

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Although historians have concluded that the problem of the relation between the British and the Indians in India was one of administration, the writers we have discussed here taken very little or no interest in this aspect of the Raj. Administrative history is an interesting topic of research for social scientists and students of government, but the writers we have discussed all had some personal involvement and deep concern with the problem and saw the situation primarily in human terms. This is true even of the novelists who believed that the British were doing a good job in India. Kipling, Forster, and Orwell were all very interested in politics, but the very fact that they chose to express themselves fictionally shows in itself that basically they were concerned with the human aspects of the situation. The attitude of each writer, expressed in his fiction, depended very completely on the writer's background and personality, and the circumstances of his relationship to India.

Kipling was an Anglo-Indian. He spent his life in this community and he belonged there. As a result, even though he intended to look at India as an observer, he unconsciously expressed the code accepted among his countrymen who stayed in India, including the prejudice against the Indians. Besides, his fiction was written during the time

when the British Raj seemed progressive and there was as yet no strong reaction against it. Thus, it is natural that any problem might come from the relation between the British and the Indians, the rulers and the ruled.

Forster with his clear-sightedness and attempt at absolute fairness laid the blame for the failure of communication in India on the doorstep of both the British and the Indians. Forster came to India when the crisis of this failure was at hand; he was still able to view the situation as a concerned outsider. What he tried to do was to assess the feelings of both parties without losing his impartiality. A Passage to India, as well as being an admirable novel, is certainly the most balanced account we have of the failure of communication.

Orwell was in Burma while the British Empire was under critical attack and was stiffening in self-defense. Feeling great personal involvement, he was very angry because he had to witness it and could not do anything. He also felt guilty about being a member of this Empire. In his fiction he expressed the reflection of his emotions. Being a socialist himself, his attitudes were definitely anti-imperialistic in a very critical way.

Forsters also had a great involvement with India. He regretted that the British had lost their position in India. Being an Anglo-Indian and coming from a long line of Anglo-Indians, he could not help expressing strong and subject-

sive feelings about the end of the Raj. He viewed the departure of the English with a sense of personal loss.

Thus, a partial/^{pattern} of developing attitudes can be discerned, a pattern that corresponds with the growing pressure against imperialism in England. You should expect a novel written in 1924 (A Passage to India) to approach the problem of the English in India with a more critical attitude than a novel written in 1901 (Kim). And you would expect also that a novel written in 1934 (Baroque Days), in a world in which most young intellectuals were attracted by socialism, to be quite outspokenly opposed to the British Raj. 'Eastern' attitude, however, cannot be fitted into such a pattern. He wrote about the dissolution of the Raj at a time when all English liberal opinion favored the departure. But because of his very deep personal involvement and commitment to the Anglo-India of his father and his English ancestors, he was emotionally unable to accept the abandonment of India and could not be sympathetic to the new Indian governors.

No matter who they were, no matter how sympathetic, how involved, or how interested in the problem they were, the final conclusion from these writers seems unanimous. No one found any way of linking the two peoples in India. We have seen many characters in these works of fiction who tentatively wore links between the two peoples, potential bridges across the vast chasm of culture and civilization

separating English from India. These characters, seen from a distance, all served the same function, even though the novels they appear in, differ widely in every aspect. In examining the novels of Kipling, Forster, Orwell, and Hemingway, we have encountered many "bridge" characters.

Kipling's Kim can be a link. Kim is English by birth but he is brought up as an Indian. He is educated in both worlds: in the English public school and in the Indian school of experience. Kim could choose either world and be happy and successful. He serves as a link hero because he can live in both worlds. But in the Anglo-India of Kipling, there is no reason to have someone as a link between the English and the Indians. The search for the river is a mystical quest, however fraudulent, and as such, is merely a personal search. The game is exclusively in the interest of King and Country. Kipling, for all his real love for the country, was unaware that Englishmen needed to relate to Indians except as master and servant.

Fielding and Aziz from A Passage to India at first seem successful link figures. Personally, they can be good friends, although socially they cannot. But finally they both fail to connect because the situation and environment do not allow them to. During the time when race prejudice was a component part of many Englishmen in India, and when the Indians too were conscious of that prejudice and felt its pressure personally, no relationship between people of

these two different races could last with any stability. Characteristically, both Fielding and Aziz show Forster's balanced point-of-view and his whole-sightedness toward the problem. They are finely drawn individual characters, but their failure to connect is shown as being symptomatic of the larger failure to connect of the two nations. And the conclusion is that no solution could be found because they were too different to understand each other. As Forster wanted to solve the problem so badly, he injected Mrs. Moore into the novel to solve the problem on a symbolic level. Mrs. Moore, however, is a failure and the symbolic pattern of the novel is unresolved.

Flory from Burmese Days is basically a man with no place to go. His psychological problem is the direct cause for his love of the country and is responsible for his attempt to make contact with the natives. However, he fails to be a link. He is fooled and destroyed by the natives he wants to make contact with, despite his attempts and his good intentions. What Flory gets is the fruits of his being a member of the British Empire. Here, Orwell is deriving a diabolical pleasure in surveying the Empire and the mess he thought it was in and creating a story to express his animosity. Flory appears pathetic and yet comic because Orwell is so angry and bitter that laughter is his only release. The conclusion from Orwell seems to be that connection between peoples in such circumstances is so out-of-reach as to

be laughable. The man who tries it is destroyed for his efforts.

Rodney Savage is a portrayal of an Englishman as 'Urbemensch' and to Masters he is a perfect link between the English and the Indians. Rodney feels he belongs to the place. He is interested in India and wants to help its people. Thus, to Masters, history is tragic because now there is no place for Rodney nor for any Englishmen in the new India. In trying to help one princely state so he can save at least one part of the India he loves from the Union, he is fooled and betrayed because that India is no longer wanted. And so Rodney returns home, married the English girl and decides to become a surgeon.

Rodney, as much as he wants to connect, cannot because he is still entirely English. Masters firmly believes that the communities in India must be separate. He cannot let Rodney marry an Indian girl, neither Victoria nor Janaki nor Sunitra. Masters believes that like must stick to like. But at the same time Rodney - an overlord - has a true commitment to help India. The problem is that in the new India, the place for the overlord is gone. The time has come when Rodney and his countrymen must return home.

There are still Anglo-Indians in India as there were in Bhowani Junction; they are still clustered around the old railway centers. Once every year they still take their

formal evening dress out of mothballs, and have a dance which they pretend is the Colonial Ball. There are still Englishmen in India too, in spite of John Mactern. But the British Raj is gone, the jewel of the Empire plucked from the diadem, the sun long since set. In the second half of the century, India must be ruled by Indians. The debate about the two-hundred-year interlude of English rule - whether it was beneficial, whether it was harmful - will continue for many decades. The reflection of the last fifty years of the Raj that is found in the novels that we have discussed will remain as its permanent monument, a monument to exploitation and to idealism, to petty despotism and imperial grandeur. Such as it was, we shall never see its like again. And such as it was too, real relationship between the English and the Indians, no matter in what form it might have appeared, could never be realised. Let the last words again be E.M. Forster's:

...the horses didn't want it - they swerved apart; the earth didn't want it, sending up rocks through which riders must pass single file; the temples, the tanks, the jail, the palace, the birds, the carrion, the Guest House, that came into view as they issued from the gap and saw Gau beneath: they didn't want it; they said in their hundred voices, 'No, not yet,' and the sky said, 'No, not there.' 137