CHAPTER - VI
POST-WAR POLITICS

The post-war development towards full self-government was initiated by the Viceroy Lord Wavell’s broadcast on June 14, 1945 proposing a new Executive Council to be entirely Indian except for the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief. The Shimla Conference and the subsequent Wavell Proposals during June 25-July 14, 1945 gave another occasion to the Sikhs and the Muslim League to highlight their respective demands. Master Tara Singh was recognised as the Sikhs spokesman. To discuss this Scheme with the Indian leaders, the Viceroy called a Conference at Shimla on June 25, 1945. Master Tara Singh was invited on behalf of the Sikh community. He was accompanied by Gyani Kartar Singh and Sardar Udham Singh Nagoke. The Sikhs were happy at their recognition as an important minority in the Punjab. As usual, the Congress and the League were given more importance in this Conference also. Their nominees were invited in larger number as compared to other parties. Lord Wavell admitted that Shimla Conference was ‘not a final solution of India’s complex problems. Master Tara Singh openly opposed the Pakistan demand and stood for an independent Sikh State.

After some deliberations, on June 29, Lord Wavell prorogued the Shimla Conference till July 14. All parties were asked to give panels of names out of which the Viceroy was to select the names for the constitution of the Executive Council. For this purpose, the Congress and the Muslim League were to submit 8-10 names each: Harijans four, Unionists three, Christians three and Sikhs three. It was made clear by the Viceroy to Mr. M.A. Jinnah that it was not necessary that the Muslim representatives would be

2 P.G.R., Fortnight ending 30.6.1945, G.O.I., Home Political, File No. 18/6-45.
picked up only out of the list submitted by Mr. M.A. Jinnah.\textsuperscript{6} Master Tara Singh also made it clear that though the Sikhs had much in common with the Congress he must claim a separate representation.\textsuperscript{7} The Conference resumed its business at Shimla on July 6, 1945.\textsuperscript{8} The Sikhs prepared a list of three names to be submitted to the Viceroy. They were Master Tara Singh, Gyani Kartar Singh and Partap Singh Kairon.\textsuperscript{9} Negotiations were also opened with the Congress for a common Sikh name. Sardar Mangal Singh acted as intermediary in this respect. In consultation with Maulana Abul Kalam Azad he was able to get the name of Master Tara Singh approved,\textsuperscript{10} which the Viceroy did not like. He wrote to the Secretary of State for India that, no doubt, Tara Singh was the acknowledged Sikh leader but his utility in the Council was doubtful, where they proposed to give Defence portfolio to the Sikh member.\textsuperscript{11} For this purpose, the British liked better the name of Baldev Singh who, in the words of Lord Wavell had more brains than any other Sikh leader.\textsuperscript{12}

However, the main concern of the Conference was the Congress and the Muslim League. Crisis developed over the demand of Mr. M.A. Jinnah that the Muslim members for the Executive Council of Viceroy should be picked up only from the list to be submitted by the Muslim League. But the Congress, as a national body representative of all Indians, wanted a share out of the Muslim quota.\textsuperscript{13} Mr. M.A. Jinnah was not only prepared to give any share to the Congress out of the Muslim quota but also he was not

\textsuperscript{6} The Tribune, 30.6.1945.
\textsuperscript{8} The Tribune, 7.7.1945.
\textsuperscript{9} The Tribune, 4.7.1945.
\textsuperscript{10} Udham Singh Nagoke, op.cit., pp. 44-45.
\textsuperscript{11} Nicholas Mansergh, The Transfer of Power., Document No. 582, D.O. No. 183-SC dated 9.7.1945, p. 1216. Wavell was further of the view that like most Sikhs, Tara Singh was not clever, nor had he much political sense (Wavell’s letter dated 19.7.1945 to King George VI, p. 1278).
prepared to share it even with the Unionist Muslims in the Punjab. The Viceroy refused to accede to such a demand of Mr. M.A. Jinnah.\textsuperscript{14} Mian Muhammad Daultana, General Secretary, the Punjab Muslim League Considered the Simla Conference as ‘a subtle move on the part of the British Government to create disruption in the Muslim ranks’\textsuperscript{15} M.A. Jinnah characterised it ‘a snare’.\textsuperscript{16} M.A. Jinnah was emphatic about the fact that the League was the sole representative of the Muslims even as the Congress was the representative of the vast majority of Hindus, Master Tara Singh represented majority of the Sikhs and \textit{Siva Raj} represented majority of the Scheduled Castes.\textsuperscript{17} On July 14, the Viceroy ended the Conference and took upon himself the responsibility for its failure.\textsuperscript{18} He demanded elections to both the Central and provincial legislatures.\textsuperscript{19} The Punjab Government lifted the ban on the Punjab provincial Congress committed and district Congress Committees in the Punjab.\textsuperscript{20} In a press conference at Shimla on July 15, Master Tara Singh blamed both the Congress and the Muslim League for its failure. He said that Mr. M.A. Jinnah was not prepared to accommodate even one Congress Muslim in the Muslim quota. It was not a tough problem and could have been solved by arbitration. About Pakistan, Master Tara Singh said that it was not an issue between the Congress and the Muslim League as it had hitherto been supposed. It was an issue between the Sikhs and the Muslims. Just as the Muslims could not submit to the Hindu domination so could the Sikhs not submit to the Muslim domination? He emphatically declared that he would demand the establishment of an independent Sikh State if the rest of India conceded

\textsuperscript{14} Nicholas Mansergh, \textit{op.cit.}, Vol. V, Document No. 536, Telegram dated 25.6.1945 from Viceroy to Lord Amery, pp. 1153-54.

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{The Civil and Military Gazettee}, 29.7.1945

\textsuperscript{16} R. Suntharalingam, \textit{Indian Nationalism: An Historical Analysis}, Vikas, New Delhi, 1983, p. 27.

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 1157 (Jinnah at the Shimla Conference).

\textsuperscript{18} V.P., Menon, \textit{Transfer of Power in India}, p. 207.

\textsuperscript{19} Sukhmani Bal Riar, \textit{The Politics of the Sikhs (1940-47)}, p. 73.

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{The Civil and Military Gazettee}, 15.8.1945.
Pakistan to Muslims. The All India Hindu Mahasabha also decided to fight the elections in the Punjab.

II

The War was then coming to an end and the short-term necessity of an Interim Government was no longer there. Lord Wavell paid a visit to England in order to get approval of the British Government for the long-term proposals to solve the Indian problem. He came back on September 16 and announced his Plan on September 19, which, inter-alia, suggested the convening of a constitution-making body as soon as possible, and also to ascertain after elections from the representatives of the Legislative Assemblies in the provinces, “Whether the Proposals contained in the 1942 declaration are acceptable or whether some alternative or modified scheme is preferable”.

The Wavell Plan was rejected by the Sikhs at the Sixth All India Akali Conference held at Gujranwala on September 29, 1945. Speaking at the Conference, Professor Ganga Singh said that the Plan was based on the Cripps Proposals which had already been rejected by them. Though the Sikhs rejected the Wavell Plan yet they decided to contest the forthcoming elections which were a part of the British proposals. The Akalis decided to fight election independently of the Congress and other organizations. Nawab of Mamdot, President, Punjab Muslim League put forth that ‘the fate of Pakistan would be decided by the Votes of Punjab Muslims’. After all, Pakistan was to be fought back on the election-plane also. After the elections were over, the Cabinet Mission reached India to solve the Indian political problem.

The end of the World War II was followed by General Elections in England in which the Conservative Party lost power to the Labour Party in England. Lord Attlee was

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22 The Civil and Military Gazette, 16.8.1945
25 Ibid., p. 169; 22.
27 The Civil and Military Gazette, 22.8.1945.
the new Prime Minister. On February 19, 1946 Lord Pethic-Lawrance, the new Secretary of State for India, announced in the House of Lords the decision of the British Government to send a mission of Cabinet Ministers to India in order to solve the Indian constitutional problem.\(^{28}\) As soon as the elections to the provincial legislatures were over the Cabinet Mission reached India to solve the Indian political problem Major Short also accompanied the Mission. He had earned the reputation of being a friend and adviser of the Sikhs. This augured well for the Sikhs.\(^{29}\) But the inclusion of Sir Cripps in the Mission, on the other hand, made the Sikhs fear lest the results of 1942 should be repeated. The Mission spent nearly five weeks in discussion with the Indian leaders.\(^{30}\) This was done to elicit their views on the sort of constitution they desired for India: the main purpose was to ascertain their reactions to the Muslim demand for Pakistan.\(^{31}\) He repeated the demand of *Khalistan* at the Shimla Conference. He argued said that it was futile to say that the Sikhs did not qualify for the Sikh state because they were nowhere in majority. He said that if the Jews with 10 per cent population in Palestine could be given a homeland it could as well be created for the Sikhs in the Punjab. The Government considered the policy to pursue the ‘Pakistan doctrine’ as an alarming menace to peace in the Punjab. The Simla Conference failed due to Jinnah’s insistence.\(^{32}\) The Akalis and the Muslim League both fought the elections of 1946 on the major issue of Pakistan.\(^{33}\) Both got convincing success. In spite of its being the single largest party, the Muslim League was outmaneuvered by its rivals and a Unionist-Congress-Akali coalition ministry was


\(^{33}\) The Akali manifesto did not specifically say much about a Sikh State. Its main emphasis was on opposition to Pakistan (Gujranwala Akali Conference dated 29.9.1945. *The Tribune*, 1.10.1945). See also *Mitra Register*, 1945, Vol. II, pp. 165-66.
formed in Punjab.  

In fact, the Akalis were divided on the issue of support to the Unionist or the Muslim League. Giyani Kartar Singh favoured the Muslim League and Mohan Singh Nagoke sided with the Congress. The Governor verified the claim of the Unionist and invited Malik Khizr Hayat Khan to form a Ministry.

The joining of the Punjab Ministry by the Akalis as partners with the Congress and the Unionists did not mean their rapprochement with the Congress. It only happened as the Muslim League failed to satisfy the Sikhs on the vexed question of Pakistan. The Sikh leaders like Master Tara Singh and Gyani Kartar Singh still suspected the Congress to be a Hindu organization that could not be trusted to support their interests. Mulana Abul Kalam Azad supported the Congress coalition with the Unionists. Mahatma Gandhi also sided with Azad. However, Jawaharlal Nehru considered coalition with the Muslim League The demand for a Sikh State still continued to be voiced through various meetings. The Akalis decided to oppose the demand of Pakistan with their 'concerted Panthic action'. “The Sikh Panth would resist Pakistan to the last man”, declared Ishar Singh Majhail while unfurling the nishan Sahib in the presence of over 1 lakh people.

