CHAPTER VI
CHAPTER VI

The Interim Government to Independence – Reaction of English Press

a) **The Interim Government**

The Interim Government is an important episode in the history of the freedom movement of India.

The following is the invitation of the Viceroy to the Indians to form the Interim Government:

*Statement By Cabinet Delegation and His Excellency the Viceroy, 16th June 1946*

1. His Excellency, the Viceroy, in consultation with the members of the Cabinet Mission, has for sometime been exploring the possibilities of forming a coalition Government drawn from the two major parties and certain of the minorities. The discussions have revealed the difficulties which exist for the two major parties in arriving at any agreed basis for the formation of such a Government.

2. The Viceroy and the Cabinet Mission appreciate these difficulties and the efforts which the two parties have made to meet them. They consider, however that no useful purpose can be served by further prolonging these discussions. It is indeed urgently necessary that a strong and representative Interim Government should be set up to conduct the very heavy and important business that has to be carried through.

3. The Viceroy is, therefore, issuing invitation to the following to serve as members of the Interim Government on the basis that the Constitution making will proceed in accordance with the Statement of May 16th:

Sardar Baldev Singh Dr. Rajendra Prasad
Sir N.P. Engineer Mr. H.K. Mahtab
Mr. Jagjivan Ram Dr. John Mathhai
Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru Nawab Mohd. Ismail Khan
Mr. M.A. Jinnah Khwaja Sir Nazimuddin
Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan Sardar Abdur Rab Nistar
Mr. C. Rajagopalachari Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel

If any of those invited is unable for personal reasons to accept, the Viceroy will, after consultation, invite some other person in his place.
4. The Viceroy will arrange the distribution of portfolios in consultation with the leaders of the two major parties.

5. The above composition of the Interim Government is in no way to be taken as a precedent for the solution of any other communal question. It is an expedient put forward to solve the present difficulty only and to obtain the best available Coalition Govt.

6. The Viceroy and the Cabinet Mission believe that Indians of all communities desire to arrive at a speedy settlement of this matter so that the process of constitution making can go forward and that the Government of India may be carried on as efficiently as possible in the meantime.

7. They therefore hope that all parties, especially the two major parties will accept this proposal so as to overcome the present obstacles and will cooperate for the successful carrying on of the Interim Govt. Should this proposal be accepted, the Viceroy will aim at inaugurating the new Government about the 26th June.

8. In the event of the two major parties of either of them proving unwilling to join the setting up of a Coalition Government on the above lines, it is the intention of the Viceroy to proceed with the formation of an Interim Government which will be as representative as possible of those willing to accept the Statement of May 16th.

9. The Viceroy is also directing the Governors of the Provinces to summon the Provincial Legislative Assemblies forthwith to proceed with the elections necessary for the setting up of the constitution - making machinery as put forward in the Statement of May 16th.

An advanced copy of this statement with a covering letter was sent by the Viceroy to the Congress President:

The Viceroy’s House
New Delhi
16th June 1946.

No.592/47

Dear Maulana Sahib,
I send herewith a copy of the Statement which, as indicated in the letter I sent you yesterday, will be released at 4 p.m. this evening.

As the Statement shows the Cabinet Ministers and I are fully aware of the difficulties that have prevented an agreement on the composition of the Interim Government. We are unwilling to abandon our hope of a working partnership between the two major parties and representatives of the minorities. We have therefore done our best to arrive at a practicable agreement taking into consideration the various conflicting claims and the need for obtaining a Government of capable and representative administrators. We hope that the parties will now take their share in the administration of the country on the basis set out in your new Statement. We are sure we can rely on you and your Working Committee to look to the wider issues and to the urgent needs of the country as a whole and to consider this proposal in a spirit of accommodation.

Yours sincerely

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad²

The following letter was written by Lord Wavell to His Majesty, the King on 8th July, 1946³

Viceregal Lodge
Simla
July 8th 1946

Your Majesty,

I last wrote just before the arrival of the Cabinet Mission. In this letter I will give some account from my personal point of view of the 3 ½ months of negotiations which have taken place and of their results. I shall write quite frankly, as I conceive is my duty to your Majesty and shall not conceal such differences of view as there were between some members of the Mission and myself.

2. I will begin by saying that I do not think any men could have worked more wholeheartedly and with greater patience and good temper than did the Mission. It is not really questionable which is the more trying to the temper and patience, the climate of Delhi in hot weather, or the quibblings, hagglings and small mindedness of Indian political leaders, especially of the Congress – the latter
have it by a distance; but to have suffered the combination of the two over a long
period without loss of courtesy or hope was a fine tribute to the Mission.
3. Their achievements were also very considerable. They certainly
convinced Indian opinion, except perhaps the most extreme, that we really do
intend to give India her freedom as soon as possible; they persuaded the
Congress and Muslim League leaders to meet at Simla; they produced an
admirable compromise plan in the Statement of May 16th; and succeeded, after
some almost interminable haggling on the part of Congress, in getting it accepted
by the two main Parties — though both had, I am afraid, more than mental
reservations in their acceptance.
4. The failure to secure an Interim Government was perhaps more my fault
than theirs, since I conducted most of the negotiations to this end. They came
near success, I think. But at the last moment Gandhi, whose conduct, as always
was quite unpredictable, threw a spanner in the works at the Congress end; and
Jinnah chose that moment to give to the Press an intemperate letter he had
written to me about the attitude of Congress, before I had ever received it. And
Nehru at the same critical juncture went off on a quite unnecessary and
provocative expedition to Kashmir, mainly for reasons of personal prestige and
vanity. Such are the irresponsibilities of the leaders with whom we have had to
deal.
5. Any differences of view that I had with the Mission were on the methods of
reaching our ends, not on the ends themselves, on which we were in full
agreement. We are bound to fulfil our pledges to give India her freedom as soon
as possible — and we have neither the power nor, I think, the will to remain in
control of India for more than an extremely limited period, without a complete
reversal of policy; we must try to leave India united; and we must secure the co-
operation of the Congress which represents the great majority of Indian political
opinion, whatever our views on the past record of that party.
We are in fact conducting a retreat and in very difficult circumstances. Now my
military instincts when retreating - and I am afraid I have had to make a number
of retreats — tell me to show as bold a front as possible and to try to simulate
enough of our strength – India is not yet able to stand without us and I feel that this should have been brought home more clearly to her rather irresponsible leaders; also what the consequences of attack on the British In India would be likely to be. I considered that the Mission should have taken and kept the initiative more; and should not have been so dependent on the shifts and changes of a set of inexperienced, short-sighted and sometimes malevolent politicians. After all, we are still in charge of India, and are giving a boom rather than asking one. Further, I thought it was a mistake that the Mission should have had, outside the official discussions, such a continuous and close touch with one of the two main Parties, the Congress, this naturally aroused the deep suspicion of the Muslim League and was probably a cause of that letter of Jinnah’s which contributed to the breakdown on the Interim Government.

I may be quite wrong in all this. Military ideas and methods may not be applicable to political negotiations; and perhaps the rather more summary methods I should have preferred would have failed completely.

Finally, I can never entirely rid my mind of the recollection that in 1942, at almost the most critical period of the war for India, when I was endeavouring as Commander-in-Chief to secure India with very inadequate resources against Japanese invasion, the supporters of Congress made a deliberate effort to paralyse my communications to the Eastern Front by widespread sabotage and rioting.

6. I will not trouble your Majesty with any details of the various phases of the protracted negotiations; but I think that you may be interested in some estimate of the performance of the principal Indian personalities concerned, and in an appreciation of where we stand now.

Gandhi ran entirely true to form; his influence is still great; his line of thought and action at any given moment and on any particular issue is as unpredictable as ever; he never makes a pronouncement that is not so qualified and so vaguely worded that it cannot be interpreted in whatever sense best suits him at a later stage; but however double-tongued he may be, he is quite single-minded on the one objective from which he has never swerved in the last 40 years, the elimination of the hated British influence from India. My distrust of this shrewd, malevolent, old politician was deep before the Conference started; it is deeper
than ever now. One of the Missions also came to distrust him at an early date and I think all did at the end. Incidentally, he looks much tougher and in better health than since I first knew him. And I was persuaded that he was at death's door when I released him over two years ago. Curiously enough, I lately found an appreciation of the Indian situation sent to me by a friend in India ten years ago; he wrote that everyone was agreed that Gandhi could not live more than six months!

I have much sympathy with Jinnah, who is straighter, more positive and more sincere than most of the Congress leaders; but he overcalled his hand in the end and thereby, I think, missed the opportunity of having a more favourable share in an Interim Government than he is likely to get again. He was naturally disappointed and indulged in an unjustified outburst against the good faith of the Mission and myself. He is a curious character, a lovely, unhappy, arbitrary, self-centred man, fighting with much resolution what I fear is a losing battle.

Azad, the Congress President, did well. He is a gentleman and stood for good sense and moderation as far as he was able, inspite of poor health and a naturally weak character. But up against Gandhi he was as a rabbit faced by a stoat.

Congress most unwisely brought up to the Simla Conference two Muslims out of their four representatives. Azad their President naturally had to come, but the presence of Abdul Gaffar Khan, from the North-West Frontier Province, whose intelligence and grasp of English are both limited, was regarded by Jinnah as a gratuitous and deliberate provocation.

I have seen much of Nehru and cannot help liking him. He is sincere, intelligent and personally courageous. But he is unbalanced – witness his ploy in Kashmir – and also lacks the political courage to stand up to Gandhi when he knows he is wrong. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel is the recognised 'tough' of the Congress Working Committee and by far the most forcible character amongst them. I have a good deal more respect for him than for most of the Congress leaders and he is probably the only one of them capable of standing up to Gandhi. If he takes the line of constitutional progress, he may be valuable; if he goes to the Left, he will be formidable.
The rest of the Congress Working Committee are poor stuff, except that possibly one of the younger ones, Mahatab, Premier of Orissa, who is earnest and likeable, may in time become a capable administrator.

