CHAPTER X
FORMATION OF PAKISTAN
THE TRAGEDY OF STEPS

Muslim League Takes To Direct Action — Holocaust For Minorities

The Muslim League Council resolved on June 6, 1946, to accept the Cabinet Mission scheme. It authorised Jinnah to negotiate with the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, about the proposed interim government at the Centre till the final transfer of power was executed. After talks with party leaders, the Viceroy invited 14 persons to join his Executive Council. He also announced that if one party declined the invitation, he would appoint others. The Congress Party declined the invitation on June 25 whereas the Muslim League accepted it. The next day the Viceroy made another announcement postponing formation of the interim government. This infuriated Jinnah and the Muslim League, and they accused the Cabinet Mission and the Viceroy of eating their words. A meeting of the All-India

2. Ibid., p. 221; Moon, Divide and Suit, p. 56; also see Gauba, Y.L., Inside Pakistan, Rajkamal Publications, Delhi (1948) Pp. 40-41. In accordance with the Cabinet Mission, a constituent assembly was elected. On September 2 an interim government headed by Pandit Nehru took office. Between May 16 and September 2 the Muslim League adopted a vacillating attitude. At first the League accepted the scheme although it negated a Pakistan visualised by Jinnah. The League later withdrew its resolution rejecting the scheme and turned its attention to direct action. As a result the League went into the wilderness of revolt. The interim government gained prestige while Jinnah quibbled over the scheme. He was distracted with envy at the sudden power and
Muslim League was summoned in Bombay on July 29. It resolved to withdraw its previous acceptance and to reject the Cabinet Mission and further to launch "direct action" for vindicating its honour and for getting rid of the present slavery under the British and contemplated future under Hindu domination. The Council called upon the working committee to prepare forthwith a programme of struggle to be launched, if necessary.

From then onward, the speeches made by Jinnah and other Muslim League leaders became more and more provocative and indirectly threatened non-Muslims. In his speech at the Muslim League council meeting, Jinnah said: "Never have we in the whole history of the League done anything except by constitutional methods. But today we bid good-bye to constitutional methods. Today we have forged a pistol and are in a position to use it." Nawabzada Liaqat Ali Khan, Abdur Rab Nishtar, Shaukat Hyat Khan and Feroze Khan Noon

prestige which Nehru and his colleagues had attained. The Governor-General, who was sympathetic to the League, however, made it easy for Jinnah's nominee to join the interim government without accepting the Cabinet Mission scheme or indeed without accepting conditions of any kind. And so while within the interim government the Muslim League was committed to bring to fruition the Constituent Assembly and other details of the scheme, outside it had launched "direct action" in many parts of the country.


5. Ibid
incited the Muslims with their provocative and violent speeches, pouring torrents of scorn on non-Muslims. Direct action, therefore, meant the use of violent means in speech and action against non-Muslims. This was the interpretation given by Muslim League leaders themselves. The cry of Islam in danger inflamed the Muslim masses. Non-Muslims were appalled at the unveiled threats. The British Press was unanimous in condemning the line taken by Jinnah.

6. The Statesman, 1-5-1946; sittar i a ag (1946), Vol. I, p. 96. Liaqat Ali Khan, General Secretary, All-India Muslim League, told the Associated Press of America that direct action meant "resorting to non-constitutional methods; it can take any form whatever that may suit the conditions under which we live." They could not eliminate any method. Direct action meant any action against the law. Abdur Rauf Mithtar, leader of the Muslim League in North-West Frontier Province, declared: "Pakistan can only be achieved through shedding blood of ourselves and, if need be, of others. Muslims are no believers in Ahimsa." Shaukat Hyat Khan said: "Punjab Muslims do not believe in non-violence and should not, therefore, be given cause for grievances because once the Muslim lion is infuriated it would become difficult to subdue him." Feroze Khan Noon observes: "I tell you this much that if we find that we have to fight Great Britain for placing us under one central Hindu Raj, the havoc which Muslims will play will put to shame what Chaghi Khan and Maliki did. We cannot eliminate any method. Direct action means any action against the law."

7. Khosla, G.D., Storm Over Azure, p. 44. News Chronicle: "There can be no excuse for the wild language and the abandonament of negotiations which marked the meeting of the League Council. What precisely does Mr. Jinnah think he will achieve by embarking upon violence and at a moment when so substantial a part of his claim has been conceded? Does he think that communal strife will benefit India or even the Muslim part of India? He has only to look at other parts of Asia to see what lies at this end of that journey. It is hopeless, of course, if Mr. Jinnah is wedded to complete intransigence, if, as now seems the case, he is really thirsty for a holy war." Other papers expressed similar views.
The Muslim League took immediate steps to implement the momentous decision. A council of action was appointed to draw up a programme of direct action and to devise ways and means of executing it. The members of the council of action were Liaqat Ali Khan, Nawab Iftikhar Hussain of Gondot, Mustaz Rehman, Shaukat Hyat Khan, Iftikhar-ud-din, Begum Shah Nawaz, Abdur Rab Nishtar, I.I.Chundrigar (both Nishtar and Chundrigar became members of the Interim Government of India in 1946-47), and H.C.Suhrawardy, Premier of Bengal in 1946 and later Prime Minister of Pakistan. The meetings of the council of action were held in secret, but the results of its deliberations were made manifest a few days later by events which provided the prologue to a long and horrible drama.