In the elections of 1946, the Akalis consolidated their position. The Muslim League surged ahead with 75 seats out of 86 seats. The Unionists were reduced to 20 seats as against 90 in 1937. However, they could cobble together a Coalition Ministry. The Sikhs joined the ministry in 1946, as they did in 1942, so that they might be in a better

34 Baljit Singh, The Elections and Politicisation, Ch. III.
39 P.G.R., Fortnight ending 15.3.1946, G.O.I., Home Political, File No. 18/3-46.
40 Indu Banga, “Crisis of Sikh Politics”, Sikh History and Religion, p.249.
41 The Civil and Military Gazette, 1.2.1946; See also, Indu Banga, “Crisis of Sikh Politics 1940-1947”, Sikh History and Religion, pp. 249-50.
position to oppose Pakistan. In February, 1946 the Sikh leaders met under the Presidentship of Master Tara Singh and passed a resolution. It demanded the splitting of the existing province of Punjab. With its unnatural boundaries so as to constitute a separate autonomous Sikh State in these areas of the Central, Northern, eastern and South-Eastern Punjab in which the overwhelming part of the Sikh population was concentrated and which, because of the property in it being mostly that of the Sikhs and its general character being distinctly Sikh, was also the de facto Sikh Homeland.\textsuperscript{43} On March 7, 1946, The Punjab Muslim League had organised a hartal throughout the Punjab. on March 9th the League celebrated ‘a Traitors Day’.\textsuperscript{44} On March 10, about 70,000 people attended the Muslim League meeting where the coalition Ministry was attacked.\textsuperscript{45}

The Congressite Sikhs as usual took a stand against that of the Akalis. Leaders like Amar Singh Jhabal were critical of Master Tara Singh and his friends felt that by opposing Mahatma Gandhi, the Akalis were strengthening the hands of British Imperialism.\textsuperscript{46} On March 27, 1946, in a meeting attended by leaders like Sardul Singh Caveeshar, Partap Singh Kairon, Gopal Singh Qaumi, Gurmukh Singh Musafir and Nidhan Singh Alam they passed a resolution condemning the idea of the Sikh State. The Central Akali Dal, the traditional adversary of the Shiromani Akali Dal, was not in favour of the partition of the province. The Dal maintained that if such a thing was to be done the Punjab must go to the Sikhs.\textsuperscript{47} It was strange that the Central Akali Dal still did not cooperate with the Akalis although their demand of Punjab for the Sikhs was the same as that of the Azad Sikh State.

The Cabinet Mission which came on 23 March 1946 could not solve the Punjab problem. The Akali Dal in April 1846 submitted a memorandum to the Cabinet Mission


\textsuperscript{45} \textit{Home Political}, File No. 18/3/46-Poll (I).


\textsuperscript{47} \textit{The Tribune}, 30.3.1946; 2.4.1946.
and opposed Pakistan in ‘unequivocal’ terms. Communal tension was rising. There were forebodings of civil war from the Punjab, where the Sikhs feared Muslims domination in any form of Pakistan.48 The Cabinet Mission met at Shimla on may 5, 146 with delegates from the Congress and Muslim League.49 On April 5, 1946 the Akali leaders Master Tara Singh, Harnam Singh, Advocate, Baldev Singh and Gyani Kartar Singh met the Cabinet Mission. They put their views separately.50 The Mission wished particularly to know whether, if it were given the choice, the Sikh community would prefer the transfer of power to a single body, or to more than one body; if power were to be transferred to two bodies, which of them would the Sikh community wish to join; and if such a thing were practicable and could be arranged, would the Sikhs wish to have a State of their own?51 The four leaders came out with the views which were basically the same, although they were worded differently. They were united in their opposition to the proposition of Pakistan. Master Tara Singh favoured a united India. If a division was to come, then the Sikhs stood for an independent Sikh State with the right to federate either with India or with Pakistan.52 Gyani Kartar Singh straight away wanted a Province for the Sikhs. Harnam Singh stood for a united India. He advocated increased representation of the Sikhs in the proposed constitution-making body and pleaded for a separate one for Sikhs if there were to be more than one constitution-making body.53 Baldev Singh favoured a united India with safeguards for minorities in the form of weighted communal proportions in the legislatures. He also put forth a scheme of “Khalistan”.54 The Sikhs definitely stood for improvement in their position. They seemed to have told the Mission that no sanctity was attached to the so-called rule that no majority must be turned into minority. They wanted this to happen in the Punjab because they maintained that in no

50 V.P. Menon, *Transfer of Power in India*, p. 244.
51 *The Tribune*, 6.4.1946, See also V.P. Menon, V.P., p. 242.
52 *Times of India*, 6-4-1946.
54 Giani Lal Singh, *The Idea of Sikh State*, p. 20
other province there were three communities occupying the same position as they did in the Punjab. They said that they occupied a distinguished position in many respects and they should not be kept in a position of everlasting subjugation. They told the pressmen that if in Bengal Muslim majority could be reduced to minority in order to provide for European interests why could not the same thing be done in the Punjab for providing protection to the Sikhs? The Cabinet Mission, however, took no notice of Sikhistan, Azad Punjab or Khalistan and treated the idea, as well as the Sikhs’ exaggerated claim to weight-age, as something that had been put up by the Indian National Congress to thwart Muslim aspirations. Such an outlook is further confirmed by the Amritsar Statement of April 15 by Master Tara Singh in which he said that the Sikhs could not live under the domination of any one and that the Cabinet Mission should consider the Punjab problem with reference to the Sikhs only. He again emphasized that the Sikhs wanted a united India and a common Government. But if Pakistan was conceded Khalistan must also be there. Master Tara Singh met M.A. Jinnah and asked the latter if the Sikhs in the state of Pakistan would have the right of cession from Pakistan. M.A. Jinnah refused and the talks failed. Baldev Singh also said in a statement that areas from Ravi to Meerut, containing Jullundur, Ambala, Meerut and Agra divisions should be merged and a Jattastan be created. The Sikh leaders pleaded their case forcefully. They mustered all types of arguments to impress the Cabinet Mission with the genuineness of their demands. But it looked that the Mission ignored them because the authorities did not want to displease the Muslims for the sake of the Sikhs who generally went with the Congress.

Before the Mission started for India, Lord Attlee had declared in the British Government were very mindful of the rights of the minorities but the latter would not be

57 The Tribune, 16.4.1946. Also, Nicholas Mansergh, (Ed.), Transfer of Power., Vol. VIII, London, 1979, p. 277 (Letter from S.O.S. to the British Prime Minister, conveying the report of parleys with the Sikh leaders in India).
59 The Tribune, 13.5.1946.
allowed to place a veto on the advance of the majority.\textsuperscript{60} Mr. M.A. Jinnah strongly reacted against this statement. He took his stand on the British Government’s declaration of August 1940 that the British Government “could not contemplate transfer of their responsibilities for the peace and welfare of India to any system of Government whose authority was directly denied by large and powerful elements in India’s national life” and stated that the adoption of the Prime Minister’s declaration of March 15\textsuperscript{th} on minorities would be “a flagrant breach history of the British rule in India”\textsuperscript{61}. On May 12, 1946 the Muslim League submitted a memorandum to the Mission in which they, inter-alia, demanded that six Muslim provinces (Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Baluchistan, Sind, Bengal and Assam) should be grouped in one group and should deal with all other matters except Foreign Affairs, Defence and Communications. There was to be a separate constitution-making body for the six Muslim Provinces. There was to be parity of representatives between the two groups of Provinces in the Union Executive and Legislature. No decision, legislative, executive or administrative, was to be taken by the Union in regard to any matter of controversial nature. The Constitution of Union was to contain a provision whereby Province could by a majority vote of its Legislative Assembly, call for reconsideration of the terms of Constitution and would have the liberty to secede from the Union at any time after an initial period of ten years.\textsuperscript{62} Obviously, such a proposal, conceding the demand of secession, could not have been acceptable to the Congress. The Congress case was presented on April 3 by Abul Kalam Azad. It proceeded on the basis of independence and on the assumption that the future constitution would be determined by a constitution-making body. The Congress plan was that on the completion of the work of the constitution-making body, a province should have three choice: (a) to stand out of the constitution, (b) to enter the constitution by federating for the compulsory subjects like defense, communications and foreign affairs, and (c) to federate for the compulsory as well as the optional subjects.\textsuperscript{63}

\textsuperscript{61} P.G.R., Fortnight ending 31.3.1946, G.O.I., \textit{Home Political}, File No. 18/3-46.
\textsuperscript{62} Choudhary Khaliquzzaman, \textit{Pathway to Pakistan}, pp. 352-53.
\textsuperscript{63} V.P. Menon, \textit{Transfer of Power in India.}, pp. 237-38.
The Shiromani Akali Dal also submitted a memorandum to the Mission. It demanded a single constitution-making body with proper representation for the Sikhs, abolition of the statutory Muslim majority in the Punjab legislature and greater representation for the Sikhs. The memorandum also said that the Sikhs had as good a claim for the establishment of a separate sovereign Sikh state as the Muslims for Pakistan. For this purpose, the Sikhs proposed that out of the existing province of the Punjab, a new province may be carved out as an additional provincial unit in the united India of the future, in such a way that all important Sikh Gurdwaras and shrines as also a substantial majority of the Sikh population in the existing province of the Punjab, would be included in it.  

The Central Akali Dal, which had no representative character during the forties, also presented a separate memorandum on this occasion. The memorandum drew attention of the Mission to the faulty compilation of census figures which made the Muslims a majority community in the Punjab. It opposed the partition of the Punjab and reiterated the demands that had been made by the Chief Khalsa Diwan many times since the introduction of democratic institutions, viz., 33 per cent representation in the Punjab, 5 per cent in the centre and one Sikh member in the Central Cabinet. In addition to this, it also demanded 8 per cent representation in the Constituent Assembly as recommended by the Sapru Committee and a permanent 14 per cent Sikh quota in the defense services. The Central Akali Dal stood for joint electorates with reservation of seats for minorities.  