Of the immediate future in India it is difficult to write with much confidence. I am left with one rather sickly infant, the Constituent Assembly, which I shall find much difficulty in nursing through its childhood; and one still-born babe, the Interim Government which I am expected to resuscitate by some means. The Sikhs, who have always more conceit than political sense, are threatening to make trouble; Jai Prakash Narain and The Congress left wing will certainly do so if they see a chance; the Services, on whom the good government of India depends, are tried and discouraged; the loyalty of the Police and Indian Army in face of a really serious challenge to British rule is problematical; and the Congress are convinced that immediate power is theirs for the asking. This has always been their real objective and they will concentrate on it rather than on constitution-making; that is in their eyes a sequel to the seizure of power, not a preliminary. The Congress is, however, by no means a united body and a considerable proportion are in favour of constitutional progress rather than violence. We may be able to secure an orderly withdrawal from our rule over India without a rebellion or civil war; but it is likely to be a close-run thing. And no one can feel much confidence in the ability of the Indians who will take over from us to make a strong or prosperous new India. Still, if we play our hand well, they are likely to continue to lean on British help and may maintain some connection with the Commonwealth; but these three months close contact with Indian politicians have certainly not enhanced anyone's opinion of their political wisdom or foresight. We shall know more of their immediate policy after the meeting of the All India Congress Committee at Bombay this week.

Monty, who spent a few days with me last month, had rather an amusing interview with Azad. He pretended to be anxious for the immediate return to the U.K. of all British troops in India and the withdrawal of all British Officers from the Indian Army. Officially these are two of the most insistent demands of Congress; but Azad, quite taken aback, said that neither British troops nor British Officers could be spared for some time to come.
9. Outside politics, I have little to tell Your Majesty. It looks as if we may just
scrape through 1946 without famine, though Bengal is now causing some
anxiety; and the threatened railway strike has been averted for the time being –
at a cost.

I am taking a fortnight’s comparative rest in Simla before descending
again into the sticky and unpleasant heat of Delhi and of political discussion.

I have the honour to be,

SIR,
Your Majesty’s humble and devoted servant,

WAVELL

As the correspondence between the Viceroy and the Congress and that with
Jinnah which began on the formation of the future constitution could not reach
any settlement, the Viceroy undertook to pursue the solution of the short term
issue. An Interim Government was necessary whether or not the major parties
agreed to it.

Amrit Bazar Patrika reported – “Pandit Nehru Invited to Form Interim Govt.
Congress President shortly to visit Delhi. Proposals to be discussed with
Viceroy.”

The same issue said “Interim Govt. Personal Announcement Expected Next
Week :Nehru to submit 2 lists.”

It also quoted – “We are where we were” – Mr. Jinnah Criticises Congress
Resolution.

Earlier in the beginning of the month, there was a clear indication of the formation
of Interim Govt. when there was no other solutions. As reported by Amrit Bazar –
Interim Government by August 15 – Secy of States’ Reported Directive to Wavell
– Congress League Parity: Non Party Muslim’s Inclusion Likely.........On the first
of September India will be governed by a Government representing the main
elements in Indian politics. As far as it can be ascertained, I believe the
proposed interim govt. will be composed of equal no. of Congress and Muslim
League Nominees. Others who will be included in the Govt. will be one non-
party Moslem, one representative each from Scheduled Caste, Parsees and
Sikhs.
Lord Wavell was left with the burden – some task of again opening negotiations to form the Interim Government.  

On June 16 he announced his own proposal of an Executive Council including a Schedule Caste representative, 5 to the Muslim League, 15 Sikh, 1 Indian Christian and 1 Parsee.

To Jinnah's questions, particularly that on the provision for decisions on Communal issues in case the Muslim members were opposed, the Viceroy gave satisfactory answers and said that no decisions on the major Communal issues could be taken in the Interim Govt. if the majority of either of the parties was opposed to it.

The contents of Wavell's letter in reply to Jinnah's letter of June 19 were communicated to the Congress President on June 21. The Congress Working Committee met in Delhi on June 25 and decided not to give up its right to nominate a Muslim nationalist to the Executive Council, nor to accept parity. The Viceroy was glad to know that the Working Committee intended to enter the Constituent Assembly in a constructive spirit, but regretted its rejection of the proposals of June 16.

Jinnah, realised that by keeping out the League Nehru had allowed the Congress to acquire a position of influence and prestige which might end in the League's isolation and drive it into a policy of sterile opposition against an administration which had the support of the British.

Nehru took Office on 2nd September 1946. His other colleagues in the Interim Government were Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Chakravorty Raja Gopalachari, Dr. John Mathai, Sardar Baldev Singh, Sir Shafat Ahmed Khan, Jagjivan Ram, Syed Ali Zaheer, C.H. Bhava, Asaf Ali and Sarat Chandra Bose.

Jinnah's main objective was to enter the Interim Government in order to break it and make it inactive from within. He wanted to prove that the Hindus and the Muslims could not hold office together and Pakistan was the only solution. The League finally joined with 5 members in October, 1946.

The Muslim members in the Interim Government tried their best to make it unworkable. The growing communal violence and the inflexible attitude of the
Muslim League convinced Nehru that partition was the only way out of the predicament in which the country found herself in the summer of 1947.¹²

The Muslim League refused to participate in the Constituent Assembly. Hence Congress members alone had to prepare the Constitution of free India. The Congress demanded the dismissal of the League Ministers unless the League participated in the Constituent Assembly. Amidst the conflict came the historic declaration of the British Govt. regarding the transfer of power.

**Independence**

As independence drew near, Gandhi felt that he was being cold-shouldered by his colleagues and followers, who were finding his strict ethical code difficult to reconcile with the political requirements of the situation. He had seen enough to convince him that by and large he had failed in inculcating the basis of his philosophy among Congress men whose craze for power and the loaves and fishes of office struck him with gale force. “I feel that political work must be looked upon in terms of social and moral progress. In democracy no part of life is untouched by politics.”¹³

On 18th May Mountbatten proceeded to London to seek the advice of the British Cabinet and when he came back to New Delhi on 31 May, he announced the British Government’s acceptance of the principles of partition, which would be effected probably on 15 August 1947. With the passage of Independence of India Act by the British Parliament in July 1947, the preliminaries for the relinquishment of authority were completed; administrative arrangements consequent upon the partition of India were largely accomplished and the preparation for the future relations of the Indian States and their accession to the Union of India were concluded with the signing of the Stand Still Agreement and the Instrument of Accession by all the States, excepting three, i.e. Kashmir, Hyderabad and Junagadh.¹⁴

Looking back we find it all started with the elections held in January – February of 1937 when Congress Muslim candidates were pitted against the Muslim League candidate in almost all the provinces. The decision of the Congress to contest Muslim seats gave great offence to Jinnah, who publicly warned the Congress early in January 1937 to leave the Muslims alone.¹⁵ This sparked off a bitter controversy between Jinnah and Nehru which dragged on for months and served
only to widen the gulf that already separated the Congress and the Muslim League and their respective leaders.  

"Our policy and programme differ in vital respects from those of the Congress" asserted the leader of the Muslim League. "Let us agree to differ," replied the leader of the Congress. "We shall not bow our head before Anand Bhawan," said Jinnah.

This struggle continued for long ten years. On the eve of the transfer of power, the British Government spelled out its policy towards the Indian States in the Cabinet Mission memorandum of 12th May 1946. It was reiterated by Lord Mountbatten on 3rd June 1947. Briefly stated, the British policy towards the Indian States on the eve of the transfer of power was as follows:

When the British withdraw from India, paramountcy would lapse and the rules of the Indian states would become technically and legally independent; they could enter into any relationship with the successor government or governments; or they could remain independent and they were free to decide all this at their convenience. The Princes were asked to make up their minds to accede to India or Pakistan taking into account their geographical situation before 15th August 1947.

Gandhiji in his evening prayer speech expressed grave doubt whether British Officers and British business would play a straight game and cited outbreak of communal trouble in different areas in support of his contention — should assist peaceful transfer of power if they desire to save India as friends and thereby maintain British fair name. The same paper quoted Gandhi — "Britain's only duty is to quit India not to change the map of India. All it has to do is to withdraw and leave India may be even in chaos."

An article in Hindustan Times reported "For the first time since Lord Mountbatten assumed Viceroyalty the feeling that he may not be playing fair has come among Congressmen and Sikh leaders."

In July 1947, when the Transfer of Power had been arranged The Times of London carried this article: "Mr. Attlee rose to make a statement in the House of Commons and the overheated atmosphere was charged with a sense of sharp expectancy. Mr. Attlee quickly drew an approving cheer for his opening announcement that the offer of Dominion Status has been favourably received by
all three parties represented by the conference and by the Viceroy. He continued to praise Lord Mountbatten for the great service he had performed. The spontaneous cheers were led by Mr. Churchill who said that if the hopes that are enshrined in this declaration should be borne out, great recognition should be given, not only to the Viceroy but to the Prime Minister who had the wisdom to make the appointment.  

The situation in India was threatening to become anarchical and on June 3, 1947, the Viceroy of India – Lord Mountbatten had since replaced Lord Wavell – announced that the British Government wanted to transfer power to Indian hands almost immediately on the basis of partition of India. The statement he issued said: “It is clear that, any constitution framed by the Constituent Assembly cannot apply to those parts of the country which are unwilling to accept it.”

Freedom dawned in the country when the father of the Nation was busy in his peace mission.  