The date fixed for launching the direct action was August 16. The Muslim League Government of Bengal declared the day a public holiday to enable people to "celebrate" it. On that day Calcutta witnessed a carnage as had not been witnessed in the last three decades of India's communal riot-ridden history. The recounting of the holocaust makes a harrowing story. In five days in Calcutta the fire brigades had to attend to 900 calls of arson. The total number of those killed is conservatively estimated at 5,000. There were riots in other parts of India on or after that date. It was

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10. Ibid.

virtually a civil war. The brutal Calcutta killings had their repercussions in Bihar and U.P. where Muslims suffered at the hand of the Hindus. These were followed by murder, loot, arson, rape and abduction of Hindu women on a large scale in Koakhali and Tipperah districts of Bengal in October, 1946.

On September 11, Jinnah offered to the Hindus the choice between Pakistan and civil war. He also suggested immediate exchange of population to avoid communal riots. All over the country there were signs of a breakdown of the administration. Lord Wavell had proved incompetent to cope with the situation. The legacy he left his successor, Lord Mountbatten, has been described by Allen Campbell Johnson thus: "In short, we have the people rioting; the princes falling out among themselves; the entire Indian Civil service and police running down; and the British left sceptical and full of foreboding."

Trouble kept simmering in Punjab. The existence of a coalition Government in the province — considered by the Muslim League as the cornerstone of Pakistan — was an eyesore to it. It was on the look-out for an opportunity to wage war on the coalition Government. The opportunity came in January 1947. Because of an alarming

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12. Ibid, p. 44
13. Ibid, p. 39
15. Campbell-Johnson, A., Mission With Mount Batten, p. 40
increase in their numbers and activities, the Punjab Government notified on January 24 that private armies (including the Muslim National Guards and the Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh) would be considered unlawful associations. Simultaneously the police raided the headquarters of the National Guards in Lahore. Raja Chaznafor Ali Khan (later a member of the Interim Government of

16. Pyare Lal, Mahatma Gandhi, The Last Phase, Vol. II, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad (1958), p. 49; Talib, Muslim League Attack, p. 20. The Muslim National Guards, a volunteer corps, was organised by the Muslim League in 1938. Like the Khaksars (Khaksars were a militant Moslem body. The movement was started in 1931 by Inayatullah Khan Masurqui of North-west Frontier Province Educational Service who had resigned his post to organise a brotherhood of Muslims, dedicated to "social service" and ultimately, and somewhat vaguely, to the attainment of political power. The movement spread slowly and sporadically from its headquarters at Lahore and in the pre-war period assumed a quasi-military character. The Khaksars drilled and marched in khaki and, like contemporary Nazi formations, carried spades, a nasty weapon at close quarters. The organisation was financed by Muslim sympathisers and by Inayatullah's own substantial means. See Coupland, A., The Constitutional Problem in India (1936-1942) p. 49) It had an elaborate command. It was the militant arm of the Muslim League and its membership was kept secret. It had its own centres and headquarters, where its members received military training and such instructions as would make them effective in times of rioting. Regular tests were given to the Muslim National Guards in fighting and attacks. Muslim women were taught first aid.

17. Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh. This non-political organisation was started by Keshav Rao in 1925. Its headquarters are at Nagpur and now Acharya Kishorekumar is its chief leader. It aims at strengthening Hindus physically, intellectually and morally and also at reviving Hindu culture.


19. Talib, Muslim League Attack, p. 58
India) described it as "an attempt to ban an important part of the activities of the Muslim League itself."\(^{20}\) The police seized 1,000 hatchets, swords, pistols, daggers and badges. Those Muslim League leaders who opposed the search were arrested. They included the Nawab of Sambot, the Punjab Muslim League chief who later became Premier of West Punjab, Feroze Khan Noon, later Prime Minister of Pakistan; Muntaz Daultana and Chaukat Hyat Khan.

On January 26 the Muslim League decided to launch an agitation, "ostensibly for safeguarding civil liberties in Punjab" but actually to force the government to resign. Sixteen Muslim League M.L.A.s. were arrested. The agitation spread and became more and more violent. The police, 75 per cent of whom were Muslims, remained silent spectators. The foulest and filthiest abuse was heaped daily on the head of Sir Khizar Hyat Khan, Punjab Premier, and his Muslim colleagues in the Cabinet. Non-Muslim ministers came in for severe castigation minus muds and abuse. Every day processions were taken out to achieve Pakistan by any means. Veiled Muslim women also took out processions daily in Lahore and raided the Secretariat.


\(^{22}\) Ibid

\(^{23}\) The Tribune, 26-1-1947

\(^{24}\) The Tribune, 27-1-1947; Talib, *Muslim League Attack*, p. 67

\(^{25}\) Ibid

\(^{26}\) *Modern Review*, Calcutta, March 1947, p. 176
The agitation was ostensibly against the Khizer Ministry, but as the Ministry was supported by the Congress and the Akali parties, it soon assumed a communal colour. After the middle of February, 1947 the agitation took a more violent turn. There were several train holds-up at Ludhiana, Gujranwala and other places. An attempt was also made to wreck the Frontier Mail near Nawalpindi. At Amritsar a Sikh constable was beaten to death by a Muslim mob on February 24. The police had to fire several times at several places. Courts were raided and files tampered with by mobs at various places. This upsurge of violence in western Punjab arose from the belief among the Muslim Leaguers that they would not be punished.

At this critical juncture the British Prime Minister, Mr. Attlee, declared that "necessary steps" would be taken "to effect the transfer of power to responsible Indian hands by a date not later than June 1948. "His Majesty's Government will consider to whom the powers of the Central Government in British India should be handed over on due date, whether as a whole to some form of Central Government for British India, or in some areas to the existing provincial governments, or in

27. Talib, *Muslim League Attack*, p. 59
28. Ibid
30. Ibid; Talib, *Muslim League Attack*, p. 64
31. Ibid
such other way as may seem most reasonable and in the best interests of the Indian people."

