Chapter XI

CONCLUSIONS

The Punjab was different from the rest of India. It was not a province to be cut in two like a Gordian knot in a traditional commando fashion. According to Malcolm Darling, "The tragedy of the Punjab could have been foreseen and we should not have handed over millions of helpless peasants, for whose welfare we were responsible, to anarchy and ruin." Penderal Moon has rightly stated that, "ending of British Raj, which we have so long foreseen and so long proclaimed as our goal, should involve a last minute division of the country, the precipitate, enforced migration of well over ten million people and casualties of the order of 200,000 does seem to argue a singular want of pre-vision and failure of statesmanship."

According to Malcolm Darling "Had the Hindu and the Muslims alone were concerned, division of the Punjab might have been effected without bloodshed." The Sikhs had also their claims and were as determined to prevent domination of the Muslims as Muslims were the domination of the Hindus. Ian Stephens has rightly stated "yet small communities, after all, can have great influence on events..... Sikhs are rather more numerous than Scots whose contribution to the world's doings has not been negligible." Nehru Report stated, "The communal problem of India is primarily the Hindu-Muslim problem. The

---

2. Divide and Quit, page 283.
4. Vide Chapter, Genesis of Partition.
5. Pakistan, page 132
Sikhs in the Punjab are an important and well-knit minority which cannot be ignored. One of the basic demands of the Sikhs was that they would not like the domination of the Muslims and their population should be transferred from the West Punjab to the East Punjab. The Working Committees of the Shromani Akali Dal and Panthic Pratinidhi Board jointly passed resolution on June 14, 1947 emphasizing that, "in the absence of the provision of transfer of population and property the very purpose of partition would be defeated." Giani Kartar Singh, President of Shromani Akali Dal said in a statement on July 16, 1947, "The Sikhs will not rest contented till the boundary line is demarcated in such way that it leaves at least 85 per cent Sikhs in India and both the States of Pakistan and India are committed to facilitate the transfer of remaining 15 per cent from Pakistan into India." A few years ago the Sikh leaders had stated in a memorandum to the Sapru Committee, "We have been asked as to whether we have any views to express in case Pakistan scheme is imposed on us by an authority whose power we cannot hope to challenge successfully and which may be the British Government or the agreed will of the Hindus and Muslims of India. In that case we would insist on creation of a separate Sikh State ... with provision for the transfer and exchange of population."

6. All Parties Conference 1928, page 27.
Had the Viceroy made an effort to explore every angle of that complex situation in the Punjab, he would have surely secured some political arrangement between the Sikhs and the Muslim League. As the subsequent events have proved, Mr. Jinnah would have agreed to the transfer of Sikh population to India on account of following reasons:

1. When Lord Ismay approached Mr. Jinnah in early August 1947 to issue a statement assuring the Sikhs their religious freedom and categorically stating that Pakistan was as much for the Sikhs as for the Muslims, the latter refused.

2. Sir Francis Mudie, the Governor of the West Punjab's letter to Mr. Jinnah proves beyond doubt that the Sikhs were not wanted in Pakistan. Sir Francis wrote, "I am telling every one that I do not care how the Sikhs get across the border, the great thing is to get rid of them as soon as possible."

3. Giani Kartar Singh told the writer that he had the information in 1947 that Mr. Jinnah had instructed Sir Francis Mudie to turn out Sikhs from the West Punjab. It was this reason for which he went to Lyallpur to exhort the Sikhs to migrate to India.

4. Mr. Jinnah told Sir Francis in 1947 that when he proposed exchange of population, people laughed at him. Exactly the same thing was happening what he said several years ago.

10. Lord Ismay's conversation with the writer.
12. Giani Kartar Singh's conversation with the writer.
13. Sir Francis Mudie's conversation with the writer.
5. As previously discussed, M. Jinnah was in favour of exchange of population and he had given public statements to that effect.