15th August 1947, India’s Independence Day, is, for those who lived through that exciting period following the end of the Second World War, inextricably linked with the partition of the sub-continent. The final chapter of that story was written in the blood of hundreds of thousands of innocent persons who were victims of large scale riots in many parts of northern India. Jinnah, who could have played a great part in making the freedom struggle a saga of unmixed splendour, preferred the way of partition. Uncompromising in negotiation and unhappy and bitter in the end, he had “a truncated and moth-eaten Pakistan” thrust into his unwilling hands.

On August 15th 1947 when Nehru spoke of “our tryst with destiny,” Gandhi was a thousand miles away bringing hope and succour to the victims of communal frenzy.

Winston Churchill commented – “We are handing over India to men of straw. Gandhi, Nehru, Patel, Jinnah – some men, some straw.”

Mr. Mihir Bose in his book ‘The Lost Hero’ has written, “Had Bose returned to India after the war, he might well have prevented the tragedy (of the partition of India). He was not a tired politician ready to accept office under any terms. Although his uncompromising hostility to Jinnah and Pakistan might have led to
civil war, the cost of that could not have been greater than the senseless waste of partition.  

At last the historic day of August 15 arrived – the first day of freedom for the three hundred and fifty million Indian people, the day on which men and women were understandably beside themselves with joy, when countless delirious crowds flooded the streets, breaking down all restraints, obstructing the viceregal and ministerial processions, pressing round the Assembly Hall, shouting slogans of Victory to India and its leaders and indulging in a carnival of noisy and riotous rivalry. Exactly at the stroke of the midnight hour Earl Mountbatten of Burma, the last British Governor General and Viceroy of India, entered the Assembly Chamber to address the Legislature and give a message of greeting and goodwill from the King, who ceased from this moment to be the Emperor of India.

Mountbatten had come back to Delhi the same day. At 12 0’ clock midnight – when the new dawn was on the horizon, the solemn ceremony of inaugurating the new Dominion of India was held in the Central Hall of the Parliament House at Delhi. The Constituent Assembly was holding its sittings in the Central Hall. The Legislative Assembly also had its own Hall – the present Lok Sabha Hall. Till then Mountbatten was the Viceroy and Governor General of India.

At midnight, when 14 August ended and 15 August began and the clock struck twelve, the President of the Constituent Assembly, Rajendra Prasad, announced the independence with the words that “the Constituent Assembly of India has assumed power for the governance of India.” Nehru addressing the Constituent Assembly on the evening of 14th August made his historic speech – “Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom.....It is fitting that at this solemn moment we take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of the humanity.....We end today a period of ill fortune and India discovers herself again.” He also said “when the whole world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance. It is fitting that at this solemn moment we take
pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity."³⁰

On that new years day, six thousand miles from Downing Street, in a village of the Gangetic Delta above the Bay of Bengal, an elderly man stretched out on the dirty floor of a peasant's hut. .........He seemed lying there on the floor, a fragile little creature. The appearance was deceptive. That wizened 77 year old man beaming out from under his mudpack had done more to topple the British Empire than any man alive. It was because of him that a British Prime Minister had finally been obliged to send Queen Victoria's great grandson to New Delhi to find a way to give India her freedom."³¹

The Statesman came out with bold caption - TWO DOMINIONS ARE BORN – Political Freedom for One-Fifth of Human Race – Power Assumed by Indians – Constituent Assembly Members Take the Oath Work for Common Prosperity New Delhi, Aug 15 – Two new Dominions India and Pakistan were born at zero hour today, ushering in political freedom to 400 million people, constituting one fifth of the human race. At a special session of the Indian Constituent Assembly, the House assumed full powers for the administration of the Indian Dominion.³²

An exclusive article in the paper by a special correspondent on the negotiations which led to India's freedom made it clear to all that division had become inevitable after Simla Conference:

NEGOTIATIONS WHICH BROUGHT FREEDOM TO INDIA³³

Division Inevitable After Simla Conference
From a Special Correspondent

The past few months have been for India months in which events have moved with breath-taking rapidity, in which a political revolution has been brought about in almost entirely peaceful conditions. The turn of the year found everyone perplexed in the extreme wondering what course things would take; today India is moving purposefully forward to her great destiny in an effort the magnitude of which leaves one gasping with amazement. And yet, looking back over the past two years, one finds an inevitability about it all. It is only natural that on the eve of the day when two great independent countries come into being, one should be tempted to indulge in a little retrospection. Any account of the recent political developments must begin with the Simla Conference which Lord Wavell called in
June 1945. The importance of this conference consists not so much in any tangible results achieved as in marking the end of the stalemate in Indian politics. Throughout the period of the war the Government had concentrated exclusively on the war effort and postponed even the most pressing problems for consideration till after victory had been won. But with the capitulation of Germany it was clear that the war was near its end, though no one suspected how near; and Lord Wavell felt that the tasks of the post war period would be rendered easier if a working arrangement in the political sphere could be reached during the period of the war. An interesting feature of the proposals made at the conference was that they were based upon a composite Government at the Centre, held together on the principle of cooperation in the war effort.

To those who remembered events during and after the Cripps Mission the readiness with which both the main political parties accepted the suggested understandings came as a revelation. After making a brave start the conference broke up without achieving success, causing acute disappointment throughout the country.

DIVISION MIGHT NOT HAVE COME

It is not necessary for present purposes to go into the reasons which led to the failure of the Simla Conference. But there can be no doubt that this was no isolated episode, but the final turning point in our recent history, the one event which led inevitably to all the succeeding stages.

It is my firm conviction that if it had been possible in June 1945, to have turned, the favourable atmosphere at Simla to account and to have set up a composite political Government at the Centre, the position at present would have been entirely different. In the summer of 1945 the will for a settlement was strong among all parties. The desire for a share in the practical control of administration was common to them all; and any arrangement, not palpably unfair to any party, if implemented would have been generally accepted. And if the parties had been able to work together in an atmosphere of goodwill the issue might not have been pressed to the desperate length of division.

One factor in the situation which was not fully taken into account at the time of the Simla Conference was the unexpectedly early end of the war with Japan. We had proceeded on the wrong expectation that the war would continue for at least
one more year. To any student of European history it should have occurred that once the war with Germany was over Russia could not remain neutral in the war with Japan. The Russian intervention brought the war to an abrupt close. The sudden end of the war is relevant to the present story in this way, that if suddenly precipitated a host of problems which had been held in suspense while the war lasted and the Government was not ready to solve them. It was not clear that a purely official Government of the old pattern could not possibly tackle these problems with any hope of success and this made a political settlement particularly urgent. Whether if we could have foreseen the end of the war in August, the issue of the Simla Conference would have been different – it is difficult to say with confidence, but I do not rule out the possibility.

SIGNIFICANCE OF LABOUR VICTORY

Another circumstance which favoured an early attack upon the political issue was the overwhelming success of Labour in the elections in England. I do not mean to say that if the Conservatives had been successful the Indian issue could have been postponed much longer. The fact is that there has been throughout unanimity among the British political parties on the Indian issues; besides, both parties, of course, must base their judgement upon the advice of the permanent officials whose appraisal of the situation is not likely to differ according to the party in power. Nevertheless, there is a difference in the approach between the parties which is of great practical importance.

The Labour leaders were actuated by a sense of urgency in the solution of the problem and by a readiness to face the practical consequences of the situation which I doubt whether the other party, with its tradition and outlook, could have displayed.

The general elections which were held in India during the winter months of 1945 – 46 were the first practical consequence of the breakdown of the Simla Conference. The results were not unexpected. The Muslim League swept the polls in Muslim Constituencies practically all over the country, the only important exception being the N.W.F.P.; and the Congress did the same in other constituencies. The Muslims and the non-Muslims were thus revealed as arrayed in two opposite and uncompromising ranks.
THE CRIPPS PLAN

The Viceroy's original programme, as approved by the British Government, had provided after the elections, for a preliminary series of consultations with the political leaders about the nature of the next step. The Cripps plan of 1942 had contemplated the calling together of a Constituent Assembly with a defined basis and procedure.

Although the British Government was committed by a number of definite statements to the principles of the Cripps plan, the plan itself had not been accepted by any Indian party and it was out of the question to apply the details of it unflinchingly and without regard to the opinions of the Indian parties. The purpose of the consultations was to ascertain the nature of the modifications if any which should be made in the principles of the Cripps plan before implementation. Unfortunately it soon became clear that no unanimity need be expected from the Indian leaders even upon the question of whether there should be one Constituent Assembly or two.

At this juncture the British Govt. took a dramatic decision. It decided to depute to India three Cabinet Ministers of the front rank to carry on the negotiations with the Indian parties in association with the Viceroy. To Indian leaders themselves this was no doubt a gratifying demonstration of the importance which was attached by the British Government to a solution of the Indian problem and it certainly hastened the crystallisation of a definite plan. By this time the Congress and the Muslim League were hardened in their respective stands and it was obvious that any plan which hoped to win the approval of both was bound to be something in the nature of a compromise between the two. A compromise was indeed what the Cabinet Mission's plan of May 16, 1946, attempted to achieve.

Its primary object was to ensure the continued unity of India for defence and international purposes. Subject to this it attempted to give the Muslim League the substance of what they wanted, namely, control over the North-Western and North-Eastern zones of India.

The plan almost came off. When the Cabinet Delegation left India at the end of June 1946 both parties had accepted the long term plan although on the question of the immediate arrangements to be made for the Govt. at the centre no
agreement had been reached. But experience showed that the plan was based upon too narrow a basis of common agreement for an enduring solution to be built upon it.

**FUNDAMENTAL DIVERGENCES**

The attitude of the two parties were fundamentally divergent. The Muslim League was intent upon securing control over the whole of the six Provinces claimed by them, but the Congress could not afford to sacrifice its supporters either in the N.W.F.P. and Assam or among the Sikhs in the Punjab. The differences between the parties were soon manifested in the form of a controversy about the interpretation of the celebrated "grouping clause." Ultimately this was settled by an authoritative exposition from the British Government which went in favour of the Muslim League and although the Congress accepted it, the psychological moment for settlement had by then gone.

