

# WHILE MEMORY SERVES

LIEUT.-GENERAL  
SIR FRANCIS TUKER  
K.C.LE., C.B., D.S.O., O.B.E.  
First published 1950



Reproduced by

Sani H. Panhwar

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## SIR FRANCIS TUKER

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REPRODUCED BY

## SANI H. PANHWAR

**To the gay and gallant who made  
my life in the Indian Army worth  
the living, and to my wife,  
CYNTHIA HELEN, Most Loyal of  
Friends**

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## DIARY OF IMPORTANT EVENTS

### 1945 JULY – AUGUST

The last battle in Burma of the Second World War.

### WINTER 1945 SPRING 1946

Courts Martial of members of the Indian National Army.

### 1946 FEBRUARY

Riots in Calcutta.

Royal Indian Navy mutinies in Bombay and at Karachi.

### MARCH

Arrival of Cabinet Mission in India.

### MAY

Cabinet Mission announces its plan. Plan rejected by political India.  
Reappearance of lawlessness in Calcutta and East Bengal.

### JULY

Viceroy's proposal to form an Interim Government.

### AUGUST

The Great Calcutta Killing.

### OCTOBER

Riots in Eastern Bengal.

### OCTOBER – NOVEMBER

Riots in Bihar.

### NOVEMBER

The Garhmukteswar Massacre.

### 1947 FEBRUARY

Announcement by British Cabinet of appointment of Lord Louis Mountbatten as Viceroy.

## **FEBRUARY-MARCH**

Resignation of Unionist Government in Punjab and assumption of direct rule by Governor.

## **MARCH**

Sikh-Muslim riots in Punjab. 'Squatter' campaign opens in Assam. Gurkha Police mutiny in Calcutta. Police rebellion in Bihar.

## **APRIL**

Arrival at Delhi of Lord Louis Mountbatten.  
Communal war flares up in United Provinces.

## **MAY**

Decline of 'squatter' and invasion campaigns on Assam border. Eastern Command forces intervene in the Meo rebellion (May – August).

## **JUNE**

Viceroy's announcement. Partition of India and of Indian Army.  
Bengal Legislative Assembly votes to partition Bengal between Pakistan and the Indian Union.  
Increasing turmoil in United Provinces.  
Partition of Indian Army begins.  
Police mutiny in Calcutta.

## **JULY**

Appointment of new Commanders in Chief for the two Dominions. Polling for demarcation of Sylhet boundary.

## **AUGUST**

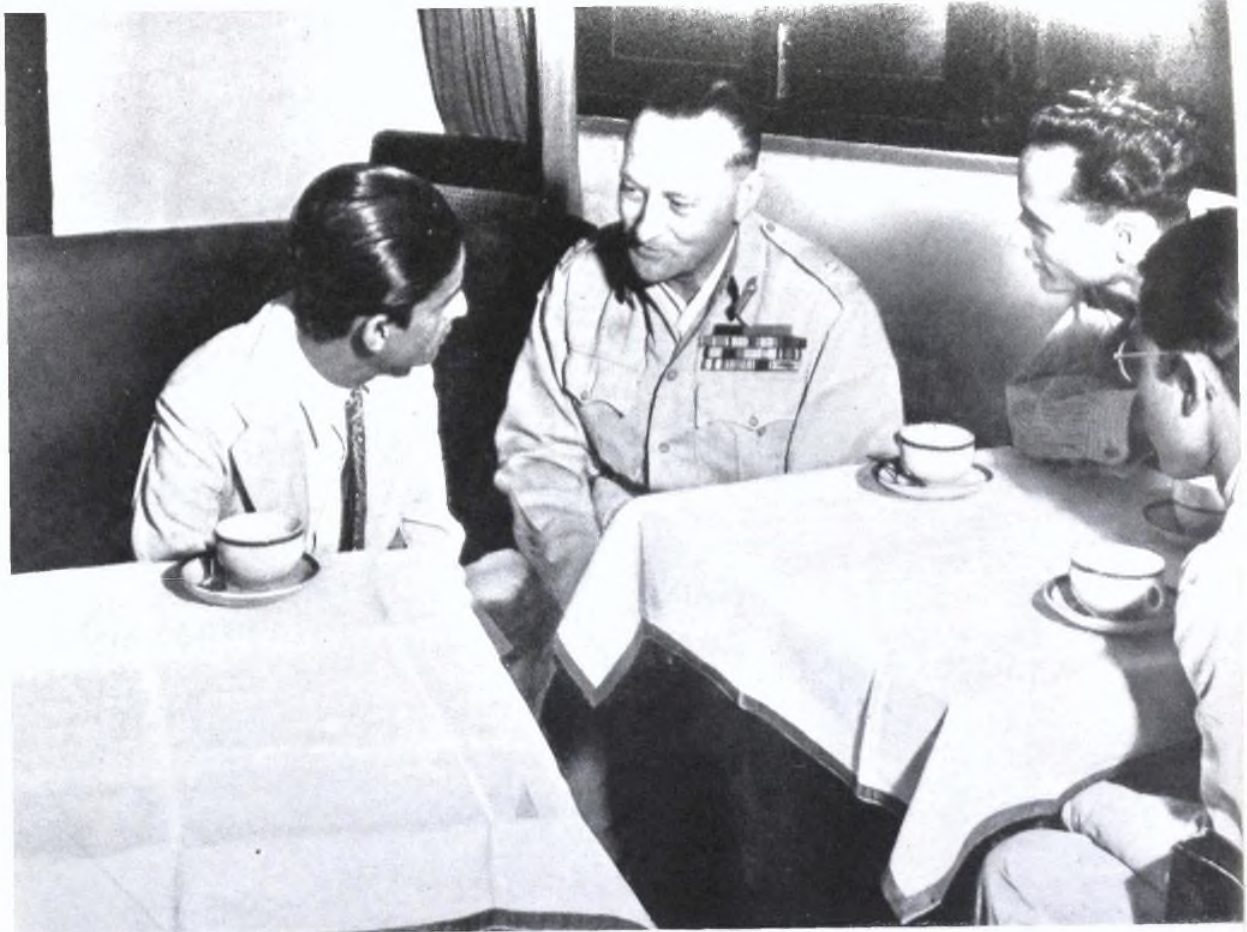
The Rampur rebellion.  
The Mahasabha threatens the U.P. Government.  
Riot in Amritsar starts the Punjab massacres.  
Independence Day (August 15th).

## **SEPTEMBER**

The last Calcutta Riot.  
Dehra Doon riots.  
Sporadic riots in United Provinces. Riots in Delhi.

## **NOVEMBER**

Trouble in Tripurah State.  
British Supreme Headquarters close in Delhi.



THE AUTHOR AT A PRESS RECEPTION IN CALCUTTA

## INTRODUCTION

THIS is the tale of the last two years of British rule in India, told by one who watched events from the Headquarters of Eastern Command.

I have told my story as we soldiers in Eastern India saw it unfold and as we formed our opinions of affairs and men. The acquaintances of most Indian Army Officers were varied and many, from the bazaar to the court, for they wandered during their peacetime careers from Quetta and Chitral to Madras and Bangalore, and in wartime from the Far East to Africa and Europe. Of India they knew best the peasants among whom they shot, fished, and recruited, and stuck pig. Perhaps their great advantage was that they all spoke the language and very many of them spoke a second and sometimes a third Indian tongue. Some of them knew the true India better than many of those Indians who spoke for her and far better than those English and American 'observers' and visitors who could only mix with the English-speaking men and women of the towns and who thus, when they came abroad, hardly exchanged India for their own country.

Whether they marched the hills in *puggree* and *chapplies* with camel transport and talked Pushtu, or streamed over the damp countryside of the south in tanks, it was all the same to them. Many of them could understand the people, soldier and civilian, with whom they dealt and were the more respected, perhaps feared, for their experience and knowledge of a complex subject.

So this account is of the last phase of the Indian Army's watch and ward over the country committed to its care, before that Army was divided into two quite different forces, placed under the two new Dominions and its British officers removed.

*It is a Song of Honour and the Drums of its Tattoo.  
The Song of fighters great and small,  
The Song of pretty fighters all  
And high heroic things.*

'Watch and Ward' is an old-world term much used in India even today for those who are engaged as custodians of government property. It will soon be lost just as that awe-inspiring Indian military title, 'Half-mounting', has been lost, even its origin being now shrouded in mystery. To me it brings memories of ever surprised youth and the sweet fragrance of musty naphthalene, *doosootie*<sup>1</sup> dust sheets, leather equipment, bandoliers, belts, pouches and water bottles (to be slung across the chest), all piled about an ancient Gurkha store-man, half-blind, and looking like a Ming ivory in a curio shop.

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<sup>1</sup> Rough, homespun cotton cloth.

For two hundred years we had stood on watch, waiting for the outbursts which had warned us that we were still foreign men in a foreign land. Now, never more alert, we guarded India's administration against an upheaval that seemed to be inevitable.

Waiting for the Rains?

Anyone who has spent a number of hot weathers in India knows what that tantalizing period is like in the weeks before the monsoon is due to break. Will it come early? Will it come up to time? Will it come at all?

A few weeks before it is due we drag our worn bodies from bed and peer out each morning to see if there are clouds about. Normally there aren't and we know we are in for a blistering day under the Indian sun. And so time crawls slowly on, the sun getting hotter every day and the feeling of tension growing tauter and tauter until it is well-nigh unendurable. Then one evening the clouds come up, the air feels sticky, there is a gust of wind, and rain seems just about to fall. The gust turns to a gale, doors and windows slam all through the bungalow, and a sandstorm—no rain, alas!—sweeps over all things while we run to shut fast the waving doors and windows and then just sit and sweat in the roasted, gritty air.

It passes and the sun comes out again. Once more we must square ourselves to bear what had seemed intolerable but now must be tolerated.

For some weeks it goes on like this. Perhaps the monsoon is late and our trials seem never to end.

That is how Indian national affairs felt to us British in India during the final twenty-four months. Release so nearly came in June 1946, but the political rains failed that year and time and again we had to brace ourselves to go on till the real rains broke. At last they broke with the Viceroy's announcement of the 3rd June 1947: by the 15th August they were in full pelt and our release came from the intolerable strain engendered by violent Indian politicians. To us the 15th August 1947 spelt liberty more surely than to the simple millions of India's villages. At last we rested on our load.

During those months of unceasing watch I was G.O.C. in C., Eastern Command in India, a command which covered the Provinces of Assam, Bengal, Orissa, Bihar, the United Provinces and latterly Delhi and the Eastern Punjab, with a population of some 150 million people. Today it seems to me that it would be a pity to lose forever the emotions and happenings of those last anxious months, months which will go down to history in the school books of ages to come—*the fin de siècle*, the waning light of a great age, lustrous with the names of some of the noblest and most accomplished men that these small islands have ever bred—Nicholson, the Lawrences, Jacob, Sandeman,

Gillespie, Edwardes, Curzon, Dalhousie, Clive, Hastings, Wellesley, and a host of other men whose names are respected, some held in awe, one or two even enshrined on the Indian countryside, many of them beloved in the India where they spent their working lives, and all of them men of great stature. I feel that we, the modest heirs of their tradition, must tell the last tale for them, must write the epilogue before the book is slammed shut for ever.

With such a vast area to command and with resources comparatively meager, I could not afford to waste men on unnecessary Internal Security tasks. I had to be forecasting months ahead to keep pace with political and military changes. To conserve my forces I was compelled to write almost daily a commentary on the situation in my Command as a whole, affected as it was by events and plans in the India outside. It is these appreciations and forecasts which have led to the writing of this book. So that is the reason why so much of it is obviously tinted with our feelings and opinions of the very times at which the events occurred. It is this atmosphere which I have been careful to preserve throughout.

One by one I take the papers out of their closed envelopes, each envelope labeled Forecast on such and such a date.

I began to write this record in India in the summer of 1947 and finished it in Cornwall in May 1948. It remains as I wrote it at the time, but a little trimmed and rearranged.

My story will show how Indian affairs were when the war was over: the rapid deterioration of the administration as the small British cadre of civil officials was hurriedly replaced by Indian, and as independence became more and more certain; in particular the lawlessness which so quickly set in: the almost insupportable burden that was placed upon and successfully borne by the Indian Army and its few British officers, and how great was the debt that India, the Commonwealth and indeed the world owed to the devotion of these officers, their skill, patience and staunchness: that we had no honorable alternative but to quit India: and, lastly, why, unless Russia first collapses, India—Hindustan, if you will—is in grave danger of becoming communist in the not distant future.

Of necessity the tale starts with a description of Eastern Command and its peoples. A more detailed description of Hinduism I have relegated to Appendix I in order not to swell unduly the book itself. Without some knowledge of that system it is impossible either to understand the political and communal affairs of which the book speaks or to be aware of the bearing of Hinduism upon the past and, above all, the future of India.

I could not be witness to all the events of which I write, but I have been lucky in being given personal accounts by my officers written especially for myself.

As a soldier I always sought to avoid any political entanglement, entanglement which must have embarrassed one's impartiality and obscured one's view of the Indian scene: entanglement, too, which was all too often misunderstood or only too rightly understood. I have witnessed with mixed feelings of sympathy and regret the antics of soldiers who have been caught up in the political toils of India. Perhaps the story loses something from this lack of political contact, but perhaps it gains a little by being written from a ringside seat. We who have expended the best years of our lives on India have a right to speak: exercising this right I may be able to display a different side of the 'struggle' of India for her independence from that which has been generally shown to the world by those more personally interested. British officials, both civil and military, have had for years to listen to much that they knew to be distorted, deliberately or ignorantly, without having the opportunity to open their mouths or to pen a line in protest.

In this book I refer to the new 'Indian Union or Indian Dominion as Hindustan'. I do this for no other reason than that it makes my task easier in writing of the bulk of India's population, the Hindus, and of their land, Hindustan. Where I speak of India, I intend the India which was within the borders governed by the British: by 'Indians' I mean the inhabitants of that India.

My thirty-three years of Watch and Ward with the Indian Army are done.

No more exile, no more moving house—at least not by my own efforts; I do not know what may be done for me by an atom bomb. No more riots, no more hot weathers, no more waiting for the monsoon—and, pray God, no more hatreds to be assuaged.



## BOOK I

1946

### I

## EASTERN COMMAND

DURING the last eighteen months of British rule in India and for three months after August 1947 I was G.O.C. in C., Eastern Command.<sup>2</sup> The Command comprised two great rivers running from north-west and north-east to a delta confluence near Calcutta; the flat valley plains about those rivers and the mountains that flanked those plains. The two rivers are mighty ones, old in fable, the Ganges from Garhwal and the Brahmaputra from the Chinese border.

The Command covered a legion of races of many different tongues. Along the northern borders were the Himalayan peoples of Nahan and of Tehri Garhwal, Indian States with their own Rajahs; Nepal, an independent kingdom; Sikkim, an Indian State with its own Rajah; Bhutan, an independent feudal State; then the Mongoloid tribes of the Balipara and Sadiya Frontier Tracts, Daflas, Miris, Abors, Mishmis. All except the last three tribes border on that mysterious upland, Tibet; the last three touch China.

Marching with Burma are the Naga tribes; the Manipur State under its own Rajah, its people devil worshippers two centuries ago and now holy Brahmans, clasping in its wide green valley the famous Lok Tak lake, haunt of myriad waterfowl; the Lushais of the Lushai hills; and, down to the Bay of Bengal, the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

This is a Mongoloid border with a Mongoloid people, presumably the overflow from a Mongolian outburst ages ago which welled up through eastern Tibet, over the Himalayas and from across Chinese Szechuan and Yunnan over the Burma hills and into the Assam highlands. The tide of small sallow Mongolian humanity flowed down the inner slopes on to the plains of Assam, Bengal and Bihar.

This is yet another instance of the unbearable pressure of population from outside upon India. The North-West Frontier with its Pathan tribes is the best known as the most recent. Only since the British came in from the sea has a reacting force come into play to hold the landward gates of India against the torrent. The pressure upon India must have been terrific to drive a people in through these towering mountains and these wild passes right to the ocean. It is one of those stupendous events of the story of this world

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<sup>2</sup> See Map No. 1, which indicates generally where the tribes dwelt who are mentioned in this book.

that hold one spellbound and which still with awe one's imagination. Were these mountains ever in Man's history less thickly forested, less inhospitable, less a dark wilderness?

It seems that India never flowed outwards by land: only occasionally, under such men as Asoka and Harsha, did she even reach to the feet of the great mountain ranges that hold her and entice her on two sides. There was never the dynamic in the people of India, no matter from where they originated, to thrust them through the steep passes to the plains of Burma, China, Afghanistan, Persia. Perhaps, too, there was never the inducement. They became always a people who, except from seaward, were segregated from the world. So it is that influences have come into India from outside these heights of land, but little enough, a thin trickle only, has gone that way out of India. Over the ocean lanes the ships of southern India, fleets of the Angria and his forefathers, have sped south-eastwards into Indonesia. Traces of old Buddhist or Hindu civilization and culture are real and usual over Malaya, into Siam, in the Sunda islands and those of the Java Sea. So India's empire, greater India proper, traditionally extends to the south-east; it does not reach into the high hills, but on the other hand the invading races flow over the high hills into the Indian plains from east, north and west.

Rightfully, if we regard history, we should look at India as including the flat land which reaches her seas, and the area south-east across those seas, but stopping well short—in the north-west, three hundred miles short—of the mountain fringe. Until the British came, her fate was decided and her history written by the pressure of populations of the Asiatic mainland; it is doubtful if the British have so changed the nature of the peoples of India, so cemented and so injected power into them, that her future will be written by herself or by any other people than those who have written it before, whose intolerable weight still gravitates heavily on to her north-western, northern and north-eastern borders.

The future depends on whether a buoyant spirit is to be reborn in Hindustan and that depends on whether the transfusion of democratic fluid has been strong enough in the short time that the patient has had it applied. Or perhaps, like the phoenix, Hinduism can rise again from its own ashes. We will live to see if Hindustan can reverse the old ways of history. It is comic and presumptuous to talk, as some have talked, standing on the communal powder keg, belied by history, of India's hegemony of Asia. The division of India came soon after this flight of oratory. A more modest approach is better suited and will be more respected.

Indeed, only since the British came has India spread her political influence out into Tibet and to the Chinese borders. That influence for one thing must be sustained. Can India sustain it? We shall see.

At Darjeeling one stands face to face with the huge wall of Kanchenjunga and his company of snowy Titans. Standing there one wonders how human beings under that vast skyey bowl, gazing at soaring peak on peak, can ever be depicted in the satisfied minds of little London Town as so much 'Poona Poona'! The Poona epithet fits the little Londoner more snugly than it fits the Briton in India. This species is used to travelling through vastnesses and to looking out of its tent or the door of its posting house at nature a little frightening by its grim malignity and its foreboding.

India, a land of foreboding, and nothing more foreboding than these placid, monstrous ranges, or the dismal, dark Nambha forest of the Assam border rustling with gluttonous leeches, or the sinister, tropically-clothed black mountain tangle of the tribal hills gloomy under swelling monsoon rain clouds, the remote stamping-ground of headhunters and human sacrifice.

Perhaps the dread and marvel of this prodigious land of broad savannahs, turbid rivers and overpowering ranges has frightened its people to seek security in mysticism, escape as eremites from the rudeness of the world, and to seek refuge in Hinduism<sup>3</sup> by fixed, safe, rigid regulation of their whole existence. Escape, or if you must stay in the world then tread safely in these well-trodden steps! Living here one feels that geography must be the prime determinant of a people's whole way of life and of its destiny.

Within this girdle of mountains the Command stretched some fifteen hundred miles from the Chinese border to near Ambala, passing to the east of Delhi. At its broadest it was eight hundred miles from Sikkim to Southern Orissa. These figures are not given to enhance the importance of the Command; they are here to show how great must be the range of races and of political outlook in this wide expanse holding over one hundred and fifty millions of people.

I have now dealt with the land marches, 'The Mongolian Fringe', so well named by Sir Olaf Caroe. The plain lands hold almost as great a variety as the mountains – Assamese, Bengali, Bihari Hindu showing distinct traces of the Mongoloid blood which welled over the fringe – then into the United Provinces where beats the real heart of political Hindu India and where for a change the big cities of the centre and west of the province are mainly Muslim, and pretty well-educated and well-to-do Muslims at that.

The ports are Chittagong near the Burma border, a good harbor with a deep river entrance taking ships up to 8,000 tons alongside its jetties, and Calcutta, on the Hooghli, an ancient port of entry for the British, with old Fort William lying by the Hooghli river, one of the most difficult channels in the world through which to pilot a ship and a plaguesome obstinate channel to keep dredged.

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<sup>3</sup> In Appendix I is a short description of the Hindu system, under the title 'The Iron Curtain'.

In a few weeks, if there is a strike of the technical hands and dredgers are laid up, silt chokes the channel and whereas ships of 16,000 tons burthen should be handled by the port, ships of no more than 8,000 tons can be handled.

It was not the Nawab of Bengal but English Job Charnock who founded Calcutta, the source of Bengal's riches.

Calcutta is now a great wen, a horrid amalgam of greed, garbage, wealth and poverty, the dirtiest town I have ever seen. I am told that there are dirtier in China and, indeed, for simple ordure, I have seen worse in a small way in Southern Italy, but then the dainty Italian baggage who showed me round, when I protested at the filth, remarked of her fellow-countrymen, 'Oh, but they are just animals!'

Calcutta is the second city of the Empire—for population. It figures so largely in this tale that some account must be given of it and its people. A book could well be written on its traffic alone. I must content myself with a few remarks on the city as a whole.

In and around Calcutta are *bustees*,<sup>4</sup> dilapidated slum areas, the greatest eyesore in the city. They not only exist in outlying areas but right in the middle of the town and close against living quarters of better-class people. They consist of a collection of low mud hovels, roofed with bamboo poles and usually covered with tiles. Sanitation, washing facilities and water supply do not exist. There are sometimes two and even three families living in the same squalid quarter, the door being four or five feet high and the greatest height of the roof seven or eight feet. They are hotbeds of tuberculosis and other diseases.

The women of these areas spend most of their time collecting cow-dung to make cow-cakes which they stick on the walls of their huts to dry for fuel. These cow-dung cakes are the main sources of cockroaches. Where they are made and left to dry in the sun one will find millions of these creatures breeding there, hatching out and then flying into more respectable quarters of the town.

Quite frequently one sees a *bustee* which has grown up on really valuable land, such as the Kalabagan *bustee*. The owner had not the money to build a house and he found it quite lucrative to collect five to ten rupees per month each from the wretched occupants of these filthy hovels.

The dwellers in these *bustees* are sub-humans, beggars, rogues and *goondas*,<sup>5</sup> whose disappearance or elimination would cause no regrets to anyone.

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<sup>4</sup> Clusters of hovels of reed and thatch.

<sup>5</sup> Roughs, gangsters and hired murderers.

The *goondas* of Calcutta are known throughout India and hated and feared in the town itself. Apart from the bullock cart drivers, *thela wallas* (handcart pullers) and rickshaw pullers, who form the nucleus of the hooligans and leaders in any riot, there are definite gangs of *goondas* in the city, both Hindus and Muslims. They are permanent inhabitants, they live mainly in the *bustee* areas of the town and each little gang has its own leader. Some of these leading *goondas* are quite well off, but the majority of them manage to eke out an existence, or rather a cover against a Vagrancy Act case, by running small pan (betel nut) shops, *beri* (cigarette) shops, miscellaneous eating houses or selling small articles as peddlers. They have an excellent Intelligence system and are prepared to turn their hands to any type of wickedness. They can be hired out for killings and stabbings and they are the ones who throughout 1946-47 were carrying on the killings, the stabbings and even shooting, throughout the town, supplemented, of course, by the occasional higher-grade terrorist. They obtain a certain amount of money, not much, by a system of protection and they also possess other means of extortion by threatening persons and by assaults at the request of individuals who are not strong enough to do the assaulting themselves. During a riot they invariably know what is going on as they are the ones who are organizing it. They keep the riot going and immediately turn to looting. The majority of *goondas* are known to the police and are on the registers of the police. They also give information to Police Thana *Babus*<sup>6</sup> against opposite *goonda* gangs, and that indeed is the main system employed by Thanas in obtaining information about these gangs. They seldom participate in housebreaking on a high level but go in for dacoity, with or without murder, among the *bustee* areas, or possibly for dacoity in some rich man's house nearby.

When a gang is too much of a nuisance and several cases are pending against it, the police refer to Government for an Externment Order under the Goonda Act, and if the magistrate thinks the case is genuine the term of externment may extend up to twenty years.

Beggars and mendicants are probably more abundant in Bengal than in any other area of equal size in the world. Here in Calcutta are whole troops of professional beggars who have never done an honest day's work and never will do an honest day's work. Men, women and children make it their business to dress in the filthiest and most verminous rags possible and every morning go begging from door to door. In Bengal it is known as *Bik Mangna* and it is customary for them to get a small quantity of uncooked rice or perhaps a few copper coins from the persons they visit. They go about in batches of ten and twelve.

In conclusion, I must say a word about Calcutta's unique exhibit, its road traffic.

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<sup>6</sup> Clerks.

Imagine yourself being driven along one of the main streets of Calcutta. All along the pavement street hawkers are squatting, selling fruit and food, the buyers eating where they stand and throwing husks and peel about the road and pavement. There are many buyers and all loiter and chat. Among the stalls, here and there, a cow lies ruminant. It seems to belong to no one: probably it has an absentee owner who is away on his lawful occasions earning a day's pay in some other part of the city. The cows are feeding on scraps littered over the ground and on any handful of grain that one who wishes to acquire merit cares to buy for them, for they are sacred, however ill their breed or lowly their owner. An occasional donkey stands by the stalls dozing in the sun.

A cross-section of a traffic jam may show a bus and tram festooned with human beings, *garri*,<sup>7</sup> lorry, two rickshaws, preoccupied dogs, some bicycles, five-seater private car with a family of ten therein, a cow and some buffaloes, handcarts with long bamboo poles hanging over the back, bullock carts, an ass and its foal, and a stray horse.

Calcutta was built on jute and tea. Most of the jute is grown in Muslim Eastern Bengal and would, if it could not for any reason reach Calcutta, go out by Chittagong if it could be there processed. The tea is mostly in Hindu Assam, cut off from Calcutta by the fact that Muslim Bengal protrudes north and severs the Bengal and Assam rail connection between Assam and Calcutta.<sup>8</sup> If this rail is not available to Assam, then the tea must be diverted to Chittagong: so Eastern Bengal hopes.

Most of the industries of the Command were in Bengal, near Calcutta and in Western Bengal, and in Eastern Bihar. The jute factories were about Calcutta: the steel works in Eastern Bihar and the coal in Western Bengal. The rest of the industries may be said to have been concentrated at Cawnpore in the United Provinces, with its big textile and leather factories. Pretty well all the industrial troubles come from two areas, from what one may call the Western Bengal area and the Cawnpore area. Eastern Bengal is Muslim and agricultural. It will be a long time before it can industrialize. Machinery must be got and, with world scarcity, it will be years before it is obtainable: there is no source of power, for the Garo coalfields are meager and will in any case take at least five years to get into production. One feels sorry for the Muslim state of Eastern Pakistan for one knows that no other race can comfortably live among Hindus as they are today and that Pakistan had to come about. It was inevitable and it is to add insult to injury to blame the Muslims or their League for it. Foreign business men do much trade with Hindu commercial men to their mutual advantage and it is that self-interest that keeps them on good terms. Among the common folk mutual advantage more often gives way to stern competition, the Muslim loses and the keen Hindu wins.

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<sup>7</sup> Four-wheeled pony cart plying for passengers.

<sup>8</sup> Muslim Bengal is now East Pakistan. (At the time of writing this book now Bangladesh)

The Muslims of Bengal are poor, being mostly the converts from low-caste or scheduled caste Hindus. The land was owned by rich Hindu landlords, many of whom lived in Calcutta and none of whom had for centuries done anything for their tenants. Thus a religious movement in Eastern Bengal would have had the greater force by being also a social movement of the poor against the rich. This gave an added zest.

The Ganges breaks from the Himalayas at Rikhikesh, place of Hindu pilgrimage, near Dehra Doon, flows through the United Provinces to Patna in Bihar and on to its delta with the Brahmaputra at the head of the Bay of Bengal.

Patna is one of our old John Company settlements. In its cemetery and that of Dinapore are graves dating from the early 18th century.

The oldest grave which we could find, the inscription now partly undecipherable, was that of James Gee.

..... JAMES GEE  
..... OF DANAPORE  
..... WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE  
..... MARCH 1706

In North Bihar and North Bengal are the Dooars, a tract of submontane country seared with rivers and streams. As late as 1830 a traveler going towards the Himalayas through this area would be traversing a country head high in coarse grass, covered with sparse forest and prickly undergrowth, literally crawling with big game, notably tiger and leopard. Today he passes through well-kept and prosperous tea gardens, a present that the British have made to India and not the only one. Tea was a Chinese monopoly until British pioneers cut the forest, cultivated the soil and planted the tea bushes.

Today, mile on mile of tea gardens greet the eye, gardens that are passing out of the stage of patriarchal management and entering that of the efficient, progressive young man beset with labor problems of his own inviting and molested by the Communist labor agitator, unscrupulous as ever. Mainly, the labor is Nepali, a term used for Gurkhas who have permanently settled in India: some labor is aboriginal.

The aboriginal stronghold is in the hilly country of Southern Bihar and in parts of Orissa. These are the Adibassis who claim for themselves the right to a separate Jharkhand state. Their tribes are highly skilled with bow and arrow and do not hesitate in a band to encounter and mob tiger and panther with these weapons, confusing the brute and killing it. They are a most attractive little people, dark-skinned, cheerful, friendly and wholly agricultural. Many are Christians, for the Lutheran, Catholic and Anglican missions do a thriving trade among them. They are, or were, like most who live in remote and wild places, animists.

During this last war we started to recruit them as infantry into a battalion of a new Bihar regiment. Would that we had enlisted them sooner. In 1944 I met in Peshawar on the North-West Frontier an imposing and prominent Pathan. He told me that his son was in Burma and had been given command of a Bihar battalion. He was getting a good laugh out of his son's enthusiasm for his men, fine little soldiers and great fighters according to their commander. These were our small, cheerful black friends from hilly Bihar – Oraons, Mundars, Hos, Santhals – who earned this praise from a young Frontier Pathan.

The Adibassi strongly dislikes the Bihari Hindu. He rebels against the superiority that the Hindu arrogates to his caste and resents being termed an outcaste by those whom he regards as thoroughly effeminate.

Eastern Command held within its confines many other interesting people, but I will say no more of them for I am not writing this book in order to describe entertaining country folk. When one leaves India it is all these little people 'who keep one's affection and with them one hopes to have left a happy memory of oneself. The British official has always identified himself with the so-called backward races, finding them usually more honest and more courageous than the forward ones. He has always had his reward in the trust they placed in him. It is the same with the Nagas: Barnes, Hutton, Pawsey and probably many another have been guide and trusted friend to them. The ever present fear is that when the British have gone these peoples will get short shrift from the ruthless: Brahman rule that will follow, swayed by milling hordes for whom they have little regard and against whose depredations they have for thousands of years so valiantly defended themselves.

In the United Provinces are cities well known of Mutiny days. Cawnpore, where the treacherous and brutal slaughter of defenseless British women and children took place – now discredited in Bloomsbury because it was an atrocity committed by others against their own people, but to us a reminder that nature has changed but little between then and the ghastly Bihar atrocities and Garhmukteswar massacre of 1946. Women and children were again in great part the martyrs – Muslims this time.

Along the holy Ganges valley is the seat of the Hindu religion and the home of its mythology; the shrines of Hard-war where the torrent swells out of the hills; Benares, of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana epics, one of the most holy of India's cities. 'Happy is the Hindu who dies in Benares, for he is transported at once to Siva's Himalayan Paradise on Mount Kailasa, north of Lake Manasa, where the great three-eyed ascetic seeing the past, the present and the future, sits in profound meditation.' Benares is a noisome city but, strangely enough, doctors tell me that you may here dip your pannikin in the filthiest part of Ganges stream and the water so gained will be found pure by analysis. I have been so often told this that I have come to believe it.



Sarnath, near Benares, is where Buddha preached his first sermon after the light of divine wisdom broke on him at Gaya.

*Yet Brahmans rule Benares still,  
Buddh Gaya's ruins pit the hill,  
And beef-fed zealots threaten ill. . . .*

Buddh Gaya, in Bihar, is the place of the Great Renunciation and the Enlightenment of Gautama Buddha.