Thus, when other organizations in the country, including the Akalis, had started taking a mental note of the prospects of Pakistan, the Central Akali Dal refused to accept any such possibility which had been conceded even by the Congress. It is worth mentioning, because, as in previous proposals, this time also the Congress and the League were the chief concern of the visitors. The Congress Sikhs seemed to have subordinated their own judgment to the pronouncements of the Congress, unmindful of the stakes of their own community. On April 30, addressing a Conference at Rawalpindi, the Congress Sikh leaders like Gopal Singh Qaumi, Ranjit Singh Mastana and Labh Singh Narang criticized the line of thinking of Master Tara Singh. They declared their unequivocal support for the

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Congress point of view.\textsuperscript{66} Similarly, the Ramgarhia Sikhs also in their Conference on May 8, presided over by Sarmukh Singh Chamak decided to throw in their lot with the Congress.\textsuperscript{67} It looked that just as being a minority the Akalis did not trust the Muslims, the Ramgarhias also being a minority among the Sikhs did not trust the Akalis. In a memorandum submitted to the Mission the C.K.D. also opposed the creation of Pakistan.\textsuperscript{68}

After discussion with Indian leaders, the Cabinet Mission presented a tentative scheme for discussion at a Conference at Shimla in an effort to find a basis of agreement between the Congress and the League. The Scheme envisaged a central government controlling defense, foreign affairs, and communications, and two sets of provinces—one consisting of predominantly Muslim, the other of predominantly non-Muslim areas—competent to deal with subjects not dealt with by the Centre. As the gulf between the two sides proved too wide to be bridged by discussion, the Cabinet Mission issued a statement on May 16, 1946, setting forth proposals based on the widest area of agreement between the two main parties.\textsuperscript{69} Although the Mission recognized that the Sikhs were the third important community in India,\textsuperscript{70} its proposals were really aimed at a settlement between the Muslim League and the Congress. The Mission rejected any proposal for the division of India. The statement read that the:

> Setting up of a sovereign state of Pakistan on the lines claimed by the Muslim League would not solve the communal minority problem; nor can we see any justification for including within a sovereign Pakistan those districts of the Punjab and Bengal and Assam in which the population is predominantly non-Muslim. Every argument that can be used in favour of Pakistan can equally, in our view, be used in favour of the exclusion of non-Muslim areas from Pakistan. This point would particularly affect the position of the Sikhs. ....We ourselves are also convinced that any solution which involved a radical partition of the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[66] The Tribune, 1.5.1946.
\item[67] The Tribune, 9.5.1946.
\item[68] C.K.D. File No. 342.54, \textit{op.cit.}
\item[70] Statement by the Cabinet Mission to India and His Excellency the Viceroy, 16\textsuperscript{th} May, 1946: Maurice Gwyer, and A. Appadorai, \textit{Speeches and Documents on Constitution of India}, Vol. II, p. 581.
\end{footnotes}
Punjab and Bengal, as this would do, would be contrary to the wishes and interests of a very large proportion of the inhabitants of these provinces…. Moreover, any division of the Punjab would of necessity divide the Sikhs, leaving substantial bodies of Sikhs on both sides of the boundary. We have, therefore, been forced to the conclusion that neither a larger nor a smaller sovereign state of Pakistan would provide an acceptable solution for the communal problem.\footnote{Ibid.}

The Mission suggested a three-tier confederation type of constitutional system-provinces, “groups of provinces” and a very weak centre. Of the three “groups of provinces” two were Muslim majority groups in the north-west and north-east of India. Punjab was included in the north-west Muslim majority group. No special weight-age was given to the minorities as representation was granted on the basis of the numerical strength of the communities. As part of the long-term arrangements, a Constituent Assembly was to be established for drafting a constitution. As for short-term arrangements, an Interim Government was to be formed comprising representatives of major political parties.\footnote{Ibid., p. 578-81.}

Initial reaction of both Congress and the League towards the Proposals of the Mission was not unfavorable. It was felt that the Proposals were a just compromise between the conflicting demands of the major political parties and provided a reasonable chance of the transfer of power with avoidance of civil strife and its accompanying chaos and menace to life and property. But after some time, the first impression was dulled and confidence in the correctness of the initial appreciation was impaired.\footnote{P.G.R., Fortnight ending 31.5.1946, G.O.I., Home Political, File No. 18/5-46.} In his statement of May 22, 1946, Mr. M.A. Jinnah reiterated the right to secede from the Union after ten years. He regretted that the Mission had not agreed to this demand of the Muslim League although the Congress had not serious objection to it.\footnote{Maurice Gwyer, and A. Appadorai, (Eds.), Speeches and Documents on the Indian Constitution, Vol. II, pp. 586-87.} The main objection of the Congress against the scheme was that the scheme left the Provisional (Central) Government weak. It also asserted that the provinces should have a choice to affirm
whether or not they would belong to the section in which they were placed. But neither the League nor the Congress outrightly rejected the Scheme. Mahatma Gandhi rather welcomed it and described it as the best thing that the British could do.

Obviously, the Sikhs were doomed. The Punjab was not only their homeland but their holy land as well, and the Punjab was in the Muslim group of provinces. The Sikhs were, therefore, the first to reject the Scheme. The Punjab Government Report relating to the period states: “Sikhs of all shades of opinion immediately rejected the Cabinet Mission’s Proposals, in an anti-British vein, on the ground that they would leave them at the mercy of the Muslims”. The Working Committee of the Akali Dal, in a secret sitting on May 18, 1946 opposed the proposals and declared its intention to launch a *morch* in order to prevent Pakistan. Babu Labh Singh wired to the Congress leaders and demanded from the Congress the implementation of the assurance given to the Sikhs in 1929. On May 19, Sardar Mangal Singh declared that the Cabinet Mission had left the Sikhs to the mercy of the Muslims and the Congress was doing nothing. Master Tara Singh also declared that despondence, frustration, sullenness and resentment had overtaken the Sikhs. He threatened a rebellion and said that the Sikhs would not join the Provisional Government. Gurmukh Singh Masafir said that the Sikhs had been ignored.

Panthic M.L.A.s assembled in a meeting at the Teja Singh Samundri Hall, Amritsar, on 23 May, 1946. Resolutions expressing distress at the Mission’s Proposals ignoring Sikh claims and interests were passed. The party was pained to find that the weightage hitherto enjoyed by the Sikhs due to their historic, political and economic importance, instead of being increased for the Constituent Assembly, was wiped out. It was further stated that the protection provided for Muslims was denied to the Sikhs in the

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78 *The Tribune*, 19.5.1946; 20.5.1946.
79 *Papers relating to the Cabinet Mission Plan in India*, p. 61.
80 *The Tribune*, 22.5.1946.
81 *The Akali Patrika*, 24.5.1946 and 25.5.1946.
Union and Group Constituent Assemblies although the reasons given for the Muslim protection applied with greater force to the Sikhs against the Muslim majority. On May 24, Master Tara Singh, the veteran Akali leader, throwing light on the contemplated action by the Akali Party against the Cabinet Mission’s Proposals, said: “We may set up a triangular morcha against the British Government, the Congress and the Muslim League which are going to be three major parties in the Interim Government”. 82 Asked as to what would be the formation of their morcha Sardar Mangal Singh replied, “It is obvious we are not going to retain any office, big or small, either in the Province or at the Centre”. 83

Major Short came with the members of the Cabinet Mission. The Akalis were happy with the presence of Major Short since he was considered a specialist on the Sikh affairs. 84 Major Short tried to persuade the Sikhs that they would, in fact, hold the balance of power. He maintained that the Muslim League Party in the Punjab might seem hostile to them but ultimately, like the Unionists, it would be compelled to woo them. The Sikhs, however, had a strong suspicion that the Muslims were out to crush them. 85 They could not overlook the fact that in Section B they would have no more than four seats and the Hindus no more than nine, so that the Muslim majority of twenty-two would be able to set up a group which would give them the substance of Pakistan. 86 The Sikhs accused the

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82 The Tribune, 25.5.1946.
85 Penderel Moon, Divide and Quit, pp. 49-50.
86 E.W.R. Lumby, Transfer of Power in India, London, 1954, p. 96. The Plan provided for election by each Provincial Legislative Assembly the following numbers of representatives to the Constituent Assembly, by the method of proportional representation with single transferable vote:

**SECTION B**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>General</th>
<th>Muslims</th>
<th>Sikhs</th>
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<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td><strong>22</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
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(Maurice Gwyer and A. Appadorai, Speeches and Documents on Constitution of India., Vol. II, p. 582).
Mission of having done this to placate the Muslims.\textsuperscript{87} The statement of May 16, recognized “the very genuine and acute anxiety of the Muslims Test they should find themselves subjected to a perpetual non-Muslims majority”; but was there no anxiety among the Sikhs lest they should find themselves subjected to a perpetual Muslim majority rule? On May 25, 1946 a big Conference was held at Lahore by the Sikhs. It was decided to fight against the unjust proposals of the Cabinet Mission.\textsuperscript{88} On the same day, Master Tara Singh sent a letter to Lord Pethic-Lawrence, the Secretary for State for India, in which he repeated most of the above-mentioned arguments and apprehensions. He also wrote:

It appears that Sikhs have been studiously debarred from having any effective influence in the province, a group or general union. I refer to section 15 (ii) and Section 19 (vii) in which it has been definitely provided that the majority of both Hindus and Muslims is necessary for certain purposes. The Sikhs are entirely ignored.\textsuperscript{89}

Master Tara Singh sought clarification on the following three points:

1. What is the significance of recognizing the Sikhs as one of the main communities?
2. Suppose the majority of Section B frames a constitution under Section 19 (v) but the Sikh members do not agree, does it mean a deadlock or does the opposition of Sikh members mean simply dissociation?
3. Is there any hope of obtaining for the Sikhs the same right as is given to the Muslims and the Hindus under Section 15 (ii) and 19 (iii)?\textsuperscript{90}

On 1 June, the Secretary of State for India gave the reply to Master Tara Singh’s letter of the 25\textsuperscript{th} May. In this letter, he expressed his inability to amend the Proposals or to put on them a new construction so as to impart interpretation favoring the Sikhs. But he maintained that this would not prejudice the position of the Sikhs in the Punjab or in the North-West Group. He also maintained that it was inconceivable that either the Constituent Assembly or any future Government of Punjab would overlook the special

\textsuperscript{87} E.W.R. Lumby, \textit{Transfer of Power in India.}, p. 96.

\textsuperscript{88} O.H.C., File No. 2, \textit{op.cit.}


\textsuperscript{90} \textit{Ibid.}
place of the Sikhs in the Province. He made it clear that the importance of the Sikh community could not be gauged from their number in the Constituent Assembly.\(^91\) The Cabinet Mission announced the scheme on May 16, 1949 and substance of Pakistan of Pakistan to the Muslim League.\(^92\) It conceded Pakistan indirectly through the scheme of grouping of provinces. In Group B, Punjab, Sind, Baluchistan and North-West Frontier Province were placed. It meant the inclusion of the whole of Punjab in the prospective Pakistan belt. The Sikhs vehemently criticized this proposal. The Panthic conference was held on June 10 in the mood of desperation. The considered that the attempt was ‘to alom bomb the Sikhs’ and hence survival for the Sikhs Pratinidhi Panthic board was appointed with colonel Nirainjan Singh Gill as its Chairman.\(^93\) At the national level also the Muslim League and the Congress could not come to an understanding with each other. At first, the Muslim League did not join the interim Government. Its attitude became more aggressive then. On September 11, M.A. Jinnah offered the Hindus the choice between Pakistan and civil War.\(^94\) He also suggested exchange of population to avoid communal riots.\(^95\) In a press statement at Lahore, Sardar Swaran Singh, leader of Panthic party in the Punjab Legislature, voiced a strong opposition to the proposal of Mr. M.A. Jinnah regarding the exchange of population. He said that such a thing would not at all be tolerated in the Punjab.\(^96\) In fact, the Sikhs found this idea to be very revolting. The Sikhs of the West Punjab and the N.W.F.P. were particularly opposed to this idea. But the Sikh leaders really did not seem to know their own mind. They had themselves suggested exchange of population in their memorandum to the Sapru Committee. The CWC presided over by Jawaharlal Nehru on August 9, appealed to the Sikhs ‘to reconsider their decision to boycott the Constituent Assembly. It admitted that and injustice had been

\(^{91}\) Ibid., p. ccii.


\(^{93}\) Ibid., p. 251.