Meanwhile a fresh page had been turned in Indian history by the appointment of the Nehru Cabinet on September 2. This was the inevitable sequel to the failure of all efforts to find a common measure of agreement between the parties for the formation of a Central Government. In the circumstances the alternatives were only three, - a purely League Government, a purely Congress Government, or a purely official Government. The last method was tried first when the "Caretaker Government" was set up in July 1946. But the time was gone when such an arrangement could endure as a long-standing system, the British Government had now gone too far to retreat and public opinion in England itself and abroad would not have tolerated a reversion to authoritarian rule in post-war conditions, the problems to be tackled were too difficult for a Government which did not possess the confidence of the people and the resistance from the Provincial Governments had also to be reckoned with.

A purely Muslim League Government too, was out of the question; it could not have administered the country without recourse to repressive measures and possibly the support of British forces. It soon became clear that a purely Congress Government also could not possibly remain in office for long in the absence of a political settlement.
ACTION AND REACTION

This lesson was furnished by the widespread disturbances which occurred all over Northern India in the months succeeding the assumption of office by the Congress. It is futile to enquire into the question of who were the primary instigators or whose was the responsibility for setting ablaze the long trail of action and reaction. It is sufficient to say that the existence of a large number of unappeased political opponents among the people would have been a threat to the stability of any one-party administration.

These events therefore underlined the extreme urgency of a settlement of the political question on lines which satisfied both parties. An attempt was first made to proceed on the basis of the Cabinet Mission’s plan. The Muslim League was given representation in the Central Government thus fulfilling the original intention and the point in controversy about grouping was clarified in favour of the Muslim League. But when it became clear that the League still remained unwilling to participate in the Constituent Assembly and cooperate in the further stages of the plan a major crisis loomed ahead.

The British Government has been criticised both in Parliament and in India for the decision that it then took to set a date for the demission of its political responsibilities in India. It has been said that the actual terms in which this declaration was made encouraged the rather naïve assumption that power would be handed over to whichever party was actually in control in the various Provinces at the appointed date and thus led to subversive agitation and violence in the Punjab and the N.W.F.P.

I do not deny the possibility that the British Government, being more familiar with the methods of political action habitual in the sophisticated conditions of England, underrated the danger of more vigorous and ruthless methods being attempted in India, but so far as the essential principle of the declaration is concerned, I am unable to see what other course it could have adopted.

The imposition of a new political system by the British Govt. was obviously impossible; it was equally obvious that the Cabinet Mission’s plan had no longer any chance of being proceeded with by common consent; the continuance of a composite Govt. was therefore possible only as an interim arrangement pending the adoption of an alternative solution.
BRITISH POLICY VINDICATED

On the other hand, the removal of the Muslim League members from the Govt. or the resignation of office by the Congress was likely in the existing conditions of tension to have had dangerous consequences, possibly leading to a civil war. What the British Govt. in these circumstances attempted to do was to dissolve the immediate crisis by the introduction of a new and dominating issue which might be expected to stimulate attempts at mutual accommodation on a new basis. And the ultimate result, it must be said, has vindicated this policy.

Regret has been widely expressed that a stable political structure could not be raised on the basis of the Cabinet Mission's plan. I must say frankly that in the conditions of the problem I do not share this view. The three-tier system which the plan recommended would, I fear, have been unduly complicated for the conditions of our country. Our pressing economic problems can be tackled only by a strong and energetic Govt. at the Centre. But the Constituent Assembly composed and functioning on the lines indicated in the plan could have produced only a cumbersome machine full of checks and balances which would have prevented the emergence of a strong and efficient Govt. and the recurrence of deadlocks would have prevented the taking of any energetic action when it was urgently needed.

The preference for the Cabinet Mission's plan is born of a sentimental yearning for the unity of India, this is undoubtedly a feeling worthy of great respect, but a vague and ineffective unity can be too great a price to pay for administrative inefficiency and endemic anarchy. I also feel that in the present conditions a precarious unity of this nature could not have endured and the country would have soon fallen apart in disastrous circumstances of disorder.

NEW VICEROY'S TASK

The Cabinet Mission's plan being out of the picture, the only alternative solution was division and this was quickly realised by the new Viceroy who replaced Lord Wavell in March. But it still remained for him to find an agreed basis of division, a task which, in view of even the recent pronouncements of the party leaders, might have been expected to present considerable difficulty.

The surprising speed and success with which this was accomplished must be attributed to the method adopted by Lord Mountbatten in his negotiations. In
brief this may be called the method of open diplomacy. In the past the British
Govt. being the repositories of power, had proceeded on the basis of unilateral
pronouncements; it declared what it would be pleased to grant; the political
parties could take it or leave it. It is not surprising that in most cases they
preferred to leave it.

Even as late as the time of the Cabinet Mission’s negotiations with the parties,
this was in principle the method adopted. Although the Mission’s proposals, both
as regards the long-term and the interim period, included features recommended
by the parties, these were finalized and presented without consultation. Lord
Mountbatten realized that this method would no longer suit the case. The
technique he adopted was to take the political leaders into his confidence and by
persuasion obtain their concurrence to his proposals. The British Govt.’s
statement of June 3 was prepared on this principle. Since both the parties had
already accepted its essential features, they could not very well refuse to
implement it. And once the main plan had been approved, progress was smooth
and rapid.

**INTRICATE PROBLEMS REMAIN**

I do not mean to say by any means that we are quite out of the wood yet. There
still remain intricate problems of partition to be solved and perhaps more difficult,
to be implemented. But in the process of working out the plan of division in detail
Lord Mountbatten has been adopting the same technique of open diplomacy with
remarkable success.

Lord Mountbatten’s new method of approach has already yielded rich dividends,
for it has given us control of the State some ten-and-a half months before the
deadline set by the British Governments’ declaration. There is a tendency in
some quarters to cavil at the outcome because of its being based on Dominion
Status. I am unable to understand this attitude. What we have always wanted
was the Transfer of Power; so long as this is secured. I do not see what
objection there can be to the label. The grant of Dominion Status, it has been
explained, was forced upon the British Government for reasons connected with
the mechanics of the transfer of power; for power could be transferred only to a
"competent receiver" and one would be forthcoming only after the Constitution
had been framed; this would have meant some delay even in the case of India; while in the case of Pakistan the Constituent Assembly has only just met. Besides, it should be borne in mind that Dominion Status is not a political condition which conforms to a rigid and definite pattern; the great advantage of British political institutions is their extreme flexibility which permits of considerable change in substance side by side with great conservatism in the matter of form and ceremonies.

REASONS FOR AGREEMENT

There is still one thing which requires explanation that is why, in view of the rigid party creeds of both the Congress and the Muslim League an agreement which fully met the demands of neither was so easily accepted by both.

This is a problem which will long perplex the historian of the future who will no doubt be in a better position to study the question in its proper setting, but my own feeling is that responsible leaders on both sides were by this time so alarmed at the rapid drift to conditions of anarchy that they felt it essential to reach a settlement even if it involved a partial abatement of their demands.

Hiren Mukherjee wrote in his article Milestones on the Road to Freedom – “Today is a red-letter day in India's annals. Two dominions emerge – India and Pakistan – as near to independence as any state, outside the category of great powers, can expect to be in an inter-dependent world. It is therefore a historic landmark, a day of good cheers and yet of a becoming solemnity. This inspite of the fact, which cannot be gainsaid, that few people in India today are in a mood of real rejoicing. To our wonted economic woes have lately been added the agonies of a senseless communal carnage that has seared India's soul and besmirched her fair reputation.34

Bengal and Punjab, two of India's vanguard provinces in the struggle for freedom, have had to pay cruelly for the country's leaders' inability to pull together and to accept artificial bifurcation of their soul. Freedom, besides coming in today's context more as a gift from Britain than as a yearned-for prize won by strenuous battle, carries rightly or wrongly, implications that India's militant nationalism may not find too savoury.35
The Times of India's headline was BIRTH OF INDIA'S FREEDOM Nation Wakes to New Life – Mr. Nehru calls for big effort from people “Incessant Striving Task of Future”

"WILD SCENES OF JUBILATION IN DELHI"

"FRENZIED ENTHUSIASM IN BOMBAY"

‘LORD MOUNTBATTEN GREETES PAKISTAN Mr. Jinnah Re-Affirms Firm 
Friendship with Britain’

“GO FORWARD IN TRANQUILITY AND PROSPERITY” – Attlee's Message To Free India.

An important phase in the history of India ended and a new one began amidst tears and smiles, bloodshed and thunderous roars of jubilation. The price paid for freedom can never be compensated again.

Partition

The Prime Minister Clement Attlee in his famous statement on Indian policy on 20th February, 1947 announced that “in the opinion of His Majesty’s Government the time had come for responsibility for the Government of India to pass into Indian hands.....His Majesty’s Government wish to make it clear that it is their definite intention to take the necessary steps to effect the transference of power into responsible Indian hands by a date not later than June 1948.”

The Congress High Command found the issue of Pakistan the only stumbling block to freedom at that hour of triumph. Gandhi was so unhappy at the impending division of India that he said:

"I can see clearly that the future of independence gained at this price is going to be dark.....But may be, all of them are right and I alone am floundering in darkness. I shall perhaps not be alive to witness it, but should the evil I apprehend overtake India and her independence be imperilled, let posterity know what agony this old soul went through thinking of it. Let it not be said that Gandhi was party to India's vivisection."

