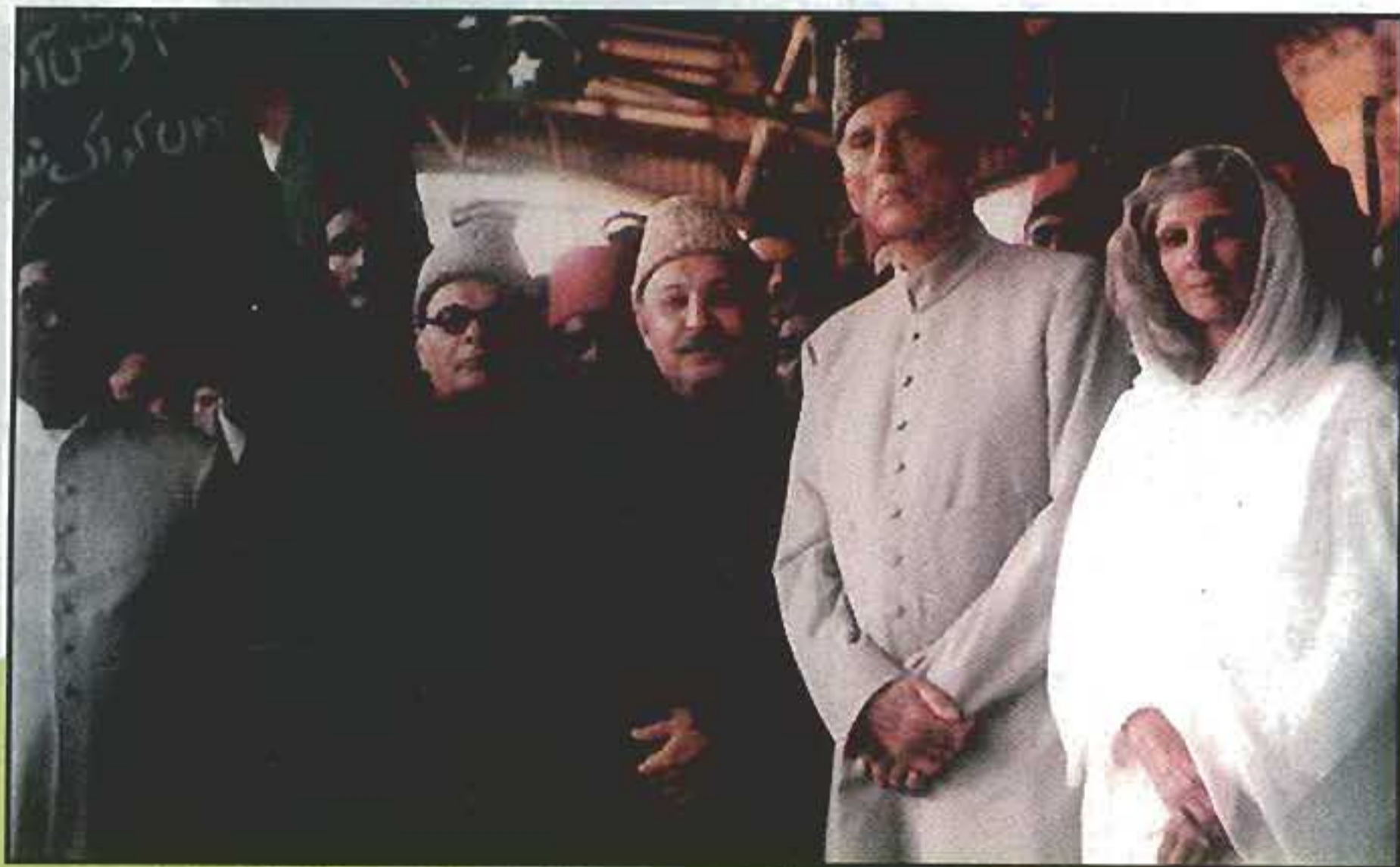


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Jinnah Film Review