Further south in Orissa is the famous temple of Puri, where the god Krishna, a Naga<sup>9</sup> by descent, the god of love, is worshipped under the name of Vishnu. None but a Hindu may enter here and all who enter must keep secret what they see. Is this the relic of the exclusiveness of the Aryan patrician?

There have been other ways, those of Rama Krishna<sup>10</sup> at Dakshineswar, but they are sadly rare in Hindustan.

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<sup>9</sup> Caste in India (Hutton), p. 132

<sup>10</sup> A Brahman saint who acknowledged no caste and held that true religion was universal. Died 1886.

## II THE INDIAN ARMY AND POLITICS IN EASTERN INDIA

*January – March 1946*  
**(I) ON THE INDIAN STAGE**

WITH the end of the War in September 1945 we soldiers were at once plunged into the cares of internal security, Watch and Ward, keeping the peace. Our attitude towards this role was not the attitude which Pandit Nehru and many who were outside official circles were wont to ascribe to us. Our attitude was detached and impartial, and perhaps for that reason, because it seemed so dispassionate, some came to regard it as the callous habit of the oppressor, the foreign autocracy, efficient, certain of its power and ready to use it. This very detachment may have seemed unfeeling and remote from the customs of the people. Others saw it as the wearily experienced outlook of a governess, and were irritated. In his autobiography, Pandit Nehru deceives himself in thinking that his Congress Party kept our British civil officials in a torment of fear for the security of their own Government or perhaps for their own persons. His book has been widely read all over the world, more widely than will ever this book of mine be read. Throughout my thirty-three odd years in India I have never seen a British administrator, high or low, frightened by anything that the Congress Party had contrived. Apprehensive they have been, but only as apprehensive as the new Indian Government have lately been or as any of us would always be at the prospect of having to use force for the maintenance of law and order. To us British the violent breaking of the peace by any party whatsoever and the use of violence to subdue the lawless are both repugnant. Our habit is for the settling of quarrels by compromise and by a gradual progress. If anybody of people so obstructs members of the public or of the administration from going upon their lawful occasions and will not desist when required, then the administration is compelled to use force in order to permit life to continue in its common way. None of us has ever enjoyed a fracas so occasioned. Though we regarded it as a distasteful necessity, we could not shrink from it simply because we did not like it. That had always been our attitude. The British administrator and soldier looked upon these outbreaks purely as a disturbance of the law and order that it was their duty to maintain.

At this time we hoped that whatever disturbances there might be would be anti-British or anti-government and not communal, because we knew that the former would be ill-supported and not prolonged and would have the Army wholly against them. They were a smaller danger than the communal outbreak which would be far wider spread, might have its effect on the Army itself and once started would break out again and

again all over the Command. For a long time the Congress Party had been setting an example of lawlessness, inciting the people to disregard authority, threatening the police and boycotting them and their families. This spirit of lawlessness, now that the firm hand of British Administration was being lifted from the Government, was to increase and ultimately, as we then emphasized, to rebound on the very Indians who had excited it when they in their turn would wield the civil authority. We knew that self-government for India was imminent and that with it the Army must be nationalized, that is, officered entirely by Indians, before many years were out, and that therefore the brunt of the onslaught would have to be taken by an all-Indian army, necessarily weakened by the withdrawal of experienced British officers.

So the end of the war brought little comfort to us British and little cessation of strain. I shall later speak of the Indian National Army—the Japanese-sponsored force—at some length so it is sufficient here to touch on it only where it affects the narration of events and the explanation of our sentiments at this time. Its existence added considerably to the difficulties of our officers and to their worries, tried by war as they were and few in number as was the regular British cadre in the post-war days.

Our first concern was to clear our minds as to the probable future of India and its Army so that we could prepare ourselves for the changes that were soon to be upon us. We ardently desired that India should be united, strong and friendly to the British Commonwealth, if not a member of it, and that the Indian Army to which we had devoted the best years of our lives should remain a solid, efficient and faithful instrument of the new India. To this latter end we bent our efforts.

Nevertheless, to us there was one dreadful reality about the Indian situation, and it was that never in our lifetime could we see the rift closing between Hindu and Muslim. The chasm was too deep and was daily widening. It overshadowed all other political considerations in India.

The tantrums of politicians, the abuse of us British by the Indian Press and by our own home newspapers, all seemed far away and other-worldly. The future effect on our Indian Army of this schism was obvious. It meant that the mixed regiments of Hindu and Muslim soldiers would some time or other break to pieces. The best would be desertion by the sepoys; the worst, fighting within the unit. From here would certainly spread civil war and riots in the countryside; but we foresaw that the reverse process would be more probable, namely that the communal troubles of cities and villages would lead to the disruption of our mixed units. There were many such units, from battalions and regiments to sections of signalers and to small workshops. In the end this shattered army would shatter India to smithereens.

In India, if one does not face reality at the outset, then reality will hunt after one as hunts the Hound of Heaven and will overtake one at a most difficult place where

escape is impossible. Communalism was reality: most of the rest, the urge for self-government among them, were froth on the waves and affected only their few devotees. With this in mind it was apparent that even in a united India, if the Army were to survive then it would only survive if it were regrouped into its communal classes, so that at least in units the two communities would not have to endure the strain of trying to paddle along together when they knew that there was communal chaos in their home villages. Above all, the Indian commissioned officers must be separated. Aristotle's remark that man is a political animal may be debatable, but no shadow of doubt can be cast upon the axiom that the Indian is a political animal. Most educated or semi-educated Indians think of nothing else but politics to the grave detriment of the work in hand. Worst of all, they talk of little else and that can be very tiring. Even if the men stood the strain after the communally impartial British officer had left the Indian Army, the Indian officers would certainly break under it. Therefore they must be separated, so, we urged, both officers and men must be grouped into communally homogeneous units and the sooner the process started the better.

Furthermore it seemed to us impossible for India itself to emerge from the dressing-room robed in a single costume blended of both Hindu and Muslim colors. The bodice must be of Muslim green and the skirt of Hindu saffron. All the more reason then that the Army must conform.

We held that before such time as an award for the division of India was made, we must be ready to place our army where it would be least influenced by the political conflict which was at first bound to arise.

So it seemed to us certain that whether India were united or divided the Army must in any case be grouped into communal units or formations. It was hoped, with little confidence, that she would hang together and so keep our precious army integral, but it was expected that she would split in half and that the Army would thus, in any case, be as a consequence divided. That, it would seem, must be the end of our army; but no, we saw that there was even then a chance of saving it and in later days rebuilding it if steps could be taken at once to attune everybody's mind before communal feelings became too fierce and if it was soon enough realized and accepted that India must split.

This one chance lay in handing out to each of the two parts a contingent of its own and in keeping a third part under the management of all the three parties concerned, British, Muslim and Hindu. If possible the third contingent should be built round one completely impartial body, the Gurkha Brigade under its British officers. If a percentage of the technical part of this contingent could be British at the outset, it would add greatly to its strength and reputation for impartiality.

We predicted that Britain would probably accept such a plan for it would make for stability in a traditionally unstable region of Asia and because she would, by the

substitution of Gurkha manpower for her own, find it economical. The pills to be swallowed would be most distasteful for Hindustan for she scorned and distrusted everybody. However, if it were then shown her that the alternative to the medicine was a terrible and fatal internal upset perhaps she would swallow her *amour propre* and her distrust along with the pills.

Without this impartially controlled contingent we felt certain that the two States of India would be at each other's throats before many moons had gone. Preceding this struggle for the domination of India there would be an impoverishing race in armaments among peoples whose standard of living was already far too low. There would be no one left to guard the strategic frontiers while both races were turning their whole attention inwards upon each other. Yet the frontiers were of as deep concern to Hindustan as to Pakistan, for Hindustan, once they were breached, had no natural frontier left to her.

More than that, Pakistan had kindred peoples and probable allies stretching northward far over her mountain borders into Asia. If she could be by any means persuaded to stand beside Hindustan, then the latter would have all the advantage of this vast cushion of Islam between herself and danger. India could then apply herself to her own undisturbed development with a great feeling of security, knowing that her own men stood far from her borders on the frontier of another State and shoulder to shoulder with the soldiers of that State.

For the British, with their dream of a united India, the central contingent would be not only the emblem of Indian unity but the nexus which would one day again draw together the fighting services of all India into one strongly knit body.

For us soldiers of the Indian Army the formation of this contingent was most to be desired as the nucleus of the reborn service that we held so dear.

Foremost among the topics of those latter days of 1945 was the future union or division of Muslim and Hindu India. We held that whatever might be the solution to India's problem of self-government it was essential to her that she should remain internally tranquil. With internal peace she could turn her face outwards to watch her natural borders and her soldiers, sailors and airmen could train uninterruptedly for, and build their services to meet, India's external foes. With internal discord, all their time and all their energies would be distracted towards the policing of their own country. No matter how large the defence services, they would be weak, for they would be unprepared for war and when war broke on them a large proportion would be still employed on securing peace in their homeland. Thus, any political solution which made for tranquility within the country, even if it divided the country, would leave India strategically stronger than one which held the country together in a resentful and troubled union.

Also, it seemed that a separate Pakistan and Hindustan would find their Internal Defence problems far less acute, for a time at any rate, than would a unified India. For one thing, the majority of the population would not brook rebellion and riot on the part of some minority, so that perhaps one would at least get a rather degenerate form of the sense of civic responsibility for law and order, a sense so sadly lacking all over India.

So it was possible that these two separate States might on the whole, by reason of their own internal agreement, be for a time more militarily strong than a unified India which was always looking inwards to quell, with its meager armed resources, disturbances over great areas.

Beside Muslim and Hindu discord there were others whose differences needed sympathetic attention. These were the States and the Frontier tracts and Frontier kingdoms. In the same way as it might be necessary to compound the differences by dividing India rather than compelling an unwilling minority to attach itself for ever to a greedy majority, so it was necessary to avoid compulsion, direct or indirect, in framing the future of these others. Such compulsion could only bring about a unity which would break apart again in times of stress. Here again, with the States possessing forces of their own and with the tribes themselves warlike, strength for war lay in these peoples being satisfied and remaining tranquil.

It was often said that to divide India would so weaken her strategically that she would become a prey to Russia. I have shown that united and riven with discord she would be weaker than if divided and tranquil, and that we had hoped that even if divided we might yet secure a united strategical defence of her borders. If we failed to obtain this, then indeed her position would be precarious but even then less precarious than if she were in a troubled union.

Division of India had indeed, as we saw, certain purely strategical advantages. Since Germany's downfall was imminent we had all looked to Russia as the next country which might be dangerous to the Commonwealth. The immense strength of Russia by virtue of her insular position in central Asia I have explained elsewhere.<sup>11</sup>

For a hundred years we have kept a sponge between Russia and India. Through the evolution of war and of transport that sponge has today worn very thin. Russia's infiltration into Persia had been long foreseen; her filtration across the Oxus from her autonomous Republics of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan should only be a matter of time. Her threat to Turkey seemed to have died for the time being but only by the staunch opposition of that country. Recently, Russia's disinterested offer of arbitration in the

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<sup>11</sup> *The Pattern of War* (Cassell).

dispute between Chungking and Sinkiang had led the Muslims of the latter province to address Chungking as though they were already autonomous.

The setting up of the People's Republic of Outer Mongolia was another Russo-Islamic penetration of the Chinese sphere. So it seemed that Russian Islam was potentially dangerous. Furthermore, the Tatar blood seemed historically to have retained much of its kinship over the huge area of Kublai Khan's empire.

Turkey for some centuries was the centre of Islamic power and even now it seemed that she was a stalwart opponent, though much weakened. But she had lost her leadership of Islam and Islam now might look for leadership to the Muslims of Russia. This would be a most dangerous attraction.

There was much therefore to be said for the introduction of a new Muslim power supported by the science of Britain. If such a power could be produced and if we could orient the Muslim strip from North Africa through Islamia Deserta, Persia and Afghanistan to the Himalayas, upon such a Muslim power in Northern India, then it had some chance of halting the filtration of Russia towards the Persian Gulf. These Islamic countries, even including Turkey, were not a very great strength in themselves. But with a northern Indian Islamic State of several millions it would be reasonable to expect that Russia would not care to provoke them too far.

Thus, it was possible and advantageous to place this Islamic strip between Russia and a virile northern Islamic State of India and to induce the states in the strip, including Turkey, to look eastwards to Muslim India instead of northwards to Islamic Russia.

Hindustan could also profit thereby because Hindu India was entering the most difficult phase of its whole existence. Its religion, which is to a great extent one of superstition and formalism, is breaking down. If the precedents of history mean anything—the appearance of Stoicism, Epicureanism, Cynicism and Skepticism on the breakdown of the Greek religion, the appearance of Communism following on the breakdown of the Catholicism of France, the revival of material philosophies on the breakdown of Buddhism in China—then we may well expect, in the material world of today, that a material philosophy such as Communism will fill the void left by the Hindu religion. It seemed to some of us very necessary to place Islam between Russian Communism and Hindustan.

We thought that Hindu India should welcome some strong state to its north which could allow it to settle its affairs internally with a little peace, for it had a legacy of very violent social trouble soon coming to it.

During my visit to Kabul in 1944 I was impressed with the Afghan feeling that they would never be able to trust a Hindu Raj<sup>12</sup> in India. They would give their friendship now to a British Raj or to a future Muslim power in India, such as Pakistan, but they feared and suspected a Hindu Raj. An Afghanistan which was robust and friendly was essential to India's defence, and India could go far and with much profit in arming and training and throwing her whole influence into Afghanistan. The Hindu Kush Mountains and the ranges running west from them will in a future war with Russia be wholly vital and India's outer nuclear defence should be emplaced in those mountains in peacetime. She may have lost her chance of emplacing it in the Elburz.

Furthermore, there was no reason why a strong Islamic State in India should only look north and west. Islam in Malaya and Indonesia should find support in India against undesirable Chinese activities.

We acknowledged that Islam had more often than not broken into factions but considered that that applied mainly to desert Islam, always shifting. Turkey had remained a nation for hundreds of years: so had Persia and Afghanistan – ploughmen as opposed to nomads.

The military disadvantage of dividing India would of course be grave. That we acknowledged.

The mere fact that it had been necessary to divide India into Pakistan and Hindustan would have shown that India was split by a fundamental disagreement, so fundamental that the vast benefits to be gained through unification had been cast out from men's minds and their judgment warped. It is fair to say that such disagreement amounted to a hostility between two great sections of Indians that might at any time burst into open strife; the better they were armed and organized for war, the more bitter and devastating the strife.

Moreover, Pakistan would be sown with discord in itself from the Sikh minority and Hindustan from the Muslim minority and perhaps from the depressed classes. So we could not believe that Hindustan and Pakistan could straightway live at peace with each other, nor could we assume that within their own territory all would remain quiet. So long as there was one-party government of the Muslim League in one State and the Hindu Congress in the other, internal uprising would be quelled with a stern hand. But there were many signs that both States before long would find themselves with political and social factions within these big parties which would weaken their ability to repress violent attempts to alter the nature of the government or to break away some portion of the State from central control.

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<sup>12</sup> Government, rule.



These and other reasons, which I now give, induced us in early 1946 to anticipate that, whatever the political solution in meeting India's demand for independence, some sort of impartially controlled central contingent must be constituted for all-India defence.

Against land attack there is, generally speaking, only one effective form of land obstacle and that is a considerable mountain range. No such obstacle would exist between Hindustan and Pakistan. The boundaries facing each other are strategically artificial. Therefore, should they come to blows, there would be no geographical hindrance to delay delivery of heavy attack by one or the other. If it were for this reason alone, we hoped that there would be some impartial agency which could from the very outset of independence prevent war between the two States.

In any case (and this again applied whether India were united or divided) it would be quite impossible for some years yet for these two States to maintain a common mixed army under their own control. Jealousy was such that this army would have to be completely equalized by enlisting and training and pensioning one Hindu for each Muslim. Presumably, each unit would be thus equally composed and each company and platoon the same. Hindu caste was not ready for this mixture even if it were possible to bring it about. Actually, it was a practical impossibility.

Each instructional school would have to take one Hindu for one Muslim and its instructional staff, despite the shortage of Muslim officers, would have to be one Hindu instructor for one Muslim instructor. There would be source for quarrel in putting in a commandant of any unit and any school. A single army controlled and officered entirely from these two States was not a practical proposition. The thing would break down on its officers. Once the British had gone they would be free to exercise intercommunal hostility and nepotism. (This again applied whether India was united or divided.)

If, as we believed, the rift between the two States was initially a great one and each would have territorial ambitions against the other, then surely it would be most inexpedient for these States to enter for an armament race by maintaining their own separate armies. Moreover, there would be external defence to be considered. It was hard to expect that Hindustan would be prepared to leave the defence of the important western frontier entirely to Pakistan. Pakistan had religious interests far north and far west of the North-West Frontier and a slight swing in international politics might well draw Pakistan northwards to its ancient affinities. If a fully armed Pakistan wished at any time to subdue Hindustan or to gain a point by force then it would not call so much on Islamia Deserta as on Russian Islam which was a power that was gathering force. The danger to Hindustan was most apparent.

Would either party entrust the defence of the north-eastern frontier, against which the Japanese pressed in 1944, to the State which covered it? We felt quite sure that neither

party would accept this if it were clearly put to it. If that frontier were not awarded to Pakistan and were part of Hindustan then it would be for Pakistan to entrust its defence to its rival. After the pro-Japanese leanings of so much of that Hindustan part of India, after the exhibition of Subhas Bose's Indian National Army, we were certain that Pakistan would not in the end wish to entrust the defence to her southern neighbor.

On the other hand, Hindustan, with a war on her eastern border, would be apprehensive that Pakistan would attack over her open frontier.

Therefore, it seemed to us at this time that it must be in the interests of both these States, while maintaining their own armed police for internal security, to contribute towards the maintenance of an impartial force for keeping them safe against external aggression from a foreigner and from their rival State in India.

Thus ordinary wisdom dictated that some sort of central, impartially controlled force should be constituted. If ordinary wisdom was not given the weight it should have and one or other of the two States should try to prevent the building up of the central force, then we British had in our hands a very powerful lever for persuading it to accept our views. The lever we possessed was our scientific knowledge without which no Indian government could produce an effective armed force. To give the benefits of this knowledge to one government and not to the other would render the latter so inferior in military power as to be insignificant. It would go outside for the knowledge that we refused it but its chances of obtaining what it sought would obviously be very small. No foreign power would reveal to it anything of value for fear of its being passed on or sold to others.

We hoped that all these considerations in favor of keeping some sort of central impartial force would be squarely and forcefully put to all leading Indian politicians of whatever complexion. If this force were not constituted before the partition of India, it would be ever less and less likely that the two States would be able of themselves to join together for their common defence.

There was one problem which was continually before us and that was the matter of officering the Army in the future. During the war we had had some sorry disappointments over the Indian Commissioned Officer and his ideas of military loyalty to his pledged word. Some of these men had been truly excellent and magnificent officers, but against that we had to place the knowledge that the I.N.A. sprang from the Indian Commissioned Officer. No soldier, even of a mercenary army, throughout all the ages can ever condone the breaking of his pledged word of loyalty by any soldier of any caste, creed or race. It was useless to say that it would not happen once the British had given over control of India, because India had yet to face far greater stress, politically, socially and in religion, than had ever been laid on the loyalty of her armed forces by the mild rule of the British.

We believed that any central contingent consisting of both Pakistan and Hindustan subjects would have to have a strong cadre of regular British or other Commonwealth officers.

Some put this cadre as high as two to one Indian until such time as we were able to produce a completely new and efficient officer cadre for India. We put this at fifteen years. We did not consider that the British seconded officer, as in the system for East and West Africa, would, with language difficulties and the need to gain special experience, be able to train up the new entry of Indian Commissioned Officers, or to know the men well enough to produce the highly efficient units, formation staffs and formations that India needed. In any case, we doubted very much whether India would produce even fifty percent of the officers she required for there was no large number of young men offering themselves, nor had the War Office, during the recent war, permitted the British officers of the Indian Army to take up enough higher appointments to enable them in turn to train up Indians for superior commands.

Whether it was desirable that either or both of these States should remain within the Commonwealth was another matter. Two things seemed certain at that time.

One was that Muslim India—Pakistan—and the Indian States would, if no compulsion were brought to bear on them, wish to remain in the Commonwealth. If they elected to remain then it was obvious that the rest, fragmented, could not get out. Perhaps this accounts for the later coercive attitude of the Government of Hindustan towards unwilling States. The second certainty was that the British Commonwealth had not by itself the means to absorb the three hundred millions of people who were of a relatively low standard of education and attainment, most of whom belonged to a religio-social system antipathetic to the democratic system which was generally found under the Union Jack or to which the rest of its peoples aspired.

There was one commonly accepted assumption that seemed to us ridiculous and not a little dangerous and it was that India must progress in a democratic manner. One had only to regard the democracies of the West to see how few peoples were able to make the system work. France, Italy, Germany, Spain, in fact all but Britain, Holland, Switzerland and some Scandinavian countries, were barely capable of operating parliamentary democracy. (Some who have witnessed the irresponsible behavior of certain sections of the British people in recent years may perhaps doubt if even the British are sufficiently educated or morally advanced to live fittingly within their democratic system.) The rather natural conclusion from this was that it needed a very special type of population to work it, and it may not have been stretching deduction too far to say that a free Protestant Christian population was the best fitted for the task. Some might even say that it was the only type so fitted. At any rate most will agree that only a temperate and tolerant people can run a progressive democracy: further, that a

democracy is an indefinable thing and continually grows and develops as the very nature of its people changes. It springs from the people: it is not and cannot be placed like a garment on any people whatsoever. It may be true to say that a people gets the government that it deserves it is certainly true to say that a democratic government is the very essence of those whom it governs.

Since it springs from, and is, the very nature of the people themselves, it follows that, the northern peoples of Europe being very different in character from the people of Hindustan, it was reasonable to predict that the latter would need a very different form of government from the former. That was self-obvious when one contemplated the vital part that religious precepts, forms and rites play in Hindu life. To us it seemed, and had always seemed, an act of folly to try to fit a democratic hat on a theological head. To make the hat fit, the head would have to be pulped into smithereens and of what use then was the hat when the shattered head was that of a dying man?

We recollected that Lord Macaulay, who could not be said to have been reactionary in his views on India, had remarked, 'This, then, is the state in which we are, we have to frame a good government for a country into which, by universal acknowledgement, we cannot introduce those institutions which all our habits—which all the reasoning's of European philosophers—which all the history of our own part of the world would lead us to consider as the one great security for good government. We have to engraft on despotism those blessings which are the natural fruits of liberty.'

And Lord Morley, If it could be said that this Chapter of Reform led directly or necessarily to the establishment of a Parliamentary 'system in India, I for one would have nothing at all to do with it.'

Whether we were to compel or persuade India to engraft on herself a parliamentary system, it seemed as though she were heading inevitably towards this dangerous experiment. No one of importance questioned its wisdom or suggested an alternative. The men of Macaulay's and Morley's time seem to have been realists; of our time, doctrinaires.

Regardless of the religious, social and tribal divisions in India, all and sundry in England and in India were speaking of India's 'national aspirations'. They said that before this great 'national movement' we British were powerless and that if we did not leave gracefully we should be forcibly thrown out. In fact, had we wished to stay and firmly said we would stay until we considered India to be ready for self-government, we could very easily have stayed. It meant that we should have had to clap into gaol five or six thousand political firebrands.

Whether we wanted to stay or would have been justified in staying is different, and that is discussed later on. It is enough here to assert that in stepping out of Hindustan we

were leaving the country open to some form of despotism, and not a despotism set up peacefully by ourselves but one violently thrown up by the leaders of the country themselves. No despotism makes for peace with other countries, for it relies on a popular support which is fed entirely by material benefits. I admit that a hereditary monarchy may, in a modern world, ringed round by strong democracies, remain at peace with its neighbors. There is, however, only one form of government that will surely make for peace and that is true democracy, not one of the Russian sample. Thus, in leaving Hindustan to herself, we were leaving her to strife with her neighbors and not, we feared, fulfilling truly our obligations to the rest of the world. It was thus that many of us reasoned on the future of India in early 1946. We will see in due course how near to or how far from actuality were our conclusions.

## (2) THE DOMESTIC SCENE

From January onwards Indian soldiers came trickling and then pouring in from Indo-China and Indonesia. The former seemed to have been affected little by their experiences in that territory: the latter were affected. They had seen men of another country who looked much like themselves and were in fact anciently of their own blood, striving against a European master with the sacred word liberty on their lips. They had seen them die for what they believed. All were to some extent affected, but particularly the Muslims who already were troubled by events in Palestine. Thus, in their minds were two disturbing elements, their budding 'nationalism' and their desire to see Islam justly served in its dispute with the Jews.

It was for us to set their minds at rest on both scores, though obviously we could not satisfy those minds. It was easier to explain national aspirations to them than to justify with honesty our policy in Palestine. Many of us and many of our men had been in Palestine during the war. Our Indian soldiers, grappling with Vichy French tanks at Mezze outside Damascus, fighting for their lives at Alamein on the very doorsteps of Sion, had witnessed the Jew in Palestine in all his wealth and comfort, safe from the rough hands of war, cigarette in mouth, strolling lazily in the sun about Tel Aviv on his weekly Sabbath, young, well fed, well attired, and withal squeezing the last *pie*<sup>13</sup> from the frugal and penurious soldier for wares of exorbitant price. Those sepoys, many of them Muslims, now added to their political hostility to the Palestinian Jew a marked attitude of contempt. This spread, and particularly swiftly among Muslim soldiers whose sympathies had been roused by the fight for liberty of their Indonesian co-religionists. There was a rustle of discontent.

We put our heads together and in January issued one of our Talking Points<sup>14</sup> on Palestine to give what we believed to be a true and balanced explanation of the position there in order that the men might not be disturbed by violent articles in the Muslim Press. We quoted the demand that H.M.G. should implement forthwith their promise to make 'Palestine a National State for the Jews in accordance with the Balfour Declaration', and pointed out that that declaration did not promise to make the whole of Palestine a Jewish State. We quoted the terms of the declaration to view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home, nothing being done thereby to prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities. We gave them briefly both sides of the case and pointed out that violence would in the end solve no more

<sup>13</sup> Indian: one-twelfth of an anna or penny.

<sup>14</sup> Circulars broadcast to our soldiers to keep them in touch with current affairs and problems which affected them. These had been started by my predecessor shortly before I took over Eastern Command.

there than it would in India, counseling in both places good will, patience, common sense, justice, honesty and cooperation.

Dealing with 'national' aspirations we pointed out that a country that has no desire to rule itself is a country whose people are disunited or spiritless and that, as the Indian Army had shown itself to be an army of high quality, it was right and proper that its men should also wish the country from which they sprang to be self-governing. No government could stand for a moment unless its army were loyal to it, so the Army must be loyal to the new 'national government'; and in order that that government could be instituted peacefully and firmly it must be loyal to the present government until its work was done. We instanced the results of disloyalty in the armed forces in Spain, Argentine, Brazil and other South American States and quoted the Viceroy, Lord Wavell: 'The welfare of the people, the greatness and prosperity of a nation, depend on the efficiency and devotion of its services—the Civil Service, the Police, the Armed Forces—who must be servants of the government, not of a political party.' In the Indian Army were exemplified the qualities of good government, the qualities they were to expect from their own 'national' government.

Meanwhile, the Congress papers 'plugged' nationalism and the fight of white and color in Indonesia as hard as they could in order to make anti-British capital out of contemporary events. Our soldiers were at liberty to read all this, but they still trusted us to tell them the truth and to be honest and impartial advisers.

The Indian Press naturally made a great deal out of Indian troops being used to suppress the nationalist movement in Indonesia and protested very loudly against the reprisals taken by our soldiers for attacks on themselves by professedly friendly people. These wordy onslaughts had been met earlier in the year by a Talking Point explaining to the whole Command that all that our troops were in Indonesia for was to restore peace and to disarm and remove the Japanese forces still there; and that we did not mind one scrap what sort of government was later set up there.

The true facts had often been misrepresented, and in many quarters a gullible public had been too ready to believe untruths which were unfavorable to the Government of India and to their servants, the Indian Army. With so much that was 'anti', it was well to be reminded by the Viceroy of the truth about Indonesia. We quoted him as follows:

Our soldiers, he says, are not there to suppress the Indonesians: they went there on an errand of duty and an errand of mercy. . . . These tasks have been rendered difficult by the action of extremists and lawless elements instigated by our Japanese enemies. . . . It is these extremists whom our troops have had to fight. . . The courage and discipline of Indian troops, attacked without provocation while rescuing defenseless women and children and murdered while protecting the peaceful citizen against mob rule, have been worthy of their highest standards.

Yet one more tribute to the gallantry, restraint and discipline of the Indian Army of which we may all be so proud.

Considerations of national Independence and Interdependence were expounded in another broadcast.

Lack of cloth for mufti clothing when off duty or on leave, reduction in the ration scale to meet scarcity conditions, niggardly daily travelling allowances (for the V.C.O. only half that of the British private), lack of information on the progress of release, free issue of cigarettes to British and not to Indian soldiers – these and many other grievances had to be ameliorated or a reasonable explanation given to the men. Free cigarettes were important for they loved their cigarettes and the Indian sepoy is frugal with his money and a great saver. We showed him that the British soldier did not get a free issue when he was at his home, in England, but only overseas, and that the Indian sepoy was treated on the same principle.

The newspapers were busy with false reports and false charges which were passed on by us to the men and to them refuted in our broadsheets. We told them not to believe a tithe of what they read in the Indian newspapers. I give this particular Talking Point, Number 9, word for word in Appendix III.

In this case we dealt with accusations that the British organized the Bengal famine of 1943: that the British were not sincere in their statements regarding the grant of self-government to India, and that the parliamentary delegation had been sent to delay self-government for India.

Strikes and party politics and the soldier's part in each were also explained to the men. They were unused to the idea of either of these, but we saw on the horizon coming industrial and social troubles and the need for temperance and tolerance among Indians once self-government came and the dust of party conflict was raised.

We showed why strikes came about and why they did not happen in a good army where sympathy existed between officers and men. The army must be strictly impartial in its duties in a strike and must make no attempt either to break or to assist the strike but must regard itself solely as a servant of the State and of the public. We emphasized that in party politics, there should be a responsible use of the vote and of all individual endeavors, for national ends and not for personal gain. To see both sides of a question, to put country and neighbors first, and to take a long-term view of the problems confronting the country, were the ways of responsible men and women.

In Chapter I, I have mentioned Calcutta's traffic. I would not risk my reputation or liberty by attempting to drive a car through the streets of Calcutta. With so long an



experience of cars behind me I was surprised when I read in the newspapers the attacks on our military drivers, for it was my opinion that by far the worst drivers in Calcutta were the ordinary civilians—in fact few of them could be said to be drivers at all, for they would never have passed a test in England—after them the U.S.A. negroes, next on the ladder of virtue the civilian driver of a military lorry, then the average Indian soldier, the U.S.A. white soldier and the ordinary European civilian drivers, the experienced B.O.R. who had probably driven a lorry or a bus in England and his U.S.A. equivalent in road manners.

It is true that our men had come to us straight from the plough and the buffalo herd, but at least they had a sense of discipline and some desire to obey the rules they had been taught. The majority of the drivers of Calcutta had neither. In Appendix III are some extracts from the Indian Press of Calcutta.

In view of the massacres of which we shall later read and to which Indian papers incited their willing readers, the terms in which these extracts are cast seem a little florid.

On the 10th April we summoned a Press conference and the Area Commander informed the correspondents of various Calcutta newspapers of the orders now issued to ensure that military vehicles behaved better. As a matter of fact, all except one of these orders had been in force for many months for both British and Indian drivers. However, they seemed to impress the reporters, who went away almost satisfied. Meanwhile we had been painting all our vehicles with dazzle yellow streaks in front and at the rear to distinguish them from civilian vehicles driven by civilians, and from American vehicles. As soon as these were out on the roads, complaints against the Army ceased altogether, showing how slight had been their foundation.

Civilians were in possession of large numbers of vehicles of types identical with our military cars and lorries, many with their W.D. numbers still on them. If one had the wit to look closely at the driver's clothes one could easily see if he was a soldier or a civilian. A little observation would soon show even to the least thoughtful how large a number of civilian-owned vehicles of the sort were on the streets of Calcutta, and without doubt many who cudgelled the army were not so witless as to be ignorant of this fact.

We did what we could to reduce our responsibility for accidents. On the civil side nothing was done: the driving continued to be the worst we had seen, pavements to be so blocked with hawkers as to be unusable, and pedestrians to be wholly untaught about the use of the roadway. It was the mote and the beam again.

I have rather labored this because much of the agitation was solely due to the fact that the Indian Army and the British Army were British-run and it was thought by agitators that it would bring us into disrepute if pressed hard enough.