\(^{94}\) Muslim League Attack on Sikhs and Hindus in the Punjab, SGPC, Amritsar, p. 42.

\(^{95}\) Ibid., pp. 42-43.

\(^{96}\) Mitra Register, 1946, Vol. II, p. 49, See also the The Akali, 28.11.1946.
done to the Sikhs’. However, the Muslim League rejected the Cabinet Mission Scheme and gave a call for the ‘Direct Action’ which led to large scale violence. M.A. Jinnah said, “we have also forged a pistol and are in a position to use it” The Lahore Action Committee of the Muslim League organised a meeting of the ulemas and pirs and had a fatwa issued in favour of jehad on 10th August, Mr. Feroz Khan Moon explained that the Muslim Leaguers were ‘not only ready to sacrifice themselves but they would sacrifice their children also’. The Working Committee of the Muslim League asked the title holder Muslims to renounce their titles. Mulana Azad called 16th August ‘a black day’ in the history of India.

In the meantime, the Interim Government, headed by Mr. Jawharlal Nehru got into office on September 2, 1946. Baldev Singh was Defence Minister. September 2nd, 1946 was observed as a ‘Black Day’ by the Muslim League. Moreover, the League started enlistment in the Muslim National Volunteer Corps. However, on October 25, 1946 the Muslim League also joined the Interim Government. This, however, did not bring about any change in the attitude of the Muslim League. Their propaganda was still virulent and they talked in terms of Jehad, bloodshed and sacrifice. The Congress was hopeful that once the Muslim League joined the Interim Government the former would be able to bring round the latter to its own interpretation of the Cabinet Mission Proposals. The Muslim League, however, knew its own mind very well and was not

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101 Fateh, 31.8.1946.
105 The Civil and Military Gazettes, 3.9.1946.
106 Dawn, 4.9.1946.
107 Mitra Register, op.cit., p. 270.
ready to be taken in by any such maneuvers of the Congress. It was decided to call the Constituent Assembly on December 9, 1946.\(^{108}\) The Muslim League was apprehensive of the overwhelming majority of Congress in the Constituent Assembly relating to Pakistan. Therefore, instead of responding properly to the invitation to join the Constituent Assembly it resorted to legal quibbling. The British Government therefore invited the Indian leaders to resolve this constitutional crisis. Jawharlal Nehru, Jinnah, M.A. Liaqat Ali Khan and Baldev Singh arrived in London on December 2, 1946. It was a very crucial meeting. The British Government upheld the Cabinet Mission’s interpretation of grouping of provinces contained in their statement of May 25, 1946.\(^{109}\) The Secretary of State further stated that if the Federal Court’s interpretation on grouping of provinces went against the interpretation of the British Government the matter could be opened afresh. This in a way meant that the point was not justifiable. This left the Sikhs in no doubt about their position in Section B. Sardar Baldev Singh said that the Sikhs might withdraw from the Constituent Assembly.\(^{110}\) It is significant to note that in reply to a letter from Master Tara Singh the Secretary of State for India stated in his letter dated June 11, 1946: “I fear the Mission cannot issue any addition to, or interpretation of, the statement”. But the statement of December 6, 1946 issued by His Majesty’s Government not only interpreted the May 16 statement but also made substantial additions in favour of the Muslims. The Sikhs were really doomed. They had so far been clinging to the Congress in the hope of safety. The London meeting, where Jawharlal Nehru could not object to the clarification given by the Secretary of State in favour of M.A. Jinnah vis-à-vis the grouping of provinces and the decision of the Federal Court etc., sealed the fate of the Sikhs. It had, however, to be admitted that the Sikhs had been living in the world of make-belief otherwise the attitude of the Congress should have always been known to them. The Congress had admitted in its 2\(^{nd}\) April, 1942 Delhi resolution relating to the Cripps Proposals: “Working Committee could not think of compelling any territorial unit

\(^{108}\) *The Akali*, 22.11.1946.


to remain in the Indian Union against their declared and established will".\textsuperscript{111} It has further to be remembered that the Congress rejected the Cripps Proposals more on the ground of unacceptable provisions relating to Defence than the non-accession clause contained in them. All the same the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress passed a resolution on December 22, 1946 in which it regretted that the British Government, vide their statement of December 6, had acted in a manner which had not been in keeping with their own assurances.\textsuperscript{112}

The Sikhs were, therefore, very sore over the treatment meted out to them. The Congress was mentally prepared for Pakistan, so the plan did not sound very much unacceptable to it. The Muslim League also accepted the Proposals in its meeting held on June 6, 1946.\textsuperscript{113} To hide its obvious satisfaction with the Scheme, the Muslim League in this resolution made out a few points of disapproval also. The cause of Sikhs had been betrayed. Even Mahatma Gandhi, who had earlier lauded the Scheme, wrote about them in his \textit{Harijan}: “Are the Sikhs for whom the Punjab is the only home in India, to consider themselves, against their will, as a part of the section which takes in Sind, Baluchistan and the North-West Frontier Province”?\textsuperscript{114} On this point, the author of the “Betrayal of the Sikhs” observes:

Mr. Jinnah claims for the Muslims the right of self-determination as a nation? Perfectly correct and laudable in every way, but are the Sikhs also not entitled to self-determination as a nation? Above all have they not as much reason to fear domination by Muslims as the latter had to fear domination by Hindus and Sikhs.\textsuperscript{115}


\textsuperscript{112} Mitra Register, 1946, Vol. II, pp. 127-29.


\textsuperscript{114} File No. 51/3-46, G.O.I., \textit{Home Political}: Weekly Confidential Reports sent by Information Bureau to the Secretary of State for India, Week ending 29.5.1946 (Letter No. 4880).

\textsuperscript{115} Landen, Sarsfield, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 2-3.
The Sikhs were the first to raise their banner of revolt against the Cabinet Mission. Tara Singh issued a unity call of now or Never.\(^{116}\) It is, therefore, no wonder that the All India Sikh League in its session held at Lahore on June 4, 1946 under the Presidentship of Baba Kharak Singh passed a resolution in which it, inter-alia, asked the British Government to purge the Cabinet Mission’s proposals of the communal virus which has proposed to be injected through the system of provincial grouping and representation on communal basis.\(^{117}\) Main opposition to the proposals of the Mission was, however, expressed by the Sikhs in their All Sikh Parties Conference held at The Teja Singh Samundari Hall, Amritsar, on the 9\(^{th}\) and 10\(^{th}\) of June. All Sikh Parties, with the exception of the Central Akali Dal, offered their support to this Conference.\(^{118}\) It was attended by over a thousand Sikh leaders representative of Akalis, Congress Sikhs, Nirmalas, Chief Khalsa Diwan, Singh Sabhas, and District Akali Jathas from all over the Punjab, the North-West Frontier Province, Delhi, the United Provinces and other places. Those present also included Master Tara Singh, Sardar Baldev Singh, His Holiness Maharaja Partap Singh, the Guru of Bhaini Sahib, Sant Nidhan Singh Alam, Sarmukh Singh Chamak, President of the Central Ramgarhia federation, Inder Singh and Shivdev Singh, Congress M.L.A.s, Mangal Singh M.L.A. (Central), Sardar Ujjal Singh, Sardar Joginder Singh, Sardar Jagjit Singh, Panthic M.L.A.s, and Sardar Bahadur Jodh Singh, etc.\(^{119}\)

\(^{116}\) The Tribune, 21.5.1946.


\(^{118}\) The Akali Patrika, June 10, 1946. The Central Akali Dal was prepared to offer its cooperation provided the programme for a morcha was settled beforehand, and the list of invitees was mutually prepared (The Tribune, June 7, 1946; The Statement of Baba Kharak Singh). The Central Akali Dal did not participate and yet it was a “very full and representative gathering of the Sikh Panth”. (Muslim League Attack on Sikhs and Hindus in the Punjab, p. 28); It was attended by over a thousand Sikh leaders representative of Akalis, Congress Sikhs, Nirmalas, Chief Khalsa Diwan, Singh Sabhas, and District Akali Jathas from all over the Punjab, the North-West Frontier Province, Delhi, the United Provinces and other places. Those present also included Master Tara Singh, Sardar Baldev Singh, His Holiness Maharaj Partap Singh, the Guru of Bhaini Sahib, Sant Nidhan Singh Alam, Sarmukh Singh Chamak, President of the Central Ramgarhia federation, Inder Singh and Shivdev Singh, Congress M.L.A.s, Mangal Singh M.L.A. (Central), Sardar Ujjal Singh, Sardar Joginder Singh, Sardar Jagjit Singh, Panthic M.L.A.s, and Sardar Bahadur Jodh Singh, etc.

\(^{119}\) The Civil and Military Gazette, 11.6.1946.
Sardar Ishar Singh Majhail, M.L.A. (Panthic) described with tears in his eyes how the British Cabinet Mission had led down the Sikhs and said that, as a self-respecting community, they could only fight the wrong by sacrifices. He hinted at the launching of a *morcha* by the Sikhs. Babu Labh Singh, President of the Shiromani Akali Dal thought that they could save their existence only through blood-shed, for which they would have to take an irrevocable pledge before the *Akal Takht*. Sardar Ujjal Singh said in a fiery speech: “We are not going to tolerate this Scheme which will impose on us virtual Muslim rule. The British seem to have forgotten the real strength of the Khalsa. We shall not betray the *Panth*. We are not going to tolerate this Scheme which will impose on us virtual Muslim rule. The British seem to have forgotten the real strength of the Khalsa. We shall not betray the *Panth*. 

