

achievement, and there is little doubt that when a third edition of this book is due, she will again add some new

discoveries and interpretations drawn from her comprehensive and deep knowledge of Indian social systems.

## A Congress Stalwart

S Joseph

Rafi Ahmad Kidwai: A Memoir of His Life and Times by Ajit Prasad Jain; Asia Publishing House, 1965; pp X + 130, Rs 14.

THIS is a short memoir of Rafi Ahmed Kidwai written by a friend, colleague and admirer. In this book Ajit Prasad Jain has chosen the happy technique of presenting a number of anecdotes and incidents from Kidwai's life and letting the events, on the whole, speak for themselves. For instance the chapter called 'Some Rafian Episodes' consists of the juxtaposition, without much explanatory comment, of a number of terse anecdotes which show up different and sometimes startling aspects of his character. It appears from these that Kidwai had a taste for fast driving, was extremely gregarious, outspoken sometimes to the point of rudeness,openhanded in his generosity and a lover of practical jokes. In addition to that he did not hesitate to use his office to help those who appealed to him and publicly announced (as a joke) shortly before his death that he could, if necessary, successfully replace Nehru as Prime Minister. Fortunately no attempt is made to trim Kidwai down into consistency by omission or explanation.

A few important events in the history of the Congress Party and government in which Kidwai played a part are also described. They are the U P Agrarian Reform Movement, the gradual alienation of Muslims and the Muslim League from Congress, and the manouvres which took place within the Congress party after Independence and which culminated in the resignation of Kidwai from the party and eventually the replacement of Tandon by Nehru as President of the Party. The analysis of events is generally fair but one must question the statement that the Congress alliance with the Khilafat movement was "the finest hour of the nationalist struggle" because Hindus and Muslims were for once united. Gandhiji, he says, would go to any length to create confidence among minorities. But even in the Congress there were people like Motilal Nehru who were doubtful about the Congress support for such "a moribund institution. . . . even the Turks were sick of it" (Nanda). It was the

Moulvis and Ulemas who dominated the Khilafat movement, not the middle class Muslims who eventually came to power in the Muslim League. At any rate this Hindu-Muslim Unity lasted only until the Khilafat was dissolved by the new Turkish government.

In another chapter Jain defends the Congress decision to refuse to accept the Muslim League as sole representative of Indian Muslims for the purpose of division of seats in the U P cabinet of 1937. Maulana Azad has pointed to the decision as being largely responsible for the demand for a separate Muslim State. Jain says that the formation of Pakistan could only have been the result of certain deep-seated and long-term causes; it could not be due to one isolated incident. But even long-term causes can be intensified and latent fears brought to the surface by more immediate events and unfortunately the UP incident seems to have given Muslim League leaders the opportunity to demonstrate to their followers the potential dangers of Congress ride.

Another episode described in some detail is the series of events leading to the resignation of Kidwai and the author from the Congress in 1951. Kidwai had long been associated with the left of the Congress and with socialist groups outside consisting mainly of defected Congressmen. His aim we are told, was to persuade Nehru to leave Congress and become the leader of a new Socialist Party. It is fascinating to speculate what might have occurred if he had succeeded. But without Nehru, Kidwai was unwilling to leave Congress; whether this was due to his emotions which would not let him leave an old friend as Jain says, or due to his reason which must have told him that he could never succeed without Nehru is not clear.

A quaint touch is added to the book by Jain's choice of verse for his chapter headings. The split between Muslim League and Congress is headed by

*"Two lovely berries moulded on one stem,  
So with two serving bodies but one heart"*

and the U P Agrarian Reform struggle with

*"Ring in the nobler modes of life.  
With sweeter manners, purer life".*

Only the chapter entitled 'Father of Civil Aviation' is left verseless; perhaps even the Oxford Book of Quotations could not rise to the occasion.

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