This statement brought the prospects of attainment of power very near. It was hailed by Jawaharlal Nehru "as a wise and courageous decision." But it added to Jinnah's anxiety, and placed Khizar Hayat Khan on the horns of a dilemma. Jinnah had now a little more than a year to consolidate his position in western Pakistan. So efforts to reach a settlement in the Punjab and North-West Frontier Province were started. The League leaders were more than ever anxious to wrest power in Punjab so that by the time the provincial transfer of power occurred, i.e., in June 1948 or earlier, the Muslim League should be firmly in the saddle to receive power from the British Government and to consolidate the western block of Pakistan.

The official report of Mr. Akhtar Hussain, Chief Secretary to the Punjab Government, describes the position in the province in February as "very disturbing." On February 26, the Panthic ("kali") Assembly Party appealed to the Muslim League "to stop these unlawful

35. Ihosla, G.D., Stern Reckoning, p. 98, Mr. A. Hussain said: "The Agitation which the Muslim League commenced on January 24
activities which are bound to have serious repercussions if continued any further "and asked" the Punjab Government to adopt a firm attitude and take speedy action in dealing with the menace to the peace of the province." On the same day, the Muslim League called off the agitation following a settlement between the Punjab Government and the President of the Provincial Muslim League. The ban on the Muslim National Guards and the Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh was lifted but restrictions on processions and meetings were continued. About 1500 League workers were released. The Muslim League decided to celebrate March 2 as Victory Day. In the speeches delivered on the occasion, the agitation was described as a first step in the struggle for achievement of Pakistan.

Khizar Hyat Khan could not look forward to the continued support of his Hindu and Sikh colleagues as events were widening the gulf between Muslims and non-Muslims. The ties that bound the various elements in the Unionist Party were extremely tenuous. Moreover, the Punjab was part of Group B with a preponderance of Muslim population, and the future of a Punjab politician rested on Muslim

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36. The Tribune, 27-2-1947
support. In the circumstances, Khizar Hyat deemed it impolitic to
deal with the League agitation with a firm hand. His indecision
earned him the odium of Muslims and non-Muslims alike. The former
thought that his continuance in office was keeping the League out,
while the latter interpreted his mildness as sympathy for the League.
The compelling force of Mr. Attlee's statement demanded immediate
decision. Realising that whether in office or out, he could not
exercise any influence on the course of events, Khizar Hyat resigned
on March 2. Giving the reason for his resignation, he said that
continuance of the coalition Ministry was likely to jeopardise the
chances of a settlement. Moreover, it was but fair to let the Muslim
League, which was the Muslim majority party, speak for the Muslims.

**Muslim League Invited to Form Government**

On March 3, the Governor invited the Muslim League to form a
ministry. The Nawab of Sadoot, leader of the Muslim League Assembly
Party, accepted the offer. A wave of resentment spread through

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39. Talib, *Muslim League Atlee*, p. 66

40. Khosla, G., *Stern reckoning*, p. 98; Moon, *Divide and quit*,

41. *The Tribune*, 3-3-1947; Moon, *Divide and quit*, *Pp. 76-77*. The
  reason which he gave to the public was diplomatic. He said
  that the decision announced by Mr. Attlee required that parties
  in the province should be brought face to face with realities.
  "It is now incumbent on me to leave the field clear for the
  Muslim League to come to such arrangement vis-a-vis the other
  parties as it might consider in the best interests of Muslims
  and the province. If I were now to continue to lead a coalition
  in which the Muslim League is not represented this might put in
  serious jeopardy such chances as might otherwise exist of a
  settlement being arrived at between the communities in the
  province.

Congress and Panthic circles. All the fears engendered by the events of Calcutta and Nekkahi seemed about to come true. The Muslim League could not form a ministry without their co-operation and they were determined to withhold it. The Congress and Akali parties held a joint meeting in the Assembly chamber to discuss the situation. Outside, a large crowd of Muslims kept up a continuous barrage of provocative slogans like "we will take Pakistan by force." After the meeting, Master Tara Singh came out of the Assembly chamber and facing the hostile Muslim crowd he flourished his kirpan and shouted: "Hat ke deynga apni jan, mager na deynga Pakistan" ("we may be cut to pieces but we will never concede Pakistan.") The situation was about to develop into a most ugly incident when the police intervened and dispersed the crowd.

The same evening non-Muslims held a mammoth meeting in the grounds of Kapurthala House and the leaders gave vent to their pent-up anger against the Muslim League attitude. Breathing fire and brimstone, the Akali leader told the vast concourse: "O Hindus and Sikhs! Be ready for self-effacement like the Japanese and the

43. Barbara Singh, The Punjab Tragedy, Steno Press, Amritsar (1949), p. 32; Khosla, G.S., Stern Beckoning, pp. 99-100. Khizar Hyat's resignation and the swearing-in of a Muslim League Ministry put too great a strain on the patience of the Sikhs. Master Tara Singh in a Press interview to "New York Times" on February 28 remarked,""I don't see how we can avoid a civil war. There can be no settlement if the Muslims want to rule the Punjab. We cannot trust the Muslims under any circumstances. The Sikhs have the ability to keep the Muslims out of eastern Punjab, but why should we stop there? We should drive them out of the Punjab entirely. The Sikhs have started to reorganise their own private volunteer army in response to the Muslim League's month-old agitation against the coalition Ministry of the
started reorganising the Akali Party. If we can snatch the government from the Britishers, no one can stop us from snatching it from the Muslims. We have in our hold the legs and limbs of the Muslim League and we shall break them. Disperse from here on the solemn affirmation that we shall not allow the League to exist.