He said that the areas which were associated with the *Gurus* and holy shrines of the Sikhs were also included in Pakistan. Master Tara Singh spoke feelingly, trembling with rage, making appeal to the *Panth* to end dissension. He said that the Englishmen should realize that the Sikhs could do more harm than the Muslims, if enraged. Jathedar Udham Singh Nagoke appealed to the Sikhs to come forward with a lakh of volunteers to preserve their existence, as against two lakhs which they had given to the Indian army to save the British Empire. He said that the proposals were based on communalism. He appealed to the Congress to come out in defense of its principles. To the Sikh public he appealed for the gift of one month’s salary, as the *morcha* would require tremendous amount of money. Niranjan Singh Gill of the Indian National Army said that the Singapore opportunity of 1942 had come their way again and he expressed the readiness of his comrades to make the supreme sacrifices at the behest of the *Panth* and the country. Bawa Harkishan Singh, Principal, Khalsa College, Gujranwala and Sardar Bahadur Jodh Singh, representing the Chief Khalsa Diwan (Moderate Sikhs); Nidhan Singh Alam, Namdhari; Dyal Singh, Head of *Nirmala* Sikhs; Amar Singh of Students’ Federation; Bhag Singh, Bawa Bachittar Singh (Delhi) and Pritam Singh (Sargodha) also delivered speeches assuring the *Panth* of their full support in this matter. On the second day, i.e., the June 10th, the Congress Sikhs, who had abstained

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120 *Mitra Register*, 1946, Vol. I, p. 204.s

121 Landen, Sarsfield, *op.cit.*, pp. 121-22.


from the first day’s session, also came in led by the President, Amritsar District Congress Committee (Rural), Sardar Darshan Singh Pheruman, and Giani Gurumukh Singh Musafir.\textsuperscript{124} The main resolution condemning the British Cabinet Mission’s proposals, moved by Sardar Bahadur Ujjal Singh seconded by Gyani Kartar Singh, was passed unanimously. The resolution objected to the compulsory grouping of provinces which even in the words of Lord Pethic-Lawrence, the Secretary of State for India, “make it possible for Muslim to secure all the advantages of Pakistan without incurring the danger inherent in it”. The resolution also stated that even when the Mission admitted that the Punjab is the “homeland” of the Sikhs its recommendations had liquidated their position in this “homeland”. Through another resolution the Conference also set up a Pratinidhi (representative) Panthic Board with representatives from all the leading Sikh organizations including the Namdhari Darbar and Nirmala Sikhs etc. Leaders like Master Tara Singh, Gyani Kartar Singh and Udham Singh Nagoke were taken on it. This body was to work for the realization of the Sikh objectives. The Conference also decided to constitute a Council of Action with Colonel Narinjan Singh Gill as its head.\textsuperscript{125} It was to execute the decisions of the Pratinidhi Panthic Board. The Conference was concluded in a very grim atmosphere. But the bellicosity displayed in the speeches of the Sikh leaders had no effect on the Mission, who persisted in regarding the Sikhs, perhaps because of their wagging beards and political naiveté, as pathetic misguided dotards, who were behaving like silly children, crying before they were hurt.\textsuperscript{126} There was then very little that the British could do for the protection of minorities short of establishing any states for any who were numerous enough to claim the status of separate nations. The Muslims with their ninety-two million populations might qualify for such a treatment; not so the Sikhs who numbered no more than five and a half million and could not point to a single district of the Punjab where they were in majority. They might talk of a separate Sikh State, but no one could have believed that this was a practical proposition.\textsuperscript{127} The

\textsuperscript{124} The Civil and Military Gazette, 11.6.1946.

\textsuperscript{125} Landen, Sarsfield, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 126-27

\textsuperscript{126} H.V. Hodson, \textit{The Great Divide}, pp. 152-53.

\textsuperscript{127} E.W.R. Lumby, \textit{Transfer of Power in India}, p. 97.
Muslims also ignored this sullen mood of the Sikhs and did not care for them except to tender some advice that “the wisest course the Sikhs could adopt was to rely on Muslim generosity”. In this background it looks difficult to agree with the author of ‘Sachi Sakhi’ that Sir Jogendra Singh, a member in the Viceroy’s Executive Council, could have weightage for the Sikhs, but the Akalis warned him not to speak on their behalf. On the other hand, Liaquat Ali Khan the General Secretary of the All India Muslim League passed a resolution and accepted the Cabinet Mission Scheme. Thus, M.A. Jinnah and the Muslim League rejected the Pakistan Scheme.

On June 16, 1946 the Cabinet Mission and the Viceroy announced a proposal on the formation of the Interim Government. A Sikh member was also proposed to be taken on the Executive. The name of Sardar Baldev Singh had been mentioned as a Sikh nominee. The Panthic Advisory Board, under the influence of Colonel Narinjan Singh Gill, who was pro-Congress expressed its inability to advise any Sikh to accept invitation to join the Cabinet. The Congress itself rejected the Viceroy’s proposal about joining the Interim Government but accepted the proposal about the formation and functioning of the Constituent Assembly. Master Tara Singh, however, did not appreciate this decision of the Congress. He felt that when the Congress had accepted the long term plan it was only a matter of time that it would accept the short term plan also.

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128 P.G.R., Fortnight ending 15.06.1946, G.O.I., Home Political, File No. 18/6-46.
129 Kapur Singh (I.C.S Retired), Sachi Sakhi, p. 84.
130 The Tribune, 7.6.1946.
132 The Tribune, 17.6.1946.
134 The Tribune, 23.6.1946.
136 The Sant Sipahi, July, 1946.
On 7th July, Nawab of Mamdot, President, Punjab Muslim League, commented on the Cabinet Mission plan and its failure.\textsuperscript{137} The Cabinet Mission left India: It was decided that the members would report to the British Parliament on 18th July\textsuperscript{1946}.\textsuperscript{138} British Sardar Baldev Singh wrote a letter to the British Prime Minister in which he charged that the Cabinet Mission had shown care only for the Muslim League. He further wrote that the Mission while admitting the fears of the Sikhs against a Muslim majority had still involved them in what must in the end amount to a perpetual Muslim communal rule, and had made no provision for the Sikh areas to opt out of this domination. He also regretted that the provisions made for resolving the Hindu-Muslim disputes in the Constituent Assembly had not been afforded to the Sikhs. In his reply to Sardar Baldev Singh, Mr. Attlee said that the statement of May 16 could not be altered in favour of the Sikhs.\textsuperscript{139} In this letter, the Prime Minister wrote more or less the same things that Pethic-Lawrence had written in his letter in reply to Master Tara Singh’s letter. He urged upon the Sikhs not to boycott the Constituent Assembly. On July 18, 1946 Sir Stafford Cripps made a detailed statement in the British Parliament on the Cabinet Mission’s work in India. In this statement he referred to the Sikh problem also. He said:

I now pass to question of the Sikhs. It was a matter of great distress to us that the Sikhs should feel that they had not received the treatment which they deserved as an important section of the Indian people.\textsuperscript{140} The difficulty arises not from anyone’s under-estimate of the importance of the Sikh community, but from the inescapable geographical facts of the situation...they demand some special treatment analogous to that given to Muslims. The Sikhs, however, are a much smaller community, 5½ as against 90 millions, and, moreover, are not geographically situated so that any area as yet devised-I do not put it of possibility that one may be devised in the future-can be carved out in which they would find themselves in a majority. It is, however, essential that fullest consideration should be given to their claims; for they are a distinct and important community whose culture and interests deserve protection.\textsuperscript{141}

\textsuperscript{137} Baljit Singh, \textit{The Elections and the Politicisation in the Punjab}, p. 288
\textsuperscript{138} G.D. Khosla, \textit{Stren Reckoning}, p. 37.
\textsuperscript{139} V.P. Menon, \textit{Transfer of Power in India}, pp. 290-91.
\textsuperscript{141} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 639.
The statement said that population basis had been adopted for representation in the Constituent Assembly, which entitled them only to four seats out of twenty-eight seats in the Punjab or out of thirty-five in the North-Western Section for the Constituent Assembly.

We hope this situation may to some extent be remedied by their full representation in the Advisory Committee on Minorities set up under paragraph 20 of the statement of 16th May. Over and above that we have represented to the two major parties-who were both most receptive-that some special means of giving the Sikhs a strong voice in the affairs of the Punjab or the North-Western Section should be devised.142

He said that he hoped that if the Sikhs maintained undivided view amongst them and were patient they would be able to work out some satisfactory arrangement with the two main parties. As usual, the statement accepted the Sikhs as an important community whose interests and culture have to be preserved. But beyond that it did nothing. It showed its helplessness over their small number. The Sikhs were thrown at the mercy of the two major communities knowing full well that, unlike individuals, inter-community deals were never struck on the considerations of equitability or morality. Rather grab-and-run mentality prevailed in such affairs. To keep the conscience of the Mission clean, the statement also tried to suggest that the Sikhs, after all, were not united. Even this view was not very correct. The Sikhs-their main representative parties-were united in their opposition to Pakistan. Master Tara Singh was, however, of the view that this expression of sympathy had not meaning and no sincerity. He said that after the Cripps Mission went back from India, even the Secretary of State declared in the Parliament of England on April 28, 1942 that in future alternative methods would be explored which might form a “better basis for the definition of boundaries and might give representation for smaller elements such as Sikhs whose natural aspirations we appreciate”.143 Master Tara Singh

142 Ibid.
said that the situation being over, today even the British had gone back on their word.\textsuperscript{144} The Governor of Punjab, Evan Jenkins also argued that if M.A. Jinnah and Nehru would accept some safeguards for the Sikhs, things would be much easier.\textsuperscript{145} The Sikhs were thus greatly disappointed. Their accommodation in the Constituent Assembly was insignificant and in the Interim Government was, consequently, meaningless. On top of it all their house was also not in order. The flush of sincerity caused by the injustice done to them by the Mission’s Proposals soon wore out and various leaders and groups in the community started talking in the language of their own motives. To say nothing of the eagerness of Sardar Baldev Singh to join the Interim Government,\textsuperscript{146} the Congress alone as a huge political organization was sufficient to make them abdicate their own interests. The Congress Sikhs became willing, or unwilling, tools in these machinations of the Congress. It was, therefore, no wonder that even after deciding against joining the Interim Government or the Constituent Assembly, the Panthic Pratinidhi Board decided to appoint a Committee of Nine to negotiate with the Congress.\textsuperscript{147} This the Sikhs did even when the past record of the Congress-Sikh relations was not very encouraging.\textsuperscript{148} But placed as they were, probably, they had no better course to take except the ‘willing suspension of disbelief. Therefore, by the middle of August the attitude of the Panthic Pratinidhi Board underwent a change and it decided in favour of joining the Constituent Assembly.\textsuperscript{149} This was done on the assurance given to them by the Working Committee.

\textsuperscript{144} The Sant Sipahi, July, 1946.


\textsuperscript{146} The Rayast, 1.7.1946.

\textsuperscript{147} It comprised Narinjan Singh Gill, President, Maharaj Partap Singh, Jathedar Udham Singh Natgoke, Gyani Kartar Singh, Baldev Singh, Sarmukh Singh Chamak, Amar Singh, Sampuran Singh, M.L.A. (Central) and Professor Mota Singh (\textit{The Tribune}, 12.7.1946).

\textsuperscript{148} Master Tara Singh quoted the crisis caused by the Rajaji-Gandhiji agreement. At that time Gandhiji admitted that if in future he made an agreement with Jinnah, both he and Jinnah would first come to Master Tara Singh for his prior approval. “Today some one should ask this Mahatma that now, before accepting Pakistan and the permanent domination of the Muslims over the Punjab, why did they not come to Master Tara Singh”? (\textit{Sant Sipahi}, July, 1946).

\textsuperscript{149} P.G.R., Fortnight ending 15.08.1946 and 31.8.1946, G.O.I., \textit{Home Political}, File No. 18/8-46.
of the Indian National Congress through their resolution passed at the Wardha Session, assuring them all possible support in removing their legitimate grievances.\textsuperscript{150} The decision of the Sikh Advisory Board to co-operate with the Congress in the new Interim Government and the constitutional plan was conditional in character. Their demand for constitutional safeguards remained unchanged.\textsuperscript{151} This decision was adopted under the influence of Colonel Nirainjan Singh Gill.