Although Jinnah was reluctant to have a Pakistan of his dream, not one decided by the British at the end he had to accept when Mountbatten showed him a message from Churchill that if Muslim League did not accept the plan, it would spell the death – Knell of his demand for Pakistan. On 3rd June the leaders met
the Viceroy and Mountbatten disclosed his intention that the transfer of power could be effected at a much earlier date than June 1948. On June 4 the exact date of the transfer of power was declared i.e., 15th August 1947.

The most impressive feature of Mountbatten's diplomacy was the speed with which he arrived at crucial decisions. After a series of lengthy interviews with Nehru and Jinnah he concluded that the latter was determined to have Pakistan at any cost, that the political situation was heading towards a crisis and that the Cabinet Mission plan would have to be abandoned in favour of partition. Thus, the Muslims held fast to their demand for a sovereign Pakistan, even at the price of provincial partition. The Sikhs and Hindus refused to remain in a Muslim majority Punjab; the Hindus in Bengal refused to submit to Muslim majority rule. This being the state of affairs, the Mountbatten plan took into account the consensus of the views of leaders of major political parties.\textsuperscript{43}

Nehru commending the proposal said he disliked the division of India, but at the same time India could not be allowed to bleed continuously and indefinitely. A swift surgical operation was preferable under such dire circumstances. The League Council overwhelmingly gave approval to the plan while the AICC session of 14\textsuperscript{th} & 15\textsuperscript{th} June approved it by 153 to 29 votes, with 36 abstentions.\textsuperscript{44}

A Reader's view was published in Times of India as a letter to the Editor regarding partition which was like this:

To the Editor, "The Times of India" Sir, - Mr.Jinnah is the real advocate of the partition of provinces on the plea that our community must not dominate the other community.

The separation of Sind from Bombay Province was one of the famous 14 points of Mr.Jinnah effected by Mr.Macdonald, the then Premier of England in his famous award at the time of the Round Table Conference in 1931. All the arguments of Mr.Jinnah for the separation of Sind are equally applicable to the Eastern Punjab and West Bengal – predominantly non-Muslim majority parts of the Provinces. It is natural they are unwilling to remain under a Muslim Raj. Under these circumstances the Muslim League can not now grumble against the partition of Bengal and the Punjab into Muslim and non-Muslim parts under separate Governor or as a separate unit.\textsuperscript{45}
April 9
The paper reported about the first provincial partition – Members of the Bengal Legislative Assembly on Friday took a historic decision. They decreed a second partition of the province which this time results from the free vote of the elected representatives of the people and by the wish of the community which so bitterly resented Lord Curzon's famous edict. The whole procedure did not occupy more than an hour and was marked by complete absence of excitement. The June 18 issue of the paper had retorted – Disorders Must Stop. It is difficult to understand the persistence of communal disturbances in various parts of the country. Over a fortnight has now elapsed since Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Mr. Jinnah and Sardar Baldev Singh broadcast to the Indian public their tentative acceptance of the British Government's plan for the transfer of power and appealed for a cessation of communal strife. The leader's decision has since been ratified by the All India Congress Committee and the Council of the All India Muslim League and the Sikh Community has signified its agreement.

The excerpts given below are from a letter sent by Jawaharlal Nehru on 22nd June 1947 to Lord Mountbatten on the sufferings of the people of Punjab.

"Dear Lord Mountbatten,
You have not returned from Kashmir yet and are due back tomorrow. I am, however, writing this to you rather late at night because I am distressed and the sending of this letter will perhaps give some relief to my mind.

2. I am writing about what is happening in Lahore and to some extent in Amritsar. Yesterday, I went with Gandhiji to Hardwar and visited the numerous refugee camps there. There were, till yesterday, about 32,000 refugees there from the Frontier Province and the Punjab. Most of them were from the Frontier Province. Daily some 200 or so fresh arrivals came there. Apart from these refugee camps in Hardwar, there are similar large camps at half a dozen other places, some in the U.P. and some in the Indian States like Patiala, Alwar etc. The condition of many of these people is pitiable although many relief societies and local govt. are trying to help them.

3. But this letter is mainly about the city of Lahore where fires are raging and consuming hundreds of houses. It is reported that 100 houses were burnt down
last night and this morning. During the previous two days about 250 houses were set to fire and burnt. At this rate the city of Lahore will be just a heap of ashes in a few day's time. The human aspect of this is appalling to contemplate.

4. Amritsar is already a city of ruins and Lahore is likely to be in a much worse state very soon.

5. If you will forgive a personal touch, I should like to tell you that my mother came from Lahore and part of my childhood was spent there. The fate of Lahore, therefore affects me perhaps more intimately than it might many other people who are not connected with that city.

6. Apart from newspaper reports, people have come from Lahore to see me today and they have given descriptions of what is happening there. Whether their accounts are correct or not, I cannot say. They tell me that repeatedly when houses were set to fire, the residents of those houses rushed out into the streets and lanes and these people were fired at by the police for breach of the curfew order. (The end of the long letter) – if it is continued on this scale for another ten days or so, there will be little left in the city of Lahore to save. If anything has got to be done, it must be done immediately.....Please forgive me for this long letter which you will get on your return from Kashmir. I tried to stop myself writing it, but the thought of Lahore burning away obsessed me and I could not restrain myself.

National Herald reported – 25 Lakh Non-Muslims Leave W.Punjab.

The Hindu reported – Attention on Partition of Bengal and Punjab – All India Boundary commission Appointed – Two Muslims : Two Hindus Ratio observed.

Two days later came the news-Dispute over Bengal Boundaries Begins Muslims demand Calcutta for Pakistan. Hindus ask territory for 27 millions. First skirmishes in war of nerves.

8th July issue contained – Gandhiji Suggests Alternative to India Bill.

Pre-partition agreement between Parties stressed – League asked to convene Conference excluding Viceroy – effort to harmonize future relations. Mahatma Gandhi suggested that the Muslim League should take the first step for calling a joint conference with the Congress wherein an agreed solution could be arrived at without the intervention of the Viceroy. He said that he did not intend that the joining conference should be held to undo Pakistan.
Pakistan should be treated as an established fact beyond dispute or discussion - he said.51

The Viceroy's personal reports tell us about his partition plan.

A. THE PARTITION PLAN

Viceroy's Personal Reports
Report No.1 April 2, 1947

VICEROY’S COVERING LETTER TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE

I was interested to read your views about the time table for the whole operation of transferring power in June 1948. I had already come to the conclusion here that a decision about what we are going to do would have to be taken at a considerably earlier date than we envisaged during our talks in London. I quite understand the point you made about the time required to prepare and get through Parliament the necessary legislation, but I hope whatever is decided that it will be possible to make an announcement of our intentions at an early date before legislation is introduced.52

Viceroy's Personal Reports
Report No.2 April 9, 1947

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11. After my last interview with Mr.Gandhi on April 4 I arranged for him to spend an hour with Ismay in order that the salient features of his scheme might be reduced to writing. This was done, but in two letters to Ismay Mr.Gandhi has affected to be most disappointed and has taken the line that the object of these talks was to produce a formal draft agreement and not a mere summary. In other words he was hoping for a Mountbatten - Gandhi pact I have written to him making it clear that at the present stage I have no intention of making up my mind on the solution I propose to recommend for it would be premature to prepare any cut and dried plan even in draft form. He has accepted my rebuff very gracefully.

12. I saw Mr.Jinnah first on Saturday, April 5 when he was in a most frigid, haughty and disdainful frame of mind. He started off by informing me that he had come to tell me exactly what he was prepared to accept. I said that I did not want to hear anything like that at such an early stage and
that the object of this first interview was merely that we should make each other's acquaintance. He came with his sister to dine alone with my wife and myself on Sunday, April 6 and stayed until well after midnight and it was only by then that the ice was really broken.

13. Our conversations continued on Monday, April 7 and he continued to give me the background of the negotiations with Mr. Gandhi and the Cabinet Mission. I tried by every means to bring him up to the point of saying that he would accept the Cabinet Mission plan and enter the Constituent Assembly.

14. He pointed out at great length that it was quite valueless entering the Constituent Assembly or even trying to go back to the Cabinet Mission plan, since the whole bases of the Cabinet Mission plan were that it had to be worked in a spirit of cooperation and mutual trust. In May 1946 there had been some prospect that this atmosphere so far from improving had taken a serious turn for the worse and it was clear that in no circumstances did congress intend to work the plan either in accordance with the spirit or the letter.

15. He said that India had now passed beyond the stage at which any such compromise solution could possibly work and he categorically called upon me to hand over power as soon as possible, preferably Province by Province and to let the Provinces themselves choose how they formed into groups. Alternatively, if I preferred it, I could have the groups myself.
if I accepted his arguments on the need for partition of India, then I could not resist the arguments that Congress were putting forward for the partition of the Punjab and Bengal. He was quite horrified and argued at great length on the need to preserve the unity of the Punjab and Bengal, pointing out that the Punjabis and Bengalis regarded their Provinces as unified territories which they would hate to see split up.

12. I told him that I had been so impressed by his arguments that I was prepared to accept them. He was delighted, but only until I pointed out that his arguments had also convinced me that the partition of India itself would be criminal. Then we started going round the mulberry bush again.

13. Finally I told him that I had deliberately refrained from discussing the scheme for the transfer of power with any member of Congress except Gandhi and that I was not adopting the scheme the latter had put up. I said no one had done any propaganda with me; but that I had come to the conclusion myself that what would be best for India would be a complete union with the strongest possible Central Government. In fact I would like to see the present Interim Govt. strengthened by his joining it himself, so that I could turn over to the Interim Govt. in toto in June 1948. If I had invited the Pope to take part in the Black Mass he could not have been more horrified. I hastened to assure him that I should not allow my personal feelings on what was good for India to interfere with working out a solution which would be acceptable to the people of India in their present frame of mind. But I warned him categorically that if I finally decided to recommend to His Majesty’s Government that there should be partition, then that principle would be applied right through to the Provinces and that partition would follow the boundaries of the Communal majorities; since I was convinced that the non-Muslim communities in the Punjab and Bengal would be just as likely to fight if put under Muslim domination as Muslim Leaguers would be likely to fight under Congress domination.