It did damage us without doubt in the eyes of the public, European and Indian, and we could ill afford at that critical time that the Indian Army should suffer any loss of prestige or its soldiers, even its drivers, any loss of confidence in our ability to protect them from the malice of civilians. We felt responsible for the future: the civilian had not the same feeling.

More than once, when some accident occurred in Calcutta, the mob turned to and burnt the next military lorry that came that way, no matter who had been the culprit. Finally, we had to place armed guards on our vehicles, with the full accord of the government of Bengal, and to make public our intention to shoot if any more violence were threatened to our drivers or their vehicles. Most of the newspapers only tended to egg on the worst characters of the mob to continue these outrages, leading them to expect immunity, by virtue of Press and popular indifference to, or support for, their behavior.

Another source of annoyance to the Indian civilian population was the fact that the Indian soldier was better fed than the now strictly rationed civilian. At the same conference my Major-General Administration gave the facts to the reporters.

Our men were indeed better fed and though we were cutting their ration we knew full well that in such delicate circumstances where the Army's loyalty to itself and to the future India hung critically in the balance, there was a point beyond which we could not cut men who had endured the hardships of war for so long, without grave discontent and serious results. It was necessary to stem the clamor of the Indian Press.

General Ballentine pointed out that the Army had foreseen the coming food shortage and in the previous November had made a cut of one-sixth in the total ration and in March had suspended 25 percent supplies of flour and 55 percent of sugar to our canteens. Further, we had re-classed all stocks from twenty to fifteen days requirements, while we were still ourselves farming on a large scale in order to provide our own vegetables and were offering up military lands to the civil to extend their farming activities. We had offered four companies of motor transport to Bihar and Bengal to help in the distribution of civil supplies.

All this was indeed true. We had done and were doing a great deal, and because of that we were able to keep our ration at a reasonable scale and to ensure that the Army was content with its food. We kept the Army informed of the feeding conditions among civilians, and, in demanding further cuts from the troops, showed that it was their duty to accept them without murmur.

During March there had been the big Victory week celebrations in Delhi. There was a good deal of discussion as to whether they should or should not be held. I myself, learning that I should be required to float past as an exhibit standing erect in the front

seat of a carrier, felt opposed to the idea but maintained a dignified neutrality between my duty and my inclinations. In the end the celebrations were held and I floated by as required, feeling a complete fool and knowing that the Indian populace of Delhi neither knew me from Adam nor cared one straw who I was. It was well that the authorities decided to wheel us precious general cargoes off parade directly after the float past, for the main body encountered a shower of brickbats in Connaught Circus where it wended for the better delight and edification of the populace. I think the populace had all the fun they set out to have on that sunny afternoon in March 1946. It was a non-violent demonstration which by custom meant that no violence was done to the marksmen.

It was about now that G.H.Q. in Delhi put out one or two broadcasts by very senior officers which we in the provinces found it hard to understand. The gist was that British officers of the Indian Army were expected to serve the new Indian Government with the same loyalty as Indian soldiers had served them, the said British officers. This presupposed that British officers were automatically going to serve on under the new Government. But it was very doubtful if the new Indian Government would get British officers to serve on, since few of them had any doubts as to the perplexing conditions in which they would be called upon to serve and were apprehensive that the Indian Army after a few years would no longer be the same as it had been during and before the recent war. In any case the new Government would have to make a fresh contract with the British officer, for his commission no longer ran directly he ceased to serve the Crown of England. As a contracted servant it stood to reason that he would be loyal to his new master, but was it likely that he would contract knowing what he did? What of serving with the I.N.A.<sup>15</sup> which Delhi had pardoned? Delhi seemed to be remote from realities.

The tide of communal feeling was steadily rising in all provinces in the Command, political divisions being submerged as it rose.

Hitherto we had always been able to rely on the Auxiliary Force of India, a European and Anglo-Indian volunteer force, fairly well armed and consisting mainly of business men and their employees and technicians. For local disturbances they were embodied and frequently proved their value. But now numbers of Anglo-Indians were dropping out or refusing to join for fear of later persecution by the new Government of India. To this extent we were therefore weakening in our resources for the keeping of law and order.

It was not surprising that the European Association of Calcutta summoned a secret meeting of its members to consider how best to protect themselves and their families in circumstances dictated by the now obvious increase of lawlessness in the country.

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<sup>15</sup> Chapter IV.

Someone managed to get particulars of what passed in this meeting and the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* published them with great relish. The obvious line for the nationalist Press to take, and which they took, was that the British were contemplating wrenching back from struggling India the prize of independence so nearly in her grasp.

Before long this same Press was provided by some disloyal Indian employee with another *bonne bouche*, the particulars of a secret scheme which we had called 'Asylum'. All it amounted to was that in the event of grave trouble in India, whether directed against the British or against the Government, throwing the country into turmoil and lawlessness, we would collect and escort the European and Anglo-Indian population to certain previously stocked and protected refuges. This again was interpreted as an attempt to arm ourselves and reconquer the country from its lawful rulers. The only aggressive part of the scheme was that we would, from these bases, set to work to restore the law and order which had broken down and to restore the administration, whatever it was, so that the country could peacefully go forward on the path of 'liberty'. 'Asylum' was a thoroughly stimulating draught for the national Press.

The spring and early summer season was clammy in Calcutta for rain was scarce: April had not 'wept her golden tears' to refresh us.

Disbandment of famous Divisions coming in from overseas went on apace. Demobilization centers were crammed full. Everything went to schedule, thanks to G.H.Q.'s excellent wartime arrangements for demobilization.

Much of our time was spent in visiting units and saying good-bye to them before they left us to take their famous deeds into what I fear may well be oblivion. I think it will be too great a task to rescue them all from the graves of the forgotten, however industriously the historian may strive.

### III A PERSONAL APPROACH

WHILE the I.N.A. affair<sup>16</sup> was at its most acute, threatening to tumble down the whole edifice of the Indian Army, we were trying to get the ear of influential Indian civilians, not in order to set them against the I.N.A. but in order to get them to see that the defence of India must be their first care after British power was withdrawn and that therefore they must adopt a responsible attitude towards it. In this attempt we were much handicapped by having been out of India for so long during the war. Not that we regretted our absence, for most of us were deeply perturbed at being back again and by what we saw going on all round us. A wholly artificial situation boding much violence was being created over the face of the country by a handful of politicians. Sincere many of them may have been, but the fact remains that they were not voicing the desires of the people, whose main preoccupation was to be protected from the communal fanatic, the Brahman and the moneylender and to be able to turn to an honest and impartial official when in trouble—if they could get to him through the hedge of native obstruction which sought either to keep them away altogether or to make the journey as expensive to the petitioners and as lucrative to themselves as possible. If anyone wishes to explore the tangled undergrowth of this jungle let him read Philip Woodruffe's *Call the Next Witness*.

*The United Services Journal of India* unfortunately only found its way into Service hands: it got no further unless some newspaper summarized its articles. It showed the tendency of the daily papers of India when only those military articles which had to do with selection of officers and other slightly political domestic military subjects were fairly well advertised while articles on strategy were ignored. My own articles on strategy, for what they were worth, reappeared only in a small pamphlet of very limited circulation edited by Professor Jadhev of Indore, an enthusiast on military science.

I lectured at different places, often on world strategy of the future, and managed to get a few Indian editors and other civilians in to listen. They were very attentive to what to me were about the most unmanageable lectures I had ever had to give. I had to start on the simplest basis and to build up on that a strategical theory which could be compressed into an hour and which the audience could apply for themselves. Indian newspapers took the greatest care in reporting the lectures correctly and sent their reporters to me with the scripts before publication.

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<sup>16</sup> Chapter IV.

For some reason of which I am in doubt, the educated Indian civilian was more ready to listen to the British Army officer than to the British civilian official. Perhaps he was familiar with the latter and knew little of the former, or maybe he felt that he knew all that was to be known of the civilian's profession but next to nothing of the soldier's. Whatever the reason, he seemed inclined to be friendly with us licentious and oppressive creatures. Our lives being a little precarious we tended to take ourselves and the affairs of India fairly light-heartedly and to form a contrast to the anxious intensity in which he had his political being.

I lectured to the Royal Asiatic Society in Calcutta to a purely civilian audience who gave me an interested hearing for over an hour. At the end of it the Chairman presiding at the lecture, a noted Indian physicist, rose to speak a little on the probable future of atomic energy in commerce. An aged and irascible European in the audience listened for some minutes with increasing restlessness and reddening face and then, in a loud and commanding voice, told the Chairman to sit down. The luckless Chairman continued to speak, so his opponent told him to 'shut up' and went on to say that he had already listened to a very long lecture (mine) and that the speaker was now clean off the point. The scientist gently asked him to cease fire and said he would be finished in a minute. But the aged man was not appeased and with a last loud order to shut up he rose and stumped from the room. The rest of the session continued in peace.

The lecture was fully reported.

*WORLD PEACE LIES WITH TEMPERATE AND JUST PEOPLE, SAYS G.O.C.-IN-C.*

Lieut.-General Sir Francis S. Taker, G.O.C.-in-Chief, Eastern Command, in a lecture to the Royal Asiatic Society in Calcutta on Thursday said the peace of the world lay with those people 'who are temperate and can apply to themselves a form of government which develops a national conscience and so a national will towards justice in international affairs', reports A.P.I., etc. etc.

I was a member of the Executive Council of one of the universities, not for my learning but because the university had a cadet corps. Here, for the first time in my life, I saw professors going about the domestic affairs of an Indian university and it was an eye-opener to witness. I was warned by a friend that the meetings of the Council might well last for four hours, so I told the Vice-Chancellor on the first occasion that I would have to go after about an hour and a half. It was soon apparent to me that the professors welcomed the meeting not so much as giving a chance for us to solve the problems of the University, as a chance for them to display their forensic talents. Separately or together they leapt up to demand the attention of the Chairman and when they had it they would tend to begin with Here on the floor of this House.

I remember one item which for me only concluded when I read the paper the following morning. It had to do with the misdemeanors of the librarian. I should hate to recount them all for they spread over a period of seven years and I myself thought that he would be dismissed out of hand, but I had not reckoned on the centripetal attraction of the rostrum. Professor followed professor 'on the floor of the House', all to accuse but simultaneously to excuse and defend what my simpler senses told me to be a quite scandalous conduct of the librarian's office. I was highly entertained to learn that their *Encyclopedia Britannica* was not now of much use, for the students who consulted it cut out the passages that they wished to study and took them home for better perusal. The University had lost much money over this and over other backslidings in the matter of bills, but the librarian was obviously a man of means for he had offered to pay five thousand rupees from his own pocket to make up a part of the known deficiencies. After two hours on this case I had to leave for another appointment, much to my regret. If professors were so prolix and wasteful of time and energy one could not expect very much of those whom they taught.

In one way and another I have seen a good deal of the students in my life, for most universities have a Training Corps of some sort and into those Corps go the cream of the colleges. As Brigade Major in the thirties I had a lot to do with the Corps round about Delhi. In August 1946 I gave an interview at the Calcutta University to a selected band of young Indian students and after it was over had tea with them and went round the University. They were, as I foresaw, steeped in politics, and all their questions to me bore on the political side of the Army. They wished to discuss the pros and cons of the I.N.A. about which I only warned them that if it ever happened again after we had left, then they must blame themselves for their present support of that nefarious body. I got the stock reply that it could never happen after the Army was their own. In India any who had lived there long could always predict the tutored answer to almost any political question. These boys and girls, the boys more than the girls, were impregnated through and through with propaganda. They may change when we are gone but I do not think so: the signs are not wanting that each cause will be more passionately pressed than the last. For instance, Communalism became far more bitter and active than any animosity previously shown against the British. Most of the questions were attempts to make me admit that British troops were much better equipped and paid and British airmen given more efficient machines than their Indian counterparts. I was asked by a Sikh *coram publico* why it was that British troops were so sexual and so given to rape. I ignored the first part of the question, which simply indicated the nature of my questioner, and asked for instances of the second. There were none, but the mind locked with the fascist key is never convinced of the truth of another argument.

The same Sikh informed me that the Sikhs were the bravest of the brave and a fighting people. I said I was interested to hear it. In the Punjab in early 1947, just a year later, they had a grim lesson in return for their truculence.

The girl students were more sincere to my mind and less riddled with political shot. They yearned for the time when India should be a nation and were surprised when I said that I longed for that time too and so did nearly all Englishmen, but that India had more difficulties than I cared to think of between herself and nationhood. They, too, were blind to the inescapable truth of communalism. It will disappear when the British go. Pandit Nehru, Gandhi, a hundred others have promised us, the world, and these young people that this must be so. The promise was not to be fulfilled. We knew it could not be: they refused even to contemplate its failure.

If one did have any success in these interviews, it must have been from letting them see that one was the usual fallible human, approachable, ready to discuss things without bias and as much aware that India's ship was heading towards the beacon of nationhood, an erratic course withal, as they were. Our young English folk are immature, if you like: I prefer them so. There is plenty of time left in life to be swamped in the anxieties of national affairs. Youth is there to be enjoyed. Let them enjoy it. Let them work if they like, or if they must, and work hard, but keep a large, fresh open-air room in the mind where the joy of youth can enter. The twilight of cloudy political day has far too early seeped into these youngsters' minds. Many of them will never know the carefree days that were their right. Their elders have deprived them of their blossom time, and to what purpose? They are certainly the less agreeable company for an old soldier.

Press conferences I did not like.

The trouble in India has always been that the reporters try to drag one into politics the whole time. Then, unless one insists on giving them a 'hand-out' of what one has said, or spends a long time checking through their reports, one finds oneself badly reported and unexpected constructions put on one's words.

In Press conferences my efforts were always towards showing that the virtues displayed by the Indian Army were of inestimable worth, hoping that, accepting the dictum, my hearers would see of how little merit had been their I.N.A. and of what little use to them in the future.

In Appendix III I give a newspaper report and leader on one such conference.

What I had to say was understood and was agreeable to some of my audience. It did seem from the general attitude of the newspaper men at the conference and their subsequent reports that we had at least attracted some sympathy towards the Army and gained some understanding of its day-to-day difficulties.

Nevertheless, a short time after this conference, the next day or the day after that, there appeared in the Hindu Press three letters—two from my headquarters and one from



G.H.Q. in Delhi. They were secret letters and were reprinted *in extenso*. I had proposed that 'Major-General' Chattedee of the I.N.A., who had just been repatriated to India, should be kept out of Bengal while the province was in such a political turmoil. The other letters were in continuation of that proposal. It was something of a shock to see secret letters thus exposed. They had been stolen somewhere between my headquarters and G.H.Q. or at G.H.Q. itself. It was alarming for the future, for the only person who could have got at them was some Indian officer employed on the Staff. There they were for the whole world to see and there were we and G.H.Q. searching our dispatch books, looking for clues as to who had done it. This was the beginning of many exposures of secret military information in India. So long as officers, for money or for political advantage, will hand out privileged documents and information to those who should not have them, so long does the Army function at half efficiency. We never found the culprit: probably he typed off a copy for himself for none of our copies was unaccounted for.

*The Morning News*, a Calcutta Muslim paper, in view of the fact that it was a Hindu leader, Sarat Chandra Bose, who first read out the letters in the Legislative Assembly in Delhi before they appeared in the Press, naturally demanded a full enquiry and heavy punishments. That was the right point of view even though prompted to no small extent by communal feelings.

A Calcutta European newspaper remarked that the G.O.C.-in-C. had no business to write such a letter since he knew it might fall into the wrong hands! So much for sending a letter Secret, sealing it, putting it in two covers, sending it through Special Signal channels, recording its passage all the way and carefully filing it at both ends in steel cupboards. All this should be done away with as the letters might fall into the wrong hands, said the newspaper. But if this letter should not have been written, then no secret letter should be written by the Army, and that is an absurdity.

Being fond of art and of all craftsmanship, it was a great pleasure to me to open art exhibitions and to visit them.

There was a very keen art circle in Calcutta, then led by the late Mr. Ghose and by Lady Mukherjee. It has done much good.

In June 1947 All-India Radio asked me to broadcast on Art, far too expert a subject for me to tackle. Yet I did want to say something to as many as would listen about the priceless benefit of having some sort of skilled hobby to distract one's mind from the common troubles of the time. Particularly, I hoped that some young Indians might hear and might accept personally what I said. So I compromised by agreeing to broadcast on the Amateur Artist. Of that I know a lot, for I was at least wholly amateur with all the technical faults of that status.

I am not an admirer of Indian art but of one or two Indian artists. The work of the late Amrita Sher Gil was remarkable and, had she lived, would have provided for India the first synthesis between whatever is left of Indian art, and the new art of the West.

I came to know some of India's artists and to have them as my friends. No one can resist the simplicity of Jamini Roy who, seated at my table, would demand from the other guests which knife or fork or spoon he should use for each course. It was he who, looking at one of my oils, told me that the West was lucky in art, for it always knew what it was after, whereas he and his people were forever groping. I usually knew what I was after but never achieved it, but I agree with him that the artists of the West have a great advantage since the study of international art in all its aspects, past and present, is organized for them and they can turn to a hundred masters and their brilliant works for knowledge and inspiration. India has none of this, or so little that the artists have to scrape round to find anything of present value to them. The reason is that the country has been for millennia so torn by wars, tribal and dynastic, that artistic progress has suffered the severest handicaps. As the bullock tugs the plough today, so do India's people fashion things with their hands as they were fashioned aeons ago. And now, illumined by Western thought, her artists seek to leap an artistic chasm of a thousand years. To the commotion of wars has been added the imprisoning and narrowing effect of the stratified caste system of Hinduism and that has prevented the movement of ideas up and down through society. Had there been this movement as there is today, inspired by British example in India, Hinduism would have burst its bonds to the immense benefit of India and Indian art and culture.

In their studios I noticed the lack of good drawing: all too many were trying to paint before they could well draw, run before they could well walk. It was not the license of the fine draughtsman in depicting form but the annoyingly amateur carelessness in never learning how to depict it.

I have left the beaten track in pursuit of a hobby. It took me, however, to meet poets, artists and sculptors. I attended *mushairas*, Urdu poetry readings, in some places, and enjoyed them.

So my net of acquaintance was fairly widely flung, perhaps widely enough to justify the comments on Indian life and people that I make in this book.

One would have been blind indeed not to notice how communal hatred permeated every walk of Indian life and culture.

The sarcastic literary review of a Hindu book which I have reprinted in Appendix III is a fair sample of this antagonism. In the first sentence of this chapter I have mentioned the I.N.A. Since that body of weaklings and turncoats so deeply affected our army throughout the whole of 1946 it is time to explain its origin and to narrate something of

its activities and treatment at the hands of the political parties of India and of our own Army Headquarters at Delhi. I shall write at some length about this I.N.A., for it was to us soldiers at that time, and to some of our I.C.S. colleagues, a movement of the greatest military and political importance.

#### IV

## THE INDIAN NATIONAL ARMY, THE POLITICIANS, AND THE INDIAN ARMY

*Treason doth never prosper; what the reason?  
For if it prosper, none dare call it treason.*

WE will begin the story at Pegu, north of Rangoon, in July 1945.

The Japanese Army is breaking out from the Pegu Yomas, the low, intricate, forest-clad hills to the west of the road from Mandalay to Rangoon; that road in turn runs along the west bank of the Sittang River, at that time a broad swollen brown flood meandering along the foot of the Shan hills to find the sea.

All is sodden, lush, green and hot. There is a straight, big-dropped downpour from a still sky.

The victorious 4th Indian Corps is dealing with the 28th Army condignly and without mercy. In the middle of the Corps front is the 17th Indian Division which, in early 1942, through mismanagement far above the Division, suffered so terribly in the retreat across this very Sittang River. Now, veteran, famous and highly-equipped, it is beating its enemy down into the swamps of Burma's rice-fields. The slow streams of the Sittang tributaries surge along thick with the blown corpses of Japanese soldiers, urging their burden out into the river and down to the sea. The 28th Army is cornered in the waist-deep mud between road and river. The few that get across to the far side of the river are being decimated by Aung San's Patriot Force and then by our own guerillas working well into Japanese territory. Nothing will escape of this army.

In a corner of Pegu is the little civil gaol. Into it now in small bands—for the Japanese even at the very end in their extremity give themselves up sparingly—come the Japanese prisoners of war from northward about Pyinwagon, sent in by our 17th and 19th Divisions.

As the slaughter proceeds, in come bearded tatterdemalions whom with difficulty one recognizes as Indians and, with more careful scrutiny, as erstwhile soldiers of the Indian Army. One looks at them curiously, fallen in there inside the Japanese prisoner of war pen in the gaol, these men who took arms against the Indian Army. They come to attention, stock still, rather specially soldierly, as one passes. This man, we are told by the 'I' people, has brought in twelve others.

*Kitne dinon se paidal a'e?* ('How long have you been walking?') *Tin hafte.* ('Three weeks.')

Well, one thinks, that's not much of a feat. They've been serving the Japanese in Subhas Chandra Bose's Second I.N.A., so the Jap would have just let them be. They would have walked unmolested as though making for the battle, thrown away their rifles and then come over to us with their hands up. They could have done that long ago. Compared with the gallant escapes over the open desert of our men of North African days, without food and without water, this feat is trivial. Yet they seem, after betraying their loyal brethren, to expect others to accept them at their own estimation, to hope in a dull, sneaking way that others will disregard the fact that they joined a Japanese Army to fight against their comrades. Let us hope that since they wanted to be Japanese they will just be sent packing off to make what way they can back to Japan, their spiritual home. We don't want them in India as a political tool to be used against the Indian Army.

One passes them by in silence, scarcely noticing them, and goes on to the Japanese. These stink but at least were neither traitors to us nor to their own people; they were loyal to the end and, however low some may rate them in the scale of humanity, in this at least they showed themselves the superiors of the cowards and weaklings of the Indian Army that we have just seen. The Japanese bob their salute as we come to them and profess themselves happy with rations and medical care. They are in a bad way: feet with festering sores, riven with fever.

Looking at the interrogator's list it is noticeable how many of the Indians are of the 1/14th Punjab Regiment, one of the Indianised battalions; that is, a battalion with an almost complete cadre of Indians as officers. One of them is sent for and asked why he went over to the enemy. He replies that in the Army he was taught to obey, so when his officers ordered him to come with them he did so and so did his friends. They then found themselves in the I.N.A. with their officers. They went like sheep after their false shepherds; like sheep they came back when they found the doors of the fold wide open again.

'I see. What officers went with you from your Regiment? Captain Shah Nawaz, Captain Mohan Singh, Lieutenant Dhillon, Captain Abdul Rashid, Lieutenant Mahomed Akram.<sup>17</sup> I don't remember any others.'

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<sup>17</sup> Captain Shah Nawaz. Charged with waging war against the King-Emperor, and abetment to murder. Convicted on both counts. (*The Statesman*, 4th January 1946.)

Captain Mohan Singh. Never brought to trial.

Lieutenant Dhillon. Charged with waging war against the King-Emperor. Convicted. (*The Statesman*, 4th January 1946.)

Captain Abdul Rashid. Charged with waging war against the King-Emperor, and gross brutality against Indian prisoners of war. Convicted on both counts. (*The Statesman*, 5th February 1946.)

Lieutenant Mahomed Akram. According to G. S. Dhillon in his *The Indian National Army in East Asia*, Mahomed Akram was killed in an air crash in the spring of 1942 while on his way to Tokyo.

Shah Nawaz strikes a familiar note. His photograph is on the wall in the Commandant's office in the Indian Military Academy at Dehra Dun; slight of build, with a small black moustache, standing next to Brigadier Peter Collins, one of the most upright men and best of soldiers, then commanding the Academy. Collins lavished all he had of his sympathetic personality and his considerable abilities on the young Indians of the Academy. So here is Shah Nawaz, winner of the sword of honor or the belt at the I.M.A. A Muslim too; quite unbelievable. Some say that few of these very successful cadets at Home or in India do really well later on, but surely Shah Nawaz has created a record.

It is a relief to leave this rabble and to get back to Corps Headquarters in the town and there busy oneself again in maps and operations, directing Indian soldiers who will fight towards their enemy to reap the full and bloody harvest of their final victory.

Then, in the misty evening the air conference, the instructions for concentrating fighters on to the lacerated enemy, target by target. The I.N.A., feeble, sordid and impotent, is forgotten.

The men who are doing the fighting are the hardy, frugal, invincible<sup>18</sup> and enthusiastic Indian and Gurkha soldiers to whom, for more than thirty years, I have grown so well accustomed. These are the men who deserve best of India in the days to come. They will never get their deserts unless they take them, for never have their voices been heard and never will they be heard in the shrill clamor of their country's political jungle. Moreover, perhaps India will go the way of Egypt, the men of affairs mostly lawyers, schoolmasters, and professional politicians. Our soldiers are peasants and I have read that peasants are always gullible: if they weren't they wouldn't be peasants.

Back in India in September 1945, together with relief at our victory and the ending of the struggle, I found that the thought of the I.N.A. was troubling more Indians than I had ever expected. Even English intellectuals, birds of a year or two's sojourn in India, were taking a keen interest in the rights and wrongs, and the degrees of wrong, of the I.N.A. men.

Perhaps a regular soldier was not qualified to judge of these men. He saw only one thing and it was that they had sworn an oath of fealty, that they had broken that oath and turned upon their brothers-in-arms, joining with a brutal enemy to destroy comrades with whom they had shared their lives and who trusted them: that this was the meanest, most degrading crime to which a soldier could stoop, and that there was only one punishment for it: death. No army can exist where there is no trust.

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<sup>18</sup> The Indian Army kept 'warfare' as its first priority; 'welfare' for officers and men came after training and fighting.

The sheep who followed might to an extent be excused and simply extorted from their provinces: but those who led and those who actively maltreated our prisoners, whether officer or sepoy, should suffer the severest penalties. Even a mercenary who turns traitor expects only the firing squad when he is caught.

Talking one day with Guy Wint, that most percipient observer and student of Indian affairs, I found that he held much the same opinion as did I. So I was not so much of a walrus as I thought. Neither did the Prime Minister of Bikaner and the Diwan of Travancore differ so widely from me.

I was in good company, for both these Ministers are among the best intellects I have ever had the good fortune to encounter.

Seeking the opinions of many people who were only too ready to open the discussion and to air their views, I concluded that a very great number of men in civilian India held that the conduct of the I.N.A. was reprehensible and meet for punishment. They differed in the degree of punishment. At any rate, every one of them expected the leaders to be awarded some pretty stiff sentences by the Army, particularly as it seemed even then that at a fairly early date this army was likely to be their own. All the Indians whose opinions I sought were Nationalists: there were few educated Indians in those days who were not.

It was recalled that history had little good to say of even the most mercenary of mercenary soldiers who turned with their weapons upon their employer. And were these men mercenaries? They did not join as mercenaries join. They came willingly, generation after generation, to the same regiment to serve in the one Army which represented their country: there was no other Army. This was their family career as it used to be the career of the families of our English counties in their county regiments. All time had produced only one Indian Army and it was this one. They were proud of it; so proud that they became a class apart from the urban civilian. This was the Indian Army and recognized by its soldiers as the Indian Army, at birth a child of the British connection. Until their Indian officers led them away and suborned them to join the enemy it had never occurred to them that this Army was not their Indian Army but the army of a foreign power. Strangely enough, there in the 1/14th Punjab Regiment all the officers were Indians, a truly Indian Regiment, for before the surrender at Singapore the British Commanding Officer had been wounded and taken prisoner in the first few days of the fighting and the British Second-in-Command had been killed. No, the excuse that they were only mercenaries was too thin to wear. It was no good. Nevertheless, a soldier may not join as a mercenary, but yet be by nature himself mercenary. The men whose names I cite I were of this sort. Their services were for anyone who suited them best.

Shah Nawaz, for instance, cashiered and no longer a Captain in one of the most famous armies of the Second World War, can be sure that he has a place in history. Of all the I.N.A. he has been the most vocal, so generations to come will point a finger at him and at the strangely few whose names have come down through the ages remembered for such a deed as his. That he did not join the I.N.A. at the very beginning seems to have been due to his personal antipathy towards its founder, Captain Mohan Singh, whom he knew well.

Were they really fighting against their brethren for the freedom of India? It must have very quickly become apparent that India was not to be freed by the cruel yellow morons with whom they had associated themselves. However, perhaps once they had joined it was difficult to get away from them and above all impossible to get back to the prisoners of war cage from which they had so willingly stepped out. So they had to stay with them. But were they fighting for the freedom of India from the British? If they were, the burning zeal to rid their country of the oppressor should have spurred them on to the highest endeavor in battle. It did not do that, for when they engaged the Indian Army they did so with only half a heart and at the first chance they either fled or, preferably, surrendered themselves in shoals. Shah Nawaz, for instance, is quoted in *The Glory that is I.N.A.* by F. B. Roy as saying: 'Then I decided to join the I.N.A. I decided to sacrifice everything—my life, my home, my family, etc.' Why then did he surrender so meekly to the British? Most of the other well-known officers of the I.N.A. came in as readily. There is food for thought in the conduct of these men if one believes that the loyalty of the future Indian Army is to be subjected to yet more rigorous tests.

Their heart was not in the fight for the freedom of India. They had not joined the I.N.A. for that purpose. In Appendix II are two accounts of actions fought by our Indian regiments against the I.N.A. The ease with which our men overcame their former comrades shows how small was the incentive to fight offered to them by the I.N.A. and its leaders.

If they were not going to fight, why did the rank and file join the I.N.A.?

Firstly, because their Indian officers led them over to join it and they had been taught to obey.

Secondly, because they were the cowards and weaklings of the prisoners of war of the Indian Army, those who could not support the hardships of a prison camp.

Thirdly, because they had seen disgraceful sights in Singapore before the surrender—men of all races behaving in craven fashion. They had ceased to believe in these people or in their capacity to win the war. The battlefield and victory had receded from them: they were alone with the Japanese conqueror. They joined him, not willingly but because there was no one else and would be no one else they could join, and, with him,



perhaps they would once more see their homes. In what state they would see them they did not pause to think.

But what of their officers? In Appendix II the reader will find some particulars of the best known of these traitors who smeared the name of the Army they had joined and had sworn loyally to serve, many holding their commissions as faithful and trusted servants from the Crown of England; the same commission as we others held. Had we done as they did, we would have expected the wall and the firing squad. I am sure that they too expected it and that they full well knew they deserved it but hoped against hope that the well-known moderation of the British and their capacity to forgive and forget would yet spare them from the severest penalties.

The leniency of the punishments handed out to these men was remarkable, especially to those who had committed acts of cruelty on our own captured soldiers, their brethren in captivity.

The crimes were the more evil and sadistic because they were against helpless prisoners of war who had once been their comrades. In 1945 I would have said that such bowless monsters must be mad, but not now that I have been tutored by the 1946 atrocities of Bihar and Garhmukteswar, and of the Punjab in the following year. To accept the excuse of lunacy would have later on absolved whole sects of India's people.

It was argued by the hierarchy that to be cashiered was a truly harsh and shameful punishment. But these officers had already cashiered themselves and were proud of it. Their brethren among the Indian politicians were as pleased as Punch with them and by the time the trials were over they were as pleased as Punch with themselves. Cashiering was no punishment. Accompanied by no other penalty it appeared ridiculous and made the Army look ridiculous and somewhat pompous. The more the authorities proclaimed the severity of the sentence the more feebly defiant they appeared to civilians.

There is an odd inequality in the sentences as finally confirmed. Thus Shah Nawaz is convicted of abetment to murder, is cashiered and goes free, while Burhanuddin is convicted of causing grievous hurt and suffers seven years rigorous imprisonment. There are other anomalies.

One of the most striking came later, in a case of indiscipline in a certain regiment of the Indian Army after it had returned from overseas. The men were going on release and, as is the custom, their kits were being inspected to see that they had no government property or weapons in the kit with which they were to travel. Smuggled articles were found and the sinners at once questioned and remanded for disciplinary action. The rest objected, became insolent, violent, and refused to obey orders. The six ringleaders were arrested, tried by court martial, and given sentences ranging from five years to six

months. These sentences were rightly confirmed and fully appreciated in the Army, and indiscipline ceased in that area. The crimes were, compared with abetment to murder, very low in the scale of iniquity, the punishments much higher in severity.

If any battalion deserved to have its name struck off the Indian Army List for ever, it was the 114th Punjab Regiment. The name was still there when we left the battalion had been raised once more complete with its load of shame as a blot on the fair name of the Indian Army for all future soldiers to look at as long as Pakistan or Hindustan Army Lists connect the daughter battalion with this infamous unit.