After the Sikhs decided to join hands with the Congress in the Constituent Assembly and the Interim Government, the events started moving very fast. The Muslims observed “Direct Action Day” on August 16 which has followed by four-day span of civil strife and killings.\textsuperscript{152} The Sikhs felt more and more cornered and got closer to the Congress in the time to come. In his England visit of December, 1946 Baldev Singh remained more or less tied to Mr. Jawharlal Nehru.\textsuperscript{153} This ultimately decided the fate of the Sikhs. The partition had to be accepted by them as the Congress had already been convinced of it. All this became a natural corollary to the doings of the Cabinet Mission. The Cabinet Mission promised Pakistan and also free India. So both the Congress and Muslim League were satisfied to some extent. But the Mission ignored the Sikhs. The Sikhs were disappointed. They were thus written off by the Congress and the League both.\textsuperscript{154} Thus in a way, the British were the authors of the consequent misery of the Sikhs. The author of “Betrayal of the Sikhs” correctly observed:

Whatever members of other parties may do or say, the ultimate responsibility for settlement of the problem must rest with us, the British, and our neglect to discharge that responsibility will be nothing less than a betrayal of the Sikh nation, and resultant bloodshed.\textsuperscript{155}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[151] P.G.R., Fortnight ending 31.8.1946, \textit{op.cit.}
\item[152] Tara Chand, \textit{History of the freedom Movement in India}, Vol. II, pp.482-84. See also, P.G.R., Fortnight ending 31.8.1946, \textit{op.cit.}
\item[154] The Preet Lari, May, 1946.
\item[155] Landen, Sarsfield, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 130.
\end{footnotes}
The author is of the view that a Commission should have been appointed to go into the whole question. Its report could then have been taken up by the Cabinet Mission for necessary action.\footnote{156} It is, therefore, clear that the Sikhs were given a raw deal by the Cabinet Mission. The Sikh leaders put forth their case as best as they could. However, different stands taken by the Communist and the Congressite Sikhs undermined the position of the S.A.D. Even the affairs of the Sikh Advisory Board remained under the shadow of the Congress that did not fail to exploit the pro-Congress ways of Colonel Narinjan Singh Gill.\footnote{157} The Viceroy, Lord Wavell, records in his Journal, vide entry dated May 12, 1946 that the Maharaja of Patiala came to see him and told him that the Sikhs were ripped apart. The Akali Group, the Congress Group and the Communist Group were pulling in the opposite directions.\footnote{158} It is clear from this that the Congress group and the Communist Group deliberately tried to torpedo the moves of the Akalis. But it has to be admitted that only the Akalis really represented the Sikhs. It may therefore be said that the British apathy coupled with the difficulties created by the Communists, the Congress and the League, blocked the way of the Akalis. In November 1946, communal riots started in the Punjab.\footnote{159} The Punjab showed determination to put down violence by course of martial law, if need be.\footnote{160} Malik Khizr Hayat Khan expressed sympathy with all the sufferers. He blamed the press for arousing communal flare up.\footnote{161} The Punjab Public Safety Ordinance of 1946 was promulgated.\footnote{162}

On January 5, 1947, the Congress finally albeit with reservations, accepted the grouping clause of the Cabinet Mission. Master Tara Singh and Giani Kartar Singh termed it a betrayal of the Sikhs.\footnote{163} In the session of the Constituent Assembly on April

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\footnote{156} Ibid., p. 133. \\
\footnote{157} File No. 51/3-46, \textit{op.cit.}, Confidential letter No. 5810 dated 4.7.1946. \\
\footnote{158} Penderel Moon, (Ed.), \textit{The Viceroy’s Journal}, London, 1973, p. 266. \\
\footnote{159} \textit{The Civil and Military Gazette}, 10.11.1946. \\
\footnote{160} \textit{The Civil and Military Gazette}, 11.11.1946. \\
\footnote{161} \textit{The Civil and Military Gazette}, 16.11.1946. \\
\footnote{162} \textit{The Civil and Military Gazette}, 20.11.1946. \\
\footnote{163} Indu Banga, “Crisis of Sikh Politics 1940-47”, \textit{The Sikh History and Religion}, p. 252.
\end{flushleft}
28, 1947 also the Congress said that no constitution would be forced on any unwilling part of the country.\textsuperscript{164} This was the maximum that the Congress could do. It passed resolutions that accepted the December 6, 1946 statement of the British Government and also simultaneously tried to console the Sikhs. Perhaps the position of the Congress was not enviable. It could not take an extreme stand and put in jeopardy the freedom of the country, which was very much in sight then. Above all it also looked as though the Congress had become impatient by then. Even Gandhiji did not like that posture of the Congress. It was said that the resignations of Sarat Chander Bose and J.P. Narayan from the Congress at that time were in sympathy with the Sikhs who had been betrayed by the Congress.\textsuperscript{165} Mangal Singh was also constrained to remark that the acceptance of the British interpretation regarding compulsory grouping by the Congress was another dangerous slip towards Pakistan. He fretfully said that the Congress had sacrificed the interests of the Sikhs. He advocated partition of the province as the solution, with river Ravi as the dividing line.\textsuperscript{166}

The Sikhs were in real distress then. The whole weight of Pakistan was upon them. The problem was how, and how much, they could retrieve. Their four members in the Constituent Assembly could not do much for their community, because they were too few to influence its proceedings.\textsuperscript{167} But leaving this forum would be worse, for they would lose even the platform from which they could ventilate their grievances, their microscopic number notwithstanding. Further, in this course of action they would have as well lost the sympathies of the Congress which had passed a couple of resolutions showing their resentment against the December 6, statement of His Majesty’s Government. Thus the Sikhs ultimately decided to co-operate with the Congress and secure safeguards through the Constituent Assembly. Sir Evan Jenkins, the Governor of the Punjab, assured that the Punjab Government would do everything to prevent communal disturbance in the Punjab.\textsuperscript{168} Processions were dispersed with mild lathi-

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{164} V.P. Menon, \textit{Transfer of Power in India}, p. 355.
\item \textsuperscript{165} \textit{The Sikh Dunya}, January, 1947.
\item \textsuperscript{166} \textit{The Tribune}, 9.1.1947 (Statement of Sardar Mangal Singh).
\item \textsuperscript{167} \textit{The Rayast}, 16.12.1946 (Statement of Master Tara Singh).
\item \textsuperscript{168} \textit{The Civil and Military Gazette}, 10.1.1947.
\end{itemize}
charge. The Punjab Premier assured that he would not allow the Muslim League ‘to reduce Punjab to political and communal chaos.’

On January 17, 1947 Sardar Ujjal Singh and Gyani Kartar Singh, members of the Constituent Assembly, made an emphatic assertion, “We want”, they said, “that nothing affecting the Sikhs should be decided without our consent”. They also pointed out that no doubt they were disappointed at the All-India Congress Committee Resolution of December 22, 1946, but they would continue to co-operate with the Congress. However, if the right of communal veto was not given to them they would act according to the mandate of the Panthic Pritinidhi Board and withdraw from the Constituent Assembly. In his heart of hearts Master Tara Singh was of the view that since the British-Muslim League understanding was deep there was no possibility of the same between the Congress and the Sikhs. They should at the same time also see to it that the British did not cause misunderstanding between the Sikhs and the Congress.

III

On February 20, 1947, Lord Clement Attlee made a very crucial statement in the British Parliament outlining the schedule for the grant of independence to the Indians. Said the British Prime Minister:

His Majesty’s Government wish to make it clear that it is their definite intention to take the necessary steps to effect the transfer of power into responsible Indian hands by a date not later than June 1948….His Majesty’s Government will have to consider to whom the powers of the Central Government in British India should be handed over, on the due date, whether as a whole to some form of Central Government, or in some areas to the existing Provincial Governments, or in such other way as may seem most reasonable and in the best interests of the Indian people…. 

The above statement was issued under the pressure of the world leaders soon after the close of the World War II. For the first time the Indians felt convinced that the British would certainly be leaving India, and quite soon that started a run-away politics of cut-throat style in the country. On the last week of February, violence erupted in half a dozen major cities including Amritsar and Lahore.\textsuperscript{175} The Muslim League campaign of hatred against the Unionists was at its peak.\textsuperscript{176} Master Tara Singh issued a statement that civil war cannot be avoided.\textsuperscript{177} Events were further accelerated and political parties and the politicians were required to perform at breath-taking speed. It was in this wave of uncertainty and intrigues that Khizr Hayat Khan resigned on March 2, 1947 as the Premier of Punjab.\textsuperscript{178} After February 20\textsuperscript{th} Statement of the British Government Sir Khizr Hayat Khan had been feeling that if he still continued to lead a coalition in which the Muslim League was not represented, this would seriously jeopardize such chances as might otherwise exist of a settlement between the communities in the province.\textsuperscript{179} This was a more stunning blow to the Sikhs than even the February 20\textsuperscript{th} Statement. Consequently, upon the resignation of Sir Khizr Hayat Khan on March 3, the Punjab Governor invited the leader of the Muslim League party to form the Government.\textsuperscript{180} The Sikh leaders and Councilors met at Lahore on March 3 and unanimously passed this resolution:

\begin{quote}
\textquote{...The new circumstances created by His Majesty Government’s statement of February 20\textsuperscript{th} appear to have influenced the Premier’s decision to resign. While we feel that the Premier was actuated with the best of intentions his decision, however, is undoubtedly calculated to facilitate the installation of the Muslim League into power in Punjab before transfer of power from British to Indian hands takes place.}\textsuperscript{181}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{175} Michael Edwardes, \textit{The Last Years of British India}, p.141.
\textsuperscript{177} A.B. Rajput, \textit{Muslim League: Yesterday and Today}, p. 141.
\textsuperscript{179} The Tribune, 4.3.1947.
\textsuperscript{180} P.G.R., Fortnight ending 15.3.1947, G.O.I., \textit{Home Political}, File No. 18/3-47.
\textsuperscript{181} Darbara Singh, \textit{The Punjab Tragedy}, Amritsar, 1949, pp. 31-32.
On 3rd March, the Governor, Sir Evan Jenkins invited the Muslim League to form a Ministry. On the same day, i.e., March 3, 1947, a huge Hindu and Sikh public meeting, was held at Lahore in the evening. In this meeting there were dangerous and truculent talks. The Sikh leaders gave statements saying that they were determined to fight Pakistan and would oppose the Muslim League Government at all costs. Master Tara Singh said:

…Our motherland is calling for blood and we will satiate our mother’s thirst with blood….We have in our hold the legs and limbs of the Muslim League and we will break them….The world has always been ruled by minorities….I have sounded the bugle. Finish the Muslim League.

On account of the heat generated by this meeting, March 4 was marked by bloody events in Lahore. Sir Khizr Hayat Khan showed his inability even to head the caretaker Government. Riots broke out in the prominent cities such as Lahore, Multan, Rawalpindi, Amritsar, Jhelum and others. On March 4th, 1947, the Sikhs and Hindu students took out a protest procession. The police opened fire, killing 13 persons and injuring 103. On the 5th of March, in the face of the Muslim League’s failure to form a Government, Governor’s rule was proclaimed in the province. On the same day, K.C. Gulati, The Akali: Past and Present, Ashajanak Publication, New Delhi, 1974, p.133.