The world has always been ruled by the minorities. The Muslims snatched the kingdom from the Hindus, the Sikhs grabbed it from the hands of the Muslims and ruled over them and shall even now do so.

I have sounded the bugle. Finish the Muslim League." Giani Karter Singh reminded the audience that the yellow flag of the Sikhs used to fly on Lahore Fort and hoped that it would fly there again.

Congress speakers too addressed the gathering but they were moderate in their speeches.

But Master Tara Singh's utterances were mere threats. The Akal Fauj of his existed only in his imagination, and the preparedness of the Sikhs was little more than an empty boast. This was

Punjab in which the Sikhs were represented." In his public address on March 3 on the grounds of Kapurthala House he was more bellicose.


45. Ibid
demonstrated from the manner in which non-Muslims and more parti-
cularly the Sikhs suffered in the March riots. They found themselves
without any means of self-defence and perished by the thousand.

On March 4, Hindu and Sikh students of Lahore took out a big
procession to demonstrate their resolve not to tolerate the Muslim
League ministry. The procession was fired at by the police and
also attacked by Muslims in a part of the city. Thirteen persons
were killed and 105 injured. This was the signal for province-wide
killing on an unprecedented scale.

The Governor soon discovered that the Muslim League could not
form a ministry without the assistance of Hindus and Sikhs, who were
not willing to cooperate. As a result he suspended the Constitution
on March 5 and assumed to himself all the powers under Section 93
of the Government of India Act, 1935. This served as a signal for
another outbreak of widespread rioting in the Punjab. The Muslim-
dominated districts of Sultan, Jhelum, Sialkot and Lahore fell in
the grip of riotous mobs and hooligans who resorted to large-scale
murders, arson, loot, rape and abduction.

47. Ibid, p. 43; Pyare Lal, The Last Phase, Vol. II, p. 10
49. Talib, Muslim League: Attack, pp. 72, 107, 167, 209; Pyare Lal,
The Last Phase, Vol. II, p. 14
The police did not take strong measures against the Muslim mobs. How could they be expected to lay about them vigorously with lathis or shoot them straight or to break up riotous parties of their own co-religionists? And if they did so who would appreciate or reward their services? Certainly not the British, who were about to leave the country, and still less the Muslim Leaguers who were going to be masters of the western half of the province. Another factor responsible for the lack of police control was the depletion of the services by wartime demands and the grant of leave after the war. As a result Punjab had been left with insufficient British officials of first class quality to man key districts. Many of them were fed up with long years of service without a break and dispirited at the prospect of their careers in India coming abruptly to an end. At this critical moment men were holding posts for which they were not well fitted either by temperament or experience. They remained pathetic witnesses to arson, murder, loot and abduction.

Retaliation soon started in East Punjab in the districts of Amritsar, Ludhiana and in the Sikh states and the vicious circle set entire Punjab ablaze. The similarity of the pattern followed by the rioters in all these places again pointed to a deliberate and well-conceived plan. By midday of March 19, 1947, according to a

50. Moor, Divid and Quit, p. 80
51. Ibid
statement by Macdonald, Chief Secretary to the Punjab Government, the campaign launched by the Muslim League had cost in casualties 2,049 Hindus and Sikhs killed or seriously wounded. These figures were considered an underestimate. The events provoked a strong reaction against the Muslim League even in the British Conservative press. Pointing to the dangers inseparable from "any attempt to enforce a communal dictatorship by unconstitutional agitation," The Times commented on March 11, that the danger was in no way lessened if the agitation was claimed to be based on "democratic principles."

The Partition of The Punjab

While the minorities in the Punjab were bleeding and the Muslim mobs carried sword and fire before them, the Governor could do little. Even the Central Government found itself helpless. The policy of the Muslim League in the Interim Government was one of a vowed obstruction. It openly maintained that it had joined the Government merely to fight for Pakistan. It was able to defeat almost every progressive measure which the Congress members were desirous of

53. Pandit Nehru's Press Statement, March 17, 1947. "I have seen ghastly sights and I have heard of behaviour of human beings," remarked Pandit Nehru, after a visit to some of the riot-afflicted places, "which would degrade brutes ... if politics are to be conducted in this way, then they cease to be politics and become some kind of jungle warfare, which reduces human habitations to the state of a desert ... Let people struggle for their political aim if they want to, but they must do so as human beings with a measure of human dignity."

adopting. The Interim Government had no unity or cohesion and the
different departments of administration frequently pulled in different
directions. All over the country unrest and lawlessness was spreading
and in the Punjab conditions bordering on utter anarchy prevailed.
Khrur and his colleagues felt helpless. Frustration and chaos stared
them in the face. Years of suffering and hard labour had landed them
in a blind alley and the only alternative was ignominious acceptance
of partition. A three-day tour of the riot affected cities of the
Punjab-Lahore, Sultan, Rawalpindi, Amritsar and Jhelum – by Nehru
brought home to him the ghastly truth of communalism run amuck, too
painful to be endured any longer.

A few non-Muslim delegations met him and insisted that Punjab
must be divided in case there was partition of India. As a result,
the Congress approach to the problem of Pakistan underwent a radical
change. The working committee took the initiative in formally demand-
ing partition of the Punjab.

Last Phase, Vol. II, p. 11; Congress Bulletin, March 26, 1947,
p. 5. The All-India Congress Committee, after recording its
views on the resignation of the Punjab Premier, stated in a reso-
lution, "During the past seven months India has witnessed many
horrors and tragedies which have been enacted in the attempt
to gain political ends by brutal violence, murders and coercion.
"The Punjab became six weeks ago the scene of an agitation,
supported by some people in high authority, to coerce and break
a popular ministry which could not be attacked by constitu-
tional methods. A measure of success attended this, and an
attempt was made to form a ministry dominated by the group that
had led the agitation. This was bitterly resented and has
resulted in increased and widespread violence."
In effect, it was an eleventh hour attempt on the part of the Congress to wean away the Muslim League from the principle of partition by confronting it with theological consequences of its doctrine.