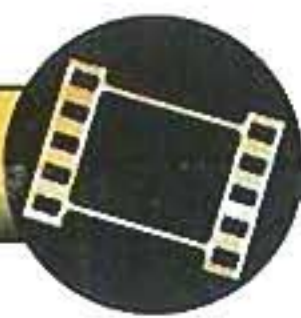
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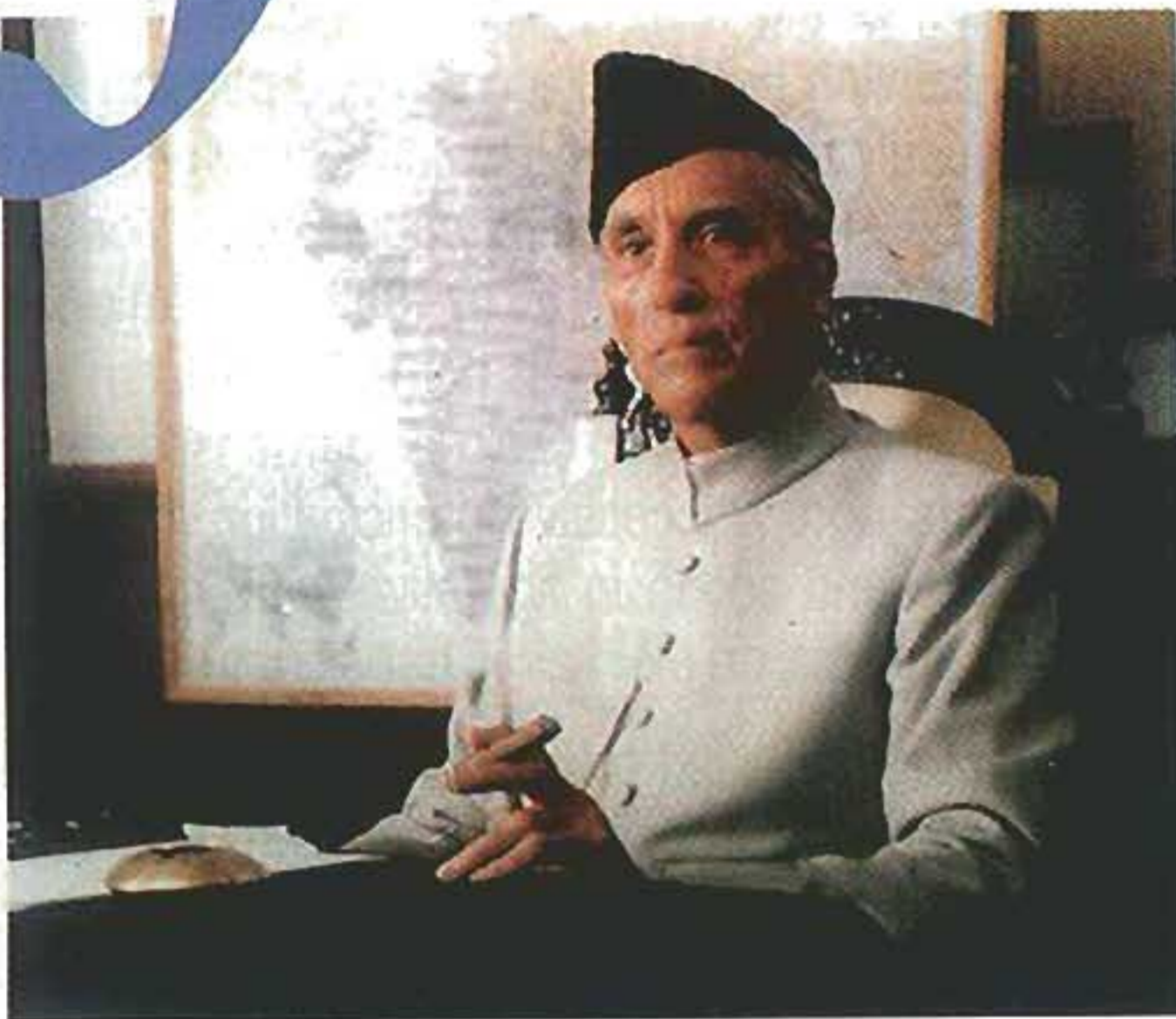
Jinnah