The *Statesman*, India's most influential English daily newspaper, said that the weak and inept handling of the I.N.A. by our Army Headquarters would do incalculable harm to the Indian Army. Later on we shall see to what this maladroit handling did actually lead, but in the meanwhile there is more to be told of the I.N.A. itself.

We speak of discipline in the Army, and we and every citizen worth his salt know that no army can exist without discipline. We know, too, that discipline is founded on the good will of all ranks to do their best at all times and that from this springs that wonderful quality in a military body which the French have so aptly termed *esprit de corps*. With that all things are possible of achievement in peace and, above all, in war. Nothing is possible for a battalion which has not got it: it becomes worthless and a waste of the country's money, for an army exists to fight the wars of its country and if it is not fit for that it is fit for nothing and can be disbanded. It is worse than useless: it is dangerous. The weapon may turn in the hand at the critical time and the nation be lost.

All this is self-evident, yet there were professional soldiers in our military pontificate who by their treatment of the I.N.A. set to work to hew out the very roots of the Army. It is a wonder that the whole tree did not crash to the ground. That it did not fall was due, not to us senior British officers but to the British regimental officers and the handful of Indian officers who adopted from them their ideals of service—officers both regular and temporary of our Indian battalions, armored and artillery regiments, and of the corps and services. It was they who suffered most in the mixed messes of British and Indian officers and it was they who stood staunchly by their units both at this time and through the days of which I am soon to speak. To a man they were appalled at what was being done by their seniors and from now onwards they turned away from Delhi.

From that time, then, dates the indifference of the British officer of the Indian Army towards his higher command. Until the time we left, that attitude had never changed. Adjurations and defiance's flowing from Delhi simply irritated him the more. A most loyal and capable servant had lost faith. He slogged along at his job for the sake of the regiment and its men.

I have said that all the British officers, a large number of nationalist Indians, even men of the Congress Party who were not withered by hatred, and European civilians, no die-hards but short sojourners in the land and critical men, expected that the Army would vindicate itself by laying on thick and fast the punishment of the officers of the I.N.A. I have shown what punishments were in fact bestowed. The bewilderment of the regular officer can be imagined.

But ineptitude had yet higher flights to make. It was arranged that the first trial to take place was that of Shah Nawaz, Dhillon and Sahgal. The trial was to be held in the Red Fort at Delhi. It would be difficult for anyone to conceive of a more ill-advised procedure than this. Here were three men who represented the three most influential political sections of the population, the Muslim, the Sikh and the Hindu – that is to say, the Muslim League, the S. A. Dal and the Panth, and the Congress Party – to be brought to trial together.

Indian public and political opinion being essentially communal in its bias, this collection of accused could be guaranteed to raise the clamant sympathies of each of the big communities even if it were only to protest the innocence of the representative of its own community, let alone to condemn the cruelty of the act which brought their patriot before the court martial. It raised all these parties like one man, to the prejudice of justice and with evil results on the Armed Forces of India as will later be shown. But the final consequences have not yet manifested themselves. They will do so later. At the time, the British regimental officers and commanders regarded the affair in amazed silence as the political parties each vied with the other in their contributions of clamor and money in defence of the I.N.A. and in condemnation of the British.

The selection of the Red Fort in Delhi was, for yet other reasons, an act of gaucherie which could not then have been surpassed. The Red Fort is today symbolic of two things – of the fall of the Moghul power before the onslaught of the British, and of the Mutiny of 1857-8. Shah Nawaz, the Muslim, stood his trial in the stronghold of the Muslims' power from which the handful of British had cast them out. All three men stood their trial in the very fort which was the centre of the mutineers' resistance, the palace of the mutineers ruler, the last King of Delhi, in the tragic days of the Indian Mutiny when the Kashmir gate was broken in and British, Indian and Gurkha soldiers swept from the Ridge into Delhi by this gate and through the Subzee Munde. The dramatic significance of this was not lost on Indians, whereas British officers and civilians found cause for sardonic jesting.

Here are the first accused and here is the royal setting for the trial. The whole affair caused immense interest in India, both in civil and in military circles. The Congress Party, true to its short-term policy of embarrassing the Government and regardless of the long-term results of its actions, at once took up the cudgels on behalf of the three accused. Their Press was violent in its expressions of admiration and in its threats of

reprisals if these traitors were condemned and awarded anything but the most lenient sentences.<sup>19</sup> They raged in print and on platform over the high patriotism of these men who fought against the oppressor, without pausing to think of what sort was the other side whom they joined and what were its objects. They conveniently neglected to ask why the accused, if they were such heroic patriots, had not died in battle for their faith, or why they had voluntarily surrendered themselves, confidently throwing themselves on the mercy of their 'oppressors'. Nor did politician or editor care to examine the undistinguished military behavior of the Japanese-paid I.N.A. in its operations in Burma. That is to say, quite plainly, they did not care to confess that the I.N.A. either surrendered in droves as soon as contact was made with the Indian Army or else lifted up its skirts and ran beyond range of trouble.

But our army did little to correct impressions: it maintained the indignant silence of a half-immersed water buffalo pelted by urchins. If, as was happening, large numbers of letters went to the Press in praise of this most incompetent military force, then surely it would not have been amiss for some who had been on the other side to give in a similar manner their experiences of fighting these people. Judging by what I had heard in Burma of their antics on the battlefield, I think that they could have been laughed out of court and that those who backed them would have piped down, to the great benefit then and later of the Army and the other two Services. There were papers in India whose columns might have been open to 'the other side', papers that were read by most educated Indians. The I.N.A. could have been made a term of ridicule, like Fred Carno's warriors. But nothing of the sort was done.

In their silence the laugh which should have been on their opponents, was on the military authorities. They were an Aunt Sally for anyone to have a shy at. The shying was brisk and accurate. As Al Carhill has it in *The Garden of Adonis*, the Army was displaying 'homiletics and suppliant posteriors seductive to the foot of insolence', and the foot was energetically applied.

At first the Muslim League stood aloof from the chorus and many of us hoped that they would come down wholeheartedly on the side of loyalty to the army in which for generations so many of their relations had served. We saw, too, that here was the League's chance to put the Congress Party in the wrong and to gain the sympathy of all the Allies. But it said nothing until, finding that it too might make a little short-term capital out of the clatter by showing that its zeal for Indian nationalism was not to be exceeded by that of the Hindu, it joined its voice with the voice of Congress so that between them a pretty political how-de-do rose to the heavens to drop its unwelcome and uncalled for moisture upon the wincing head of our Army Headquarters. The

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<sup>19</sup> In Calcutta, on 1st November 1945, there appeared anonymous handwritten posters calling for the release of officers and men of the I.N.A. and threatening that for each member of the I.N.A. harmed 'twenty white dogs' would die. These posters were found pasted on walls in the Dalhousie Square area of Calcutta. Some of them concluded with the words 'Long Live Terrorism', a slogan significant for the peace of mind of independent India.

Muslim League probably lost far more than it gained by aligning itself with the Hindu Colossus: it tarred itself with the same brush of irresponsibility and it estranged decent Englishmen, who, warm with the news, were one by one now returning to their own country. Had it come down sturdily on the side of the soldier's loyalty to the Army and against its own traitors of the I.N.A., it would without doubt have earned prestige, and its voice then, and later in the time of need, would have been heard outside India. As it was, those who did not understand the rather *pawky*, mean little game of vote-catching, at once bracketed the League and the Congress together as birds of one feather. In this business the League lost face.

The accused were defended by a nimble-witted lawyer, now dead, Bhullabhai Desai, who added to his talents as an advocate the great advantage of having served for some time on the Viceroy's Executive Council. He was thus well informed of affairs leading up to the trial, of feeling in higher circles, and also having a close acquaintance with Army Headquarters whose motives and probable line of action in any given circumstances he must have been well able to judge. Bhullabhai died shortly after his successful defence, taking with him the burden of having set at freedom those who had sold their brothers.

As a highly-intrigued spectator of the legal trial and all that went before, accompanied and followed it, I was very sorry to hear of the loss of this brilliant lawyer. It seemed to me that he might have had much to tell which today is still hidden.

So far the acumen of our military authorities had not won much admiration: there was worse to follow on the gentle decline to Avernus, enough to make the ordinary European civilian refuse to credit his eyes or his ears, and enough to bring unbelieving amazement and then triumphant jubilation to the heart of the politically-minded minority of India and its tutored followers. Nothing could have been more exhilarating to them or could have better manifested to the world the power of the Congress than that at last that body had got its fiddle into the Army band and that that fiddle was now the leading violin to whose whimsical tunes the Army must dance. The Muslim League had seized the triangle just in time to add its little noise but the notes it struck were fewer, less confident and less jubilant, for its apprehensions as to the long term effect on the orchestra were a little keener. Mischief was everywhere.

At this time one's mail bag brought letters on the I.N.A. affair, many conveying the views of Indians of all sorts and kinds.

From these it was apparent that even confirmed and Machiavellian Congressmen were prepared to hear of heavy sentences on these three. They would have shrilled their aggrievement to the heavens but they would have accepted the situation, for they were not so much myopic as merely mischievous.

And the Indian Army, what was it thinking about it all?

These in the day when heaven was falling, The hour when earth's foundations fled,  
Followed their mercenary calling And took their wages and are dead.

*Their shoulders held the sky suspended;  
They stood and earth's foundations stay;  
What God abandoned, these defended,  
And saved the sum of things for pay.*

A. E. HOUSMAN.

*(Epitaph on an Army of Mercenaries)*

The Indian Civil Service has been spoken of as the steel structure of India's fabric. I do not think that that is any exaggerated tribute to a great service in its heyday. The Indian Army was the foundation on which that structure rested. With a sound army, India was safe; with a rotten army, she was ruined forever. The British officers knew that, and that the responsibility for keeping the Army solid and good despite all things rested with them. Those were grave times and we were not fresh for the test: we were a little jaded by the stress of six years of war in harsh climates and by our exertions in building from so small beginnings and such assorted materials a great modern army of first-class standard.

The 'old school tie' is an abomination to some people but they have suggested no substitute. I have none to offer for I do not know of anything which will quite do its duty in this humdrum world of ours. It is one of the results of Christian teaching on which our whole school system used to be founded. Those who had been brought up in its traditions of loyalty and its standards of honorable dealing were as a bloc firmly convinced that both as an example to others and to vindicate the honor of the Army that they served and which had won such distinction in the war, the sentences of these three officers, if they were found guilty, must be condign. So much for the British officer whose views were simple and without any doubt.

The Indian officers ranged from the older regular to the newly-joined wartime officer. The former in their turn varied from those who had been to English public schools and had maintained their contact with English ways of life and thought, who now held precisely the same view as the British officer, to those whose sole contact with the British had been with the instructors in the Indian Military Academy in Dehra Dun and who, for racial reasons, had avoided further contact. These last maintained that the I.N.A. were patriots and much to be praised. Among those who held the 'British' view was one of my staff, a Brahman from the Punjab, who had enlisted before the war and had gone through the ranks to a commission. Those who had in this way risen to commissioned rank had no doubts or illusions that the I.N.A. were traitors and not patriots and held that men who would thus betray their own brothers during the

present mild British regime would be far more ready to do it again under any regime that might follow. 'Patriotism' would not deter them. No army would hold together for long with such men and it was vital that it should now be shown that conduct such as this was not to be condoned for a minute and was not to be held in future days as a precedent. It would be fatal if it were.

Further along the scale came the wartime Indian officers. Most of them were of the semi-educated, suburban or urban type who had little acquaintance with the few British who so sparsely inhabited India. These men usually adopted the political view that the accused were patriots and to be treated leniently, though whether they expected them to be lightly punished is another matter. They said that once India were 'free' nothing of this sort could ever again occur, for then there would be no hostility between governed and government. In fact, their views were mainly the result of their racial feeling against the British. These young officers had obviously not got so far as to foresee the stern caste struggle which has yet to occur among Hindus, with the caste Hindu as the ruler of Hindustan and the lowly Sudra and Outcaste forming about a third of the Hindustan population, nor the fifth column that must exist in the shape of the big Muslim minority; both far larger and more solid blocs than the scattered malcontents of our Hindu Congressmen of 1939-47.

Among the men, the Viceroy's Commissioned Officers (Subedars and Jemadars) and the sepoy of the Indian Army, there were the two categories—the urban-educated and the peasant from the village.

On the whole, the educated supported the view of the wartime Indian officers, but it was interesting to witness the sudden change of outlook in many of them when shown the probable later effects of today's leniency on their own future army.

'Patriotism' then appeared to them in rather a different light.

The regular V.C.O.s and sepoys<sup>20</sup> were one and all loud in condemnation of the accused and of the whole I.N.A. and hoped they would get all that should be coming to them.

Without exception, the loyal prisoners of war, many of whom as prisoners suffered brutalities from these their former comrades, protested strongly against any leniency towards any man of that army. 'Why,' they asked in surprise, should we who suffered for all those years and were true to our salt, not now be preferred to the men of the I.N.A.? The least guilty of them were cowards who sought soft quarters with the Japs because they could not endure the conditions that we endured. They must all be punished, and those who plagued us, most heavily.

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<sup>20</sup> Sipahi; anglic, Sepoy, private soldier.

The simple wartime sepoys were in the main set against the three accused for they had come from the villages where, for generations, the people had ruled that it was sinful to be untrue to the man whose salt you ate. (*Nimak haram* means forbidden to the salt, disloyal.) But their feelings were qualified by the fact of having or not having relatives among the I.N.A. If they had I.N.A. relatives, then they feared that imprisonment might reflect on the family's prestige and that loss of pay, allowances and pensions would throw the sinner and his family on their charity. Amongst Indians, the family tie is a strong one, so strong that it is disgraceful for a relative to be in want. He must be cared for, however undeserving; and, if he finds it helpful, with wife and children he will board and lodge for long periods on his more fortunate 'family members'. It was the family which ruled their outlook.

In Talking Point No. 4, at Appendix II, I give the terms in which we explained the I.N.A. problem to our men in February 1946.

Briefly, we sought to make it clear to them that a traitor is a traitor, no matter under what cloak he would cover his betrayal of his fellows, and that the only heroes among our men in Japanese captivity were those who staunchly refused to join the I.N.A. against their own country.

In the villages, the returning I.N.A. were given a fair welcome, more because that which was lost was found than because they were men of the I.N.A. But their first popularity wore off a little when it was found that many of them were without funds and demanded easy and well-paid employment to recompense them for the great sacrifices they had made on the altars of patriotism.

It was at this time that the British officer of the Indian Army was returning from service overseas, trying to find rest from the strain and seeing nothing about him but a country seething dangerously with political emotions whipped up by a handful of politicians, urged on by the British Press from England. He began to feel that he was regarded even by his own higher command as an incubus of which it would like to be rid but in place of which it had as yet nothing better to offer. The British officer knew well that he had carried the Indian Army through the war and now saw that he was not only to get no thanks for his pains but that Indians were being rapidly preferred before him, no matter what their relative competence might be.

Very soon the Press came out with the announcement that the Army had decided to deal leniently with I.N.A. offenders. While accepting that many were but sheep, the British officers, now getting first-hand tales of the brutal treatment of loyal officers and men at the hands of some of the blackguards of the I.N.A., became more incensed than ever and more out of sympathy with the higher military authorities.



In case the habit of disbelieving their own countrymen has been too strongly ingrained in the people at home, I transcribe in Appendix II the story given to me by an eyewitness to one of these horrible deeds. The story was written down for me and the original papers are with me with all the names important to the narrative. I only give two of the names here, for they are names which we should never forget for the sublimity of their behavior.

It is a tale of cold-blooded savagery. It is as well to face facts and to know the true nature of other people.

Pandit Nehru expresses himself as horrified at the brutality of the Bihar atrocities against Muslims in 1946. I dare to predict that Mr. Nehru does not yet know his countrymen well enough.<sup>21</sup>

Here is Pandit Nehru's foreword, dated 10th October 1946, to the book by Mr. Shah Nawaz Khan of the I.N.A., entitled *I.N.A. and its Netaji*:

My friend and colleague Major-General Shah Nawaz Khan of the I.N.A. has presented these facts in sober fashion, and thus provided an important record of an important undertaking . . . . I recommend it, therefore, to others and I hope that a reading of it will bring enlightenment about many aspects of this brave adventure.

To continue the narrative of the I.N.A. in India—the first court martial passed sentence as I have shown above. The Army took it upon itself to commute, reduce or set aside the sentences and thus, to the scandal of its officers, condone the offences. The courts martial had done their duty and imposed heavy penalties; the Army had no business to meddle with what should have been a political compromise. The sentences should have been confirmed, thus upholding the standards of loyalty of the Indian Army. If the Viceroy had thought fit to intervene and to direct that leniency should be shown, that was another matter. As far as his army went the good soldier held that it should have vindicated its good name by showing what it thought of these grievous crimes.

It was, and is now, most difficult to ascribe a satisfactory reason for the action of the Army authorities in this matter. If it felt that it was appeasing politicians it could hardly have pursued a more hazardous policy, particularly in India where politics almost take the place of mothers' milk. It seemed at the time that that could be the only reason and it seemed a thoroughly bad reason, for it at once put the rest of the I.N.A. affair on to a political rather than a military plane and there it stayed. India's future army now has a strange precedent for handling military crimes and it may be tempted to avail itself of this convenient method of twisting the processes of justice.

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<sup>21</sup> Since these words were written we have witnessed the Punjab civil war of 1947

It is the more to their lasting credit that the British officers carried on with zeal and industry to the very end, rebuilding what had been shattered by war, healing the wounds left by this latest humiliation, and making India's army as ready as they could for a future in which they themselves were to have no part.

The size of the I.N.A. was quite remarkable. As far as I recollect, the Indian Army prisoners of war numbered some 60,000 of all ranks and I should think that those who joined the I.N.A., either the First Army or the Second when the First was disbanded, must have been round about 20,000 Indians. A big proportion, admittedly, but many of them only sheep.

The worst were those whose moral character was such that they would as life serve the one as the other, as readily break faith with the one as with the other and satisfy their malice as readily on the one as on the other. These were the men who should have been dealt with condignly and no excuses of 'patriotism' should have been raised for them by any man with respect for himself or for the good name of his people. These ambitious men were recognizable: they were those whose minds were closed in the same manner as were the minds of Nazi prisoners. But if abetment to murder is condoned as it was condoned in the case of Shah Nawaz then there is little left to punish.

As the trials proceeded into the early months of 1946, the I.N.A. drifted in by shiploads to our wired-in camps near Calcutta. To have these camps in Bengal, the fermenting pot of violent political India, made things very difficult for the local command: to have another similar camp at Bahadurgarh near Delhi, the scene selected for the first trial, made things just as difficult up there. Multan, in the far north-west of India, was a safer choice and to it the 'Blacks', the worst characters, were dispatched. These Blacks had the mental habit of the Nazi prisoners I saw in Africa; their minds were closed, I think permanently closed, to all thought outside of their creed. They were the stuff of which the S.S. gunmen and criminals were made. Subhas Chandra Bose and his I.N.A. captains had done as evil and efficient a job as did Goebbels and his propaganda men in Germany. This is significant for us devotees of democracy. Subhas Chandra Bose merely translated common Indian political practice into military politics. A Military Dictator, he permeated the core of the I.N.A. body with a rigid, utterly intolerant, tightly-closed and diseased mentality. All who wish well to the future Indian Army will pray that the ruthless talons of political India will never fasten themselves into the soldiers. But in our treatment of the I.N.A. affair we have conceded the right of violent politics to dominate military discipline. We have shown the way.

In Lucknow was the hospital for the sick I.N.A., at first a sheepish, ashamed lot. As the trials went on, as the policy of leniency became more widely known, so rose the spirits of the I.N.A. both here and in the camps. From being ashamed of themselves, the modest soon became arrogant and overbearing. British officers who went to inspect the

camps or to look into the prisoners' welfare, were shouted at, abused, and sometimes pelted with stones. The guards provided by Indian units were subjected to the same sort of treatment day in and day out. The Commanding Officers of these units knew full well that if their men lost their heads and dealt violently with these malicious and abusive gentry, they would not get the same leniency as the prisoners were to get for what they had already done.

Martial Delhi was sinking itself up to the neck in the morass of India's politics, a fatal thing for an army in a country where some politicians could easily write The Prince more convincingly than could its author. The solemn military antics thus executed were a diversion to a very large and thoroughly appreciative audience. 'Who sups with the devil must use a long spoon.'

In the camps near Calcutta, Jingaragacha and Nilganj, these prisoners were sorted into colors denoting the degree of their guilt. The White were those who joined the I.N.A. but whose conduct thereafter was such as to clear them of any act of disloyalty beyond the simple fact of joining that army; the Grey were lukewarm members of the I.N.A. who had done enough to display disloyalty; the Black were those who had taken an active and evil part on the side of the Japanese. The Whites were sent off to their regimental depots, there to be paid, clothed and sent on leave. The Greys were discharged from the service and their pay and allowances during captivity were forfeited, but they retained certain rights to pension, earned outside the period of captivity. The Blacks suffered the same forfeits and lost all right to pension or gratuity, while a few of them were court-martialled. No one could cavil at the Whites or even the Light Greys, the sheep, being treated mercifully, but many had much to say about the kindness shown to the others. Moreover, to have men who had done as some of these had done careering round their villages, feted by the Congress Party in its short-sighted way, was thoroughly bad for the prestige of the Army.

These men should have been externed from their villages for a period long enough to get the Army through the usual postwar malaise of all armed forces. The best way to have done this would have been at once to re-enlist most of the Greys in something in the nature of reformatory battalions and there to recondition them mentally before they returned to the villages. The objection to this course was that the loyal man was being demobilized compulsorily at that time and that therefore he would have objected to these men being re-employed. But in fact he would not have objected for he would have been only too pleased to know that these I.N.A. men were not to bother him in his village and that they were being once more turned into good soldiers and citizens before being let loose. All other objections than this are even more easily dismissed. With some scheme of this sort working we would have avoided putting so conveniently into the agitator's hand a set of half-arrogant, half-disgruntled, half-demoralized ex-soldiers kicking their heels in our main recruiting areas, a living effrontery to our

sepoys, past and serving, whenever they visited their homes, and an ever-present source of trouble in communal disturbances.

Before long it was announced in the Press from our army at Delhi that the charge of waging war against the King would no longer be proceeded with and that only those who were guilty of atrocities to their comrades would be brought to trial. The regular army began to wonder what military crime was serious enough to merit punishment. The Press soon took up the case of one Durga Sing Lama, a renegade Gurkha soldier, domiciled in India, who had joined the I.N.A. and had been captured by us during the latter part of the war. He had been tried, convicted and hanged, and had unfortunately died of the effects. But the commotion did not last long as it was not possible to unhang the criminal. From this it is seen that Indian politicians can accept the inevitable.

European officials of the Indian Civil Service were now asking those above them for guidance as to procedure in their most serious criminal cases. If the Army did not punish abetment to murder, then how could the civil courts punish this or any less flagitious misdemeanor?

These were difficult days for some of us. European and Indian civilians did not hesitate to air their views on the policy that the Army was pursuing, to ask what one thought of it and what would be the later effects on the Service. They had not long to wait for the answer to the last question: it was given in a shocking manner in February 1946 by the men of the Royal Indian Navy. If the soldier had attempted to defend his army's policy his questioner would have wiped the floor with him and the last state would thus have been far worse than the first. He had gently to bring his persecutor to change the subject, but the latter would come back to it later on till finally an impatient, Of course you won't talk about it, finished the conversation.

The first results came soon: the long-term consequences India has yet to experience. An example of what they are to be has since been afforded by certain well-known Sikh I.N.A. leaders who took such a prominent part in organizing their compatriots for the wholesale and ghastly slaughter of Muslim men, women and children in the autumn of 1947; and by the leading part taken by Muslim officers of the I.N.A. in the invasion of Kashmir in 1947 and 1948. These men had no Indian loyalties; they merely played from 1942 to 1945 for their own ends and notoriety, and for the very same objects in 1947 and 1948. They have not yet done with India and its politics. Their battle-cry, Forward to Delhi, will yet be heard from other lips – as irresolute, let us hope.

The Supreme Commander of the I.N.A. was a plump Bengali Brahman of overweening personal ambition, the late Subhas Chandra Bose, brother of Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose, a well-known figure in Hindu political life. Subhas Chandra Bose was known to his I.N.A. followers as Netaji (Spiritual Leader). Two of the staunchest supporters of the I.N.A. after the war were Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Vallabhai Patel, the

strong man of the Congress, both of Hindustan. Admittedly it was our Army authorities who set the precedent for treating treachery as a non-cognizable offence in the Indian Army, but the three gentlemen I have mentioned have so committed themselves to the support of that principle that they will find it difficult to handle firmly such cases in what is now their own army, without incurring a charge of inconsistency.

By the very act of taking over the government of a large and most diverse population which in truth had recently shown itself to have almost as many parties as there are individuals, the caste Hindus, backed by the rich, are now ruling, and about to enlist soldiers from, a far more discordant people than the democratically-inclined British ever had to handle.

The attempts of the Congress Party, albeit unsuccessful, to undermine the loyalty of the Army during this critical period may also be later remembered in India when others wish to induce soldiers to take the same course as was taken by the I.N.A.

Subjected to all these distractions, political and military, the war-worn Indian Army set itself to travel a strange and hazardous path into the future.

## V THE BEGINNING OF THE TEST January

THE New Year opened with a spurt of political activity on behalf of the I.N.A. The three first accused, the test case for us in the Army and for the whole of India, were released as free men.

If it had hitherto not been apparent to anyone in the Army that the Congress Party would use the I.N.A. for subverting the loyalty of the Indian Army it must now have become as plain as daylight. There was no one who was under any illusion as to the importance of the Indian Army to the Government for maintaining the peace of the country while delicate negotiations were in train with India's tender and doubting politicians for the setting up of a self-governing India. There were few who did not realize what a dazzling prize the Indian Army would be for extreme Hindu nationalists to gain, and with what speed they would be able, with this in their hands, to slaughter or expel from India every single British man, woman and child, to leave no trace in the holy land of these devoted people. The policy, therefore, was to vilify the British in all newspapers and on all platforms and at the same time to keep the I.N.A. in the public eye and to thrust it down the throats of our soldiers. Bit by bit, since the British, having conceded the case, were in no position to argue it against the I.N.A. in the newspapers (even if they could now get a hearing, which was doubtful), it was expected that that body would come to be regarded in the Indian Army with respect instead of contempt. Eastern Command at this time was some 300,000 strong, British, Indian, and East and West African, with a large contingent of American soldiers as lodgers, independent of us but dependent on us for many services. It was a bloated, unwieldy command, with all respect to the officers and men who willy-nilly comprised it.

The Army was in a far more delicate state than were even the negotiations for handing over power to India. War was over and the usual aftermath of ill-temper and peevishness was setting in. Men were being demobilized who wished to stay on in the Army: others who wanted to get back to their homes were being kept on as key men in their units: there was the usual wartime quota of half-trained, half-disciplined, half-educated, wholly political men in the technical units who really did not know what they wanted except to raise their own prestige by making things difficult for their British Commanding Officers. A spate of anonymous letters from these men and from civilians started to flow in, accusing British officers of cheating the men, withholding their pay, stealing the funds, bribery and every crime under the sun.

It was little wonder that the few Regular British officers left with us at the end of this long war were almost tired out. The small Regular cadre with which we started the war had recruited, expanded and trained up from a small Indian Army of 189,000 men,

almost entirely foot and horse, of varied races and languages, a great force of some 2,500,000 on a fully mechanized establishment from rear services to front line. This they had done in the short space of five years in a trying climate. Not only that—they had then led this army against the two most formidable military powers of the time, Germany and Japan, and had beaten them handsomely. This feat is probably the greatest military achievement of our race.

In Eastern Command we had the whole, huge base of the Burma Army to close down while stores and material were even then rolling in from overseas to fill it up! It was a formidable undertaking, for these depots stretched right into northern Assam and Burma up against the Chinese border, and away through Assam into Imphal and beyond. Thousands of tons of stores had to be back loaded by road to rail-heads on the metre-gauge Assam railway, railed down through Assam to the ferries, brought across the Brahmaputra River and railed on into depots all over Bengal whence they were passed to central depots in the United Provinces or to disposal depots in Bengal and Bihar. All this meant a vast amount of sorting, the retention of large numbers of officers and men to handle the material and the use of many millions of cubic feet of covered storage in and about Calcutta.

To make our task the less congenial some local European and Indian business men of Calcutta started to bombard us by letter and through the Press with demands for the return of requisitioned property, inferring either that we were holding on to it for our own nefarious reasons or were incompetent. No one would have preferred more than we would to see the return of buildings to their owners speeded up, but they had first to be cleared and then to be handed back in such manner that both the State and the owner would be satisfied with the transaction. Our hiring staffs were continually changing with officers and men going on release, and that made things the more difficult. The attitude of one sort of business man was that it was he who had suffered from the war by our prolonged presence in Calcutta and particularly on his property and that we were gentlemen of leisure back from a pleasant holiday abroad. However, by dint of a good deal of overtime we succeeded in clearing the stores and in handing back, in what one day may be regarded as a very short time, the bulk of the requisitioned premises.

Further to disturb ourselves and our soldiers another campaign was started, mainly in the Indian Press, which we called the 'Get Rid of Them' campaign from its first big leader. The object of this was to show what degraded villains were our soldiers, British and Indian. Every peccadillo that could be seized upon was magnified and distorted in order to bring our men into disrepute. Many of the charges were quite false but that mattered not one whit to those who made them. In the main, it was the Indian papers which chose this line of attack, but the European papers were by no means innocent of partaking in the game. It always strikes me that many journalists must have very easy consciences who do not trouble to look back to see what damage they have set out to do

in the past. The Economist, in July 1947, answering the question What is chiefly wrong with the Press? 'said that' one of the answers—and perhaps the most comprehensive answer—is the low general standard of education and responsibility among the journalists.

In those days any stick was good enough with which to beat the sorely-trying but victorious Army, particularly as it was in about as great difficulties as it could be with quite a good chance of being broken to pieces under the lash of the Press and of Indian politicians. What would have happened if their efforts had succeeded?

Eastern Command had already started its series of 'Talking Points'. The object of these was to keep the soldier himself fully informed of the political situation in his country as it affected him, of the changing conditions of his service and of his duties to his country. These 'Talking Points' went out at the rate of four or five a month and I believe that they did an immense amount of good in presenting the man with an honest and sane appreciation of the trend of events and in encouraging him to remain true to his profession and so to his country. They went out on a very wide distribution, translated into the vernacular, to be discussed at weekly durbars<sup>22</sup> and to be pinned up on notice-boards and put on recreation-room tables.

We were struggling to keep the Army loyal and to preserve its confidence against an insidious enemy, some of whom were wittingly trying to subvert its loyalty and others of whom were either maliciously or ignorantly tilting at its self-respect. We saw the seriousness of the situation for we knew that an army is a dangerous thing to command. Many on the other side did not realize what the effect was of what they said and wrote, though perhaps ordinary gratitude might have stayed their hand. The R.I.N. and R.I.A.F. mutinies should have later given them food for thought but seemed not to affect their plans in any way.

In this state we faced the problem of the I.N.A. and its effects on our men.

In early January the Congress Party issued an invitation to the three I.N.A. leaders, Shah Nawaz, Sahgal, Dhillon, to attend their Independence Day celebrations to be held in Calcutta between 23rd and 26th January. This was intended firstly as an affront to the Army in a place where there were several thousands of soldiers and secondly to attract the more political of the soldiers to see and hear these heroes of Indian Independence. The virtual acquittal of these three men had come as a shock to our Indian soldiers to whom the authorities had previously taken pains to prove that the trial was justified. In the event, only Shah Nawaz arrived for the celebrations and the police took care that he was given little opportunity to lionize himself before the Army.

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<sup>22</sup> Unit conferences at which suggestions and grievances were put before the Commanding Officer. An old and useful custom in the Indian Army.



As a diversion some men of a Provincial Civil Labor Unit in Chittagong, who wore khaki drill clothes for want of any other uniform, broke out of their lines at night, having had trouble over local women, and beat up a Muslim village. The damage done was minor but some huts were burnt. This was seized upon by the Indian Press, the Muslim League and the Communists to heap coals of fire on the heads of the Army.

There were accusations that we were hiding the culprits, had held a parody of a trial and let them off, and other similar charges. They were surprised and rather disappointed when we told the local civil authorities that this affair was no concern of ours and must go before a civil court. As far as I recollect, few of the accused were convicted, a very different outcome from what might have been the case had they appeared before a military tribunal, as we later took care to point out to protesting politicians.

In the wake of the I.N.A. there now came political Volunteer Corps, the existence of which India has grown to regret.

The local Congress Party had by this time, it seems, completed the first phase of its programme, which was to work up the masses by all means and methods to a hatred of the British.