Had the provision for the transfer of Sikh population from the West Punjab to the East Punjab been made in the 3rd June Plan or an Indo-Pakistan Board been constituted to facilitate the transfer of Sikh population with exchange of property, the Sikhs would have been satisfied to some extent. An illiterate Sikh woman from Sheikhupura district rightly said to Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru who was watching the foot convoy on the road, "If you wanted to partition the country why did you not first arrange for exchange of population? See what misery has fallen on us all." There were certain proposals to make some minor adjustments. V.P. Menon suggested that Nanakana Sahib might be given 'Vatican' status. Sir Evan Jenkins, Governor Punjab suggested that the Montgomery district might be allotted to the East Punjab to accommodate the Sikh colonists from the West Punjab. Both these suggestions, though

16. The Last Days of British Raj, page 211.
17. Ibid, page 212.

Sir Evan Jenkins, the Governor of the Punjab wrote to the Viceroy "I believe there is quite a lot in the claims of the Sikh and for that matter other residents for the East Punjab for a share in the canal colonies of the West and the Gianni's (Giani Kartar Singh who had a long interview with the Governor) idea that the Montgomery district should be allotted to the East is by no means as ridiculous as it sounds. The district if so allotted to the East could be recolonised so as to concentrate the non-Muslims there and transfer Muslims to Lyallpur." The contents of this letter have been verified by the writer from Giani Kartar Singh. In England I learned from Sir Evan Jenkins as well as from Lord Ismay that L. Mosley got access to some original records which appear to have been misquoted by him in his book - Last Days of British Raj.
very sound, would not have much satisfied the Sikhs as they fell very short of their basic demand. The repressive measures proposed to be adopted such as arrest of the Sikh leaders would not have improved the situation as suppression could not cure a deep rooted malady.

The employment of British troops might have suppressed the communal rioting for the time being. But the British troops though available after the 15th August could not be employed on account of certain technical difficulties. Lord Attlee writes, "But it is axiomatic in the British Commonwealth that the British troops can only be employed under the orders of British Government at Westminster. You cannot hand over British troops as mercenaries to the will of a Prime Minister of another part of the Commonwealth. We could not put our people in the position of fighting on the decision of another Government." (18)

The Sikh-Muslim League settlement would have minimised the communal conflict. But as Alan Campbell Johnson stated the leaders of both the communities were small men who were called upon to grapple with big events. "The local Muslim League leaders said claim to take over power in the Punjab with seven per cent communal majority was no more constructive than Sikh insistence upon the partition of the province and at the same time retention of the right to choose which section of it they would join." Francis William quoted Lord Attlee saying that

18. When Sir Francis Mudie suggested Lord Mountbatten to employ the British troops in the Punjab, the British troops were available at Karachi.
19. A Prime Minister Remembers, page 204-5.
Mr. Jinnah was "not a man I ever thought high of. I had known him since 1927." When the writer discussed with Lord Attlee the causes of the bloodshed which followed transfer of power, the latter told that the Government at that time was stuck up with Mr. Jinnah who could not rise to the occasion.

Mr. Jinnah wanted that the Sikhs should join Pakistan and he gave assurances of good treatment towards the Sikhs. The Sikh leaders insisted on some constitutional rights when they met Mr. Jinnah in 1946 and 1947. Lack of mutual trust and confidence was the main cause for the breakdown of talks. S. Baldev Singh rightly described the attitude of Mr. Jinnah like that of a salesman who wanted to sell a horse without convincing the customer of its good qualities by trial and always exhorted that the horse was a good one.

It is equally true that the Sikh leaders too were very unimaginative. S. Baldev Singh accepted the 3rd June Plan without ascertaining the basis of partition. After accepting the 3rd June Plan with partition of the Punjab on the basis of contiguous majority areas he gave statement, "if the verdict of the Boundary Commission went against the Sikhs, they should be prepared to make all sacrifices to vindicate the honour of the Panth." He did not foresee that the actual boundary line could not be much different from the notional division included