13. I told him that while I remained statutorily responsible, through the Secretary of State, to HMG and Parliament for the presentation of law and order in India, I would not agree to the partition of the armed forces, which
had already been so weakened by nationalisation that they could not possibly stand partition as well. I did however tell him that I would be prepared to have the matter investigated by the Defence Committee if a decision on partition were finally taken.

15. Although Jinnah did not lose his friendly attitude, his arguments became more and more futile and he ended by saying, “If you persist in chasing me with your ruthless logic we shall get nowhere.”

16. I regard Jinnah as a psychopathic case; in fact until I had met him I would not have thought it possible that a man with such a complete lack of administrative knowledge or sense of responsibility could achieve or hold down so powerful a position.

17. I finally pointed out that the most he could hope for from me was to allow Provinces and where applicable halves of Provinces, to decide whether they wished to join Pakistan. I pointed out that at this rate it looked as though he would get Sind and Western Punjab for certain; the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) would be a doubtful starter (and if he got it would cost him 3 ½ crores a year to keep the tribes quiet). In the east I pointed out that he would get the most useless part of Bengal, without Calcutta and if he wished it he could have Sylhet back from Assam.

19. I summed up by pointing out that the choice before him was likely to be:
   i) The Cabinet Mission plan which gave him all five Provinces of Pakistan with complete autonomy and with only a very weak Centre to which they would owe allegiance for three subjects which might be covered by the general term Defence. or
   ii) A very moth-eaten Pakistan, the eastern and north-west frontier parts of which were unlikely to be economic proportions and which would still have to come to some Centre for general defence subjects for a long while after we had left.

20. He said, “I do not care how little you give me as long as you give it to me completely. I do not wish to make any improper suggestion to you but you must realise that the new Pakistan is almost certain to ask for dominion status within the Empire.” I advised him to address himself to Sir Terence
Shove on this matter, since I could not possibly recommend to HMG that they should take on such a severe liability as the moth-eaten Pakistan was bound to be.

21. He ended up in a rather more reasonable frame of mind, regretting his inability to re-consider the Cabinet Mission plan. He said it could only have been worked in a spirit of the utmost co-operation and mutual trust which might have been possible a year ago; but that the atmosphere now so far from improving was continuously worsening and it was clear that in no circumstances did Congress intend to work the plan either in accordance with the spirit or the letter.

22. It seems quite clear that if any attempt is made to impose the Cabinet Mission plan on the Muslim League, they will resort to arms to resist it.

23. Having had nearly three weeks of incessant talks with all the leaders, I think I ought to let you know the lines on which my mind is working.

24. In the first place, I am convinced that we have got to make up our minds one way or the other in the very near future if we are to avert civil war and the risk of a complete breakdown of the administration. On this there is complete unanimity of opinion, both European and Indian, in this country. The Governor have not a shadow of doubt about it. My first conclusion, therefore, is that our decision must be announced before the end of May at the latest.

25. Secondly, I have very slender hopes of getting acceptance of the Cabinet Mission plan and I am very much afraid that partition may prove to be only possible alternative.

26. Thirdly, I feel strongly that the scheme of partition should be such as will not debar the two sides from getting together, even before we transfer power, if saner counsels prevail when the bewildering complications of partition are clearly realised.

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32. I am glad to say that the Governors have expressed their unanimous support of the line I have taken with the various Indian leaders; and all of them urge the greatest possible speed in making a decision and an announcement; for even the quieter Provinces feel that we are sitting on
the edge of a volcano and that an eruption might take place through any of the three main craters – Bengal, Punjab and NWFP – at any moment; with the risk of sporadic eruptions in Assam, Bombay and Bihar.\(^5\)

Viceroy’s Personal Reports
Report No.4 April 24, 1947

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21. This is the one bargaining counter I have left, for it is just possible that when faced with the full stupidity of what they are doing, the League might make some gesture to accept a compromise Cabinet Mission scheme and Congress in their desire to retain some form of unity might also be more forthcoming. But I am afraid this is a very pious hope and there are no signs that I shall succeed.

23. I have formed a special Committee consisting of Ismay, Mieville and Abell, who are working in the production, of a plan under my general direction. This would of course include the draft of an announcement by HMG on how they intend to transfer power on the due date. We four have met one of the principal leaders each day this week – Liaquat on Monday, Nehru Tuesday, Jinnah Wednesday and Patel on Friday. I have found that if one gets a single leader to give evidence before a small committee they are more reasonable and go out of their way to be helpful not only in pointing out difficulties which would be encountered from their own party, but also frequently drawing attention to the difficulties which would be raised by the other party.\(^5\)

Minutes of Viceroy’s Staff Meetings
Eleventh Meeting April 8, 1947

ITEM 5. ALTERNATIVE PLANS FOR THE FUTURE OF INDIA

His Excellency the Viceroy said that all the various factors on which a decision on India’s future would be based were fast becoming clarified. With each talk he had with the different Indian leaders new facets arose, new plans were suggested. Perhaps the outline plan put forward by Pandit Nehru was the best so far. Pandit Nehru had considered it probable that the 1935 Constitution (as at
present modified by practice) would remain in force with the least possible number of changes until a new Constitution was devised.

Mr. Abell gave his view that this was bound to be the case – for the whole of India if unity was maintained or for Hindustan in the event of partition.

His Excellency the Viceroy said that Pandit Nehru had also expressed the opinion that the only way in which the Gandhi scheme could be made use of was by offering Mr. Jinnah the leadership of the Interim Government. Pandit Nehru had emphasized that on no account should the strong central authority be dissolved until there were competent alternative authorities to which to hand over. In this opinion Pandit Nehru was in accordance with Rao Bahadur Menon.

Lord Ismay stressed the difficulty of committing to writing the various plans put forward by the Indian leaders. Nearly all their ideas were as yet inconclusive. His excellency the Viceroy said that this was to be expected in the present stage, when they had not really got down to thinking out the details.

Mr. Abell doubted whether Mr. Jinnah would come into the Interim Government as Premier if Dominion Status was granted. There would not, in such a case, be sufficient safeguards against domination by the Congress majority of the Government. His Excellency the Viceroy said that Mr. Jinnah had told him the Cabinet Mission's plan now. He added that he intended to make it clear to Mr. Jinnah that, if he decided to give the Provinces the right to decide their own future, that right would also have to apply to areas within the Provinces.

Lord Ismay then raised the question of the line to be taken by the Viceroy if one or more of the parts of a divided India asked to be allowed to remain within the Empire. At present, it was possible for the Viceroy to fend off approaches on these lines – but Lord Ismay said that he could believe, when it came nearer to the point, that it would be right to continue to discourage all applicants. Although it might well come about that it would be the weaker party or parties who wanted to stay on in the Empire, Lord Ismay gave his opinion that it was improbable in the extreme that the division of India would lead to open warfare between Hindustan and Pakistan and thus the embroilment of British Forces. He emphasized the necessity for the retention of bases. A possible solution might be a form of Locarno pact, whereby both the sides would be guaranteed.56
Minutes of Viceroy's Staff Meetings
Twenty-Seventh Meeting May 7, 1947

ITEM 1. AN ALTERNATIVE PLAN

Sir Eric Mieville explained that, at a meeting of the staff that afternoon, Rao Bahadur Menon had put forward the view that it was possible that Mr. Jinnah would not accept the plan in the Draft Announcement. He had therefore suggested that it would be desirable to have another plan ready, so that Mr. Jinnah could be given a clear choice of alternatives.

His Excellency the Viceroy said that he has always borne the possibility of a rejection of Mr. Jinnah in mind. However Mr. Jinnah had given no indication of any such intention. At all the interviews which he had with Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan, he had watched them carefully for any sign that they intended to reject the plan. They had given no such sign. Every test which he had applied had led him to the belief that they intended to accept the plan. If Mr. Jinnah really intended to spring a last moment surprise by rejecting it, he could not have played his part better towards making that surprise complete. Surely Mr. Jinnah's only reason for rejecting it, would be that he would hope, by continuing to bargain, to obtain more than the truncated Pakistan at present offered to him. Mr. Jinnah's real aim was to keep the British in India — and he might think that if he rejected the plan, he would make it more difficult for the British to go, by continuing his efforts without end to obtain a more favourable award.

His Excellency the Viceroy pointed out that the only other possible reason for a last minute rejection by Mr. Jinnah would be a sudden realisation that Pakistan was not practicable. When faced with full horrors of a truncated Pakistan, he might conceivably try to get out of it. But this was most unlikely. Mr. Suhrawardy had told him (His Excellency) that Mr. Jinnah had said that he would agree to an independent Bengal so presumably the latter would be quite satisfied with the North Western Pakistan alone. His Excellency the Viceroy said that he had asked Mr. K. S. Roy for his comments on an independent Bengal and Mr. K. S. Roy had declared himself in favour of it so long as certain safeguards were guaranteed.

Rao Bahadur Menon said that, from information which he had received, he believed that the conditions for which Mr. K. S. Roy would ask would be impossible
for Mr. Suhrawardy to accept. He went on to point out the ways in which Mr. Jinnah could boycott the present plan if he decided not to accept it. He would direct his followers not to attend the divided halves of the representatives to vote on the future of the Provinces and sit in the Constituent Assemblies. In Rao Bahadur Menon's opinion there was little doubt but that the Muslim League would obey their President's orders in this respect.