"The tragic events have demonstrated that there can be no settlement of the problem in the Punjab, by violence and coercion, and that no arrangement based on coercion can last. Therefore, it is necessary to find a way out which involves the least amount of compulsion. This would necessitate a division of the Punjab into two provinces so that the predominantly Muslim part may be separated from the predominantly non-Muslim part."

See Menon, V.R., Transfer of Power, pp. 347-348. The Muslim League press issued severe criticism of the Congress proposal to divide the Punjab; nor was the solution entirely agreeable to certain pro-Congress sections. The Congress President explained that the Congress had only suggested a division of the Punjab as a means of putting an end to violence, and that the same remedy would hold good for Bengal if circumstances in the province were similar.

On March 9, Nehru wrote to Lord Wavell enclosing copies of the resolutions passed by the Congress working committee. Nehru said it was the intention of the Congress to approach the Muslim League for a joint meeting to consider the situation. They wanted to do everything in their power to get the Muslim League representatives into the Constituent Assembly, so that all might function in terms of the Cabinet Mission statement of May 16. If, unfortunately, this were not possible, then the Congress would try to lay down a course of action which would avoid friction and conflict. It was with this object in view that they had sought a meeting with the League and had also suggested the division of the Punjab into two parts. This principle would, of course, apply to Bengal also. The proposal was not a pleasant one for the Congress to contemplate, but such a course was preferable to an attempt by either party to impose its will upon the other. Recent events in the Punjab demonstrated - if such demonstration were necessary - that it was not possible to coerce the non-Muslim minority in the province, just as it was not possible or desirable to coerce others.

The Congress felt that the suggested way out would be fair to all parties. If the League accepted the British Cabinet Mission's scheme of May 16 and cooperated in the Constituent Assembly, the question did not arise in this form. But even so, it was worth considering whether Bengal and the Punjab should not both
if it persisted in its demand for division of India. The assumption
was that, faced with the prospect of being left with a "truncated,
moth-eaten" and economically nonviable area, the Muslim League might
not press its demand for partition. It was also an effort made in
despair in the event of India's partition, to salvage the non-Muslim
majority area of that province from Muslim League rule. If the
Muslim League insisted on demanding partition, it could not in reason
claim exception from the application of that principle to areas it
claimed for Pakistan.

No reply was sent by the Muslim League to the Congress Working
Committee's invitation to meet its representative beyond saying that
the Congress resolution would "be placed before the next meeting of
the Working Committee of the Muslim League." For this no date was
fixed. And when a month later the Congress General Secretary in-
quired when the meeting would be held, he was told that, in view of
the discussions which had, in the meantime, been initiated by the

be divided into smaller provinces. In the event of the
Muslim League not accepting the Cabinet Mission's scheme and not
coming into the Constituent Assembly, the division of the
Punjab and Bengal would become inevitable. In reply the
Viceroy told Nehru that he would forward the Congress resolu-
tion to the Secretary of State ... until the results of the
Congress approach to League were known, it would be premature to
consider the question of partition of the Punjab and Bengal.

new Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, it was not likely that a meeting of the working committee would be called "until a definite stage in the talks had been reached."

The Punjab Provincial Congress Committee endorsed on May 4 the resolution of the Congress working committee demanding partition of Punjab. Jinnah denounced the demand for partition of the Punjab and Bengal as a sinister move actuated by spite and bitterness.

57. Ibid

58. The Tribune, 5-5-1947. The Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee resolution said: "This committee, while believing in the unity of the Punjab, is of the opinion that the unity of India is more fundamental and necessary. But if division of India becomes inevitable and inescapable because of the reactionary, negative and anti-national and undemocratic stand of the Muslim League, then in view of the present happenings, the part of the Punjab which desires to remain in the Indian Union, is fully entitled to exercise its inalienable right to do so.

59. Sjitra's Inclalcon (1947), Vol. I, p. 61; Menon, V.P., Transfer of Power, pp. 355-356. Jinnah issued a statement on 30-4-47 that the proposal for partition of Bengal and the Punjab was a sinister move actuated by spite and bitterness. He said that the principle underlying the Muslim demand for partition was that Muslim League should have a national state in their homeland comprising the six provinces of the Punjab, the North-West Frontier Province, Sind, Baluchistan, Bengal and Assam. If the Punjab and Bengal were partitioned, all the other provinces would have to be cut up in a similar way. Such a process would strike at the root of the administrative, economic and political life of the provinces. He suggested that an exchange of population would sooner or later have to take place and that this could be effectively carried out by the respective Governments in Pakistan and Hindustan. He finally demanded the division of the defence forces and stressed that the states of Pakistan and Hindustan should be made absolutely free, independent and sovereign.

Jinnah's statement drew the retort from Rajendra Prasad that the demand for division of the Punjab and Bengal was in the terms of the Muslim League's Lahore resolution of 1940 and it could not claim any area which were not contiguous and in which the Muslims were not numerical in a majority. He said that if
Muslim League leaders did little even at this stage to reassure the Sikhs or assuage their feelings. At no stage did Jinnah attempt to win over the Sikhs and secure their acquiescence in Pakistan. He did not even express regret for the recent events in West Punjab. He had given them veiled threats but no promises. He had warned them that division of Punjab would be harmful to them but had not encouraged them to believe that Pakistan would be beneficial. There were some British officials who considered that in this he was very wise. In their view, the Sikhs wherever they were -- whether in India or Pakistan -- would be a bloody nuisance. Jinnah was well advised to steer clear of "the bastards so far as he could." With a truncated Pakistan he was likely to get two millions of them. This was at any rate better than having the hornets' nest.