The next phase began with the forming of these Congress Volunteer Corps all over Bengal, Bihar and Assam, the inauguration of training camps under ex-I.N.A. instructors and enrolment of members.

Hitherto, the Sikh community of Calcutta had taken little interest in politics, but lately, owing to the large number of Sikhs in the I.N.A. and the keen interest taken by the Congress Party in the I.N.A., the Sikhs had begun to come out strongly in its support, the Gurdwaras (Sikh temples) becoming the centres of political activity on behalf of the I.N.A. and of its erstwhile leader Subhas Chandra Bose. This Netaji had been killed in a plane crash in Japan but was still believed by nationalist Indians to be alive. As the Sikhs were well represented in the ranks of the Army it seemed certain that these political sentiments would spread from the temples to our regiments, doing much damage in the process.

There occurred at this time what might have been a rather significant incident. Three I.N.A. men of the darkest political hue were being taken from their camp near Calcutta to Delhi. At Moradabad, where many passengers changed trains, they shouted '*Jai Hind!*' ('Long live India') their party cry, upon some of the crowd rushed to the carriage and carried them shoulder high in procession through Moradabad city. The armed escort had perforce to march with the procession, but not altogether unwillingly. The crowd toured the town and returned the I.N.A. men and escort to the station. At this

time, too, the I.N.A. leaders in prison camps were settling their programme for the day of their release. Unfortunately for their future careers as leaders of India's revolution, the Cabinet Mission came to India and drew their teeth by handing to them on a platter what they had intended to capture with bow and spear – independence for India.

They had proposed to form a revolutionary party and to bring about a revolution, to carry on sabotage and anti-British propaganda and to contact foreign powers, chiefly Russia.

On the whole January 1946 passed fairly peacefully by, despite rumblings from the Labor front threatening a spate of strikes on the railways and in the Bihar and Bengal industrial plants. If there were strikes, then the business men would expect the Army to maintain law and order and to provide technicians to keep the essential services going, their electric current and sanitation and some part of the telegraph and telephone systems. Politicians were busily going about breathing vengeance, whenever they should come to power, on the police who put down the 1942 insurrection. The spearhead of this attack was in Bihar and led by Bihar Congress politicians. The results, a police mutiny against their indigenous provincial government, were not what they anticipated at the time.

January was a month of political preparation by vilification of the British and of attempts to unsettle the Indian Army, leading to a grisly climax in mid-February in Calcutta, the first of many horrors in that city.

Towards the end of January the British Parliamentary Delegation of all parties came to Calcutta. With well-known exceptions they seemed to have come to grips with facts and to be walking with their feet on the ground. I feel sure that the report that they made to the Government at home must have been of the greatest value. Their principal line of investigation lay naturally in the problem of unity or division, the great communal issue which political India sought to hide.

We now had our first taste of trouble in the Services when the big R.A.F. station at Dum Dum mutinied and infected the R.I.A.F. close by. In Chapter VI, I speak of unrest in the Services so will say no more of it here.

With every single unit in a touchy and highly-strung condition, the senior officers of the Command spent most of their time touring about seeing officers and men, listening to their troubles and trying to improve living conditions which in many cases were little better than in the *bashas* (grass huts) the men had occupied on service in Burma.

Every troop-ship that came into Calcutta with troops aboard was visited and inspected from stem to stern by one or other of us senior commanders and the Commander-in-Chief's message of welcome read to the men.

It is a trying business touring in India from April onwards as the heat is terrific and the hotel rooms and *dak* bungalow or Circuit House rooms are as hot as ovens, having been kept unaired ever since the last visitor left them. As European managements and staffs departed so did the standard of cleanliness and of food drop in the hotels and bungalows until it became something of a gamble whether one's inside survived a tour or collapsed, making the tour an irksome event. Latterly I always took with me some tablets of sulpho-guanidine and an Indian remedy called *Isaf-Gul*. *Isaf-Gul* consists of a cluster of tiny seeds. They are stood in cold water till the whole mess is gelatinous. It is then drunk. I found it a most soothing remedy for a lacerated inside and more than once when I thought I would have to go to hospital did *Isaf-Gul* repair my worn machinery and restore me to health.

January slowly gave way to February while emotional tension among the population in the Command strained itself to bursting point. In mid-February it parted with a loud twang, first among the citizens of Calcutta and then among the Indian Navy and Air Force and lastly, and least noisily, among Indian soldiers.

## VI UNREST IN THE SERVICES January – February

DURING 1946 there were serious cases of mutiny in the Royal Indian Navy, less serious in the Royal Air Force and Royal Indian Air Force and minor troubles in the Indian Army. The British Army stood staunch and good almost to a man, and their high standard of conduct in the most trying conditions, domestic, political and climatic, had without any doubt at all a thoroughly good effect on the erring Air Forces and on the whole Army in India.

It was galling to think that the Royal title was held by the two Indian Services which behaved the worst in all these troubles.

It is sufficient to give a brief account of the Indian naval mutiny to show of what sort was this serious trouble in that Service. At Karachi and at Bombay, the mutiny took much the same form. At various ports and in other ships there was indiscipline but, compared with that at these two places, it was not serious.

Before touching on the naval mutiny at Bombay and Karachi it is as well to explain that Bombay is in Southern and Karachi in Northern Command and therefore these events are not known to me at first hand. What I tell here is from accounts given to me by eye-witnesses.

There were certain causes of all these troubles common to all three Services.

At the end of any war there is dissatisfaction among men who return to their homeland and find things not as good as they expected, who are kept waiting for passages back to their homes by exasperating delays in settling their accounts and who, with the definite purpose gone out of their lives, have not as yet found another to absorb their attention and to divert their minds from small discomforts. Here, in India, there had been for years an ever-growing violently abusive and unscrupulous campaign against the ruling authority. There was unrest in India itself. Every paper was full of accusations against the 'British' Government which never, or hardly ever, as a matter of principle made any effort to defend itself and which indeed could not at this time have had a hearing in this political tumult if it had made an open attempt to obtain one.

Then there was the whole business of the I.N.A. There is no doubt whatsoever that because the leaders of the I.N.A. had been let off almost scot-free, others who sought the

opportunity to mutiny were in no sense deterred from it by fear of punishment: rather did they feel that they had much to gain, judging by the manner in which the Indian Army traitors were lionized and feted by the populace under the stage-management of Congress Party politicians. From all I saw and heard I put this factor high in the list of those that made for mutiny and indiscipline in the armed forces. It was certainly used by the mutineers as a precedent for their conduct.

At this time the Congress campaign of vilification of the Government of India, supposedly British but mainly Indian, was in full swing. It was quite unscrupulous and paid little attention either to the truth or to the possibility that there might be a good case on the other side. Above all, for no rhyme or reason, the Congress repeatedly accused the British as a nation of continually breaking their word to India over the granting of responsible government and put it abroad that they were therefore not to be trusted now, whatever they said. Perfidious Albion! I remember in February 1946 asking Mr. R. G. Casey, then Governor of Bengal, whether he as an Australian could support the view that the British had broken their word to India. His answer was emphatically 'No'. But the campaign of vilification went on. Everything British was to be reviled. 'British exploitation of India' was one of the favorite taunts. Every British official was to be condemned. They were attacked and threatened for suppressing the 1942 revolt, the now famous attempt of prominent leaders of the Congress Party to bring the Japanese into India. It failed because the Indian Police, the British I.C.S. and the British and Indian armies in Bihar and the U.P. acted quickly and decisively, but it was a dangerous upheaval and had its ill effects on our endeavors to halt the Japanese and to throw them back from India. Frustrated, the politicians now sought to turn the affair to the discredit of the British and Indian civil servants who had successfully dealt with it.

There was one particular cause which we might get rid of at this stage in the discussion. The first was that both R.I.A.F. and R.I.N. had modeled themselves on the R.A.F. and R.N. instead of on the Indian Army. Thus, they lacked the most important feature of an Indian service, the Viceroy's Commissioned Officer. It is true that in the Navy the Petty Officer to some extent satisfactorily replaced the V.C.O. That is proved by the good behavior of the Petty Officers during the Navy's troubles. But they did not replace the V.C.O. in his great influence over the men and his ability to keep officers and men in touch with each other.

The V.C.O. occupies a unique position in the Indian Army. In some Continental armies there are under-officers: the British Army has warrant officers. It would seem at first glance that these two classes of sub-officer coincide with the V.C.O. but that is not so. The latter is the combined product of the very nature of the sepoys who go to make up the Indian Army and of that British genius for finding the apt solution to a hitherto inexperienced difficulty. This V.C.O. is necessary to the sepoys because they must, with their racial traditions of personal and autocratic rule, have someone who is as readily

accessible as is the headman of the village, who is clothed with authority and just far enough distant from them to command their respect. So the V.C.O. is suitably placed and suitably clad with authority to enable him to fulfill his peculiar function. Again, since the Indian Army has always been run with less than one half of the cadre of British officers that is needed in the British Army, it has been essential that the subordinate commands in a regiment should be held by some form of Indian officer. This is the V.C.O., the subadar and the jemadar, and it is he who commands the troops and the platoons and acts as second-in-command to the squadron and company. The British officer coming into an Indian regiment as a young and inexperienced man from England, Formerly known as the I.O. (Indian Officer); thereafter, to distinguish him from the Indian Officer holding the King's Commission, he was known as the V.C.O. (Viceroy's Commissioned Officer), holding his commission, as always hitherto, from the Viceroy of India—Subadars, Risaldars, Jemadars. has needed a guide, philosopher and friend in his early days of service, and here was one provided for him. He has, throughout his service in the regiment, needed someone who could give him the men's own point of view in all matters, keep him informed of their domestic troubles and advise on religious customs and, in turn, pass on his orders and instructions to the men in a way in which they would fully understand them. So the V.C.O. came into being. He has been invaluable to the Indian Army, exercising a restraining influence on hasty and inexperienced young British officers, keeping the Indian sepoy's happy and ventilating for them their troubles. With such an example for them it is a pity that the R.I.N. and R.I.A.F. should have modeled themselves on their British counterparts and kept no place for the V.C.O. in their organization. For lack of him, officers and men of these Services never really came to know each other. Their relations became impersonal and the human touch was wanting.

The Communist was well in on these disturbances. It is always hard to determine how far Communists actually start trouble for they are seldom in evidence until the trouble is well on its way. They had dogged the footsteps of the Congress Party for a very long time and still dogged them, for they knew that however much Mahatma Gandhi might ordain that violence should not be used there were bound to be some of his followers who would get out of hand when feelings began to run high. Therein lay their opportunity, for all they wanted was to turn agitation into violence. Chaos with no authority able to govern is their object, so that the harassed may turn to them to restore the order that they themselves have upset.

That is easy for them: they have only to direct their firebrands to cease their activities. Danger from them does not lie in their numbers, for if their numbers were great they could not so well control them: it lies in their compactness and in their complete lack of any ruth or scruple in what they promise and do. To them, nothing seems unfair so long as it serves their purpose, and this gives them an incalculable advantage when they face authority which is in itself scrupulous. Democracy is for Communism a particularly convenient condition in which to exist for it is very unusual for a democratic people to

realize that any political party is treating them unfairly. Yet the first sign of resistance shown by these tolerant democratic beings sends the Communist off into eldritch shrieks against 'police oppression', the very wickedness in which he himself must always indulge.

Whenever Congress has been able to create disturbances or to prepare the soil for it this noisome creature has been ready and quick to leap in and reap the harvest. And so it actually was in the case of the R.I.N. and the R.I.A.F. The Communists appeared even to have got their hand in on the R.A.F. mutiny at Dum Dum near Calcutta in early 1946. Decent airmen were exhorted to mutiny by unseen voices in rooms with the lights switched off: in fact, everything showed the grubby fist and the slimy ways of these people.

In the R.I.A.F., perhaps also in the Indian Navy, the fact that 'educated' boys were recruited, many actually from the universities, disposed the service to indiscipline. There is no more unbalanced and undisciplined body than the student class of Indian universities. I shall have more to say of them later. Indiscipline, permeation with political propaganda, unhealthy obsession with politics, made many of these boys unsuitable as members of a fighting service.

The sorry example of mutiny set by the R.A.F. at Dum Dum and at other R.A.F. stations in India, simultaneously reported from yet other places in the East and Middle East, and the fact that to all intents and purposes, so far as the Indian Services were aware, even the ringleaders got off scot free, had a great deal to do with our troubles.

Those are some of the principal reasons for the disturbances in the Indian Services.

Here are short accounts of the R.I.N. mutinies at Bombay and Karachi, prefaced by disturbances in R.A.F. and R.I.A.F.

In mid-January 1946 the R.A.F. mutinied on certain stations in India and the Middle East, refusing to obey orders. The R.I.A.F. followed suit by refusing to eat their food. Soon the usual string of grievances was put forward, rate of demobilization, gratuity, deferred pay and so on, and, finally, the R.I.A.F. declared their sympathy with the I.N.A. and other mutineers. British troops stood by in Calcutta to take over the airmen's armories should the mutiny show signs of taking a violent turn. Major Woodrow Wyatt, M.P., who was in Calcutta at the time, was called in by the local R.A.F. authorities and himself addressed the R.A.F. mutineers at Dum Dum.

The R.A.F. mutiny remained peaceful, taking the form of mere indiscipline. In due course the men returned to their work but with their discipline impaired.

In December 1945, talking to a R.A.F. officer in the United Provinces, I had already been forewarned that the discipline of the men of the ground installations of that Force was falling to pieces. They looked upon themselves far too much as factory hands and far too little as men of a great fighting service admired by the whole world and to which it was an honor to belong.

The R.A.F. disturbances had nothing but evil effects on others, particularly on the R.I.A.F. who were to model themselves on their British colleagues. But for the Army it served one good purpose. It warned us of the new democratic technique of mutinying, a curious technique, and put us on our guard. Orders went out from Eastern Command that the word 'strike' would not be used: mutiny was mutiny in the Army no matter what it was called elsewhere. It was to be nipped in the bud if it started, force at once used and the ringleaders arrested and heavily punished by summary court martial. The essential quality of the treatment of the disease was that it was to be dealt with speedily, quietly and without temporizing, from first to last.

Much criticism was leveled at the authorities for not dealing with these cases of mutiny in the R.A.F. as they deserved. Not only did the Air Ministry tie its own hands as regards the R.A.F. but a precedent had been created by which in all fairness no stronger action could be taken against similar cases in the R.I.A.F. Any disciplinary action against the latter would at that time have at once placed a strong anti-Government weapon in the hands of Congress, namely the political and racial complaint of discrimination against Indians. That was the immediate effect: the future effect will be seen in days to come when Labor in India is more fully organized and in a position to influence politically-minded young men in the Indian Air Forces.

In the same months there had been petty cases of indiscipline among Indian ratings in southern India, with one minor mutiny. The Indian Navy had grievances, the sort that result from lack of sympathy between officers and men, those which the Indian Air Force aired with such gusto. They were genuine but not enough to warrant the happenings of February 19th to 23rd of 1946. Events showed more of a drift into mutiny than a well-prepared and **coordinated** plan. Along with the R.I.N. mutiny came the Bombay riots. Which was cause and which effect, I dare not conjecture.

We did know that matters were not right in the R.I.N. long before February 1946 but thought that these troubles were either exaggerated by rumors or were only post-war restlessness.

The trouble in Bombay started on the 18th February with the usual refusal to eat food and to attend parade. By the 19th February there were Congress and Muslim League flags hoisted on ships and shore establishments, and some of the ratings of a shore establishment, after refusing to perform duties, moved in a riotous band into Bombay city, interfering with Europeans and breaking windows. The greatest danger was that



the mutineers would get at arms and ammunition from the armories of their barracks. Had this happened there was no saying where the fighting would have ended: there would have been pitched battles in the streets between troops and sailors and the number of troops needed to quell the mutiny would have tested the resources of Southern Command to the limit and the disorganized railway system almost beyond its capacity. There was no question that the sailors in the end would have been overpowered, but much destruction would have been done and many lives lost and many an unhealable moral wound inflicted by an all-out conflict between soldier and sailor. Those were anxious moments and the ears of all who were aware that trouble had started were strained in the direction of the naval barracks for sounds of the first shots being fired.

Although the outbreak started with the rather more understandable demands for domestic improvement it soon produced a plethora of more or less political demands. Reading the newspapers at the time it seemed that the mutineers had been blessed with the gift of tongues, firstly of Congress politicians and secondly of Communist agitators. The latter language blared forth in its usual abusive fashion.

General Lockhart, commanding Southern Command, was now put in charge of the whole operation of subduing the Bombay mutiny, with all Services under him.

As the rowdy sailors surged through the gates the next morning to break up the town they were joined by ratings from another ship. They set out to march through the streets. By now the soldiers were on the move and mobile columns of Mahrattas were thrown out to contact, halt and round up the mutinous ratings. The Mahrattas drove into the city making for the main lines of advance of the mutineers and, debussing at top speed, blocked their further advance and brought them to a halt. At the same time British and Indian troops were hustled out to all possible landing-places to picket them and to prevent disaffected sailors from landing and joining the riot. Bit by bit, during the day, the Mahrattas rounded up the trouble-makers and herded them quickly along back to their lines. The business was done patiently and with restraint so that there was no violence between the men of the two Services. By nightfall the city was cleared of the pestilence. The sailors were soon confined to their barracks.

On the 21st February, there was fighting. Soldiers had been posted to stop the mutineers from breaking out of Castle Barracks. Suddenly the mutineers opened fire on the pickets. The pickets at once went to ground and returned the fire with interest. This riposte quickly subdued the sailors' attempt at lethal methods but not their desire to get out of their barracks and into the town for another brawl. They next tried to get over the back wall of their temporary prison and so make their escape, but the movement was spotted and more soldiers quickly sent round to stop them.

During the day one of the rebel ships trained its guns on the barracks, presumably ready to open fire when the rioters had made good their flight.

In the town, those ratings who had managed to creep through undetected or had been left behind by the comb-out of the night before, succeeded in collecting together and soon clashed with the police, on whom they opened fire. By now Leicesters, Marines and Mahiattas were all out after the rebels and the end of their junketing was in sight. R.A.F. Mosquitoes appeared over the town to lend more color to an already warlike scene. The civil population had taken cover, small blame to them: streets were deserted and quiet, the more alarming for the timid with the sound of rifle shots clearly to be heard in the hot, sunny midday.

The mutineers were now so happy about their affairs that a broadcast by the Admiral on the 22nd February demanding their surrender met with no response. The Congress leader, Sardar Vallabhai Patel, who arrived in Bombay about this time, condemned the mutiny and advised the men to surrender. At the same time he asked for leniency for the mutineers.

Pandit Nehru, too, had come to Bombay, but he either found the place already over boiling or was persuaded that his intervention was not wanted. Whatever happened, he soon withdrew again. The Communist, Mrs. Asaf Ali, was also much to the fore, but it was rumoured that Sardar Patel, the strong man of the Congress Party, warned her off. On the following day, the 23rd, the ratings hoisted their surrender flags on all ships and establishments and gave in. The soldiers then marched on to the ships and posted their guards.

Leniency was granted. We have not yet seen the long term result of it.

The one bright spot in all this was that the Chief Petty Officers and Petty Officers remained steadfast in nearly all cases: they had not, however, the trust of the ratings, which would have forewarned them of mutiny, nor the influence to stop the trouble taking a serious turn.

Undoubtedly the mutiny was roused and fanned by a political breeze. Some of the ships would recently have been in Malayan waters and there met the I.N.A. and seen much of the Azad Hind movement in Singapore and in Burma. We ourselves had noticed how often the R.I.N. ratings on our side of India were to be seen at political meetings, not a healthy sign. But the root cause lay in domestic grievances.

There were, of course, the usual newspaper accusations that Indian troops had refused to fire on the mutineers. There was no foundation whatsoever for these: the soldiers had done their job and done it properly. It was the first taste that the Mahratta battalion had had of handling anything of the sort and it acquitted itself well.

There is no doubt that this mutiny was a stimulant to others to act in the same way. It was clear that the embittered speeches of Congress leaders over the months that went before, their encouragement to violence, their unpardonable defence and praise of the I.N.A., had had their effect. Added to this violent and disgraceful affair were the examples of the so-called 'strikes' in the R.A.F. and the R.I.A.F. As anticipated, R.I.N. men excused themselves by pointing to these as a precedent. One British battalion commander said to me at the time, 'It is of the utmost importance that the idea that one can just sit down and just disobey orders with impunity should not become general.' But little was done even to these men to deter others from following their example. Some were dismissed the Service; some had mild punishments handed out to them over the table. It was like the I.N.A. business over again and it left any decent soldier more despairing than ever for the future of the Services.

At this time there was mild concerted indiscipline in one Indian battalion near Bombay. It was soon subdued: a matter of grievances over bad food on the ship coming back from service and a too rigid and rude Customs examination at the port. We had more complaints from time to time over this examination until it was better conducted. Men coming back from fighting do not appreciate the attentions of sprucely dressed Customs officials in white ducks who have not had the spirit to follow their example. There are, too, some civilians who think that they can take every advantage of the soldier because the latter is bound by discipline and cannot retaliate in kind. It is thus that the spuriously bold rush into print about the sins of the soldier and his leaders, knowing that they cannot be taken on with the same weapons.

In Madras, some British soldiers of an administrative unit threatened a 'strike' for better conditions, quoting the example of the other strike, but succumbed to a stern warning of what would be done to them if they persevered in their intention.

Almost simultaneously with the R.I.N. mutiny in Bombay another broke out in Karachi. This took a more violent turn and resulted in quite considerable casualties to the ratings.

It all started on the afternoon of the 10th February. A number of the crew of one of the ships broke out and left the ship, shouting 'jai Hind', and proceeded to Karachi town. Before long they returned and were remanded for disciplinary action. The rest of the crew, while disapproving of their indiscipline, refused to carry out orders until the sinners were pardoned. The demand could not be accepted. The Naval authorities put Kiamari and Karachi out of bounds to the Navy. General Richardson at once placed military pickets on the Chinna bridge to enforce the order.

By the next morning more establishments were in a state of mutiny: at one place the white ensign was torn down and it looked very much as though the ratings would seize

the landing-craft moored alongside and cross the harbor to get round the Chinna bridge and so reach the town, or else make for one of the warships, board it and rouse its crew also to join them. Troops hurried to the landing places to forestall the operation. Before midday one of the ships was firing indiscriminately with all its armament, some shells dropping at the Indian battalion's barracks on the far side of the cantonment. The platoon at East Wharf returned the fire to protect their men while getting to cover. They had one man wounded. The ship's crew now steadied down to a more definite policy of shooting at everything that moved in its neighborhood on the quayside or in the harbor. Thus, with the cessation of movement, firing from the ships soon subsided. The platoon remained in observation and by trial and error soon discovered that whenever any of its men moved or was spotted observing the ship, the gun crews at once manned action stations.

A parachute battalion now moved down East Wharf to clear all ratings off and back to their ships. Here they met five hundred of the latter and expected a fight, but the five hundred quickly accepted the situation and moved off in front of the troops.

By now things were being brought under control. The shore establishments were quiet but still in a state of mutiny; the ships' crews were truculent and obviously prepared to use the ships' armament. Naval officers had managed to get nearly all weapons away from the establishments and into safe keeping, but the high-angle guns at the School of Gunnery were left.

General Richardson thereupon decided to give the resisting ship's crew till 9 a.m. the next day in order to surrender un-conditionally. If by then they had not given in, he would attack and capture the ship. Accordingly, the ultimatum was conveyed to them. During the night he brought up a number of 75 mm. guns and mortars and emplaced them in warehouses and among sacks of grain and bales of cotton, ready to cover the attack. Troops took position and an officer kept an eye on the tide. At 9 a.m. there had been no sign of surrender so the Commander of the attacking force waited, watching till the tide was just right to prevent the ship's 4-inch guns at full depression being able to shoot effectively. At 10 a.m. he sent a final ultimatum and informed the rebels that any man seen moving on the decks would be shot. At once the ship's crew manned its guns and army snipers opened fire.

The R.I.N. opened on the troops with Oerlikons firing in all directions, causing a redoubled effort from the snipers' rifles, this in turn bringing the ship's reply with its 4-inch guns.

The 75 mm. howitzers and mortars at once registered on the ship and opened up for effective fire. There was now a full orchestra, for the Army's light automatics chattered into action and the ship let loose with all it had. Before 11 a.m. the mutineers had received several direct hits all round their Oerlikon mountings and at 10.55 a.m. up

went the white flag and all firing stopped. The crew abandoned ship and fell in on the quay and the troops took possession.

Inspection by the soldiers showed that while they had inflicted quite a number of casualties, the light shell of their 75's and mortars had done little damage to the ship itself. But between decks the crew had indulged in an orgy of wanton damage and made a shambles of their own ship.

Before this, a British battalion crossed the harbor by night and at dawn slipped in and occupied the high-angle gun sites at the Gunnery School.

That ended the R.I.N. mutiny at Karachi.

Once more there issued scurrilous falsehoods from the Indian Press charging Indian troops with refusing to fire on their compatriots. This type of report was so constantly 'plugged' in the Press that we finally concluded that it was part of a definite campaign organized by some political party to wear out the soldier's spirit and sense of duty by constant repetition.

A variation of it at this time was that Indian soldiers in Lahore had refused to arrest Dhillon, the former member of the I.N.A. who was cashiered. The campaign was helped on by a distinguished member of the Congress Party who at this time announced his opinion that an Indian soldier who refused to fire on his own countrymen would not be guilty of indiscipline. He reversed that opinion when he visited Bihar in 1946 and witnessed his fellow-countrymen at their savage work on their own fellow-countrymen and women. Here and now I want to emphasize that if the Indian Press could have rotted out the Services, in particular the Army, it would have done so with the greatest joy and with a sense of triumphant achievement. It did its best. The English-owned Press in India was better, much better, but it too on more than one occasion succumbed to the lure of news-value. My experience of the past few years in India has been that Nemesis always in due time overtakes those who wittingly utter in public what is false. The Indian Army's reaction to the mutinies was not unexpected. All opposed the mutineers except the men of the clerical and artisan type of the administrative services. 'Strikes' and mutinies did not interest the sepoy of the fighting unit: he just classified them as fatal bat (idle talk). Men who had served abroad in the Middle East and in the Central Mediterranean Forces had had a taste of better conditions than those to be found in Indian barrack life, especially in the basha barracks and temporary hutments that were their fate in an army swollen far beyond peace-time establishments. There was disappointment in the standard of life in their own country. Whereas they had had the full field service ration and eaten it at a table, seated on chairs, now they ate a reduced ration squatting on their haunches on the bare ground. At night-time barracks were unlit. British Commanding Officers importuned Headquarters for furniture and electric light but got neither because these things were not in the 'Barrack and Hospital

Schedule'. Only by slow degrees did we manage to squeeze the furniture out of a reluctant Finance and we never succeeded in getting the electric light for more than a poor tithe of their buildings. Yet, notwithstanding their disgust, the soldiers remained staunch and good, true to their calling.

As late as June 1946 the ripples of the R.I.N. mutinies were still disturbing the surface of India. Newspapers, out of sheer mischief, were still collecting funds for the R.I.N. mutineers and searching for special employment for them. This made the remaining loyal men of the R.I.N. discontented and set the sepoy hoiking and spitting with annoyance at the idea of such men being regarded as heroes.

All these happenings, except the R.A.F. mutiny at Dum Dum and minor mass indiscipline in the R.I.A.F., were still outside Eastern Command. Our first taste of trouble of this sort, and our last, came one bright Saturday in late February, just as I was looking forward to an infrequent half-holiday. The Area Commander in Calcutta rang me up in the afternoon at my house in Tollygunge to say that there was serious indiscipline impending in the lines of one of our Indian Pioneer units lying next to the R.I.N. barracks in the heart of Calcutta. Some of the men had refused to obey orders and had assaulted an officer.

The R.I.N. in Calcutta had been out on 'strike' –mutinying, in other words—for some weeks. We were then about to put a battalion 'on top' of them, having been asked for it by their Captain, arrest the ringleaders and give the rest the alternative of either returning to duty or taking the consequences. The ratings, thanks to tactful handling by their officers, had been fairly orderly but were obviously tainted with Communism and likely to be a nuisance if allowed to act the goat any longer. They were playing games at all times of the day when our men were working, shouting silly political slogans and trying to incite our Pioneers to imitate their ways, strolling about and refusing to listen to any order given them.

Our difficulty now over the Pioneers was that Calcutta itself was in a very tense, emotional frame of mind with Mr. Jinnah about to address a mammoth meeting of Muslims in the central part of the city, and Hindus and Muslims just spoiling for another fight. They had not had one for two weeks or more. If any action we took developed into a fracas down in the dock area while rounding up our Pioneers or dealing with the R.I.N. and probably having to drive our men through Calcutta to segregate them for proper enquiry, the odds were heavy on our starting a major explosion in Calcutta. So we rang up our friend Sir Frederick Burrows, the Governor of Bengal, and told him we had this trouble on our hands but would try and keep it in play till the following evening when Mr. Jinnah would have done with his meetings, but that if we found that we must act before then we would warn the police in good time. Accordingly, that afternoon and the next morning officers played at parleying with the mutineers, a most galling and quite wrong proceeding, one of them being

kicked for his pains. However, needs must when the devil drives. A second unit of Army against its detractors and traducers. Virtue is not always its own and sole reward. I have said that the British Army remained staunch throughout. This enabled us at first, while our Indian units were demobilizing and disbanding and reorganizing, to use mainly British and Gurkha troops to deal with our Service troubles and to cope with the frequent disturbances in the towns. This allowed enough time for our Indian units to have a look round, take stock of the position and to get ready to play the truly wonderful role they later played in the terrible happenings of 1946 and throughout the civil war in the Punjab in the spring and summer of 1947.

The British units were getting younger and younger as men went on Python, Liap, Lilop, Slick, Stiff, Sewlrom, Domcol, Farleaf, Generosity and Elimination and other intriguing excursions. There were sergeants of twenty and sergeant-majors of twenty-two and twenty-four. When one went to see these battalions the men looked at one in a faintly inquisitive way as though registering for their home letters a short description of this particular museum piece. One allowed them as good an inspection as possible for the amusement of their readers.

They gave me a very good impression of the boys of today, keen and full of humor. I only wish there were less round shoulders and pigeon chests: I wish too that there was more purpose in their lives and that the English schools gave these young people a taste for taking up some sort of hobby or craft. I think it was Professor Jacks who said that each one of us has in him the desire for a skill of some kind: it only needs encouraging to start.

With so many of our operatives working as pure automata it is vital for the mental development of our people that we encourage all sorts of home crafts among them, so that they can learn to be creative and to enjoy their own faculties instead of turning from the unskilled cares of the shop to the dope of the cinema film. Life is too short to let it go unfilled.

Mr. Gandhi touched in his idyllic, ineffective way on the need for village crafts to stop the drain of population to the cities. He span and wanted all others to spin. Essentially he was right. If only some part of our industrial work in England could be done in the more satisfying surroundings of the village without spoiling our village life, how much more truly happy would our people be. But this is no place for moralizing. G. M. Trevelyan quotes William Blake:

*Great things are done when men and mountains meet,  
They are not done by jostling in the street.*

An intelligent countryman is more genuinely wise than an intelligent townsman. The countryside has taught him wisdom that a townsman can never learn from his streets.

*I knew all the swift importings  
On the willful face of skies;  
I knew how the clouds arise  
Spumed of the wild sea snortings.*

These young soldiers enjoyed their time on civil disturbance duty provided it did not go on too long. It gave them a change from barrack routine: it sent them into the city where they could see and study at close quarters the lives of the poorer Indians. Perhaps, above all, they enjoyed the sense of responsibility and the respect and gratitude with which they were everywhere greeted. Being mostly urban men and not knowing the language, they were more at home in the cities than in the countryside. In the rural areas not even Master Tommy can readily make himself understood, although I must confess that the soldier who wanted a jug of milk and said to the herdsman: See them gowers, well dood 'em could have tuned in to any man on earth from the Arctic to Patagonia, and fully deserved the milk he got. *Gai* is a cow: *dudh* is the noun 'milk'.

The Red Caps, young British Military Police, were ever to the fore in all our troubles and took charge on the slightest pretext, efficiently and with their usual nonchalance and sense of the dignity of their position. Theirs is only too often an invidious task: their patience and good manners were worthy of the police force of Great Britain.

Master Thomas's last appearance in India—and we must not forget his officers—has been quite the most successful of all his long and chequered career of good-natured sinning and unwitting *faux pas*. The Indian is still fond of him, though his leaders would have been loth to admit it.