His Excellency the Viceroy pointed out that it would always be open to him, in such circumstances, to go ahead with the plan and allow the Congress minority to supply the voters and form the Constituent Assemblies and Ministries in the Provinces or Half-Provinces in which the Muslim League boycotted the proceedings. Such a Course would prove to Mr. Jinnah that two could play at his game. But it would lead to endless massacre and would be altogether out of accord with H.M.G's intention of handing over India in accordance with the will of the people. Therefore it would seem best to have ready an alternative plan which would involve the demission of power under the present Constitution. Such a plan would not, in the last resort, require the agreement of the Indian leaders. Provincial subjects would be demitted to existing Provincial Governments and Central subjects to the existing Central Government. His present intention was to confront Mr. Jinnah with his alternative the day before the proposed meeting with Indian leaders. He felt such a clear choice would make Mr. Jinnah far more likely to accept the plan in the Draft Announcement.

Mr. Scott put forward the view that if Mr. Jinnah even then refused to accept the plan in the Draft Announcement, his word should not be taken as final. The two alternatives should be put before the Muslim League working committee in the full glare of world publicity. He gave his opinion that demission of power under the existing Constitution would not wholly favour Congress. The Muslim League would presumably be in power in Bengal and the Punjab and because of the importance and bargaining power of these two Provinces, relations between them and the Congress centre would soon find their own level and the two parties would have to come together.\textsuperscript{57}
Minutes of Viceroy's Staff Meetings
Thirty – Eighth Meeting June 4, 1947

ITEM 14. THE ADMINISTRATIVE CONSEQUENCES OF PARTITION
Copies were handed round of a letter which had been received from Pandit Nehru that morning concerning the previous day's discussion in a meeting with the seven Indian leaders, of the paper entitled “The Administrative Consequences of Partition.” In this letter Pandit Nehru also reiterated his view that he did not like the idea of the Interim Government carrying on in the present manner for another two months.

His Excellency the Viceroy said that he had arranged for Rao Bahadur Menon to discuss this matter with Pandit Nehru. He noted that in his letter the latter suggested that he (the Viceroy) should discuss it with Mr. Krishna Menon. He pointed out that Pandit Nehru was continually asking him to see Krishna Menon. Whatever the merits of using the latter as a “contact man” might be, it was clear that Mr. Krishna Menon was Pandit Nehru's right hand man.58

Viceroy’s Personal Reports
Report No.10, June 28, 1947

2. The internal situation in the country is much quieter with the unfortunate exception of the Punjab, where trouble has flared up again in Lahore, Amritsar and the Gurgaon district. In the two former the trouble is confined to arson and stabbing on a widespread scale. It is carried out by “cloak and dagger” methods and is therefore very difficult to put down. In Gurgaon, where my wife went again on June 26 there has been a long standing feud between the Meos and Jats and now that additional troops with increased vehicles and wireless facilities have been sent in, I hope that we shall be able to control the troubles. A similar Meo-Jat flare up in the United Provinces was dealt with very quickly, as the authorities were ready for it.

3. Every responsible person is particularly worried about the situation in Lahore and Amritsar, for if we cannot stop this arson both cities will soon be burnt to the ground. In his interview with me on June 23, Jinnah begged me to be utterly ruthless in suppressing trouble in Lahore and
Amritsar. He said, "I don't care whether you shoot Muslims or not, it has got to be stopped." On June 24 Nehru came to see me and talked in the same strain. He suggested turning over the cities to the military, withdrawing the police and declaring martial law.

4. I accordingly asked Jenkins for his views by secraphone, so that I could raise the matter in cabinet on the following day. Jenkins replied to the effect that he had discussed a similar proposal on June 23 with the Lahore Area Commander and the Inspector General of police and later with the local party leaders and had decided against it. His reasons were that since decisive action by troops against "cloak and dagger" activities was out of the question, martial law might well fail and the troops would soon be exposed to the same communal attack as the police. To sum up, Jenkins, while admitting that the situation was causing him grave anxiety, did not think that martial law was the answer to trouble of this kind.

5. The meeting of the Cabinet on June 25 was a very difficult one. I was violently attacked by leaders of both parties for the complete failure of the 'British' to maintain law and order under Section 93. Nehru, as usual, completely lost control of himself and demanded the sacking of every official, from the Governor downwards, that same day. I had to reprimand him publicly for this irresponsible suggestion. I must admit he took the rebuke very well. Patel then rent against the British, saying that in the days when they were putting down Congress and freedom movements, they had no difficulty in keeping law and order. He said it was a case of the British covering up for the British. I told him I could not take such a slur and he immediately said he had not meant it as a slur. Then the league started attacking me and saying that there would soon be no city left for them to inherit. Baldev chimed in with a "shoot everyone on sight" cry; upon which Patel pointed out that the only people shot by the troops were the wretched householders who were forced into the streets during curfew hours when their houses were set on fire!

5. Finally I obtained unanimous agreement that the Governor should be invited to form a Security Committee of the local leaders of the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs; that this Committee should draw up an agreed list of
local officials in whom all three parties would have confidence; and that they should be put in power wherever possible. I suggested that the Security Committee should meet every day and that all the leaders, from the High Commands downwards, should use every effort to call off all violence. These proposals were well received and I passed them on to Jenkins at once. I am glad to say that the news from Lahore is now better.59

The people of India in their variety found ways natural to themselves to celebrate the coming of their freedom on 15 August 1947. In Mysore a Dakota airplane flew over the city and showered multi-coloured flowers on the heads of humanity below. In Trivandrum students held a cycle rally with national flags on their bikes. Prisoners in Cochin were released. In Coimbatore the mill owners association gave each of their workers five rupees. In Bodinayakannur sweets were distributed to children. The Dowager Zamindarni of Bod waived the collections of money owed to her in arrears. Gandhi invited everyone to a day of fasting and extra spinning.60

The Congress had repeatedly sworn by the principles of national integration and secularism. But when the occasion came to oppose partition and stand by proclaimed ideals and goals, its top leadership readily accepted the partition plan. Only one man, who was unfairly and unjustly condemned and ridiculed by Muslim League leaders was irreconciled to his party’s decision and stayed aloof from the festivities that accompanied independence. He was Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. The dawn of freedom had arrived, but at what cost! Partition symbolized his personal tragedy, the defeat and negation of all that he had stood for, just as it reflected the failure of the Congress to keep the country united. He trudged on and on in riot-ravaged Bihar and Bengal to provide the healing touch. Here was the Mahatma in body and spirit.61

Regarding partition the leaders expressed their views in different ways but one thing was clear that Partition had become inevitable. Gandhiji pleaded for support to the stand taken up by the Working Committee. Explaining that he himself was not happy over partition plan, Gandhiji said that world opinion would go against them if they did not lend support to the decision taken by the leaders whom they themselves had put in power.62
Govind Ballav Pant said—"this was the only way to accept freedom and liberty for the country." Congress President Kripalani said—"If the majority of the people in Bengal, Punjab NWFP and Baluchistan wished to secede, we could not consistently with our principles compel them not to do so." Maulana Azad said—"There is need for immediate settlement. The Congress stood by the ideal of a United India but it was also committed to the principle of self determination and was against coercing any unwilling areas to join the Union."

STATE PAPER NOT SHELVED.

The division is only of the map of the country and not in the hearts of the people and I am sure it is going to be short lived partition.

The National Herald in its issue of 29.06.1947 reported—"India's international relation and obligation will remain unaffected even after Pakistan comes into existence. Position in this regard has been clarified in the India bill.

Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre asked Mountbatten in their interview "In researching for Freedom at Midnight we made the astonishing discovery that Jinnah was dying of tuberculosis in 1947 and that his doctor didn't expect him to live for more than six or seven months. Were you aware of this?"

The reply they got from Mountbatten was—"Not only was I not aware, but nobody was aware. Nobody had a clue. I'm glad I didn't because I just don't know what I would have done if I'd known that. You see, Jinnah was so much of a one-man band. If somebody had told me he's going to be dead in six months would I then - I am asking myself this question now - would I have said, Let's hold India together and not divide it? Would I have put back the clock and held the position? Most probably."

What would have happened, it is difficult to say now. But Pakistan came into existence, consisting of regions which had steadily opposed separation from India — and carved by a man who, except for the last decade of his life, was a more ardent Nationalist than any Muslim of his generation. It started as a movement with no positive goal except opposition to the Congress, vitalised by forces that had no real interest in India's partition and utilised by Churchill for indefinitely postponing India's freedom. Too late, the Congress leaders realised
the price they were being compelled to pay for their failure to be accommodating when Jinnah was prepared to be reasonable and could control the forces that adopted his banner. Opportunism on all sides had exacted a terrible price. Some people believe that if the Cabinet Mission plan of 1946 had been allowed to be worked, the unity of India would have been preserved. They say that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru made a great tactical blender when he remarked on 7 July 1946: "We are not bound by a single thing except that we have decided to go to the Constituent Assembly." On the 14th of August when Mountbatten delivered the message of greetings and Godspeed to the new dominion of Pakistan from His Majesty the King of England, such reflections were far from the mind of the Pakistani inheritors of British power. For the moment they were dazzled by the unexpected spectacle of the hauling down of the Union Jack and its replacement by the green flag of Pakistan. They were lost in dreams of the revival of days when the Righteous Caliphs held court in the sacred city of Medina. The past and not the future held them in its grip. The partition which was made after much consideration and reconsideration could not ultimately satisfy anyone. It created some permanent problems. Radcliffe had made certain variations from the notional boundary as announced on June 3. The problem was complicated in both Punjab and Bengal and the claims of the two different parties were widely different. Radcliffe submitted a written report mentioning the areas to be allotted to India or Pakistan. He also left maps demarcating the areas of India and Pakistan. There were often discrepancies between the two. He did not mention, in case of any discrepancy between the report and the map, which would prevail. This caused a lot of confusion, particularly in Bengal. It can be said that a big country which geography, history, mountains and rivers had made one was divided in a most cavalier manner. Our leaders were so tired and anxious that they ignored the warning of Radcliffe that it would be risky to proceed on the basis of taking August 15 as the deadline. Probably Nehru also reasoned that he had spent long years of his life in British jails and, therefore, he was keen to come into power as early as possible. In the words of Nehru - "by cutting off the head we will get rid of the headache."
Even as the country emerged from travail and suffering into freedom, the galloping flames of civil conflict raged fiercely with ominous forebodings. In a fit of religious frenzy and hatred people were slaying one another on a scale unmatched and unequalled in the annals of fratricidal clash. It was nothing sort of armed warfare. Within an area of 30,000 square miles some 10,000,000 people were on the move between India and Pakistan. Murder, rape and pillaging were the order of the day both in East and West Punjab. Minorities on both sides of the border suffered severely on account of these atrocities.\textsuperscript{73}

