

KASHMIR CELEBRATES INDEPENDENCE

The people of Kashmir celebrate newly-won independence. Their rejoicing at the cutting of the Maharajah's oppressive powers is tempered by the realization that Kashmir is the stumbling block to peace between India (represented here by Prime Minister Pandit Nehru) and Pakistan, who sent no representative. Frontier battles have been going on incessantly, and the war (that has even put the women of this state under arms) occupies the minds of all on this Independence Day.

Addressing the crowd, Pandit Nehru speaks of the plebiscite by which Kashmir will be able to affirm its accession to the Indian dominion. It was this provisional Union that last year precipitated the frontier incidents. As in the world's other trouble centres, it is the fanaticism - that makes soldier of women - which defies solution by the peacemakers. A UNO Commission is now on its way to the valley of Kashmir, the scenic beauty of which is world famous. Hopes of a settlement seem dim (for in a country where even young boys are put into uniform and given arms) peace must remain remote.

A river procession is the climax to the seven-day long celebration. The frontier war recedes, as Pandit Nehru accompanied by Sheik Abdullah - Kashmir's Prime Minister - says farewell to the people of India's youngest state.

If the fighting spreads to this peaceful valley, hopes of Indian unity will be irreparably severed.