All that troubled us with the British soldier was the occasional gang, and one case of walking off the ship when bound for Pioneers meanwhile followed the example of the first and also mutinied. But Fate awaited them.

The second evening, just as dark was closing in on the dirty, sweaty city, British and Gurkha troops descended upon their camp, surrounded them and picketed the armories. The Area Commander with a few men marched up to the quarter guard, which was making as though to resist, threatened it and disarmed it.

Lorries drove into the camp, both units were hustled into them by armed guards and in the dark the Indian drivers took the convoy through the city out on to the far side to empty barracks some twelve miles away. There the men were dumped, courts of enquiry held, summaries of evidence taken and regimental courts martial assembled. All the ringleaders, some forty-five men, were tried and sentences given from one year to six months' imprisonment. The whole affair was over in a few days and the mutineers repining in their cells. Not a soul in Calcutta outside the Army knew what



happened nor did those prime makers of mischief in our defence services, the newspaper reporters and Congress politicians, ever hear of it.

Later on, pressure was brought on us to reduce the sentences, but we refused.

There was no more mass indiscipline.

By dawn the next morning troops were picketing the R.I.N. camp and the carefree sailors woke up to find themselves about to be treated roughly. They went back to work.

Very soon afterwards, there was trouble in another Command at the Signal Training Centre at Jubbulpore. From all accounts this was mainly a case of rank indiscipline among Madrassi soldiers. It followed on the R.I.N. and R.I.A.F. mutinies and may be said to have been directly caused by them. The usual grievances were aired, food, pay, barracks, until, on the 1st March, a fair crowd of men proceeded into the town and held a meeting in proper political fashion. The local Congress leaders seemed to have advised them to return to their lines and they took the advice. Congress appeared by now to have been a little awed by the Frankenstein monster it had created. Believe me, it is still alive as I pen these words.

Almost at once troops started to arrive in Jubbulpore from outside to look after the situation and the signalers soon gave up the unequal contest. There was no violence: it was a sort of Satyagraha (passive resistance) in true Gandhi tradition, with non-violent indiscipline. The business was all over by the 3rd March.

From then onwards, we used to get occasional newspaper reports from Jubbulpore of refusals to eat food, hunger strikes and so on, but there was nothing of grave moment, however great the relish with which Hindu papers reported these obscure events.

Here and there the Indian Army had the usual after-war ailments. But they were mainly of a mild type and not to be marveled at with the efforts being made by the Congress party and by the Communists and J. P. Narain's Socialists to subvert the loyalty of the men to their British officers, to the so-called British Government in India and to British 'Imperialism'. If only they could have turned the Army against its British officers, how well they would have done. But the Indian Army, the old and tried regular units of that force, remained to a man staunch to its British connection and to itself. It was the old school tie again, *esprit de corps*, imbibed from public schools in England. In the footsteps of the regulars trod worthily their consort units of the new army, fashioned from their fifth rib.

The tale of the Indian Army as it unfolds in these pages will, if I tell it as I should, astonish the reader of this book, for never, I believe, has the loyalty and soldierly spirit

of any army been subjected to such a strain and to such determined and ingenious pressure to subvert it and to destroy its pride in itself. And never has any country in history depended more on its army to see it through its darkest and most confused days than has India depended on the Indian Army. The contest was on now for the British commanders of the Indian Army to preserve the army they had built and to save it for the India of the future, while, on the other side, bent on its destruction, were political parties, in this respect the most short-sighted that any country has ever had the ill-luck to breed. The Muslim League kept aloof: it made no attempt either to subvert the Army or to encourage it. Later it would have gathered for itself a rich harvest of gratitude from every class and creed except the Congress and its satellite parties had it at that time come down wholeheartedly on the side of the Army against its detractors and traducers. Virtue is not always its own and sole reward.

I have said that the British Army remained staunch throughout. This enabled us at first, while our Indian units were demobilizing and disbanding and reorganizing, to use mainly British and Gurkha troops to deal with our Service troubles and to cope with the frequent disturbances in the towns. This allowed enough time for our Indian units to have a look round, take stock of the position and to get ready to play the truly wonderful role they later played in the terrible happenings of 1946 and throughout the civil war in the Punjab in the spring and summer of 1947.

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All that troubled us with the British soldier was the occasional gang, and one case of walking off the ship when bound for Malaya. The gangsterism was the work of one or two small troupes of roughs who had got together in certain units or had deserted and who went out at night to terrorize and rob. Their victims were mainly taxi-drivers. Though their activities were regrettable and though all was done to lay the bandits by the heels, we were glad that they had chosen the taxi-drivers, mostly Communists, as their prey. Most of these taxi-men were Sikhs and a Sikh is a man who, in a regiment, is

known as the most consistent intriguer in the Army. He has other characteristics, among them being his arrogance and inordinate love of money. Nevertheless, when he is on your side he is a great fighter.

In seeking out these gangs, our men, under Lieut.-Colonel Eric Gregory, were groping about in the underworld of Calcutta, perhaps the most squalid underworld that there is, one of criminals and crooks of all nations and harlots of every shade and degree.

One of our difficulties was to get on to the British gangs and to separate them from the Anglo-Indian gangs who were purely civilian but who unwittingly wove a net of clues across and across the tracks of those we sought.

## VII THE FEBRUARY RIOTS

### *Calcutta, 11th–14th February*

WHILE the Service troubles were a-brewing political emotions in Calcutta were rising to thunder pressure. In November there had been riots, the worst that Calcutta had as yet experienced; they had been mainly anti-British in complexion but their violence, short though they were, had shocked all decent people. In January there had been more of the same sort and those who dwelt in Calcutta had seen Europeans roughly handled by hooligans in the streets. But no Europeans had been killed and the rough-housing had given the impression that either the mob feared the consequences of overstepping the mark or else it was half-hearted in its dislike for the ordinary Briton. It was, I think, a little of both conditions that kept Europeans more or less secure from mob violence. The trouble was, and always will be, that once people get a taste for violence they tend on the one hand to look readily to it as a quick means of settling affairs rather than to accept the delay and doubtful issue of long-drawn negotiations and discussions, and on the other to become so habituated to the use and sight of violence as to regard it as a natural condition.

*Blood and destruction shall be so in use,  
That mothers shall but smile when they behold  
Their infants quartered with the hands of war.*

Learning those lines at school in England I used to suppose that they were of 'old, unhappy, far-off things, and battles long ago'.

Today they are all too familiar, real and ghastly.

After these Calcutta riots<sup>23</sup> of which I am now to tell, the leading Calcutta newspaper came out with a condemnation of this exhibition of mob fury and referred to it as spoiling the fair name of Calcutta. Without being in the least cynical, it did seem to us at that time that the record of the previous month or two had only been the warning siren of fearful happenings yet to come. Within the agitation against the British we had seen the gnawing growth of communalism. We knew full well and for certain, and we said so at the time, that this growth was the one reality of the whole body politic and that the anti-British symptom was artificial and only exhibited to sight by quack politicians in order to cover the fatal disease hidden beneath. They knew it was there and they passed

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<sup>23</sup> See Map No. 2.

it by lightly, saying that with a change of air from that of Britain to the balmy vapors of India the patient would soon cast out such a trivial and only temporarily incommoding malady. They announced this from the housetops and from the hustings whenever they found it convenient to issue a bulletin on the patient's health.

It had been a comparatively pleasant cold winter in Calcutta and by mid-February in this year the sun was only uncomfortably hot in the small hours of the afternoon. For some days the Muslim League had been advertising its intention of holding a meeting to protest against the sentence of seven years R.I. passed on Abdul Rashid, formerly of the 1/14th Punjab Regiment and late of the I.N.A. He had been punished by court martial for abetment to murder and for cruelty.

The Muslim case was that whereas this man had been given a fairly heavy punishment, others, Hindus of course, had escaped more lightly.

Against such discrimination the Muslim was in honor bound to protest. Despite the tension in Calcutta it appeared that the demonstration was likely to pass off quietly, for the Muslims were not in a mood just then to start a disturbance. But we did note that within the protest against the Government was the more stinging emotion against the other community.

And so, on the bright forenoon of the 11th February 1946 the sons of the Prophet began to collect in little bands making their peaceful way to Wellington Square at the centre of Calcutta city, to hold their meeting and to protest against an injustice. An appeal had been made to students of all communities to join in the protest. An appeal to the students of India which means a day off from their studies and a chance of prodding their own vanity by slinging mud at the constituted government, is certain to be answered with a fairly full muster. And so the most unstable element in Calcutta's teeming and volcanic population was added to the crowd. The meeting started in orderly fashion at 1 p.m.

At 3 p.m. five hundred of our youthful hotheads formed a procession and set out, catcalling and gesticulating, away from the meeting at Wellington Square just as it was breaking up, heading through some of the most crowded thoroughfares of commercial Calcutta towards the bottleneck of Howrah Bridge which crosses the Hooghli River. To reach their destination they would probably march through Dalhousie Square; and Dalhousie Square, in which all the government offices are situated, had always been a prohibited area for meetings and processions. This fact was well known to the students, and their action in taking this route was willfully designed to provoke the police into opposing their progress.

The procession turned along Strand Road and then headed for Dalhousie Square. Our Military Police patrols, who had been observing the situation, and those of the U.S.

Army, followed in jeeps, keeping contact with the procession and reporting back to their headquarters by radio. The civil police at once formed a cordon in front of the now excited procession to keep it out of the prohibited area. The riposte of the students was to squat on the road and pavements in front of the police, both with the object of wearing out the police and stopping all traffic so that the police would in turn be compelled to move them by force, and also in order to put the public to the greatest inconvenience possible. They hoped thereby to enrage the public, always ready to side against the police, until they too took up the cudgels on behalf of the squatters. This is a good example of what the Congress Party was pleased to call non-violent action; any impartial observer could see that it was willfully designed towards compelling the authorities to take forceful measures. The non-violent elements could then go back, pose as martyrs and display themselves as heroes, and write in their diaries and in newspapers of the merciless and vicious beatings they had experienced and of the low form of life of all police, particularly the British and Anglo-Indian sergeants and inspectors, compared with their own innocent selves.

Sensing a scene and piling up against the road block of students, an excited crowd of about three thousand now started to gather close by near Charnock Place (pace Job, its founder).<sup>24</sup> Armed police with tear-gas hurried to the scene. As yet there had been no violence and the police had avoided using force but the atmosphere was unbearably tense and tragedy was in the air. The hot afternoon sun poured down on the angry scene, the sun that always ferments the emotions of India's people. The crowd was buzzing, a low heavy noise as of hornets. These headstrong boys now represented the cause of suffering Abdul Rashid, and the police the authority which had condemned him.

Showers of stones came flying from the crowd at the silent, motionless police.

The police at once sprang into action and delivered charge after charge with their brass-bound staves and within half an hour, before 5 p.m., the crowd was hurriedly dispersing. Soon afterwards the city was quiet and it seemed that the trouble was done with. But there was not the usual feeling of relief that comes after an explosion of this size. We felt, rather than knew, that emotions were tenser than ever.

Word of the police's forceful actions spread, and lurid rumors of all sorts and kinds were wafted like wildfire about the city. Sunset found it still peaceful and it seemed unlikely that night would bring trouble. We were mistaken.

The lights of the city twinkled up but the streets were silent and traffic was not running. Rumors were having their effect. There was fear about, and fear in India means trouble. By 7 p.m. there were men, ragged and half-naked, their shoulder blades glistening as

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<sup>24</sup> Job Charnock, an English merchant, founded Calcutta in 1690 at a small village on the Hooghli River.

they slipped past the dim lamps of Calcutta's by-roads, walking swiftly towards the north and as swiftly the crowd was collecting, till at 8 p.m. it became apparent that we were in for a night of rioting. Two U.S. lorries were stopped, the occupants thrown out and the vehicles set alight. Calcutta *goondas* were coming into action.

Our radio patrols were pumping back news to Brigadier H. Gibbons, the Fortress Commander, at his headquarters in Fort William. Military Police jeeps streamed out of the gates of the Fort and out from Barrackpore in the north, to head off all Service traffic, British and U.S., from the storm centre.

Meanwhile the disturbances were spreading, crowds swarming down from the troubled north setting alight any vehicle they met. In a short time about a dozen or so cars and lorries were blazing and the mob was barricading the main arteries in the centre and north of the town. The police arrived and cleared Central Avenue with tear-smoke, now concentrating their forces towards the vital centre, and there at about 10.30 p.m. the constabulary were compelled to open fire in order to repel a big and now wildly riotous mob lest they themselves were overwhelmed and trampled underfoot.

Luckily the south of the city remained quiet though deserted, enabling police and military to pass freely on their duties and the police to concentrate their forces farther north. Another mob attack soon developed, heaving and surging towards the same area of the town, directed this time on Hare Street Police Station itself. The men turned out at once and drove the rioters off with tear-gas and bullets.

Those who saw these happenings had a queer sensation of something monstrous moving with barely human intelligence in the half-light of the narrow, canal-like streets. By midnight the crowds had melted to lick their wounds and to sleep. An hour later the streets were completely silent, the only signs of conflict being the dustbins and tar barrels which the rioters had used as road blocks and barricades. These were cleared.

The rest of the night passed serenely by. I had been in Delhi for a conference and was flying back to my headquarters at Calcutta on the afternoon of the 11th. Whilst still in the air I learnt of the state of affairs in Calcutta and that my plane must land at Barrackpore near the river and not at Dum Dum which was then cut off from Calcutta by the crowds. In the late afternoon we circled Barrackpore and landed. I was met by an armed A.D.C. and escort and told of developments. Military traffic could not traverse the town to my headquarters at Tollygunge in the far south of the city. Accordingly, we drove off to the landing stage at the old Government House at Barrackpore where Alfsea H.Q. had been during the war. There we were met by a launch driven by a veteran major of the Inland Water Transport. And so, as a thief in the night with the dusk falling on the river and over the afflicted town, or as a Tudor prisoner bound for the Tower, I slipped down the Hooghli for Prinsep Ghat. My journey took nearly two hours. At Prinsep Ghat I landed and with an escort drove to Fort William, there to



confer with the Area Commander about the city's eruptions; thereafter, escorted by an armored carrier, to my house at Tollygunge.

At 8 a.m. on the second day of tumult, the 12th February, crowds began once more to collect at the north end of Central Avenue. By 10 a.m. the rioters were at it again, but the police seemed to be likely to be able to settle the business in their own way. Calcutta had a considerable force of Gurkha armed police who usually came in and used their weapons whenever things were getting beyond the power of the ordinary constabulary. The Gurkha police were now much in evidence. In the northern part of the arena about Vivekananda Road, detachments of the crowd were presently stoning vehicles and burning them. The mob gradually swarmed in towards the centre of the town down Central Avenue, pelting buses and trams and forcing passengers to alight. Like scared partridges bus and tram ran to shelter at their depots and were soon off the roads altogether, the trouble-makers following them southwards into Bhowanipur using the same tactics.

By midday the whole place was rich with trouble, Europeans being molested wherever they were found in and about the business quarters. Virtually all the roads leading into the centre of the city were blocked by violent crowds and their barricades.

The soldiers were now turned out and brought on the spot in case they were needed, the York and Lancaster Regiment disposing strong piquets at nodal points in the north, east and south of the central focus of trouble, ready to prevent more of the population entering the scrimmage where police were engaging the mob. The roar of enraged and hysterical thousands overcame the dwindling clatter of the city's traffic.

However, the police were holding their own and preventing the crowd from uniting, thus the acts of violence were still sporadic and still isolated from the general vortex of disturbance. It still looked as though the mob would wear out their enthusiasm before the police wore out their own physical resistance. And so the tussle went on till after dark that night when the mob was to unite and police control to be lost. At that time we still, and rightly, placed great trust in the police to deal with these commotions and, although ready to intervene, we left them to their job as long as humanly possible. It was the right policy and by it we, civil and military, upheld the reputation of the police and maintained their confidence in themselves and their pride in their justly-earned reputation. In later days, with the whole edifice of administration crumbling, we stepped in far earlier to offer our help.

That night my next-door neighbor found his sweeper thrashing a small urchin of ten. The sweeper was beating his own son for throwing stones through shop windows in the city, a feat for which a Hindu political tout was paying him a rupee a shot. Easily-earned money, thought the gamin. And so it was, but what of the sneak who paid him? He got away scot free, as he intended. There was a lot of paid window-smashing by

small boys during these turbulent days. Children were being used quite unscrupulously to further the ends of Congress agitators. That afternoon a procession of some thousands of school children marched in towards the maelstrom about Dalhousie Square, paraded shrilly bawling round that place, but was peacefully dispersed by the police. Open lorries with yelling schoolchildren, hired at a few *annas* each, were dashing around all over the town adding to the bedlam of their elders.

Bit by bit throughout the afternoon gangs were uniting and the police were being thrust back by sheer weight towards Wellington Square. Now they were using tear-smoke freely but by 4 p.m. both north and south Calcutta were out of their control, large crowds milling about, brickbats flying all over the place and *goondas* smashing windows and breaking in and looting shops.

Meanwhile a plump, small figure, Mr. H. S. Suhrawardy, later Chief Minister of Bengal, led a Muslim procession from Wellington Square to the prohibited Dalhousie Square where the police very sensibly let it pass. But that procession also became excited until finally it was quietly dispersed by its leader.

In the evening the police had a short-lived success, managing to open the southern arteries of the city to let through a U.S. convoy. But the mob soon closed them again and it was apparent by dusk that they had for certain the upper hand of the police, working between the police cordon and the tear-smoke, heavily stoning the constabulary, bursting into shops and throwing their contents all over the road. At last the crowd got into Chowringhee, Calcutta's Oxford Street. They started to stone Europeans and to molest both male and female, and finally broke into one of the gunsmiths' shops but by some miracle forgot to loot the stock. Private residential houses were attacked and entered by force. Chaos now reigned all over the stricken area with the police tired out and fighting back in small parties, their coordination breaking down. Vehicles were burning in many places.

The government now asked for military help. At 8 p.m. British infantry and tanks left Fort William, and the Green Howards drove in post haste from the north at Barrackpore, clearing the way as they went into the heart of the metropolis and to Fort William. Simultaneously the 4/3rd Gurkhas lorried in from the south and cleared Russa Road, the southern artery, arriving at Kalighat Post Office in the nick of time. The mob had assaulted the Post Office, throwing its contents in the road where they burnt them and then set to work to burn the building itself. The Gurkhas jumped from their lorries and charged straight into the mob which fled incontinently. However, before the Gurkhas could reach the tram depot at Kalighat the mob had burnt nine trams which were in the yard. Police and Gurkhas again arrived just in time to prevent them from destroying the depot itself and to get the fire brigade in to deal with the incipient blaze.

Rapidly the troops permeated the town, clearing roads, shooting where necessary as they went, and sweeping the rioters out into the suburbs, through the dust of the combat and the oily smoke of flaring lorries. By midnight the city was quiet and remained quiet throughout the hours of darkness. Many roads were still blocked by burnt and blazing vehicles, by barricades and by broken glass, refuse and brickbats littered on pavement and highway.

That night the York & Lancaster Regiment, the Green Howards, and the 4/3rd Gurkhas were combing out the city with the help of the police, while the 25th Gurkhas, who had just arrived by sea for dispatch up country, were in reserve at the Transit Camp. A composite battalion of five companies made up from details in the Transit Camp had been formed ready to operate in the suburbs.

At dawn on the 13th the mobs returned to the counter-attack. The 4/3rd Gurkhas found themselves stretched beyond their limit to keep the Kalighat area quiet. The northern suburbs out towards Barrackpore now started to get out of control, with the mill hands on strike and therefore idle and spoiling for trouble. The composite battalion was sent in to deal with this, and the North Staffords, who had been standing by ready to move, were ordered in from Ranchi by road.

We contacted the Muslim and Congress leaders and they induced most of the strikers to return to work. The disturbances were, as usual, now in control of the *goondas* who were stopping and burning trams and buses and stealing the spare parts. The Gurkha armed police were in action all over the town, to be ostracized later on by all Indian communities for having quietened their areas of the rioting city with their rifles!

The arrival of troops was beginning to have a general effect on the whole area. Congress lorries were soon going round carrying loudspeakers urging the crowds to disperse, warning them that the military had taken over and were shooting.

From one cause and another disturbances were becoming more sporadic and isolated again, although a tense moment came at about 1 p.m. when crowds started to converge again towards the centre of the town. There was much brick batting, particularly from the housetops, and efforts were made, some successful, once more to barricade the roads. Troops and police came in from close by and dispersed the mob.

In the afternoon the northern mill areas again blew up; trains were stopped by dense crowds massing on railway tracks and lying down in front of engines. Buildings at Naihati station were burnt along with coaches and trucks of a train standing at the platform and other acts of sabotage were perpetrated against trains at different places. The railways diverted their traffic round the danger spots.

By 6 p.m. the worst of the crowds had been broken up but they tended as ever to collect again after military and police patrols had passed. The echoes of frequent firing were heard from most parts of the city. Government had promulgated a ban on all processions and assemblies.

A little later rioters broke into the Methodist church at Dharamtolla Street in the middle of the town, wrecked its contents, burnt the church and then attacked a girls' school which was only saved by the timely arrival of one of our patrols. A U.S. convoy coming in from the north was stoned and suffered nineteen casualties. Civil telephone exchanges were now no longer functioning, so all traffic went over military and R.A.F. exchanges and police and military wireless nets.

Later in the night crowds in the north attacked the houses of Anglo-Indians.

By midnight, as on the two previous nights, stuffed to repletion with brawling and destruction, the city relapsed into silence.

During the 14th February the situation gradually improved, chiefly owing to the free use of firearms on that day and the day before. Outbreaks were confined to the suburbs. The North Staffords that evening drove into Barrackpore. With this reinforcement control was regained over the whole city during the 14th and 15th and by the 16th nearly all activities were back to normal.

Had it not been for our bitter-minded, hysterical friends, the university students, all this destruction and suffering would never have occurred. Nothing whatsoever had been gained by the rioting. If students had hoped to see Europeans beaten up they were disappointed, for only a meager handful suffered from the mob. It is hardly surprising that the Bengali student makes such a poor impression on the mind of a foreigner.

The riots started as a defiance of constituted authority, of a nominally British government; they developed into mad fights between all and sundry accompanied by wholesale brigandage, arson, and devastation on the part of the worst elements of Calcutta. The embitterment of feelings, the widespread resort to violence in these hostilities was to lead to something far worse in August of this same year. Dr. Banerjee, Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University, must look back with remorse to the 11th February when the conduct of the boys for whom he was responsible set a match to the fuse which detonated its charges with such fearful violence a few months later not only in Calcutta and Eastern Bengal, but far afield in Bihar and into the United Provinces at Garhmukteswar and finally into the Punjab.

These riots showed us that the efficiency of the Calcutta police was ever failing as they lost their British officers. They were not working at full capacity through these days; for one thing their intelligence system, so excellent in the past, was now neither so quick

nor so reliable. We in the Army were always admirers of the Indian Police and believed that no other police force of its kind could have stood up for so many years with unimpaired efficiency to the storm of calumny and abuse that that force had had to endure. Any other force would have collapsed long before. In these pages henceforth will be noted the steady deterioration of the force through causes outside the control of its devoted European staff.

The Sikhs were much in evidence throughout the disturbances and even when things were getting better it was the Sikhs, connected with the Communist party, who kept fanning the blaze in the outlying streets of south Calcutta.

We owed a great deal to the R.A.F. at Barrackpore and Dum Dum, who at once took control of the whole situation in the north of the city, and it was due to them that we managed to restore order so quickly when it broke out in their quarter after we had got the upper hand in other parts.

Much to my pleasure I learnt that Indian soldiers were now saying that it was high time we stopped dealing with civil disturbances solely with British and Gurkha troops and that it was their business as much as anyone else's, if not before anyone else, to come in and handle disturbances which threatened the maintenance of law and order. On hearing this I replaced one of the Gurkha battalions in Calcutta with an Indian battalion and from then onwards used Indian soldiers equally with all others to handle my troubles. Right well they did their job too, as we shall later see. Without their impartial and completely loyal help we could never have kept India going so that His Majesty's Government could in the fullness of time hand over control to its new rulers. The admiration of the British officer for the Indian soldier has always been great; it was immensely enhanced by the manner in which they fought in this last war, until by 15th August 1947 our respect for these men was unbounded. I suppose that some laymen would misunderstand me when I say that the fountain of the fine spirit and incomparable behavior of the Indian soldier in the terrible stress of all these months lay in the discipline which he had been taught. If the English civilian will misunderstand me then how much more will the Indian civilian, and how little likely is he to take a lesson for himself and for his own people from this simple statement? More than one Indian soldier had said to me of late that Hindustan's weakness lay in its lack of discipline and that it was the discipline imposed by the British, loose though it may have been, which kept the wheels of administration still turning and which prevented ill humor from changing at the smallest pretext into violent action. Self-discipline is better than an imposed discipline, but the latter is better than none at all, for through it in time may develop the former.

An amusing incident that took place during these riots was the arrival of some French officers in Spence's Hotel. They said, 'Oh we was stopped by big crowd on Howrah

Bridge. Zey say, "You shout Gin Hai" so we shout "Gin Hai" (Jai Hind). Zey say, "Good fellows, now you can go on"

## VIII FEBRUARY FILL-DYKE

FURTHER to increase our cares the Socialist Party of India now came into prominence. This party, with Communists and Communal antagonism, was one of the realities of India. It still is. The leader is a youngish man of the name of Jai Prakash Narain.

J. P. Narain shakes hands with a firm and resolute grip. The hand is sinewy with long, nervous and tapering fingers. He is slight of build, tallish, with high cheek-bones, his dress the customary Indian dress of the men of Bihar, with a loose, woolen homespun waistcoat and a 'Gandhi' cap. He is a Bihari and rents a house in Patna.

By caste he is Kayasht, the widespread clerical caste indefinable exactly in the Hindu caste order but about the equal of Kshatriya, the caste or varna immediately below the Brahman. In replying to a question as to his caste he was roused to speak heatedly against the whole of the caste system and to say that India could never progress with it. He expected a period of violent commotion while the system was being destroyed, agreeing that, though many young Brahmans disliked the system, they were so involved in it by their families that they could not break away.

He was educated firstly at Patna University, but in 1921 when Gandhi started his first non-cooperation movement in which he advised students to leave their universities, J. P. Narain was as good as his word and left Patna University. He kicked his heels at home for a year or so, and then went to the U.S.A. to Wisconsin University. It was there that he became inspired by Socialist ideas, mainly through contact with immigrants from Central Europe. He was captivated by the ideas of Communism for some time but eventually dropped them when he found that all Communists were slavishly subservient to Russia.

He remains a strong admirer of Gandhi and is quick to defend Pandit Nehru against any charge of countenancing the scheduled caste system.

He is a social democrat. His first object is the elimination of the landlords who prey upon their people and give them no improvements. He rightly claims that the rich men of India only use their wealth for their own personal indulgence and contribute next to nothing to the advancement or even to the culture of India.

His first aim is to see that the bellies of the people are full and this he hopes to attain by promoting cooperative movements throughout the countryside and by encouraging the

growth of industry within the towns. By the latter means, since any man can find work in the factory, he also hopes to break down the caste system.

He is a man of courage, passionate and driven forward by a highly strung, vigorous and determined temperament. He is devoted to his cause and it is that devotion which, despite his sense of humor, may endanger the peace of India.

In spite of the strain through which a man of his nature must continually go, he looks young for his age.

The Socialist Party originated in Bengal, is revolutionary and was at that time strongly anti-British, a party which has many attractions for the student population of India. Its policy is violent, some say unscrupulous and terrorist. A party of this sort, strongly xenophobe, was an anachronism, for its target, the British, was a vanishing one. But its leaders, like the leaders of all other Indian political parties, hardly even paused to consider whether the British promise to hand India over to them was in truth to be fulfilled. They so mistrusted all people, including each other, that without hesitation they honestly distrusted the British Government. But the anti-British climate that they spread about the urban population was only too likely to affect our soldiers through the medium of our half-educated specialists and clerks.

Only in a few places, such as in Bihar, had this party any hold on the countryside, the peasantry from which we recruited our sepoy. That neglect was of benefit to the Indian Army in early 1946.

This party, egging on the Congress Party, shoved in their turn by the Communists, brought on the outbreak in Calcutta city which I have just described. This emotional crisis was really the first test through which our Indian troops had to go, although they themselves took no part in suppressing the rising.

Very large numbers of them lived in barracks which were close to the scene and many of them were, in the early hours of the trouble, mingling with the infected crowds in the bazaars of Calcutta. The troops' present reactions and subsequent behavior were closely watched by cordially interested officers. They came through untainted.

At this time Eastern Command Headquarters were in South Calcutta, at Tollygunge in the Rani's Palace, and my own house was at 7 Moore Avenue, close by. From here we had a foreground picture of Calcutta and its troubles. This involved us too much in that city to the exclusion of the rest of the Command but it did not much matter in those days because, although the Command was bloated in numbers, its territory included only Assam, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa while the whole political and military activity then centered about Calcutta. Later on, when political troubles travelled farther north in early 1947, we moved to Ranchi in Bihar from where we could survey the whole of our



demesne which by then took in the United Provinces and, by the 1st August 1947, Delhi and the Eastern Punjab. The sketch map<sup>25</sup> shows us as we were after only the U.P. had come into the fold.

The Area Commanders at this time, other than the commander of the Bengal Area, were Major-General P. L. Ranking at Gauhati, Commanding 202 Assam Area, Major-General H. Briggs, and later Major-General R. Ekin at Ranchi, Commanding Bihar and Orissa Area. Major-General J. Ballentine was in charge of Administration and Brigadier E. Hughes, of the Command general staff. I was lucky in having men to handle these outbursts who were not easily knocked off their perch or old-soldiered by senior civilians and ministers. Thus the Army Commander could get round the Command, confident that any sudden situation would be sensibly and efficiently handled. Later on, equally stalwart commanders came into our territory—Major-General C. Curtis to the U.P. Area and Major-General H. Stable to Bihar and Orissa after Ekin, and Major-General D. Russell, a great fighting soldier of this last war, came in to the 5th Division. These were all able men, each in his own particular manner, but all had one thing in common—they never asked for orders, they acted first and talked afterwards.

During the worst period the 'I' Staff was under Lieut.-Colonel C. E. C. Gregory, a most experienced officer who had been in Bengal during terrorist days of the thirties. He was one of those unusual men, less unusual among the British than among others, who just delighted in nosing about where no one expected or wanted him. Colonel T. Binney, who preceded him, had set our 'I' system on a good footing with his talons out into the Punjab and across to Bombay. I have read somewhere that the British are rather good at Intelligence work. If it is true then I think it is because their society is a democratic one in which open discussion is frequent and cause and effect constantly sought for and linked. They get into the habit of associating ideas, facts and motives. We were kept very well informed of those who interested us, even of their thoughts as conveyed to their friends and associates. There is no doubt that it is an entertaining game.

When I arrived in Calcutta on the 21st January 1946, Mr. R. G. Casey was just finishing his tenure as Governor of Bengal. He had been in the Middle East as Minister at Cairo while I was out in the desert, but I had never met him.

In mid-February Sir Frederick Burrows arrived to take over this onerous appointment. We all wished him well in an office that we would none of us have touched with the proverbial bargepole, and admired the sense of public duty that brought him from gentle England to turbulent Bengal. Before he came there was much talk of 'the experiment' and the advisability of sending one whose career had taken him from small beginnings through the labyrinth of the British Labor movement to a place of great responsibility in the Railway-men's Union. 'The background', some said, was not right.

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<sup>25</sup> Map No. 1.

Photographs of him showed a practical man with keen eyes and contemplative expression. Having soldiered for more years than I care to admit, it has always struck me that right through our nation there exist similar types in every profession and class and each responds to its task in the same way, ringing true as a bell to its type. Burrows rose to the occasion of his arduous duties with the same zest for battle that he must have evinced when he stood before a recalcitrant Union audience. He is essentially British, and nothing will ever prevent him from being British. He tells a story well, particularly of the farmer friends of his boyhood days.

It was mainly Indians who doubted the fitness of the appointment. The caste system twists men's judgment, as I think I have shown in Appendix I. Some of their remarks we in England would have straightly condemned. In India we were too polite to apostrophize them.

We had to postpone the new Governor's arrival for two days as we were in the throes of the anti-British riot I have just described. He was brought in on Alipore airfield, a field that had been recently abandoned to make way for projected extensions to the Alipore docks, whence he had a far shorter drive through the disturbed city to Government House than he would have had from Dum Dum or Barrackpore.

