channels of expenditure." In such situations, he warns, such assistance may heighten social tensions and become a source of corruption. Here, too, he dwells on the key role of technical skills and scientific knowledge, an area in which India enjoys special advantages, compared with most other countries of the Afro-Asian region. All of this lends special importance to the advancement of education, a field in which, he believes, international assistance can make only a limited contribution. Western readers will appreciate his forthright appraisal of the missionary's contribution to education in a new nationalist environment.

In commenting on the vital place of science in the new states, he strikingly brings out the existence of a vicious circle: just as the lack of industrial background has failed to stimulate interest in scientific development, so has the scarcity of scientific and technological manpower, in turn, inhibited industrial growth. He sees the gap between scientifically advanced and scientifically retarded countries inevitably widening, and with this the specter of the old dependence in a new form.

There is bluntness and realism in Panikkar's examination of the newly independent Afro-Asian world. While disclaiming pessimism, he offers a list of formidable problems and endemic difficulties that will constitute a challenge to Afro-Asian and to Western leadership for a long time to come.

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