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By Ishrat Hyatt

Jinnah the movie



"A powerful film," Sahibzada Yakub, Foreign Minister and the ambassador of Bosnia, Prof. Dr. Faik Uzunovic. "I liked the way the film was presented and I was very moved, but I would have liked more details of his life and history," said the ambassador of the United States. "I'm still shaking, it affected me so much" the ambassador of Turkey, Bozkurt Aran. His wife echoed his words. And so it went on. Even the British High Commissioner, Sir David Dain said he thought it was 'very well done' and he is a man of few words.

Most Pakistanis at this private showing, which was screened at the residence of Nasrin and Asad Hyat, thought it was an unforgettable cinematic experience and a definite contribution to Pakistani cinema which has no standing in the world.

There was not many a dry eye after the television screen went blank. Which movie was this that moved the small but select audience so profoundly? It was Akbar Ahmed's "Jinnah."

Yes, the very same movie that had faced so much opposition in Pakistan by having its script ridiculed, its main actor Christopher Lee derided because he had played the part of 'Dracula' many years ago, and many other snide remarks that left a bad taste in the mouth and the public wondering what on earth the producers were up to! The media bashing had been strong and spiteful. Even those who did not know the first thing about the movie joined in the refrain saying that the personality of Jinnah could never be portrayed by a foreigner. Anyway after much debate and deliberation, the concerned people, including director Jamil Dehlavi, decided to go ahead with their plans.

'Jinnah' is a movie that gives a compelling account of the events leading up to partition and after. The story has not been filmed in the usual narrative story style. It has been related with a series of incidents that form a cohesive whole to give a picture of what Quaid-i-Azam, Mohammed Ali Jinnah was like, his feelings and his beliefs and in the end in the inevitability of a homeland for the Muslims of the sub-continent. It also gives a brief but intimate, never before seen, peek into his private life, his marriage to the young and beautiful Rutie and his grief when she died of cancer at such a young age.

The movie begins with a horrifying scene of the founder of the nation being carried from Ziarat in a ramshackle ambulance, accompanied by his sister and a doctor. It is a heart

rending moment. The ambulance breaks down and the scene fades to an angle Gabriel (Shashi Kapoor) taking Jinnah through the significant moments of his life and asking him if he would have acted differently if he knew what was in store. You have to watch the movie to see how well this has been done and how his actions, disappointments and satisfaction are explained by Jinnah. The most touching moment is definitely during the last scene when Shashi Kapoor asks him if he had to say sorry to just one person, who would that person be? It is presumed that person would be his wife, a vibrant personality who missed the companionship of her husband because he was involved so earnestly in politics. But he chose to apologize to a young girl whose mother had died in the riots that were the aftermath of partition. Christopher Lee has portrayed this scene with such emotion that it is one of the poignant in the movie. His tears and facial expressions are so convincing that the viewer is inclined to believe they are real rather than an act or trick of the camera. Incidentally, out of the two hundred odd films Christopher Lee made, this is the only one where he shed real tears.

Most of the actors have done a commendable job of their roles, with Richard Lintern portraying a young and handsome Jinnah with assurance and James Fox an insipid, weak but ambitious Mountbatten. But the outstanding performances are definitely by Christopher Lee, who brings out the humane side of Jinnah remarkable well and Shireen Shah as his sister Fatima. She manages to bring the lady to life in a very convincing manner and gives the audience an engaging view of a dedicated woman who sacrificed her own life to look after an ailing brother with devotion.

It is not certain whether local audiences will fully understand the fact that a young Jinnah is seen talking to his older self, or that there is an in between place where people go before they are sent to their final resting place. But they will be able to recognise historical sites and be moved by the slogans and chants of "Pakistan Zindabad". The film will be released on August 14th, dubbed in Urdu after it has passed the censor board. It has received many rave reviews abroad and it is hoped it will give those who watch the story unfold, an insight into the personality of a man whose finer qualities are generally not known, either because no one has managed to bring them to public notice or because not many people read books of historical interest these days. ■