P.G.R., op.cit. It is said that in a bid to woo the Sikhs, the Muslim League offered the Sikhs five seats in a Cabinet of eleven (Ibid). It was indeed too much on the part of the Muslim League to think that the Sikhs would join such a Government whose aim was to realize Pakistan, regarded by the Sikhs as their death-knell.

G.D. Khosla, Stern Reckoning, p. 100.

P.G.R., op.cit.

Satya M.Rai, Partition of the Punjab, p. 42.


Harcharan Singh Bajwa attributes the refusal of the Governor to the formation of the League Ministry to the tearing of the Muslim League Flag by Master Tara Singh with his sword on 3.3.1947, which they had brought there to install on the Assembly building. Master Tara Singh shouted in rage “Kat ke denge apni Jan magar na denge Pakistan-Pakistan murdabad” (we may be cut to pieces but we will never concede Pakistan-Death to Pakistan). Fifty Years of Punjab Politics, pp. 76-78. However, the flag tearing incident
Master Tara Singh also appealed to the people to observe ‘Anti-Pakistan Day’ on March 11.\textsuperscript{189} This made the Muslim League all the more irritable. The behaviour of the non-Muslims in contributing their full strength to thwart the formation of the Muslim League Government of the Punjab further confirmed the views of Mr. M.A. Jinnah that all non-Muslims were anti-Muslims. But the Muslim League was then clear in its mind that the time had come for it to deal a \textit{coup de grace} to the whole thing and realize the dream of Pakistan. The Muslim League adopted the tactics of terrorism to scare the people out of their wits. Gravest of the incidents took place in the areas comprising the Rawalpindi Division where Muslims were in preponderant majority. The casualties were particularly heavy in Rawalpindi and Attock districts.\textsuperscript{190} Up to 15\textsuperscript{th} March the victims of the internecine strife numbered 1,036 killed and 1,110 injured. The things were really very appalling when Lord Louis Mountbatten took over as the Viceroy of India on March 24, 1947.\textsuperscript{191} He recognized the need for quick action in the face of general chaos and approaching civil war.\textsuperscript{192} He did not inherit a good legacy from Lord Wavell. Allen Campbell Johnson aptly summed up: “In short, we have the people rioting; the princes falling out among themselves; the entire Indian Civil Service and police running down; and the British left skeptical and full of foreboding”.\textsuperscript{193}

In this grim atmosphere, no political party could afford to be idealist. Hard and overwhelming realities of the situation had to be reckoned with. Thanks to the events since the British Government statement of December 6, 1946 the Congress had been mellowed by then. It was no longer fussy about the preservation of integrity of the country. It passed a resolution in its meeting on 6-8 March, 1947 and accepted the

\textsuperscript{189} \textit{Mitra Register}, 1947, Vol I., p. 43.

\textsuperscript{190} P.G.R., \textit{op.cit.}

\textsuperscript{191} Darbara Singh, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 43.

\textsuperscript{192} R. Suntharalingam, \textit{Indian Nationalism: An Historical Analysis}, pp. 451-52.

\textsuperscript{193} A. Campbell-Johnson, \textit{Mission with Mountbatten}, p. 40.
partition of Punjab. Moreover, but this time, the Congress had come to adopt the attitude that Pakistan issue vis-à-vis the Sikhs was a communal problem and the Congress was not concerned with it. It left it to the Sikhs to deal with it. This attitude of the Congress was nothing but an attempt to wriggle out of the solemn promises it had held out to the Sikhs since 1929. This cleared the road to Pakistan. The two major Indian political parties were reconciled to the idea of partition, although the League wanted only the partition of the country and not of the Punjab. With this crisis around, the Sikhs also tried to set their house in order like the other communities. Augmentation of the Akali Sena was started with renewed vigour. However, this Akali Sena was not trained like the Muslim Guards who were trained in stabbing and lathi driving, and its number did not exceed a few hundreds, much less was it an army as later on it was sought to be made out by the Leagues. Moreover, it was only a defensive channel and had no training in politics like the Muslim League National Guards. A new organization called Shahidi Dal was also created under the direction of Jathedar Mohan Singh to help the Sikhs in the scattered areas to take measures to protect themselves. Sikh Jathedars took a suicide oath at the Akal Takhat on April 13, 1947. In June the Akali Sena and Shahidi Jathas were merged and a Khalsa Council of Action was formed with leaders like Master Tara Singh, Gyani Kartar Singh and Udham Singh Nagoke on this Council, to control the Sena. Its strength at that time stood at 8,000 comprising the Shahidi Jathas in Lahore, Amritsar, Sialkot, Ferozepur, Hoshiarpur, Jullundur, Ludhiana and Multan districts. A fifty lakh rupee fund was instituted to run the affairs of the Sena. No doubt, the plan

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194 Menon, V.P., Transfer of Power in India, p. 347. The resolution said, “These tragic events have demonstrated that there can be no settlement of the problem in the Punjab by violence and coercion, and that no arrangement based on coercion will last. Therefore it is necessary to find a way out which involves the least amount of compulsion. This would necessitate a division of the Punjab into two provinces, so that the predominantly Muslim part may be separated from the predominantly non-Muslim part (Mitra Register, 1947, Vol. I, pp. 118-19).


197 The Civil and Military Gazette, 15.4.1947.

was very impressive. But it was difficult to admit its efficacy. The thing was that when these details were drawn Pakistan had already arrived at the doorstep. There was no time to train the volunteers. Existing cadres of the Akali Sena were insufficient to fulfill the above objectives. The leaders were busy, rather over-busy, in attending to the fast moving train of political events which were so grave and complex that they hardly left them time to take care of the Shahidi Dal and impart life to it. Master Tara Singh felt that Punjab was drifting into a civil War. He received feelers for a dialogue with the League, but he again felt that the talks would not yield fruit in that atmosphere of near-anarchy.\footnote{199} Rather they could cost invaluable time to the Sikhs, which could otherwise be devoted to the defense-call. So far the Sikhs had been imagining that the British would not abandon them and would settle the whole thing for them before leaving the country.\footnote{200} But then it became clear to them that they would have to fend for themselves. On April 3, 1947, a Conference was held at Lahore wherein the Sikh leaders and legislators unanimously declared that a division of Punjab was the only remedy left to rescue them out of this situation.\footnote{201} The decision was reaffirmed by the \textit{Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak} Committee in its meeting held at Amritsar on April 17, 1947, under the Presidentship of Gyani Kartar Singh. It also demanded the appointment of a boundary Commission keeping in view the stakes of the Sikhs in Punjab.\footnote{202} On April 18, Master Tara Singh, Gyani Kartar Singh and Baldev Singh met the Punjab Governor and put forward the Sikh point of view that the division of the province had then become inescapable and demanded that the boundary line defining the proposed division should be fixed at river


\footnote{201} All the Sikh leaders including Master Tara Singh, Bawa Harkishan Singh, President of the \textit{Panthic} Board and Amar Singh attended it. \textit{The Akali,} 5.4.1947; also \textit{Mitra Register,} 1947, Vol. I, p. 53; and Dr. Ganda Singh, \textit{A Diary of Partition Days} (Date and place of publication not given).

\footnote{202} \textit{The Tribune,} 18.4.1947.
They also demanded the recruitment of additional Sikh police and imposition of martial law in the Punjab.\(^{204}\)

All this caused some nervousness to the Muslim League. Because Mr. M.A. Jinnah had always felt that he could accommodate the Sikhs in a separate province within Pakistan. But he could not altogether relinquish a part of Pakistan in their favour.\(^{205}\) But then the Congress and the Sikhs both were demanding the bisection of the proposed Pakistan territory itself. The Muslim League was not prepared for all this. It wanted to grab the whole of Punjab.\(^{206}\) Thirty-nine thousand strong National Guards had been employed for that purpose,\(^{207}\) and by April, i.e., just within two months about a million non-Muslim had become refugees. On April 30, 1947, Mr. M.A. Jinnah issued a statement that the proposal for the partition of Bengal and Punjab was a sinister move actuated by spite and bitterness. He, inter alia, said that if Punjab and Bengal were to be partitioned, all the other provinces would have to be cut up in a similar way. He again suggested that an exchange of population would sooner or later have to take place and that that could be effectively carried out by the respective governments in Pakistan and Hindustan.\(^{208}\) All this was being done by the Muslims to make their adversaries accept the exchange of population. At first the Congress did not take this suggestion seriously.\(^{209}\) But as the events marched forth every one understood its necessity. In fact, it became inevitable under those circumstances when the individuals and the organizations alike got quickly and automatically involved in migration. The Sikhs also got round this idea

\(^{203}\) The Civil and Military Gazette, 19.4.1947.


\(^{206}\) Penderel Moon, Divide and Quit, p. 84.

\(^{207}\) Muslim League Attacks on Sikhs and Hindus in the Punjab, p. 253.

\(^{208}\) The Civil and Military Gazette, 1.5.1947. See also, Mitra Register, 1947, Vol. I, op.cit., pp. 360-61 and The Hindustan Times, 2.5.1947. Jinnah’s statement drew the retort from Rajendra Prasad that the demand for the division of the Punjab and Bengal was in terms of the Muslim League’s Lahore resolution of 1940 and that it could not claim any areas which were not contiguous and in which the Muslims did not enjoy a numerical majority (Menon, V.P., op.cit., p. 356).

finally in July, 1947 when impelled by the inundation of events. Sardar Sawaran Singh, leader of the Panthic Assembly Party, said that the transfer of population was the only solution which would ultimately do well to both Pakistan and Hindustan. He suggested a partition line as would facilitate the transfer of population and property. Such a thing was all the more necessary for the Sikhs because otherwise their population would have got divided between Pakistan and Hindustan.

IV

Lord Louis Mountbatten, who had come to India with a firm determination to settle things finally for the Indians, came out with his plan of June 3, 1947. On 2\textsuperscript{nd} June he sounded the Indian leaders about the final plan, before making it public. The Congress accepted it and so did the League. Khizr Hayat Khan, the Punjab Premier, called it ‘the work of the lunatics’. It was said that Sardar Baldev Singh who represented the Sikhs on both these occasions, accepted the Plan rather light-heartedly. The partition was implicit in the Plan, but he did not say other than these words: “I agree”.

….It might have seemed that any far-seeing Sikh, realizing the situation which would probably result from partition, would have cut his throat or gone to War rather than accept it….But…Baldev Singh …kept largely silent during the all-important meeting, except to agree to the plan that would cut the jugular vein of his people.

His only insistence in this meeting was that he wanted instructions to the Boundary Commission to be included in the Plan, impressing upon them to take the Sikhs’ interest more fully into consideration. But the Viceroy turned down this demand and Baldev Singh accepted this ruling. The Plan lay down:

1. The Provincial Legislative Assemblies of Bengal and Punjab, Excluding European members, will be asked to meet in two parts—one representing the Muslim majority districts and the other the rest of the province. For purpose of determining the population of the districts the 1941 census figures will be taken as authoritative. The Muslim majority districts of Punjab, as

\begin{footnotes}

210 The Civil and Military Gazette, 10.7.1947.


\end{footnotes}
given in the Appendix of the Plan, were defined as: Lahore Division: Gujranwala, Gurdaspur, Sheikhupura, Sialkot, Lahore; Rawalpindi Division: Attock, Gujrat, Jhelum, Minawali, Rawalpindi, Shahpur; Multan Division: Dera Ghazi Khan, Jhang, Lyallpur, Montgomery, Multan and Muzaffargarh.