21. Prime Minister Remembers, page 211.
22. Writer's conversation with Lord Attlee.
24. Writer's conversation with Major J.K. Short.
in the 3rd June Plan. The issue of Sikh shrines, the question of transfer of Sikh population and exchange of property, for which the Sikh leaders struggled subsequently should have been pressed before agreeing to the 3rd June Plan. Major J.H. Short has rightly analysed the Sikh attitude towards the 3rd June Plan. He writes, "....... the Sikhs as a whole, including most of their leaders, and not excepting Sardar Baldev Singh and Master Tara Singh, consciously and sub-consciously felt sure that in return for their consenting to that agreement, the English would ratify Anglo-Sikh bonds afresh by securing for them if not a Sikh State then an 'Imperium in imperio' agreeable to them." (26)

Before August 15, 1947, the communal riots in the Punjab took turn to the worst in some of the districts where there were British Deputy Commissioners. These districts were Rawalpindi, Multan, Lahore and Amritsar. Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, therefore stated, "In the Punjab where there was cent percent British rule, despite the efforts of certain senior officers murder and arson continued. The trouble was prevalent the most where there were British officers in charge and the divisions under the control of either Hindu or Muslim officers, were comparatively quiet." Again he said, "The British were no longer interested because they are leaving. This probably explains why some officers asked the victims who came to them for help to go to me or Sardar Patel for help. They are not desirous ofshouldering any further responsibility and many

---

27. D.R. Bose, New India Speaks (Speeches of Pandit Nehru), page 452.
have become callous." According to Frank Moraes "a few British officials had their hearts fully in the primary job of maintaining law and order. In the minds of some of them the prospects of civil chaos in India on the eve of Independence was not without its allurement. What testimony to the inability of Indian rulers and administrators to control the communal situation once the strong arm of British authority was withdrawn."

The Punjab paid the highest price for the freedom of the country. It is impossible to ascertain the actual number of casualties as there was a complete breakdown of the civil administration in both the Punjabs. However, a popular estimate of casualties is about half a million. G.D. Khosla writes, "..... the loss of non-Muslim life has been estimated at a figure between 200,000 and 250,000. It is believed that equal number of Muslims perished." "The first year of Pakistan" mentions "the massacre of half a million men, women and children." Ian Stephens and Michael Edwardes give the casualty figures to be 500,000 and 600,000 respectively. But the estimates of those British officers who were actually amidst that holocaust are more reliable. Lord Mountbatten intimated to Sir Francis Mudie the following districtwise figures of casualties in the various districts of the West Punjab after

31. First Year of Pakistan, Pakistan Govt., page 131.
32. Pakistan, page 80, and Last Years of British India.
August 15, 1947:—

1. Dera Ghazi Khan ... 250
2. Huzafargarh ... 500
3. Multan ... 2500
4. Montgomery ... 2000
5. Lyallpur ... 500
6. Sheikhupura ... 10000
7. Jhang ... 1500
8. Mianwali ... 4500
9. Lahore ... 10000
10. Gujranwala ... 4000
11. Sialkot ... 3500
12. Gujrat ... 3000
13. Jhelum ... 3000
14. Sargodha ... 3500
15. Attock ... 3000
16. Rawalpindi ... 4500
17. Bahawalpur ... 3000

Total 59250

Lord Mountbatten's estimate coincides with the figure of casualities calculated by Sir Penderal Moon who writes, "In December 1947 I made some calculations regarding the number of persons killed in the West Punjab and Bahawalpur. I had a pretty accurate knowledge of the casualities both in Bahawalpur State itself and in the immediate adjacent West Punjab districts.

33. Lord Mountbatten's letter to Sir Francis Mudie dated July 25, 1962. I noted these figures from the original letter shown to me by Sir Francis Mudie.
Regarding several other districts I had good information from old subordinates, especially among the magistracy and police with whom I was in touch. I was thus able to reach fairly precise figures for about half the districts of West Punjab and on the basis of those to make intelligent guesses regarding the remainder. These calculation led me to certain figures for the total casualties from August onwards in the West Punjab and Bahawalpur. The figure was 50,000. According to Moon the casualties in East Punjab and the East Punjab States had been heavier than in the West Punjab. "But these were not twice as high." This, according to Moon the total casualties were near about 200,000.

34. Divide and Quit, page 293.
35. Ibid, page 283.