A solitary Punjab Muslim League leader, Shaukat Hyat Khan (Sir Sikander's son), seemed to have felt the need for a more positive approach. Consequently, he made a statement assuring the Sikhs that under a Muslim League coalition government, "their legitimate rights would be fully considered and justice meted out to all, freely

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60. Moon, Divide and Conquer, p. 82
61. Ibid
62. Ibid, p. 87
63. Ibid
65. Ibid
and equally.* But generalities of this kind were quite insufficient to heal the gaping wounds or inspire confidence in Muslim intentions. How could they carry conviction when the Sikhs in north-west Punjab had been murdered and pillaged and their beards set on fire by Muslim gangs with little interference by the Muslim police and little or no expression of regret by Muslim Leagues? At this critical juncture the Majlis-e-Ahrar, the erstwhile nationalist body of Muslims, changed its policy. Its working committee passed a resolution on March 24, 1947 opposing partition of Punjab. It declared that the Muslims would resist implementation of the scheme and would stand for the unity and integrity of the Punjab. What is more, labour workers were directed to give up immediately all their connections with the Congress. Khizar Hyat Khan, too, opposed division of the Punjab, as, according to him, it would be ruinous for all communities. Ch. Suraj Mal (later East Punjab Minister), a Hindu Unionist leader, however, supported the demand for partition of the Punjab if partition of India was to be effected.

In a conference held in Lahore on April 3, Sikh leaders and legislators unanimously declared that division of the Punjab was the

66. Ibid, SP. 82-83
67. The Tribune, 25-3-1947
68. The Tribune, 17-4-1947
69. The Tribune, 18-4-1947
only remedy. Master Tara Singh, Bawa Harkishan Singh, President of the Panthie Board, and Amar Singh attended the conference by special invitation. The Akali Dal too, at its meeting in Amritsar on April 17, held under the presidency of Giani Kartar Singh, considered partition of the Punjab as the only remedy to end communal strife in the province. On April 18 Master Tara Singh, Baldev Singh and Giani Kartar Singh met the Viceroy. They told him that the Punjab should be partitioned to avoid communal strife and bloodshed. On April 22, Bhimse Sachhar and Swaran Singh, the leaders of the Congress and Sikh Panthie parties in the Punjab Legislative Assembly stated in their representation to Nehru, the Vice-President of the Interim Government, that as an interim and transitional agreement the Governor-General should install immediately two or three regional administrations with separate ministries under one Governor for the two or three zones of the existing province of the Punjab. Bangle Singh, M.L.A., said that before 1925 India had nine provinces, which were later on increased to 11. So division meant readjustment of boundaries, and for maintenance of peace this was essential. Baba Kharak Singh said, "I am a staunch advocate of Akhand Hindustan.

70. Mitra's Register (1947), Vol. I, p. 53
71. Ibid
72. Ibid, p. 244; Campbell-Johnson, A., Mission with Mountbatten, Pp. 66-67
73. Mitra's Register (1947), Vol. I, p. 59
74. The Tribune, 27-4-1947
Should, however, partition become inevitable and be unfortunately thrust upon us, I would plead for adequate safeguards and legitimate protection for the non-Muslim minorities living in the territories. 75

Mountbatten Plan — Radcliffe Award

While Lord Mountbatten's plan conceded the demand for partition of the Punjab, the Akalis put forth a demand for a Sikh homeland. This chapter is the tragic climax of political cross-purposes, lack of realism and of the spirit of compromise, violence and counter-violence and a reign of terror that recalled the general slaughter ordered by Nadir Shah in Delhi.

A convention of Hindu and Sikh members of the Punjab Legislative Assembly, the Central Assembly and the Constituent Assembly was held in New Delhi on May 2 under the chairmanship of Sh. Lehri Singh, a former Congress Minister in the Punjab coalition cabinet. A draft memorandum on partition of the Punjab was prepared and submitted to the Congress working committee. It said that in view of the Muslim League's insistence upon a division of India and the recent brutal happenings, the only solution of the political problems of the Punjab lay in an equitable division of the province assuring the non-Muslim population such territories and assets as they are

75. Ganda Singh, A Diary of the Partition Days, Patiala (1960), p. 21
entitled to according to their number and stake." The convention suggested that the bifurcation line should be drawn along the Chenab so as to include the divisions of Ambala, Jullundur and Lahore and the contiguous canal colony districts of Lyallpur or Montgomery. This would also preserve the homogeneity of the Sikh community, the great bulk of whose population is concentrated in this area.

The Akali leader, Master Tara Singh, liked the idea of partition. "The Sikhs would be glad," he said, commenting on the Congress resolution, "if the Muslim League accepted the principle to concede the Sikhs demand for forming districts into a separate province in which the Sikhs and Hindus were given as much land as they possess at present. We cannot tolerate division in which predominantly Sikh districts are partitioned."

As early as June 1946 Master Tara Singh had issued a 16-page "Charter of Slavery" against the Cabinet Mission proposals. "We escape out of this slavery only if we get one of the following, and in no other way:

Sikhs State in central, eastern and northern Punjab

or

division of Punjab along the Chenab to create a province in which no community will dominate and which the Sikhs can call their own and where they can have an effective share in the administration

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77. Ibid; Sati, A..., How It Can be Told, Akashwani Prakashan, Jullundur (1949), Pp. 54-55
78. The Tribune, 11-3-1947
substantial share (which in no case should be below 30 per cent in the legislature and the cabinet in the Punjab; weightage in the Central legislature and veto in Punjab and at the centre on Sikh questions such as is given to the Muslims on Muslim question."

