PREFACE

This thesis seeks to explain how the First World War generated immense excitement in the Punjab and the way the government and the Indian nationalist leaders tried to make political capital out of it. It brings out in bold relief the conflicting policies pursued by the government and the Indian nationalists. That was necessary because these policies worked up the excitement to a frenzied pitch and brought about the inevitable clash on 13 April 1919 at Jallianwala Bagh.

A number of essayists and historians have written about what happened in the Punjab in 1919 and have also referred to one or the other facet of what happened there during the War years (1914–18) but none has given so far a satisfactory account of the impact of the First World War on the Punjab. Their main concern was the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre and they have touched on the War and the Punjab only by way of an introduction to their main topic. This thesis has concentrated its attention primarily on the War and the changes that it brought about in the Punjab.

There have been broadly two views on the impact of the First World War on the Punjab. They reflect the two views on the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, one propounded by the British imperialist and the other by the Indian nationalist writers. The genesis of the first lies in the theme built up in the Disorders Inquiry Committee (popularly
known as Hunter Committee) Report and of the second in the Report of the Congress Inquiry Sub-Committee of 1920. The two themes have continued to have their brilliant exponents ever since first propounded; the former was expounded by Michael D’Ouyer in *India as I Know It* and Ian Colvin in *The Life of General War* in the twenties and Rupert Furness in *Massacre at Amritsar* and Arthur Swinson in *Six Minutes to Sunset* in the sixties; the latter has been harped on in such works as Alfred Hundy’s *Present Position with Special Reference to the Punjab Disturbances*, E.G. Horniman’s *Amritsar Massacre and Our Duty to India*, Pearsy Mohlan’s *An Imaginary Rebellion and How It was Suppressed* and in the numerous writings and speeches of M.K. Gandhi, Motilal Nehru, B.R. Das, Jawahar Lal Nehru and other nationalist leaders of India.

Broadly speaking the first group of writers has argued that the Indians had by and large supported the British in their war against Germany but there was a microscopic minority who had all through the war sought to sabotage war efforts. They had become a dangerous group by the close of the war and that had forced the Government to pass the Rowlatt Act. This had become necessary because the group could not be choked, as during the war, by the Defence of India Act. The Indian political leaders had cleverly used the passage of that ‘necessary’ Act to work up the people to achieve their political end of building up a large following. The second group of writers has argued that Indians gave whole hearted support to the British but once the need for Indian support was over the British forgot their solemn
promises and passed the Howlatt Act to crush the genuine political aspirations of the Indians. The Howlatt Act symbolised for this group of writers the ingratitude of the clever British.

In the heat generated by the controversy between the two viewpoints mentioned above, exponents of both the sides have ignored a deep probe into the impact produced by a war the like of which had never before been fought. The present thesis is an attempt to partly fill that lacuna. It critically examines the way that war impinged on an Indian province which while doing more for the British than any other province during that titanic conflict also gave a new fillip to the Indian nationalist movement soon after that conflict ended. It seeks to resolve what looks like a paradox.

The thesis is largely based on the voluminous archival material lying in the National archives of India. The most useful of the material there has been the Secret Proceedings in the Home (Political) Departments of the Government of India and the Punjab for the years 1913 and 1920. The in camera evidence given before the Hunter Committee (1919-20), Vols. VI & VII lying in those proceedings proved a mine of information for this thesis. The other primary source of great relevance to the subject I have consulted for the preparation of this thesis has been the private correspondence of the Viceroy's and the Secretaries of State for India during the period. For the first time this valuable source material
has been tapped in order to understand the working of the government's mind. I have also gone through all the available printed literature dealing with the subject in the libraries of Northern India, particularly those at Amritsar, Ludhiana, Chandigarh, Patiala, Delhi and Calcutta. With a view to taking a critical note of the Punjabi reaction to the war, I have also examined the contemporary Indian newspapers and journals. Conscious however of the fact that because of the wartime restrictions imposed on the press, true feelings of the people were only expressed in those newspapers and journals in an extremely guarded language, I have placed more reliance on the secret fortnightly reports of the Punjab Government submitted to the Government of India at regular intervals dealing exclusively with the impact produced by the war in the Punjab. The series was especially started by the Punjab Government at the instance of the Government of India in order to know the real feelings of the Punjabis under the impact of the war. They were exclusively meant for use of governments and written with complete frankness by the officials. The officials knew that this was called for because the Government was to base its policies on these secret reports.

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