The newspapers covered day to day features as independence came nearby. The Hitvada of 1947 recorded the various reactions related to Partition Mahatmaji To Stake His All To Prevent Partition – Speculations in Political Circles – With 3 days left for June 2 Conference when the Viceroy Lord Mountbatten will communicate to Indian leaders the British plan of procedure to give effect to the February statement there is little disposition in political circles to anticipate the nature of the plan, though there has been a spate of unofficial forecasts during recent weeks both from India and London.\textsuperscript{74}

The June 1 issue contained – Refer Division Question To People of India Congress Won Elections On Quit India Issue – V.G.Deshpande’s challenge to Jawaharlal Nehru – In a letter to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on the eve of the leaders’ conference, the General Secretary of the All India Hindu Mahasabha, Mr.V.G.Deshpande suggests that the proposal for division of India should be referred to the people and their views ascertained by plebiscite. He says the issue of dividing the country has never been put to the electorates. Mr.Deshpande says that in the past nine months several thousands of men, women and children have been killed, wounded and dishonoured and if Pakistan is conceded after so much of sacrifice and suffering it would be a betrayal of all those who have undergone persecution for the cause of undivided India.\textsuperscript{75}

Gandhiji Reconciles Himself to British Plan – Division agreed Upon To End Strife Belief in Joint Plan For Peace

Appeal to Jinnah to invite Congress

Gandhi said “it would have been right if India had remained united. But the force of circumstances had compelled the Congress Working Committee to accept
division of the country. Gandhiji pointed out that it was not out of any threat or coercion that division was agreed upon, but to put an end to strife and disorder going on at present.  

Next day's paper published — The first firm step on the road to division was taken today when the Viceroy Lord Mountbatten met seven Indian leaders in conference at 10 a.m. The Conference, it is understood, discussed the setting up of a small high-power committee which will concern itself with various aspects involved in implementing H.M.G.s plan for two Dominions.  

In the paper of 10th June came the news — League Council Accepts British Plan — Division of Punjab and Bengal Deplored Minorities' Rights to be protected in Pakistan. Tear-Gas used to disperse Khaksar demonstration.  

June 19th issue wrote — Division of Army on Principles of Self-Determination Military Personnel To Be Consulted Before Partition — At a recent poll taken by Defence Authorities in all the three commands on the issue of partition of the army, 97% of the men understood to have opposed division. In view, however of the expected political changes and the emergence of another State, the army has to be partitioned.  

July 1 issue brought forth —  
Attention on Partition of Bengal and Punjab — All India Boundary Commission Appointed — Two Muslims : Two Hindus Ratio observed.  

July 3 issue covered the dispute over Bengal boundaries —  
Dispute over Bengal boundaries begins — Muslims demand Calcutta for Pakistan Hindus ask territory for 27 millions First skirmishes in war of Nerves  
Gandhiji suggests alternative to India Bill — Pre-partition agreement between parties stressed — League asked to convene conference excluding Viceroy — effort to harmonize fulltime relations. Mahatma Gandhi suggested that the Muslim League should take the first step for calling a joint Conference with the Congress wherein an agreed solution could be arrived at without the intervention of the Viceroy. He said that he did not intend that the joint Conference should be held to undo Pakistan. Pakistan should be treated as an established fact beyond dispute or discussion — he said.  

The Times of India, Bombay Edition highlighted in its Editorial about the 1st Provincial Partition.
Members of the Bengal Legislative Assembly on Friday took a historic decision. They decreed a second partition of the province which this time results from the free vote of the elected representatives of the people and by the wish of the community which so bitterly resented Lord Curzon’s famous edict. The whole procedure did not occupy more than an hour and was marked by complete absence of excitement.\textsuperscript{63}

The Editorial in June 18 issue had published – Disorders Must Stop

It is difficult to understand the persistence of communal disturbances in various parts of the country. Over a fortnight has now elapsed since Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Mr. Jinnah and Sardar Baldev Singh broadcast to the Indian public their tentative acceptance of the British Government’s plan for the transfer of power and appealed for a cessation of communal strife. The leader’s decision has since been ratified by the All India Congress Committee and the Council of the All India Muslim League and the Sikh Community has signified its agreement.\textsuperscript{64}

At the dawn of Independence the feeling of the nation was one mixed with joy and sorrow. It was indeed rejoicing to get back the independence. It was also a matter of sorrow to see the plight of the millions of brothers and sisters of East Bengal and West Punjab groaning under the weight of Pakistan and in distress taking refuge in India to find a new living. In the wake of independence and partition of India communal passion mounted with redoubled violence. And the Hindu – Muslim blood flooded the sub-continent. The Hindus fled Pakistan and the Muslims left India to save their lives.\textsuperscript{85}

The news of communal troubles began to cast deep gloom in the capital. It was the news of murder, death and cruelty. It was learnt that in the East Punjab Hindu and Sikh mobs had attacked Muslim villages. They were burning house and killing innocent men, women and children. Exactly the same reports came from the West Punjab. Muslims were indiscriminately killing men, women and children of Hindu and Sikh communities. The whole of the Punjab, East and West, was becoming a graveyard of destruction and death.\textsuperscript{86}

The uprooted millions were in a terrible mental state. They had been driven from their homes under conditions of indescribable horror and misery. Not many had the time to plan their evacuation, most had to move out of the shortest possible notice. They had been subjected to terrible indignities. They had witnessed their
near and dear ones hacked to pieces before their eyes and their houses ransacked, looted and set on fire by their own neighbours. They had no choice but to seek safety in flight, filled with wrath at what they had seen and full of anguish for numberless missing kinsmen who were still stranded in Pakistan and for their womenfolk who had been abducted.87

All classes of people joined the stream of refugees. There were the rich, who had been reduced overnight to poverty and penury; there were petty tradesmen and office workers for whom the future was bleak and uncertain and there were the Sikhs who had borne the main burnt of the communal fury.88 Bengal, particularly Calcutta was also burning in the fire of communal hatred. The situation might have gone out of control but it was Gandhiji who saved the situation. He began 'a fast to end only if and when sanity returns to Calcutta.' The entire police force of North Calcutta undertook a 24 hour fast in sympathy. The situation came under control but the scar left a permanent impression and a horrifying memory in the state.

From the Viceroy's Personal Reports obtained from the National Archives Report No.17, August 16, 1947 contains the Memorandum by the Governor of the Punjab on the main criticisms against the Punjab Government for its handling of the current disturbances – which is as follows:

Government House, Lahore,
August 4, 1947

Dear Lord Mountbatten,

Your Excellency asked me on July 20 to prepare a memorandum on the main criticism against the Punjab Government for its handling of the current disturbances. I enclose a memorandum which is, I am afraid, rather sketchy; I have a good deal of other work on my hands and though most of the material required for a full survey is on record, it takes time to get it arranged.

2. I have not dealt in the memorandum with the allegation of partiality made at different times against me personally by the Congress and the Muslim League. Indian politicians and journalists seldom realise that a Governor maintains very close touch with the Governor General and takes no important action without the Governor General's knowledge. I am content to leave it to Lord Wavell and Your
Excellency to decide whether my letters and telegrams since I took charge in the Punjab on April 8, 1946 have disclosed bias for or against any party. These documents give a complete account of political conditions in the Punjab as they appeared to me from time to time and my appreciations and recommendations for action were generally approved both by Lord Wavell and by Your Excellency. In only one case has a critic dared to make a specific allegation — in a recent editorial in Dawn it was stated that the editor “had reason to believe” that I was attempting to influence the higher authorities and the Chairman of the Boundary Commission in favour of the Sikhs. The words “the higher authorities” in this context can only mean the Governor General and Cabinet Ministers in the United Kingdom. I have certainly kept Your Excellency informed of the Sikh view, but I have never advised that it should be accepted and I have no direct contacts of any kind with Cabinet Ministers at home — except that during disturbed periods I have, in accordance with the standing orders, sent a daily factual telegram describing events to the Secretary of State. Nor have I discussed the boundary problem with the Chairman of the Boundary Commission or attempted to influence him or his colleagues in any way, directly or indirectly. These facts can be proved and the falsity of this specific allegation indicates the quality of the more general allegations of partiality.

Yours sincerely

E.M. Jenkins

Along with the partition the permanent address of thousands of people became the refugee camps. Innumerable people could not survive to taste the fruit of independence. The British left the country contended, successful giving birth to two dominions setting them against each other. A postscript telephoned from Bombay on the evening of August 17 depicts the departure of the British:

The departure of British troops went off extremely well amidst scenes of great enthusiasm.

Our reception in Bombay was far more remarkable than in Delhi. The local police estimated the crowd as the greatest in the history of the city. Several hundreds of thousands lined the many miles of route, often breaking through the cordon and stopping our open car through sheer weight of numbers. The
demonsstration was all the more remarkable since the drives from Government House to the Docks and later to the Prime Minister's party were not intended as events in themselves. The crowd definitely shouted out, "England Zindabad" and "Jai England." 89

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