Meanwhile the political situation worsened. Communal frenzy and bitterness increased and the machinery of the administration ground to a halt. The feeling grew not only in Congress circles that if the demand for Pakistan was not acceded to, India might be split into several Pakistans. After consultations with the British Government, Lord Mountbatten formally announced on June 3 a plan for constitutional transfer of power from British to Indian hands. It provided for partition of India and of the provinces of the Punjab (opinion of Sikh leaders had already been ascertained and they had agreed to its division) and Bengal. The final boundaries were left to be determined by a boundary commission. The plan, inter alia, said that members of the two parts of each legislative assembly sitting separately will be empowered to vote whether the province should be partitioned. If a simple majority of either part decides in favour of Pakistan, division will take place and arrangements will be made accordingly. The plan also provided that before


the question of partition is decided, it is desirable that the representatives of each part should know in advance which constituent assembly the province as a whole would join in the event of the two parts deciding to remain united. Therefore, if any members of either legislative assembly so demands, there shall be held a meeting of all members other than European of the legislative assembly at which a decision will be taken on the issue as to which constituent assembly the province as a whole would join if it were decided by the two parts to remain united.

The Congress working committee resolved to accept the Mountbatten plan. On behalf of the Sikhs, Baldev Singh accepted the principle of partition as laid down in the plan, but urged that care should be taken to meet their demands when framing the terms of reference for the proposed boundary commission. He said that the plan was not a compromise. He preferred to call it a settlement. "It does not please everybody, not the Sikh community any way, but it is certainly something worth while. Let us take it at that." In his broadcast on the plan, Lord Mountbatten said: "We have given careful consideration to the partition of the Sikhs. This valiant community forms about one-eighth of the population of the Punjab, but is so distributed that any partition of this province will

82. Measani, R.P., *Britain in India*, p. 260
84. Ibid, p. 254; for its text see pp. 254-255
inevitably divide it. All of us who have the good of the Sikh community at heart are very sorry to think that partition of the Punjab, which the Sikhs themselves desire, cannot avoid splitting them to a greater or lesser extent. The exact degree of the split will be left to the boundary commission."

Master Tara Singh declared that although the Mountbatten plan conceded the "principle of partition" of the Punjab, it was "unsatisfactory and disappointing" in several respects. There was no positive provision for giving the Sikhs a homeland and their deserved status or political power, nor had they been armed with means to safeguard their rights in constitution-making.

For the Sikhs the plan meant division. They knew it and accepted it. Soon averse that they had their own plans for meeting it. The hard choice before them had long been clear. They had to submit either to inclusion as a whole in Pakistan or to division between India and Pakistan through partition of the Punjab. They

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85. Khushwant Singh, The Sikhs, p. 152. In a press conference Lord Mountbatten referred to the subject again. He said: "I find that the Congress had put forward a resolution on the partition of the Punjab at the request of the Sikh community. I sent for a map and I was astounded to find that the plan which they had produced would divide the community into almost two equal halves. So I spent a great deal of time finding out a solution which would keep the community together. I have not been able to see any solution, but whatever steps are taken are based on the Congress resolution on the subject which was passed at insistence of the Sikhs."

had chosen the latter. They had long been thinking in terms of partition and the recent conduct of the Muslims had strengthened their preference for it. Inevitably by such partition they would be split and if the 'contiguous area' principle were to be rigidly applied all the canal colonies and about two million Sikhs would fall to Pakistan. But the Boundary Commission was also to take into account "other factors" and the Sikhs clung to the hope that on the strength of these "other factors" the boundary might be shifted westwards so that they would not be split too badly. They were encouraged in this false hope by the utterances of some British politicians.

Some British officers explored the chances of a last minute rapprochement to prevent vivisection of the Punjab and of the Sikh population. A plan which was pursued with some assiduity emanated from the Muslim princely State of Bahawalpur. Penderel Moon of the Indian Civil Service, who was then revenue and Public Works Minister at Bahawalpur, had some friends among Sikhs. Through Sant Singh, Prime Minister of the Sikh princely State of Nabha, he made approaches to Sikh leaders, including Master Tara Singh.

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87. Moon, Divide and quit, p. 69. Some of the Muslims had been canvassing the idea of an entirely separate Sikh State or Khalistan. Since they were not in an absolute majority in even a single district no one could take this idea seriously but in one guise or another it had some influence on Sikh thinking both in the coming months and years.

88. Ibid, p. 69-70

89. Ibid, p. 70
Baldev Singh and Giani Kartar Singh. Taking into confidence Mustaq Ahmad Garmani, Prime Minister of Bahawalpur, Moon offered to secure the Sikhs a separate unit of East Punjab with a position in Pakistan equal to that of any other unit, such as Sind or Western Punjab; special privileges for the Sikh minority in West Punjab and special privileges for the Sikhs in Pakistan as a whole.

The Sikhs were not prepared to consider any proposals for a settlement with the League. As Moon says in his book "Divide and Quit", the Sikh leaders he was scheduled to meet in Lahore failed to turn up at the appointed rendezvous. It was obvious that they were not interested and had other plans in mind.

A joint conference of the Shiromani Akali Dal and the Panthie Pratinidhi Board held on June 12, 1947 disapproved of the scheme for division of India into two sovereign states. The only redeeming feature of the plan, according to the Sikhs, was the acceptance of the principle of partition of the Punjab. By the resolution the conference said: "The basis of the national division of the Punjab is, however, inequitable and unjust to the Sikhs. While the plan is designed to carve out a sovereign Muslim state to satisfy Muslim demand, it fails to provide for the Sikhs any portion of power or

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90. Moon, Divide and Quit, pp. 84-86
status or any means for the protection of their interests in the constitution-making machinery." The resolution categorically stated that no partition of the Punjab which did not preserve the solidarity and integrity of the Sikh community would be acceptable to the Sikhs.