The riot had come, as most Indian riots come, out of a seemingly blue sky with shocking suddenness. If one expects a riot, then it never comes. It was only a week or two before the terrible troubles broke out in the Punjab a year later, that the Governor and many other astute and experienced people of that province were congratulating themselves that 'It can't happen here, thank God!' Out of the blue again it descended upon them. One senior soldier wrote to me afterwards and asked me if I had not thought him a fool when he had so soon before the outburst told me that there would not be trouble in the Northern Punjab. Of course I did not think him a fool: I had been taken in often enough myself. I suppose the only safe thing is to expect trouble all the time: safe, but an unmitigated nuisance to all one's troops as they are kept eternally on tenterhooks. I had seen this policy pursued before when I was a Brigade Major and had registered a strong protest to my commander.

Sir Frederick Burrows arrived during the tense aftermath of this latest shock with all of us watching for the rioting suddenly to burst out again.

He made an instant impression on us all as a man of goodwill who suffered from no illusions. At his installation he spoke a few, apt words to each one who was presented to him. Soon afterwards he held a small evening party at which he addressed all the guests and, to their amazement, actually thanked those who had been running the administration of Bengal and keeping its peace. This, straight from England, was almost too much, and I thought that one or two of the guests would swoon. All they had ever hitherto been used to from England was to be proclaimed as arrogant, inefficient

oppressors: and, from India, to be called heaven-born, incompetent and tyrannical, with an overall epithet of 'exploiters' contributed by the keenest English and Indian observers. It can be imagined how, by these words, the new Governor had immediately won the audience to his side—as soon as they had understood that they were not being insulted, had recovered, had interpreted to each other this unusual language and had realized that it was in fact meant for them. Frozen hearts, numbed by abuse, habituated to accept it as well merited, began to throb again.

Hitherto, at all times, numbers of the audience had found it necessary to apologies for existing; now they began to kick over the traces and at last actually to question whether they were really as bad as the English thought. After all, there must be a little good in them just as there was some good in the masochistic English.

Lady Burrows, lifted protesting from her nest by the Wye, very soon threaded her way into the affections of the Province.

We soldiers found two very trusting friends at Government House, Bengal: in Sir Frederick Burrows a friend and counsellor both experienced and courageous.

## IX

### ENTER THE CABINET MISSION

*March*

THE Ides of March passed peacefully. The month came in like a lamb and went out like a half-grown sheep.

Interest had centered on two things – the elections to the provincial ministries and the pronouncement of the Cabinet in England. Whenever there was the chance of a decision being made all India shut its eyes, opened its mouth and held its breath to see what Father Cripps would bring. I believe that peace could be kept in India for years by approaching and negotiating, answering and promising, by advancing and retiring and never deciding, for most Hindus do not much like decision, since it means action and that is disturbing.

Day in and day out politicians and Press were acclaiming their distrust of Britain and saying that no more would come of these present promises than of those of the past. That could be understood in two ways, for ever since 1900 political advance had gone at a prodigious pace having regard to the size of the country and its population. So when it was given out in Parliament that nothing less than a Mission from the Cabinet would be coming to India, the leaders greeted the announcement with a half-smile of incredulous pleasure tinged with just a little regret that one of the planks of their platform had been so peacefully pulled away. We ourselves felt for the first time a certain relief, the easement of those whose anxieties are at last to be shared by a sturdy volunteer. Henceforth we had a partner in all our trials. We were no longer alone. We felt, too, that since at long last we might become the instruments of a national British policy, then some in England who abused, scorned and patronized us might, because they would have to trust us for there was no one else to trust, at least desist from their old activities and at last come to see our point of view. It seems that this change of attitude did indeed come about, and that in itself more smoothly paved for us the path of duty. Of the many who owed their gratitude to the Mission, we officers were of those who felt most in their debt.

Despite the more pleasant atmosphere this created, the strain, we knew, was increasing and must increase. The communal situation was daily getting worse and for two reasons. Firstly because it was becoming apparent that the day of decision was approaching and therefore each great antagonist was pressing with more and more insistence and more and more greedily his claim to be heard to the exclusion of all

others. The Muslim League's demand for Pakistan at last came to be recognized above the national tumult as the one all-important consideration for the approaching Mission. Secondly because the Press was fairly well free to say what it willed, and it said it, bitterly and effusively. It was the Press more than any other body which fanned disagreement into a flaring hatred and it fanned it without pity, without scruple, without truth and without care for the fearful consequences. With the loosening of tongues and the encouragement of the ever-ready pen as democratic liberties have been enlarged through the years in freer and freer flow, so has this communal irritation been rubbed ever harder until a cancer has been formed that nothing now can cure.

This growing hatred was our first preoccupation lest it spread to the Army, for if it spread it would destroy the Army and, with it, India. It was crystal clear that the whole future of India depended on the impartiality and staunchness of the Indian Army. We became the more careful because Pandit Nehru and others were expressing their opinion that the Army was not one with 'the people' and must be made a part of the people in the future. It rather depended upon who 'the people' were: if the cosmopolitan urban population of India's cities, then the Army was decidedly not one with the people: if the peasants of India then it was decidedly one with the people. I think that Pandit Nehru and the others meant that the Army was not one with the politically aware people of India. Those would be almost entirely the men of the cities, a small minority of the population, and it had always been our policy to keep the Army untainted from the politics of those people. This was for the very good reason that our men came from all sorts of races of India, most of whom had in the past had pretty brisk encounters with each other and because we had Muslim, Sikh and Hindu all in the same units together and we were quite determined that their communal happiness and agreement should not be disturbed by the quarrels of Muslims and Hindus in the Congress Party or by the very well founded protests of Muslims who were suffering under Congress provincial rule. As events turned out our policy was proved to be a wise one. But with the growing influence of the Congress Party in the councils of the British-Indian Government of the time, it was well on the cards that we might not be able to resist the intrusion of politics and political persons into our barracks.

Concessions had been made. Every newspaper had to be allowed into the men's reading rooms, however pernicious its contents. There the men could read violent attacks on the Army, the British, the Muslims and the Congress Party. If any British officer refused admission to any particular newspaper his action would be reported anonymously by some Indian—officer, or educated technician or clerk—to every political leader of that hue and to every newspaper, all avid to pillory the British. Either the British officers, many of whom had only been with us for a year or two, were remarkably level-headed or else we were singularly lucky, for the number of incidents of this sort that we had to deal with were astonishingly few compared with the number of complaints that we knew were made.

Some of the same kind of Indian officers and men attended political meetings, a thing not previously heard of and some, a very few, gave vent to their views from public platforms and were promptly dealt with by the Army. A lot of paper was wasted discussing whether Indian soldiers should be permitted to attend in uniform or not. It was decided that they could as long as they did not take any active part themselves.

All this is the bringing of the Indian Army into contact with 'the people'. It will do that Army no good but it is what its new Government wants. Efforts of political hotheads to get into unit lines were immediately resisted and, on the whole, the men were very loyal in bringing to their commanders all subversive leaflets and pamphlets which were handed to them or sent to them in the post. This form of political penetration of the Army by the parties of India, mainly the Socialist and Communist elements, was brisk. On the one hand was this strong campaign to oust the British officer from the confidence of his men, helped by the usual post-war malaise of all armies and by the very inferior living conditions to which men returning from overseas were consigned in the increasing heat of the oncoming summer; and, on the other, were the long years of trust which the Indian sepoy had in all British officers, old and new, regular and temporary. The contest went on for a year and the officers won.

It was thought by some that the Indian Army was anti-Congress. It was not: it was indifferent to all politicians, but it was strongly pro-Army and it was its pride in itself that carried it through—the old school tie.

On our side a fairly effective campaign was started to show the politicians what the Army really meant to our men and to India. Batches of Indian public men, editors and politicians were invited to go round our training centers to see what, in the last months before the men left us, they were being taught to fit them for civil life. We were doing all we could to give them handicrafts to take away with them to their homes—embroidery, carpentry, tailoring, shoe-making, knitting, spinning cotton fabrics, soap and rope-making, basket-making and so on—while each demobilization centre had its own demonstration farm on which local government demonstrators and instructors were employed. There were also courses in citizenship and village 'uplift'. Brigadier Brayne, late I.C.S., was the great exponent and organizer of all this side of our work.

I think we impressed our visitors, for many said they would like to see similar instruction given in the villages. There was less general criticism of the Army after that.

We officers busied ourselves round the volcano, which sometimes rumbled with minor insubordination against officers in the smaller units, with clerical strikes in the ordnance depots and pay offices, and strikes of laborers in the big depots; all very unsettling for the Indian soldiers who worked alongside them. There was a lot of trouble at I.N.A. camps near Calcutta. We were getting down to the toughest of the tough among the fascists and they were blankly refusing to give any particulars of

themselves so that we were not able to get rid of them to their training centers to be sorted out for normal dispatch. We could not find out where their homes were, nor their units nor their very names. This went on for over a month. We were unable to put the screw on them with the Army in such a weak position by now over the I.N.A. and after the latter's political victory over the Army under the auspices of the Congress Party. Persuasion was tried but found to be useless even when their own I.N.A. men helped us in it. So we took away their amenities one by one—their footballs, their papers, their extra rations and so on—until they tired of it all and we got the information we wanted and disposed of them. It was simply spite on their part for they stood to gain by being sent to their demobilization centers and thence to their homes, and only to lose by being kept where they were.

The elections to the Bengal government went much as was generally expected. Mr. Suhrawardy was not in the least doubt that the Muslim League would be returned to power but professed to be in doubt as to whether he would be asked to form the ministry. His attitude towards the British interested me, particularly in contrast with his attitude just a year later. He was at the time asserting that Britain had let Islam down all over the world, was highly critical of the British in India and elsewhere and said that Britain was now a third-class power. He need not necessarily be right in the last statement but he certainly will be right if the British people continue to see no good in each other, have no self-respect but only the futile individual amour-propre they show just now and have no faith in their own ability to better the world. It is very comforting and very conceited to think that we have the moral leadership of the world but quite useless unless we have the energy and ability to act in support of our moral principles. The ability so to act, as the world is at present constituted, rests to no small degree on the material power of our nation by which its influence is made to be felt. That in its turn rests on the industry of each one of us. I cannot see that a lazy, selfish people can lay any claim to moral leadership.

Mr. Suhrawardy, soon the Chief Minister of Bengal at the head of a Muslim League government, was at that time and for many months after a strong proponent of Muslim interests and antagonistic to everything Hindu. He is rotund and short with rather semitic features. A successful barrister with a nimble brain but with an irritating habit of saying things that he knows full well should get a rise out of the other man—a bit unfair to those with a juster sense of the effect of what they utter, and not the way to make good friends, as Mr. Suhrawardy discovered when he was dropped from the leadership of the Bengal Muslim League in August 1947 and cold-shouldered by the Congress Party. He is too prone to think that the other side will readily forget an injury that he wishes to be forgotten. That they do not forget is perhaps the tragedy of Bengal which has led to the partition of the province.

Mr. Suhrawardy is not alone in his attitude: it is shared by very many important personages in Indian political life. There may have been some educated Indian citizens

who were not communally-minded (and by that I mean who were not heavily prejudiced in favor of the one or the other great community of India, Hindu or Muslim), but I must confess to have met so few in nearly thirty-four years in India as to regard the number as negligible. He was no exception. He thought, argued and talked Muslim League: to him there was no other side, despite the position which he came to hold as Chief Minister in a province which was almost equally divided between the two communities.

On the other side the position was just the same. It is an old story how the treatment of Muslims by the Hindu Congress ministries of the thirties once and for all alienated the Muslim League from Congress.

At the end of March the Cabinet Mission arrived and, while communal feeling became intense, a peace of expectation reigned over India. The two sides were engaged now in a frontal operation in full strength for the whole world to see. The hypocritical nonsense which had been talked for years by politicians about the communal Utopia in which they wanted the world to believe Indians existed in bygone pre-British days, and the other communal Utopia in which they had informed the world at large that they would live in post-British days, came to be seen for what they were worth. It was obvious now that the one and only uniting force was the British, on the one hand as the employer under whom both communities worked together as public servants and under whom they similarly partook in industry, and on the other hand as the power against which the opposition of both sides was concerted. It would have been better if things had remained so for a little longer.

The elections duly put the Muslim League ministry in power in Bengal. In Assam the Muslim League ministry was changed for a Congress one under Mr. Bardoloi. In Bihar, Mr. Sinha, and in Orissa, Mr. Mahtab, were duly appointed Chief Ministers leading Congress ministries. There were the seeds of future trouble in the Punjab where the Muslim League had not a sufficient majority to form a cabinet and the Governor had to invite a coalition to take office, and in the North-West Frontier Province where the Congress Party was successful, a party which could never possibly represent the true aspirations of a zealously Islamic population. In Sind, due to internal squabbles, the Muslim League majority was lost. On these results the case for Pakistan obviously could not stand, yet Pakistan was the one great reality of India. Most of the rest was Maya or illusion. It was obvious that in time, within a few months, when the religious issue and Congress rule were squarely faced by Muslims in India they would almost to a man be behind the Muslim League. These were misleading results and results which must have affected and impeded the Cabinet Mission.

We must now walk round the Command and see how we were faring during March.



There was once more talk of famine in Bengal and Bihar. Naturally, the Communists jumped in on this at once and started to exaggerate to the industrial workers the necessary ration cut that provincial governments would have to make. Calcutta Corporation employees threatened to strike towards the end of the month; there were rumors of a widespread railway strike; 65,000 mill workers came out complaining about reduction in their ration. In the big steel area of Jamshedpur Professor Abdul Bari, the Congress Labor leader, started a quarrel with the Congress Party and with all the Left parties except his own, apparently with the intention of becoming Dictator of all labor in South Bihar. This put the huge coal and steel area of Bihar in a thoroughly nervous state and set the Communist party off again to make whatever capital it could out of the affair.

Certain Bihar politicians who were later to assume office had been busy complicating their future task by announcing that civil officials of Bihar who took part in the suppression of the 1942 disturbances would be tried and hanged and that other I.C.S. officers should be sent to jail as a punishment for their treatment of Congressmen after these riots. These statements had little effect on the British I.C.S. and police officers but naturally, perhaps, a considerable effect on their Indian colleagues and subordinates. As a result there were definite signs of unrest among the constabulary, aggravated by the high price of rice and other cereals and by reports of another famine impending.

A dismissed ex-constable, Ramanand Tewari, of whom we hear more a year later, was now setting to work to organize a Bihar constables' union. I came up to Patna, capital of Bihar, and there had a long talk with Mr. Creed, the Inspector of Police, a thoroughly good police officer, and he assured me that the Bihar police had been so rotted out by political agitators as to be useless. He had very few British police officials left. He had managed to get certain concessions for his men in regard to cloth and rations, but could now get no increase in pay till the new Government was in the saddle. All this meant that if there were trouble the only police available would be the Army.

Bihar was ripe for an outbreak of lawlessness. A club was burnt and troops molested: a fracas broke out between the Adibassi aborigines and a Congress political meeting. The police had to fire and one Adibassi was hit. That night Congress men returned and killed five Adibassis, harmless men who were walking alone on the roads on their lawful occasions. The election brought many other small fights all over the province.

In Bengal the campaign of victimization of the Gurkha community, as a reprisal for the valuable help of the Gurkha armed police in putting down the mid-February riots, continued unabated. The Bengali landlords turned them and their families out of their houses and Gurkhas were generally boycotted in the food shops. There was a good chance of these people taking violent objection to their harsh treatment and as we had Gurkha battalions in Calcutta the outlook was not pleasant.

The students were, as usual, active. In Dacca in February they had organized themselves into bands and created disturbances: at one place, there being no upper-class coaches on the train for them, they ripped up two or three strips of track at a crossing, causing a hold-up on the line for over a day; at another they stripped Indian soldiers of their uniforms before allowing them to proceed. In Comilla they were out with banners in processions, boarding trains and riding ticket-less between stations.

Now another problem began to appear: the surplus arms and ammunition of the United States Army. We had had solemn promises that all of this would be completely destroyed so that it should not get into the hands of the lawless elements of India. In March we sent a party to examine the process of destruction at the U.S. Kanchrapara Camp north of Calcutta and found about five thousand coolies busy exhuming sticks of dynamite and millions of rounds of ammunition, all unexploded and simply buried for anyone to find. This meant search parties and disposal parties from our meager resources to seek out and destroy all the partially-exploded dumps of American arms, equipment and ammunition all over Assam and Bengal. With the help of the local police we managed to dispose of huge quantities. Luckily for India the coolies wanted ammunition solely for the brass content, but there were others who managed to get to these dumps who wanted the ammunition for other more lethal purposes in Calcutta, Bihar and the Punjab. Many Indian men, women and children have since bitten the dust, holed by American ammunition. Those who deride military discipline may herein learn a lesson.

The Indian soldier was not entirely unaffected by all these activities. There were complaints from mixed units that they were doing the same work as the British soldier for less pay. Political agitators had wormed their way in, for this was an old theme of theirs. Returning from Java, where they had been keeping the ring between the independence armies of Indonesians and the Dutch, some of them saw a marked similarity between these two parties and the Congress agitators and the British administration.

With it all, March passed peacefully. The Cabinet Mission had arrived.

## X

### 'LOUD SING CUCKOO'

#### April – May

WE had been preparing our Indian soldiers for the arrival of the Cabinet Mission to ensure that they truly understood why it was coming and how it was likely to work. We now gave them a short sketch<sup>26</sup> of each of the distinguished members of the Mission, and showed good reason why Indians should have confidence in them and in their sincerity to do all they honestly could to bring to India her independence in a manner that would least disrupt the life of the country and be acceptable to all ordinary men of common sense and goodwill.

Thereafter we attended carefully to the official communiqués and to newspaper reports, but even more closely to their reactions on the two great and now highly jealous communities and on the officers and men of our army.

Day by day we watched the negotiations and discussions of the Mission and we saw emerging the incorrigible propensity for bargaining and the antipathy towards any sort of compromise which might look like toleration, which we ourselves had known all our lives in India. The capacity for seeing only one's own point of view and seeing that with such a blinding intensity as to obscure all other interests was only too fatally obvious. We still felt that the only course must be to divide India but in doing so to retain some sort of central defence force which could be shown to be in the interests of both parties.

What impressed us most was the phenomenal patience of the Mission and its transparently honest desire to do its best for India. Nothing was too much trouble and no approach was too humble for them to make. Whatever history may write of these Cabinet Ministers it can never record that they failed for want of trying. I myself believe that they failed because they could only see India through their own democratic spectacles and only see Indian politicians as democrats. Few of them are of that persuasion, no matter what they may assert from the platform.

Some of us had speech with Sir Stafford Cripps and Mr. Alexander. As soldiers we knew one thing very well and it was that if the Army broke it would pull India down about its ears. We could therefore insist that no political solution for India could be good which the Army did not accept as reasonable. That is to say, we British officers

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<sup>26</sup> Appendix III, Talking Point No. 17.

must be able to explain it truthfully to our men and our men must see that it was fair, workable and acceptable. This would at any rate ensure that we had the Army there to keep law and order.

The attitude of the Indian negotiators seemed to be one of complete distrust both of the Mission's sincerity and of the intentions of the opposite political party. They came grudgingly to the table and each gift horse they looked searchingly in the mouth. *Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes*. Yet, if intentions and protestations were to be mistrusted, they were their own and not those of the Mission. Time and the fearful happenings of 1946 and 1947 proved the worth of their high-flown and pious words. To us who understood them well all that we saw was their old garment of artificial stuff, now threadbare.

On the 16th May, out of this welter, the Mission propounded its suggestions. It seemed a pity that this was not an award and that the Mission did not leave it at that and then go home. Indians were far more likely to accept it as an award than to try to find a way of compromising amongst themselves in order to make the plan work. The Mission's solution was excellent so long as those who had the devising of the Constitution could apply to Indians the sort of government that suited their character and customs. The solution was described to the men in one of our circulars and followed up later on in the circular<sup>27</sup> reproduced in Appendix III. We were relieved to know that it did not place the Hindus in such a position of power that we in the Army would have to face a solid Muslim bloc of opposition. We were ready to face the fragmentary opposition of Hindu India at any time, for its elements could never unite to hurl down the Army, the one obstacle between India and chaos.

The first step was to install an Interim Government of India in which the whole of the Viceroy's Executive Council was to consist of well-known Indian political figures selected by all parties, in place of Members hitherto chosen by the Viceroy. As far as the Army was concerned, the most important change must result from the Commander-in-Chief's resignation of his post as Member for Defence and the acceptance of this very appointment by one of these new non-official Members. We wondered which community would be favored with this portfolio: if Muslim or Hindu then there would be cause for jealousy and friction. In the end, a Sikh, Sirdar Baldev Singh, was the man selected, probably a wise choice for he was of neither major community.

We doubted if the leaders would at once accept the Mission's solution, hoped they would, and trusted that they would at least see the necessity of some sort of central force for India, if not of some subjects being left with a central government of the two States. At one moment it looked as though the Mission had gained the impossible. Mr. Jinnah took the bait and all seemed well. We had very good contacts with political circles in Bengal and were satisfied to know that in all probability Congress would take

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<sup>27</sup> Appendix III, Talking Point No. 22.

it too. It looked as though we could now settle ourselves to work steadily towards India's future. We knew that the Army must be in any event 'classed' into its units and hoped to see the excuse made and opportunity now taken for starting that process even before the political parties spoke their minds. Unfortunately this decisive and desirable step was not then taken.

Then the Congress began to cavil, to demand explanations of this and that, to make insinuations against the Muslim League, and their mischievous Press got busy. But, worst of all, Pandit Nehru made a speech. In his autobiography he says that he is not a statesman. Would that he had allowed one who was a statesman to speak in his place. The speech was disastrous to the success of the Mission's plan, for it at once made Muslims suspicious of Congress intentions. They had always firmly believed that if Hindu Congress seized control at the centre the Muslims of India would join the scheduled castes and forever remain with them. Their fears were just, without doubt—slavery or extermination under the Mahasabha.<sup>28</sup>

The report of the Palestine Commission added to the general Muslim feeling of being alone in the world with all others at least indifferent to their fate, if not actually wishing them ill.

With Pandit Nehru's speech, the bickering and bargaining, the going and coming of politicians and emissaries, started again. More communal heat was generated by the friction. In Calcutta there were reports of both communities collecting stout staves and knives for future eventualities. Gandhiji's celebrations at this time were far from constructive. They were as usual Delphic, their strongest insistence being that the British get out of India at once, for only without them could India settle its problems.

After we have gone it will again be said that we stayed too long and that our presence simply aggravated the animosity of the two religious factions towards each other with all its hideous results. That is not true. Our presence was the only thing that prevented the whole of each religious body from going into a death grapple with the other all over India. The Cabinet Mission was not dealing with reasonable men – on the one hand was the fatalistic, menacing Hindu giant, on the other the man of the *Jehad*<sup>29</sup> and the *pardah*<sup>30</sup> system. Be the fault whose it may, it must be easier for a foreign statesman to debate with animist primitives than with such uncompromising antagonists.

The story of the Mission's patient endeavors is too well known for me to need to repeat it here.

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<sup>28</sup> A fanatically Hindu religio-political party.

<sup>29</sup> Religious war.

<sup>30</sup> See Glossary.

When it looked as though the Mission's plan was forever jettisoned, we had regretfully to turn back to our original conclusion, the division of India.

Now, more than ever, we urged that the forces must at once be unostentatiously 'classed' while we had the power to do it, and the Gurkha Brigade be set aside for Imperial or central Indian purposes before it was reft from us. The 'classing' of the Army could be done under the cloak of administrative efficiency. We had often in the past discussed this change. Administratively, in war it was far easier to recruit for a class regiment than for a mixed regiment of Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims, and it was far easier to feed them and even to some extent easier to clothe them. Within units promotion became simple, far less likely to cause heart-burning among the classes and more conducive to efficiency when men were promoted regardless of class and religion. It would have been a wise course to take in pretty well all respects, but it was not taken. Habit, custom, tradition, what you will, were too strong.

The only alternative to a divided India was the setting up of a military government. That Britain, tied to the chariot wheels of democracy, would never accept, yet it would have been the best way to hold the country together for the next ten years and to prepare it for better things. Military government of even a limited area would have saved the Punjab in 1947. There never was in Hindustan the personal discipline and sense of responsibility to maintain a democratic government, for the Hindu system had damped both qualities down to a negligible activity.

The Army in general looked on in a somewhat disinterested way. They did not think their British officers would really leave them and only laughed when we said we would be gone within two or three years. They would not believe us. The Indian officers as a whole were longing for us to go, for our going raised up before them a glistening vision of the most rapid advancement that the officers of any army in our Commonwealth had ever experienced. More pay, more prestige, more privilege and more patronage to help on the 'family members'. There were not many of them who envisaged the responsibilities, even dangers, of high position in a heterogeneous, polyglot army. It is strange that a people which is so highly-strung and so seemingly sensitive in its facial features, should be so lacking in imagination. I think it is because of something subjective in their mental habit, something which turns the mind always inward upon the cares and needs of the individual and his family, instead of outward towards things which can be molded to great impersonal ends by the man who will grasp them.

Soldiers awaiting demobilization were getting more and more touchy as time went on and as numbers of their luckier brethren went away and off to their fields and villages. Stories and beseeching came from families at home of the shortage of food and cloth and of how the Congress-tainted local officials made a point of never giving the soldier's little family its right allotment and of putting it at the bottom of the priority of

claimants. The men wanted to go, to see their families and to get them their just claims. There was no doubt that some families strung the story on a high pitch in order to persuade soft-hearted commanders to release their husbands. It was little short of a marvel to me that the men got away at all, and were even satisfied with their final settlement. Expansion had been so fast and the standard of clerk and accountant to be got in India was so low that we knew that the men's records and accounts in the big services must be in a muddle. Yet the officers somehow managed to sort them out and to explain them adequately to their men. Cases of discontent were insignificant and this spoke well for the way the men trusted their officers.

We made our contribution in order to help them.<sup>31</sup> This was an appeal to their sense of discipline, an appeal that seldom fails with the Indian soldier, especially at this time, warm from the praise of the world and with the laurels of war still green about his brow.

We also explained to them the machinery of the periodical Army Commanders' conferences at which all their troubles were investigated and amelioration sought.

Then, in order to draw the soldier nearer to his civilian brother whom he would soon be joining and whom, with his family's cries of neglect ringing in his ears, he regarded as a skulker and oppressor, we published yet another paper.<sup>32</sup> I cannot—we could not then—regard this paper as a good argument, nor could we expect it to be swallowed by any but the urban and more technical of our units. It was propaganda, for it was a bad case and for once we ourselves did not believe in the spirit of what we wrote. Only after many heart-searchings did we allow it to go out to satisfy those few for whom it was meant, hoping it would not offend the rest. No fighting man has much sympathy with the vast majority of those of fighting age who do not go to the front for he knows that 'where there is a will there is a way' and to the man of ready will the way is straight and clear before him: for him there is no reserved occupation. Those who stayed behind in their homeland only deserved gratitude if they died at their desk or bench from overwork, as he died in battle—but not even as he died, his lacerated corpse so often an obscene thing of repulsion and horror to the beholder.

There was not very much of importance going on in the four Provinces of the Command.

In Bihar, in late March and early April, we had our first taste of what the local Congress Party had been aiming at for so long and which they now had as a government to contend with themselves directly they took their seats—a police strike. As with so many other movements which today are goring at them and which they so sedulously and

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<sup>31</sup> Appendix III, Talking Points Nos. 14 and 18.

<sup>32</sup> Appendix III, Talking Point No. 19.

shortsightedly fostered among an intemperate population accustomed for centuries to intrigue and strife, they have lived deeply to regret that they must reap what they have sown.

The causes of the police strike were firstly economic, arising from the cost and scale of their rations, and secondly political. The rebellion of 1942 had been put down with the ready help of the police and since then these same police had succeeded in arresting and putting into detention all political troublemakers. The new government had released the majority of the detenus who now, for want of an anti-British objective, chose the Congress provincial government as their target. They became active opponents and condemned loudly from Press and platform the alleged high-handed and wrongful behavior of the police.

The strike was therefore an insurance policy, the police keeping themselves on the side of those whom they thought to be the coming men, as well as an attempted blackmail to put pressure on the government to accede to their domestic demands in order to have the peace kept during the change over from British to Congress rule. Our opinion, however, was that there was a more powerful motive force to be sought and that that was the extreme Socialist and the Communist parties.

The force was certainly badly paid, their basic salary varying from eighteen to twenty-three rupees<sup>33</sup> a month in normal provincial service and from twenty-five to twenty-nine rupees after twenty years service in the Presidential cities of Madras, Bombay and Calcutta. It had always been a source of wonder to us that the police remained loyal.

The strike was peaceful though inconvenient, our soldiers going on point duty in Patna and elsewhere until it ended in the second week of April.

In late April the police were still restless and incidents occurred leading to the dismissal of nearly forty constables. The Bihar government now issued a communiqué stating that no leniency would in future be shown and that offenders would be punished with the severity that such acts of indiscipline merited. They then passed a resolution ordering the Inspector General of Police to take action against those who had committed breaches of discipline since their return to duty after the recent strike.

Despite this, the Bihar police were talking of a further strike unless alleged grievances were redressed.

The parties of the Left found this an excellent opportunity to fight for control over police malcontents. If they had that control then they would have at least an acquiescent constabulary when their turn came to make trouble. Ex-constable Ramanand Tiwari

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<sup>33</sup> At that time, about 13¼ rupees to the pound sterling.



was again busy distributing leaflets exhorting the Bihar police to form a union and then to go on strike. There was not much need to encourage Bihar policemen to go on strike or to engage in any other act of indiscipline for they well knew that many of the Bihar Congress Members of the Legislative Assembly were on their side, so they did not scruple to invoke their influence if they were threatened with disciplinary action. Moreover, the Left wing was gaining strength in Bihar political circles, especially among the students. The concessions wrung from the state by the postal strikers later encouraged the police in the belief that similar action would have a similar beneficial result.

In Bengal the government saw the red light in good time and increased the pay of both the Bengal and Calcutta police, but the increases were too niggardly to arouse enthusiasm. There was an undercurrent of resentment at this unworthy reward to much-tried officials.

The Bihar government now stopped all work on the building of the landing strip at Muzaffarpur. This was to be a useful acquisition to us if we had to pull out the scattered European planters and Anglo-Indians of north Bihar in the event of grave disturbances, but we could not say anything as this meant another reference to the much abused 'Asylum' scheme. So we grinned and bore it and hoped for the best.

Our unamiable friends, the students, were out enjoying the early summer weather. They and the I.N.A. made none too savoury a mixture. At Dhanbad in Bihar we learnt that an ex-I.N.A. man was contacting local students with a view to forming a saboteur group for night activities on the main telephone lines and for arson. The police kept a close watch and surprised a party of seven of these rogues in the compound of the Jharia Church, securing two of them. They had a bag containing incendiary materials, other tools and a Congress flag. They admitted their intention to burn down the church. Their accomplices, nearly all students, were later arrested. These people had previously burnt down the Jharia Club and stolen many miles of cable from telephone lines.

In Bihar and Bengal students were having a high old time on the railways, travelling ticketless, stopping trains at their own whim, boarding and leaving them where they willed, travelling in first-class carriages, particularly crowding in on British and Anglo-Indian passengers, and rough-handling ticket-collectors who tried to, intervene or asked for their tickets. Police guards had to be posted on trains and travelling magistrates imposed fines during the journeys.

Meanwhile the I.N.A. Relief Fund Committee was eagerly seeking for employment for these men, for they were fast becoming parasites on the Congress Party who had belauded and lionized them. The party had started the payment of relief to the I.N.A. and promised employment. However, as the I.N.A. were pretty indifferent employees they did not hold down jobs for very long and were soon back again for relief

payments. It was nice to be paid to be idle. Congress were beginning to find them anything but the self-sacrificing, disinterested heroes which the party leaders had persuaded the I.N.A. to believe themselves. Unfortunately Calcutta Indian business men would no longer employ them. They said that I.N.A. men had no discipline and that if they employed them they would contaminate their labor and consider themselves privileged people who could not be dismissed. If they took them on in large numbers they would use their organization for mass insubordination and cause strikes. Business men paid the Secretary of the Fund to leave them alone. That is what commercial Calcutta thought of the I.N.A.

A few Indian ranks, very few, asked for their discharge as they could not faithfully serve a government with whose policy in Indonesia and Palestine as well as in other matters they were mentally in conflict.

In Dacca, in East Bengal and in Calcutta, lawlessness, which had been submerged since the riots of February, now began again to rear its misshapen head. It was symptomatic and boded no good for the future. About Dacca there were dacoits, and Hindus complained of maltreatment at the hands of Muslim *goondas*, thus further irritating communal feelings.

In Calcutta a military jeep containing a British and an Indian military policeman was attacked by a group of loiterers who had come back from witnessing the return to Calcutta of one J. C. Chatterjee, ex-I.N.A., and an attempt was made to set light to an R.A.F. lorry in a traffic jam.