2. The members of the two parts of each Legislative Assembly sitting separately will be empowered to vote whether or not the Province should be partitioned. If a simple majority of either side decided in favour of partition, division of the province would take place and arrangements would be made accordingly.

3. In the event of partition being decided upon for the purpose of final partition of these Provinces, a detailed investigation of boundary questions would be needed, a Boundary Commission would be set up by the Governor-General.  

In his press conference on June 3, 1947 Lord Louis Mountbatten made a special reference about the Sikhs. He said that the partition of Punjab had been provided at their instance, because it was mainly at the request of the Sikh community that the Congress had demanded the partition of Punjab through their resolution passed in the meeting on 6-8 March, 1947. Within week, violence spread from Lahore to Amritsar. About 4000 Muslim ships and business were burned down within the walled area of the city of Amritsar. He admitted that the community of the Sikhs though much less numerous was yet of great importance. He said that he had spent a good deal of time to see if there was any solution which would keep the Sikh community more together without departing from the broad and easily understood principle. He left this problem to the Boundary Commission. This was quite a diplomatic gesture on the part of one whose predecessors also, like him; had always felt concerned only with the major organizations like the Congress and the Muslim League and had never shown any direct consideration to the Sikhs. Commenting on this Plan Sardar Baldev Singh said that the Plan did not please every one, not the Sikhs, but was worthwhile. It was not all joy. It was a

settlement.\textsuperscript{217} He also hoped that this division might not last long. If anything, this latter view shows only his political immaturity. Master Tara Singh also issued a statement on June 3, 1947. He said that the Plan was unsatisfactory and disappointing. Even the Viceroy had felt obliged to admit that the Sikh solidarity was bound to be impaired by this Plan. He said that for Sikhs it was not a question of power but of existence.\textsuperscript{218} But this had long been clear to the Sikhs that either they had to accept the partition which meant the split-up of their community into two parts, or they had to submit to their inclusion as a whole in Pakistan. They had decided in favour of partition, a lesser evil.\textsuperscript{219} Under this apparent split about two million Sikhs, as also their canal colonies, would inevitably fall in the would-be Pakistan territory. But they were so tight-cornered that they had no way out except to futilely place their hopes in the wisdom of the Boundary Commission which, apart from “contiguous area” principle, was to take “other factors” also into consideration. The Sikhs now pinned their hopes on these “other factors” on the strength of which their boundary, they thought, might be shifted westwards so that they would not be split too badly.\textsuperscript{220} Organized incendiary activities, stabbings and bomb blasts in Lahore and Amritsar forced 70,000 persons to leave the cities.\textsuperscript{221} The Muslim League accepted the Mountbatten Plan on June 9\textsuperscript{th} and the Congress on June 15\textsuperscript{th}. The Sikhs hesitantly accepted it. They preferred to remain with India.\textsuperscript{222} After the announcement of the Plan an attempt was made to see if the partition could still be avoided. Through Sant Singh, the Prime Minister of Nabha, Panderel Moon, 

\textsuperscript{219} Penderel Moon, Divide and Quit, p. 69.
\textsuperscript{220} Penderal Moon, Divide and Quit., pp. 69-70. (Under this apparent split about two million Sikhs, as also their canal colonies, would inevitably fall in the would-be Pakistan territory. But they were so tight-cornered that they had no way out except to futilely place their hopes in the wisdom of the Boundary Commission which, apart from “contiguous area” principle, was to take “other factors” also into consideration. The Sikhs now pinned their hopes on these “other factors” on the strength of which their boundary, they thought, might be shifted westwards so that they would not be split too badly).
the Revenue Minister of Bahawalpur, approached the Sikh leaders, including Master Tara Singh, Gyani Kartar Singh and Baldev Singh. Moon offered to secure them a separate unit of eastern Punjab with a position in Pakistan equal to that of any other unit, e.g. Sind or western Punjab; special privileges for Sikh minority in western Punjab and also in Pakistan as a whole.\textsuperscript{223} The Sikhs, however, remained skeptical about the motives at the back of this offer. One Sikh leader said that there could be no guarantee that once they achieved Pakistan, the Muslims would abide by the agreement.\textsuperscript{224}

However, after about ten days, Baldev Singh was more responsive to the Muslim endeavors. May be, the Sikhs had been disillusioned by the attitude of the Congress. They seemed to be hankering after a quasi-autonomous East Punjab shorn of four Hindu districts in the south. The Congress was not agreeable to this. Hence, they were inclined to try it from the Muslims. Major Short’s friend gave certain suggestions to Mr. Moon which could be made the basis of negotiations. They were somewhat like this:\textsuperscript{225}

i. There should be a separate unit of East Punjab from which the four south-eastern and predominantly Hindu districts would be excluded (The four districts would have gone to India);
ii. The East Punjab unit should have the right to secede from Pakistan;
iii. The authority of the Central Pakistan Government should be confined to defense, foreign affairs, communications, currency and economic planning. All other power should be vested in the provincial units;
iv. three-fourths majority of Sikh legislators should be essential for any change in the constitution; and
v. The Sikhs should have at least one-third share in the armed forces of Pakistan.

\textsuperscript{223} Penderel Moon, \textit{Divide and Quit}, pp. 84-85.

\textsuperscript{224} Penderal Moon, \textit{Divide and Quit}, p. 85. Even before the Mountbatten Plan was announced Maharaja Yadvindra Singh of Patiala, at the instance of the Viceroy, had talks with Jinnah on 16.5.1946 to explore the possibilities of Sikh-Muslim compromise. As usual Jinnah remained uncompromising and adamant. He repeated his usual verbal assurances and guarantees and wanted Sikhs to accept his word (\textit{The Tribune}, 18.5.1947). Obviously Jinnah was cynical as to imagine that the Sikhs would still accept his word even after what they had experienced in the shape of the Punjab and N.W.F.P. brutalities which had gone unreapproached. Therefore, the talks failed.

\textsuperscript{225} Penderel Moon, \textit{Divide and Quit}, pp. 84-86.
These were, of course, stiff terms but they did not look impossible excepting the provision about secession. A meeting was further arranged between the Sikh leaders and Mr. Jinnah at Lahore, but the Akali leaders did not reach there and it flopped.\footnote{Kapur Singh (I.C.S. Retired), \textit{Sachi Sakhi.}, p. 98.} It looked that they were not interested in a settlement with the Muslim League. But it was not keen either. “If the Sikhs were lukewarm about a settlement, the Muslims were icy-cold”.\footnote{Penderel Moon, \textit{Divide and Quit}, p. 86.} It was understandable that the League could not gain anything by accepting this plan. The Sikhs seemed to have opened a dialogue with the League in the impossible hope that a free state might be conceded to them. The net result was that the Sikh-League political dialogue could not fructify. Consequently, a joint conference of the Shiromani Akali Dal and the Panthic Pritinidhi Board took place on 12 June, 1947 and disapproved of the scheme for the division of India into two sovereign states.\footnote{\textit{The Tribune}, 13.6.1947.} The Sikhs of course appreciated the principle of partition but protested that the basis of the national division of Punjab was inequitable and unjust to the Sikhs. The resolution categorically stated that no partition of Punjab, which did not preserve the solidarity and integrity of the Sikh community, would be acceptable to the Sikhs. This was further elaborated in their resolution passed at a joint meeting of the Panthic Assembly Party, the Working Committee of the Shiromani Akali Dal and the Panthic Pritinidhi Board held on June 14, 1947 which read that:

\begin{quote}
The Punjab Boundary Commission should be given express directions to make recommendations for the transfer of the Hindu and Sikh population and property from the western part of the Punjab to the eastern part after the partition has been affected on equitable basis.\footnote{\textit{The Civil and Military Gazette.}, 15.6.1947.}
\end{quote}

In keeping with the Mountbatten Plan, the Punjab Assembly met on 23\textsuperscript{rd} June, 1947. It voted by ninety-one votes to seventy-seven for a separate Constituent Assembly for Pakistan. Legislators of the two sections met separately. Those of the eastern section
decided by fifty-five votes to twenty-two for partition, while the western section opposed partition by sixty-nine votes to twenty-seven.\textsuperscript{230} Malik Khizr Hayat Khan commented, “the land of five rivers as we have known it, is no more today a political entity. No Punjabi is happy over it. The economic structure of the Punjab is so interdependent that it will gravely be dislocated.”\textsuperscript{231} Pirzada Abdul satar gave assurances that there was ‘no reason why Hindus should migrate elsewhere’\textsuperscript{232} The Boundary Commission was appointed in early July. Sir Cyril Radcliffe was appointed the Chairman and Justices Mehar Chand Mahajan, Teja Sng Kh and Din Muhammad and Muhammad Munir as members. On August 17, it awarded 13 out of 29 districts of the Punjab to the Indian Union.\textsuperscript{233} Lahore became a city of murders and fires. About 6000 houses and of 82,000 were burnt down in the Lahore corporation Area.\textsuperscript{234} In all, ten million people were uprooted from the home and another half a million massacred.\textsuperscript{235}

The decade 1937-47 was pregnant with constitutional developments of immense significance in the history of the Province in general and the Sikhs in particular. Further, complications were also caused by the impact of the World War II. The August Offer of 1940 went off quietly without producing much excitement or expectation for any community. In fact the outbreak of war and the preparedness of the Congress to appease the Muslim League for the large cause of freedom depended the crisis in the Sikh Politics.\textsuperscript{236} The Congress, being a representative of a majority number, always stood to gain even when its gains were not apparent. The Cripps proposals left the Muslim League quite hopeful because Pakistan could be visualized through them. The Congress leaders

\textsuperscript{231} The Civil and Military Gazette, 25.6.1947
\textsuperscript{232} The Civil and Military Gazette, 26.6.1947
\textsuperscript{235} Durga Das, India from Curzon to Nehru, Rupa, New Delhi, 1975, p.263.
\textsuperscript{236} Indu Banga, “Crisis of Sikh Politics 1940-47”, Sikh History and Religion, 254.
started calculating in their minds about bargaining with the Muslim League. Leaders like Rajaji had started garnering ideas in that direction. The Sikhs were nowhere. The Shimla Conference and the Wavell Plan took note of the Sikhs, but in the main they also tried to parley with the League and the Congress. The demands of the Sikhs were again put on the shelf. The Cabinet Mission Proposals had nothing for the Sikhs except sympathies. The fact was that the Sikhs were a minor factor in the all-India context. The British and the Congress who were concerned primarily with the overall problem did not feel it necessary to spend much care on the Sikhs particularly because their interests clashed with the Muslims interests in the Punjab. The latter were never ignored by the Government. With these handicaps around, the Sikhs could not have done better. The contradictions the Imperial War unleashed culminated in the partition of the Punjab in August 1947 with colossal human and material loss and vivisection of Indian body politic.
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