Giani Kartar Singh reiterated the necessity of a separate homeland for the Sikhs where they could develop their culture and preserve their entity. "We want our solidarity to be preserved at all costs. We do not want change of masters by passing under subjugation of either the Hindus or Muslims. We are determined to secure our homeland even if we have two big parties to face." He was sure that neither the Congress nor the Muslim League would disappoint the Sikhs as it was no use keeping a dissatisfied minority within the bounds of any country. Both the major communities, therefore, would strive for a satisfied Sikh community instead of keeping them "as a source of constant struggle or even war." On June 21 the executive committee of the Central Akali Dal of Baba Kharak Singh met in Lahore and rejected the Mountbatten Plan.

According to the Mountbatten Plan, the members of the Punjab Legislative Assembly were asked to sit in two parts, one representing the Muslim majority districts and the other the rest of the province. Accordingly, the two sections met separately on June 23.

91. The Tribune, 13-6-1947
92. The Tribune, 13-6-1947
93. The Tribune, 17-6-1947
In the western Punjab section of the Assembly, Bhim Sen Sachar, leader of the Congress party, and Sir Feroze Khan Noon, on behalf of the Muslim League, demanded a joint sitting of the Assembly.

In the eastern section, the Nawab of Sambod, leader of the Muslim League, and Seth Sudarshan, deputy leader of the Congress party, demanded a joint meeting of the two sections of the Assembly.

Within 15 minutes, the joint session was arranged under the chairmanship of Diwan Sahadur S.P. Singha (the Speaker). The joint session voted by 91 votes to 77 for a separate Constituent Assembly for Pakistan. All the Muslim members including eight Unionists, one Anglo-Indian and one Christian, voted for Pakistan.

The 77 votes against Pakistan were all cast by Hindu and Sikh members. Legislators of the two sections met separately and decided by 50 votes to 22 for partition, while the western section opposed partition by 69 votes to 27. Partition of the Punjab into eastern and western Punjab was now only a matter of time.

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96. Ibid, p. 269

97. Ibid, p. 269

98. Banerjee, A.C., The Making of The Indian Constitution, Vol. I p. 439; Senon, V.P., Transfer of Power, p. 511. In para 8 of the Plan it was stated: “In the event of partition being decided upon, each part of the Legislative Assembly will, on behalf of the areas they represent, decide which of the alternatives in paragraph 4, i.e., (a) in the existing Constituent Assembly; or (b) in a new and separate Constituent Assembly consisting of the representatives of those areas which decide not to participate in the existing Constituent Assembly.” Thus the eastern section decided to take part in the existing Constituent Assembly (Indian Union) and the
After the decision on partition of the Punjab by the Assembly, the three Unionist leaders, Ch. Suraj Mal, Rao Bahadur Mohan Singh and Ch. Prem Singh, announced their decision to dissolve the Unionist Party, the oldest parliamentary party in the Punjab, which had been founded by Sir Fazl-i-Hussain in 1923 and had ruled over the destinies of the province for a period longer than any other party in any other province of India.

To split the provinces of the Punjab and Bengal, two separate boundary commissions were constituted. Sir Cyril Radcliffe, an expert on arbitration, was appointed chairman of both. He had not been to India before. His absolute neutrality towards Indian political parties was cited, especially to the Sikhs, as his strongest credential for the momentous task entrusted to him. Sir Cyril arrived in Delhi on July 3. Sikh attention was now directed at securing from the Boundary Commission a favourable demarcation in the Punjab. The Sikhs started collecting data in support of their claim. Petitions were drafted. The eminent Sikh lawyer of the Punjab High Court, Harnam Singh, took charge of the legal aspect of the case.

On August 15, 1947, India became a free country. Pakistan was born as an independent State. The same day, Sir Cyril Radcliffe

99. The Tribune, 24-6-1947. A Joint Statement issued by the three leaders on June 23, 1947, said: "After today's developments in the province when the two sections of the Assembly have decided to divide the Punjab and when our leader, Sir Khizar
left for home. The award he had given was announced two days later. The ominous storm which had been gathering since June 3 broke out with the award's proclamation. The brief spell of truce, loaded with apprehension, gave way to a period of violent fratricide. To carry the two-nation theory to its logical conclusion, the Muslim League embarked upon a plan of expulsion of Hindus and Sikhs from their newly constituted State. Large-scale assaults on the Hindu and Sikh population in Sheikhupura, Montgomery and other districts of West Punjab started on August 18, a day after the boundary Award was made known. These were coupled with widespread arson, loot, rape and abduction of women, leading to a forced exodus of the minorities, unparalleled in the history of mankind.

Following partition the Muslim League ceased to exist in East Punjab and the Akali Dal in West Punjab. The 'new Punjab,' forming the border state of independent India, remained in ferment. Though the Congress dominated the political scene, the Akalis did not give up the pursuit of their aim. Prominent Akali leaders like Baldev Singh and Swaran Singh joined the Congress Government and Akali leadership remained in the hands of Master Tara Singh. Politics in both the countries took a different shape, the discussion of which is beyond the scope of this study.

Hyat Khan, has now definitely supported the League, we feel that the Unionist Party has ceased to exist from today. We served the Unionist Party loyally because we thought that in the unity of all sections of the people lay the salvation of our province. The Unionist Party is now dissolved forever.