The situation was not improved by a gang of American deserters in Calcutta who had been responsible for thefts and murder in the past few weeks. The military police picked up the leader of the gang at the end of May. He had just been partaking in a kidnapping case and a burglary with violence and shooting.

In Assam our Ordnance took over the American Makum Ordnance Depot and found there ammunition of all types lying about, exploded and unexploded. The civil inhabitants had been helping themselves, assisted by U.S. soldiers who had sold arms to local contractors either by permission or illicitly.

All these would one day reappear to be used by Indians against their own countrymen. At Dibrugarh we were having endless trouble in trying to stop people from digging up both exploded and unexploded U.S. dumps in the forest before we could get at them and dispose of them.

The Cabinet Mission's proposals had been well digested by the end of the month. The Indian civil population's attitude was one of waiting and seeing, Hindus being fairly philosophic and glad that the League had not got its Pakistan. Muslims, on the other

hand, felt disillusioned and said that the British Government in its meanness of soul seemed to have forgotten that Muslims took no part in the Hindu-organized revolt of 1942.

Our British officers felt that the Mission's proposals were fair. They seemed in the circumstances to be the only acceptable way to meet the desires of both parties while preventing the complete suffocation of Muslims in India by the Hindu majorities, and of avoiding certain civil war which would follow any attempt to unite the country under a strong central government which was bound to be Hindu.

Amongst educated Indian soldiers it was apparent that the views of the leaders of their politico-religious parties were their own views. Muslims held that as the British took India from the Muslims one hundred and fifty years ago, they should hand it back to them. Anyway, they did not want independence at all unless Pakistan was granted.

Hindus thought there would be civil war if Pakistan were granted. (We knew that it was certain if Pakistan were not granted.) The rest of the Army was only interested in its pay and in food and clothing for its families in the villages.

We sorted out our technical resources to keep the railways going in the event of a general strike eventuating. It seemed certain to be coming very soon with fatal dislocation of the movement of food to areas now closely threatened by famine and already little above the starvation line.

The nightmare of famine was all about. It was coming for certain in Madras, we were told. All our information and conversations with European business men went to show that if it did come it would be created, as in 1943, primarily by evil big-scale Indian dealers for the purpose of lining their pockets from the sufferings of their wretched fellow-creatures. The food was there if they would let it get on to the market. Unluckily for them British administrators had in times of plenty filled their stores with vast grain reserves and were letting them out on to the markets to keep the supply up and the price down.

They broke the famine and eased our burden for, had it come, there would have been major rioting all over Bengal and Bihar to add to the dislocation and misery.

## XI

### 'IN THE THUND'ROUS AIR'

*June – July*

*Heavy is the green of the fields, heavy the trees  
With foliage hang, drowsy the hum of bees  
In the thund'rous air*

*Robert Bridges*

THE glorious cassias, pale varied pink as chiffon dancing frocks, tore their silken purses and strewed their treasure over our Calcutta gardens.

So far, watchfully, police and Army had warded off grave communal conflict, but all knew the fatal thing was drawing ever nearer. We in the Army prayed that it might not enter the Punjab, the model province of India, from which so high a proportion of our fighting men was recruited. So long as it was kept out of that province our British officers could hold the Army together. With that proviso, no matter how wide-spread might be a communal outbreak in Eastern Command, we could deal with it. But strife in the Punjab would break up our mixed battalions of Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus, for it would surge about their very homes in riot, loot, fire and murder. It came in the end, yet the Army stood firm against it in the most wonderful way for many months. The traditional spirit of impartiality, the old spirit of pride in their Regiment, held them together for longer than any could have deemed possible. I believe that this is the greatest achievement of the British in India. Political pressure, racial pressure, tribal pressure, communal pressure—all had been resisted by the Indian Army while the British officer, new and old, never faltered in his faith in his men or in his courage to lead them. Yet how simple it would have been for the soldiers to turn against those few officers.

With the sorry deterioration of that great force, the Indian Police, it was obvious that in any grave disturbances we would find the Army only too quickly committed to perform the duties of police. We disliked this. No army is equipped by nature or training to perform this role. For them it is a bastard role.

Much has been spoken of Imperial policing;<sup>34</sup> in fact a book has been written on it. We should recollect that to give such duties to an army is to misuse that army. Imperial policing should be done by those who are adapted to its requirements; such people as the Assam Rifles, the Frontier Militias, the Eastern Frontier Rifles and so on—quasi-military bodies, well armed and yet trained and authorized for the most exacting policing duties. An army can only exert its power when it has an enemy and when it is permitted to use its weapons to the full, and freely, against that enemy. To tie it about with restrictions and still to force it to operate is to ruin it for war. This happened to our British Army in the inter-war years when it was neither equipped nor trained for war. To a lesser extent, due chiefly to its exclusive attention to the western frontier of India, this also happened to the Indian Army.

We foresaw this misuse of the Army and, while we strove to put off the day of its beginning, we did what we could to prepare ourselves for it. From the 15th August 1947 the Indian Army was no more than a police force, ill adapted to the work, still restricted in the use of its weapons and without an enemy at whom to strike. For these reasons the Sikhs were enabled, with inferior arms, to conquer the Eastern Punjab and to spread their influence into parts of the United Provinces.

It seems to soldiers that the British are no longer of the same quality as of old for they do not grasp the nettle firmly in their hands. Perhaps it is because it has become so easy to refer affairs to others at a distance who are really not sufficiently informed to make far-sighted and well-judged decisions: perhaps it is that they just lack faith in themselves.

In visualizing Pakistan we did not expect to see either Calcutta torn out of Muslim Bengal or the Punjab divided in half. The Punjab was, in so far as any province could be, an economic unit and a well administered one. Almost the same words can be applied to Bengal but without the same stress on its administration. Western democracy could not possibly suit this mediaeval India. At the best her provinces must be governed by oligarchies. That would mean government by one party and therefore by repression, for that party could not afford to allow its opponents into power for a long time for fear of their reprisals. The parties now were Muslim League and Congress. It was unlikely, with the rising tide of communal feeling, that any sort of coalition could last in those provinces. It therefore seemed that the right course was to denude other provinces of their British I.C.S. and police officials and perhaps army officers, and to concentrate them on those two provinces so as to keep the peace while the oligarchic parties, the Muslim League in these cases, were finding their feet and taking charge. The Sikhs would have been kept within their former province and, if they chose to rise

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<sup>34</sup> In January 1949, the R.A.F. had a sharp lesson, however undeserved, on the perils and difficulties of policing 'with Regulars, when five aircraft were shot down over Sinai by Jewish fighters. Our men had orders not to shoot till shot at, precisely the same orders as our soldiers policing' the North-West Frontier of India used to be given. An order of this sort is typical of those occasions when Regulars are sent out to police'.

in revolt, would have had one master and a stern one, with whom to deal. It was probable that they would not therefore rise. The Punjab being to us the crucial province and the Sikh problem its crucial problem, it was very plain that the safety of India depended on not letting the Sikhs take the bit between their teeth.

Here again it stood out that the Army must be divided into its classes in order to dispose it suitably for our aims to be put into practice.

From the views here expressed we did not waver during the coming months.

It may seem strange to a military reader that soldiers should have so immersed themselves in political considerations that they formed such definite ideas of their own on the manner of handing over government to Indians. The reasons are not far to seek. Firstly, we had to keep a very watchful eye on the Punjab; secondly, with the failing administration and the failing police, we might at any moment be forced to take charge and so we had to have clear before us in our own minds the object to which we would then devote ourselves. Further, whatever the Indian Press might say about 'Asylum', however much timidity they might read into its plans, it was a fact that even at this time the habit of violence and hatred which political parties had so carefully incubated for so many years might very easily have generated a violent outbreak against Europeans, particularly in Bengal and Bihar where the population was the most volcanic and unbalanced. We had, therefore, to look a long way ahead and to keep our fingers on India's political pulse.

The communal quarrel was the one to which all eyes were turned. On the 10th July we nearly had a big flare-up in Calcutta. Some passengers on a tram had objected to the slowness of the service and assaulted the driver. For this, the tramway men refused to work that afternoon, thus suspending the tram service. This introduced a nervy atmosphere. Later in the day a Muslim boy was struck by a football kicked by a Hindu youth and a fracas at once developed in which several people were injured.

Later in the week a ten-ton lorry knocked down a child, producing another small communal riot.

With the Viceroy as intermediary the two great parties were haggling and protesting, with, it seemed to us, little intention of making any real headway towards a suitable scheme for governing India by Indians. On the 22nd July Lord Wavell issued a proposal to them to form an Interim Government to look after the country's affairs until such time as it became possible to progress by agreement towards something more permanent. This proved to be the spark which fired the charge in Bengal and India. It was soon apparent that the Muslim League would not accept the proportion of representation in this government offered to them by the Viceroy. I will not pursue the matter here for I am concerned with those things which affected the Army rather than

with the negotiations of our patient Viceroy in his further endeavors to find common ground on which Hindus and Muslims could meet to govern their country.

Up to the end of July, while irritations became more and more acute, it seemed on the surface that whatever was likely to happen would not be much deadlier than the February rioting. Nevertheless, since the source of emotion was deep and broad, we ordered two Gurkha regiments into Calcutta from Assam and North Bengal. It was good that we did so. These would bring our Calcutta garrison up to four British battalions and one artillery regiment and five Gurkha and Indian battalions.

In Bihar there was a small riot which the police put down by using their rifles.

Then the Congress Party elected to proclaim the 9th August, the anniversary of the 'Quit India' resolution of 1942, as a day for demonstration and processions. The Muslim League was not to be outdone, so Mr. Jinnah, while rather hazy as to his real intention, announced that 16th August was to be 'Direct Action Day'. It seemed that this really meant that since the Muslims could not get their Pakistan by negotiation, they were to get it by direct and forceful action. Most Muslims, the more simple and vigorous, certainly read that meaning into Direct Action Day. So we had two fences to ride at – 9th August and 16th August.

Throughout these months, before the final terrible outbursts of late 1946 and of 1947, we always had before us some day or other as our next time of crisis, watching its approach with intensity and its quiet passing with relief. Festivals, political days, strike days, and so on—every week held its one or two days.

It seemed that the Muslim League ministry of Bengal had no intention of resigning as part of the direct action programme. Power was still too delightful a possession for that, while there was the horrid possibility of a resentful opposition taking up the reins that they would have dropped. So we hoped that all the direct action that was contemplated would be a boycott of Hindu shops and business and a campaign of 'Buy Muslim'.

Muslim interference with Hindu processions and speeches on August 9th was a serious possibility.

Our students were still mischievously busy. They thought it good to hold a meeting in Calcutta early in the month in order to point out how the I.N.A. had shown the way to cementing together the two communities and to accuse the British of deliberately causing disunity between Muslim and Hindu for their own nefarious ends. They forgot that whatever limited communal unity there had been in the I.N.A. was only produced by hatred of the British, who were thus, oddly enough, the cementing material even in this undesirable body. Major-General (*sic*) Chatterjee of the I.N.A. was present,

eulogizing the Sikhs for their part in the I.N.A. and for the sacrifice of their lives in the cause of freedom. A year later the feelings of Hindus for Sikhs were somewhat altered.

Even in Orissa students found a chance for public action, making wild speeches proclaiming their intention to sacrifice their lives in order to prevent the Orissa Congress Government from constructing the Hiralund dam in the Mahanadi river, a project which these young men held to be simply a device to save Cuttack, the capital, from flooding at the expense of poor Sambalpur!

Bihar railways were still plagued by students who had now become so lawless that the railway police feared for their lives if they attempted to curb their rowdiness or to insist on their taking tickets. Communication cords were pulled and trains stopped wherever it pleased these young men.

On the 24th July the Calcutta Students Federation organized a procession and a meeting in order to demand that the Bengal government should release the rest of the political prisoners, those who were in for really serious offences under criminal law. About five hundred students bearing banners reached the gate of the Legislative Assembly, the police having sensibly let them approach unhindered. Here, a small body of police tried to stop them but the Speaker of the Assembly intervened, letting them into the grounds where they squatted on the grass. Another student procession, over two thousand strong, now approached, so the police found themselves between the inside squatters and the outside demonstrators. Those inside then climbed up on to the balconies and into the rooms and stopped the budget debate with their noise. Some sergeants and constables were roughly handled.

At last the Prime Minister himself came out and addressed them through a loud-speaker, telling them that he would review all cases of political prisoners.

The students then retired, having gained a complete victory.

One of the colleges went on strike because thirty students who could not appear for the last examination had produced medical certificates and now demanded to be examined. This demand was heartily supported by the rest. The strikers also objected to certain restrictions that had been placed on the college magazine.

On the 1st August Calcutta Muslim League students held a meeting at which they urged all and sundry to concentrate on destroying the 'British' Government and on driving the British out of India, the arch-exploiters of humanity. All this was quite unexceptionable and would have been harmless if it had not led them on to declare that should the Congress ally itself with the British then it would be hostile. They ended by declaring that the establishment of Pakistan would rid the world of all exploitation and domination. The trouble was that many were now describing the Viceroy's intention to



set up an Interim Government as an attempt on his part to ally the British with Congress against the Muslims.

The Hindu Mahasabha and the Rashtrya Swayam Sewak Sangh (R.S.S. Sangh), the militant body of the Mahasabha, were naturally making headway, using the rising tide of Muslim opposition to induce more recruits to join the banner of Hindu bigotry. In Bihar, Muslim enmity was stirred up, and consequent Hindu bellicosity appeared round about the R.S.S. Sangh training camp at Gaya with its public displays by many hundreds of volunteers. Bihar had a big Hindu majority. This showing-off roused the martial soul of Hindu Biharis.

In Bengal, also, the Mahasabha was active, encouraging Hindus to prepare secretly against any future communal trouble. All, even the *goondas*, were to be trained in staff and dagger play – as though *goondas* needed training!

Not to be outdone, Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose, brother of the plump Subhas,<sup>35</sup> was organizing his Forward Bloc in conjunction with Shah Nawaz, ex-I.N.A., who was 'operating' in North Bihar. The Bloc was to create a revolution (it always is to create a revolution but never succeeds) as the only way to independence. To achieve its end it also now formed its own body of volunteers, not a formidable army. To reinforce itself it also tried to get its hands on the Bihar police, the everready instrument of pretty nearly any political mischief-maker. The police gave the Bloc quite appreciable support in the shape of purses.

By mid July J. P. Narain's R.S.P.I.<sup>36</sup> army in Calcutta had reached the stage of squad drill.

All the time the Muslim League was preparing itself for the struggle that lay before it. Its volunteer body, trained in aggressive methods, was daily increasing in numbers and tightening up its organization. It now came into the daylight as the National Guard, the M.L.N.G., by officially opening its premises at 5 Wellesley Street, Calcutta. Its aims were to protect Muslims and Muslim interests, for every man's hand in the world seemed to be against their people. In particular they held that the British regarded them as hostile. It was at first sight strange to us how often the Muslims of India repeated that the British treated Muslims as their enemies, but on reflection it was found to be not so strange after all. There was Palestine, there was a Viceroy who to them seemed to be intent on putting them under the power of a Congress central government, and there was a European group in Bengal which would not now vote in the Bengal Assembly when it was sure that its vote would tip the scale in favor of Muslims.

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<sup>35</sup> Netaji (leader) of the I.N.A.

<sup>36</sup> Revolutionary Socialist Party of India.

Towards the end of the month we were apprised of the programme for Direct Action Day. It was to follow that of the recent general strike of which I shall later speak. Oddly enough, all Communists, anti-fascists, and, logically enough, all anti-imperialists were asked to join in sympathy. There was to be a meeting at the Ochterlony Monument some three to four hundred thousand strong. Before that, prayers would be said at all mosques against those who oppressed the Muslims. We also expected a tram strike as the Union leader was a Muslim and a Communist, and with that an attempt to hold up all buses and taxis because they were driven by Sikhs.

On the 4th August Messrs. Suhrawardy and Nazimuddin, both of them influential Muslims, spoke violently against the Cabinet Mission and the Congress, the latter saying that the Congress Party was like Hitler's party (a comparison often made privately by the British in India) and that it would be crushed as Hitler was crushed. The M.L.N.G. having ceremonially hoisted their flag at Wellesley Street a fortnight before, was present in some strength. *Asre Jadid*, a Muslim paper, came out with an incitement to violence for Direct Action Day.

Here I will leave the political parties and their volunteer forces all ready in the wings of the stage to make a sudden and uproarious entry later in August. We now need to turn to the highlight of July, the postal strike.

There was a good deal of labor trouble, mainly in industrial Bihar and round Calcutta. The reasons for strikes in India are multifarious and it is not infrequent for workmen to down tools because one of them has been caught stealing the property of the firm for whom he works and has therefore been discharged. So long as labor in India is so irresponsible it will be impossible to industrialize the country. The working days lost over strikes for which there are quite inadequate causes and even, such as this, thoroughly unjustifiable causes, are legion. Besides these losses there are days wasted over political agitation of some sort or other, not necessarily labor politics. We used to say that in Calcutta every day was 'A Day', that is, a day of political activity to commemorate some event of the past or to protest against some occurrence of the present. 'Anti-Movement Day', 'Anti-Partition Day', 'Anti-Grouping Day', 'Stop Retrenchment', and so on: then 'Quit India Day', 'Direct Action Day', 'Tilak Birthday', 'Independence Day', and others; or a Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or Christian holiday. All that was needed was 'Anti-Agitation Day' in order, with the help of Bakra Id, Christmas, Janamasthmi, Sundays, Divali, Dassehra, Easter and a score of others, to fill the calendar right up and to allow labor to indulge in the Utopia of all pay and no work.

The lockout at the Tata foundry in Jamshedpur continued in force. The Union leader, Professor Abdul Bari, was waxing more and more violent in his views, while the efficiency of labor in this big industrial town was daily deteriorating. It looks as though the inefficiency of labor will force India's industries to mechanize their plants and be rid

of inferior workmen. I was told that four times as many men were employed per ton of output in India as were employed in the U.S.A.

In mid-July the Posts & Telegraphs employees who had been threatening to strike for some time, downed tools. To meet this contingency Brigadier M. Smelt, the Chief Signal Officer, had been in consultation with provincial governments. At first only some 40 percent of the employees were involved and only limited help was needed from us, but by the 20th July the strike had become so serious that we had to take our full part in keeping the services going. The greater part of the Command was affected but it was worst and most prolonged of course in Bengal, and particularly in Calcutta. By then the post offices of Calcutta, always dark and their entrances and passage-ways wet with the feet of coolies, dirty monsoon puddles for the unwary entering from the street, were choc-a-bloc with damp bags of mail and littered with papers and old envelopes under the feet of a restless mob clamoring for their letters from the few senior employees who had stuck to their posts.

We set ourselves the task of keeping open all army trunk telegraph and telephone exchanges and lines normally operated and maintained by the Posts & Telegraphs Department—a big task: of clearing all essential State signal traffic and urgent mail: of providing a telephone service for a limited number of essential civilians and government officials for whom telephone facilities were vital to enable them to discharge their responsibilities.

In the early stages the test inspectors refused work, so we clapped our British test linemen on to their jobs and there they remained throughout the strike. For nearly the whole period we had either full or skeleton staffs in all the exchanges, girls of the W.A.C. (I) and British and Indian soldier operators. We maintained courier and repeater stations and overhead trunk line routes throughout the Command, having before-hand moved our maintenance parties out into the countryside ready for the emergency. An added burden on our resources were the frequent calls for us to send out parties to repair lines that had been interrupted by saboteurs of the P. & T. staff. In some cases our parties managed to catch the miscreants and to hand them over to the police. In many places we patched considerable gaps of stolen wire with field cable. Breaking insulators and binding lines together were the most frequent forms of sabotage. The monsoon aided the opposition to no small extent by washing away in seasonal manner telegraph posts and culverts and by casting trees and broken branches across overhead wires.

The extent of our effort is gauged by the fact that we had at one time 290 linemen out on military trunk routes alone.

These routes had recently been handed over to P. & T. Department as we had demobilized our operators and maintenance parties.

Dispatch riders and operators cleared over two thousand essential civil messages from the main centers alone in Bengal and Assam besides those dealt with in Bihar. At first we had trouble with picketers and had to post our own protection over post and telegraph offices where our men were working.

Essential telephone messages were dealt with from the very first under our emergency scheme. Bit by bit we increased our activities and linked up the essential civilians through our military exchanges until we had a busy and considerable traffic flowing through. Our great difficulty was that the P. & T. strikers had removed all wiring records.

At railway stations we took all military and civil official mail and delivered it to its addressees and, similarly, received it from senders and routed it on by rail.

By the 7th August the strike was called off and by the 10th the P. & T. services were once more fully manned by civilians. The only serious violence during the strike had been a series of attacks at night on the telegraphic communications to the south of Calcutta, resulting in the train services being reduced by a half for some days. But the temper of the strikers was such that the one moderate leader they possessed, who had tried to avert the strike and then to call it off, had to pack his bag in a hurry, pleading business outside Calcutta, and make himself scarce.

In sympathy with the postal strike the clerks of the Imperial Bank of India saw fit to go on strike. The gallant manager stuck to his desk in Park Street, Calcutta, and with a skeleton staff performed prodigies in handling the Bank's business. The inconvenience caused to vast numbers of people by a bank strike is unbelievable. When it is over and the clerks are back at work there are huge arrears to be made up which take months to eliminate. In the meanwhile our private current accounts are naturally in chaos.

We were to consider ourselves lucky that we had got rid of these two troubles by the time the storm burst on the 6th August. Behind these strikes was the Communist Party of India, now in competition with Mr. J. P. Narain's revolutionary socialists, headaches for the future India rather than for us. We had cares enough.

In parts of the Command, Congress Party members, always a little mischievous and out to make trouble for the Bengal Muslim ministry, took advantage of the general confusion. They started to set up local administrations parallel to those of the constituted government.

The Gurkha League, a political body, was now at pains to get the Calcutta Indian public to give up its boycott and its hostility to the Gurkha community of the city. It will be recollected that this boycott started with the actions of Gurkha police in suppressing the riots of the previous February. It was a loyal and staunch effort on their part, not so

much loyal to the British as to their calling as armed policemen. A shoemaker, a semi-educated Indo-Gurkha, announced at a public meeting that the community was suffering for the doings of a handful of Gurkha police sepoy and that the Gurkhas were friends of the Indians and would, when necessary, shoot the white people and not the Indians. At the same time a Gurkha blacksmith was elsewhere saying that the purpose of the Gurkha League was to consolidate and educate Gurkhas. The blacksmith's attitude was nearer the true feelings even of these domiciled Gurkhas, while the attitude of Indians towards Gurkhas was better exemplified by the report of a Gurkha officer of one of our regiments who had been on leave in Darbhanga in Bihar. During the journey back he was molested by a large party of Congressmen who pulled the communication cord time and again and generally interfered with the progress of the train. He said that even the railway authorities were showing violent bias against Gurkhas, charging them exorbitant fines for kit alleged to be overweight and refusing to allow the owner to take it with him till the fine was paid.

While on leave he could not wear uniform for he was attacked when he wore it. His opinion was that this Congress force seemed to consist of men freed by the Congress government of Bihar from the local jail together with about a dozen ex-I.N.A. 'domiciled' Gurkhas. Where he stayed the whole lawless area was in the hands of Congress law-breakers. No police were to be seen.

Our Gurkha regiments were getting restless over the lack of any declaration of policy as to what their future was to be. Many of the men took their discharge, and in some units it was touch and go whether or not seventy-five percent of the men would ask to go. They felt they were being messed about and began to be apprehensive, for the first time in their history as British Gurkha regiments, that the British would befool them by handing them over to India.

In Bihar the Adibassis were obsessed with fear that the local Bihari Hindu would try to snatch their land away from them as soon as the British had gone. The departure of British officials from police and civil administration had now started, the gaps being filled by Indians. Lawlessness was more apparent. Criminals felt that with a disgruntled police their sins would be winked at. It was quite certain that if the left wing started a campaign of violence against the British, then the police would not lift a finger to stop the outbreak nor would their Indian officers try to encourage them to do so. 'Asylum' was polished up in Bihar in case of accidents. More responsibility for the safety of European women and children, particularly for escorts to places of safety, was laid on the Army as it was removed from the police. Plans were made for the Army to take over police armories immediately serious trouble started.

Except in Darbhanga, in North Bihar, it was not expected that there would be any serious communal trouble because of the small percentage of Muslims in the

population. This appreciation neglected to consider the effects of fanaticism and the peculiarly sadistic nature of large numbers of Hindus.

Little has been said of Anglo-Indians in Eastern Command. Being the oldest part of British India it was full of these people. They formed a very valuable section of the community, providing large numbers of the technical staff of the railways, post and telegraph services, business firms of all sorts and, last but not least, a loyal and dependable element in the Auxiliary Forces. On the whole they were a law-abiding and self-respecting community. Because they always came out strongly on the side of law and order they were disliked by those who wished to use violent methods to gain their political ends. With the impending departure of the British these people would find themselves in a most unenviable situation. What were they to do? One thing was certain and it was that if they stayed in India they must identify themselves with the people of the country. To this many of them were reconciled and elected to stay as Indian citizens. Others managed to get passages to England, either with promises of employment or to join relations there. A Mr. Ambler propounded to me his scheme to form a farming colony of Anglo-Indians in the Andarnans under the Crown but in the end nothing seems to have come of it. Anglo-Indians are townsmen and they do not readily take to the life of a farmer. Some of the more timid of the community carried on a fairly successful propaganda against their brethren joining the Auxiliary Forces for fear of Indian reprisals later on. We thought they were being rather shortsighted in view of the turmoil into which we knew Hindustan must later be thrown.

If India treats these people properly and allows them to retain their self-respect and their standard of living they will serve her well. If they are ill-treated they will be the very worst of India's *goonda* elements.

During the summer rumors came down from the hills, most of them untrue, about a fermenting rebellion in Eastern Tibet. It took long to mature but it did finally start about a year later and was as suddenly quashed. Tibetan traders coming through Kalimpong kept us informed of Tibet's hopes and fears. It was all very remote from India, but nevertheless of importance on the longer view, for the time when India should be controlling her own relations with her north-eastern borders.<sup>37</sup>

With all this activity about him the Indian soldier seemed to remain stolidly unmoved, representative of ninety percent of India's population, the men of the farms and the fields and the hills—stolidly unmoved and devoted to the Army he served. The British officer kept clear of it, only intervening to explain to his men the meaning of what was passing, to show how it affected them.

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<sup>37</sup> Appendix IX, India's Mongolian Frontier.

We were once more compelled to refute to our men newspaper calumnies against their army. On this occasion<sup>38</sup> we picked on one particular paper, the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, which had accused our men of insulting and attempting to abduct an Indian lady from her husband, of abducting another Indian lady in Ballygunge, assaulting an Anglo-Indian nurse at Howrah, and of impeding the course of justice in a court case. There was neither a grain of truth nor of evidence in these charges and we said so.

We explained to them the system of war awards and land grants, showing how these varied and that they were purely a matter between the individual and his provincial government. We explained our efforts to get them and their families properly accommodated, to get maternity treatment for their wives and our difficulties in the post-war confusion: how they could help to raise the standard of living in their villages by taking back with them the good habits the Army had taught them: postwar plans for the education of their sons and daughters: future prospects as to pay and allowances and what we were doing to give them vocational training and to resettle them when they left us.

The British officer trudged on quite ignorant of what the future held in store for him, either good or bad, or even if there was any career at all before him. He knew he was out of favor at court but his men trusted him and that was about all that mattered. He was shocked at the court martial and punishment of Commander King, R.I.N., resulting from the recent mutiny in that Service, when he thought of the extreme clemency shown towards those sailors who had used their guns against their officers.

We had our troubles in the Army, but they were all minor ones of indiscipline due to bad handling by N.C.O.s, V.C.O.s or officers. They amounted to surprisingly little. We were through that part of our test.

On the night of 8/9th August a communal riot broke out in Eastern Bengal at Narayanganj, near Dacca, over Hindus insisting on erecting a pavilion for their *Jalan Puja*.<sup>39</sup> The police had to open fire. In Calcutta communal feeling was rapidly rising.

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<sup>38</sup> Appendix III, Talking Point No. 21.

<sup>39</sup> Hindu religious festival.

## XII

### THE GREAT CALCUTTA KILLING

*16th–20th August*

AT the end of July 1946 I was ordered to Quetta to take part in a series of tactical discussions, the prelude to more detailed discussions to be held at Camberley in mid-August under the chairmanship of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff. Thereafter I was to take leave in England.

As I stepped into the home-bound plane at Karachi on the 4th August I was handed a newspaper, and with apprehension read on the front page that a new government had been installed in India—the Interim Government, under the leadership of Pandit Nehru. Some Muslims had been invited to accept office in this government. Nevertheless, Muslim feeling would without any doubt be inflamed against what they would consider to be their betrayal to a Hindu-led government. I knew then that all our forebodings of the months before would now be fulfilled. We had had our warnings of more trouble to come in Calcutta and I had, before I left Calcutta, ordered into that town reinforcements from outside—the 7th Worcestershire Regiment from Ranchi, the 1/3rd Gurkhas from Chittagong and 3/8th Gurkhas from north Bengal, Parbatipur. Before the storm broke the first two had arrived and the third was ready to entrain.

Political 'met' reports had kept trace of a pile-up of the weather ever since the February riots until now when brown cu-nimbus clouds were all about the sky.

I will first of all tell the tale of the Calcutta Killing<sup>40</sup> for historical purposes in order to record the sequence of events. Thereafter, so that those who read may be able to absorb a little of the atmosphere which pervaded those dread events and so that they may be able to picture the people who were concerned in them, I tell some of the tale in extracts, in Appendix V, from the personal experiences of two of my officers. It is my object to present a truthful picture, a presentation of affairs in India hitherto only too seldom permitted to be seen by foreigners. Henceforth, with the end of British rule, these presentations will occur even less frequently than before. Only those who believe in living in a fool's paradise will attempt to push Reality into the wings, for its rightful place is in the centre of the stage and assuredly it will in good time, perhaps inconveniently, occupy that place. It is both leading player and central theme round which any human play must be written. One great reality of Indian politics has for

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<sup>40</sup> See Map No. 2.



years been communalism. But unfortunately the Congress Party hid it from the world, with the inevitable result that India today is decisively parted into at least two nations.

To shrink from perceiving the natural tendency of Hindustan towards an Asiatic form of Communism will lead to even greater catastrophe.

From February onwards communal tension had been strong. Anti-British feeling was, at the same time, being excited by interested people who were trying to make it a substitute for the more important communal emotion. The sole result of their attempts was to add to the temperature of all emotions, and those emotions turned fatally towards heightening the friction between Hindus and Muslims. Biased, perverted and inflammatory articles and twisted reports were appearing in Hindu and Muslim newspapers, while the leading politicians and labor leaders continued no less irresponsible in their public utterances. All this boiled to fever pitch after Mr. Jinnah had announced on the 29th July that Direct Action would be observed throughout India on the 16th August. Direct action in India could only mean action by force as a protest against the decrees of the existing Government, that is, against what was considered to be inequitable treatment of the Muslims in the interests of the Hindus.

Every one of us fully understood that Direct Action Day would certainly be a day of extreme stress in Calcutta. Reports were flowing into our Intelligence Centres in Calcutta showing the ever mounting emotions of the two communities. Nevertheless, neither civil nor military officials thought that feeling would run any higher or take any more dire course than it had taken for the past month or two, for there had been many crises and at each one serious outbreaks had been expected but had not occurred. On the 9th August the Congress Party had celebrated Remembrance Day, which was to commemorate the start of the 1942 riots in Bengal, Bihar and the U.P. – riots which had nearly brought our armies to a standstill, fighting the Japanese on the Assam border. Remembrance Day had passed off peacefully.

For the first half of August, speeches of public men of both Congress and Muslim League at large meetings in Calcutta were inflammatory and violent in their character, all directed against the opposite community. On the 15th August, an acid debate took place in the Bengal Assembly when the Bengal government had announced its decision to make the 16th August, Direct Action Day, a public holiday. The debate showed how bitterly the Hindus resented this order. One of the causes for their resentment was that, up till now, the Congress had more or less possessed monopoly rights for imposing and enforcing *hartals* (the closing of shops), paralyzing the whole of Calcutta's transport, and for strikes: they thus strongly resented the prospect of any other competitor, especially so formidable a bidder as the Muslim League, entering this highly coveted field of political exploitation.

Of the reports coming in to us about public speeches at this time, the following are three selections which show the sort of oratory that was being displayed.

Mr. Nazimuddin, speaking to a Muslim meeting on the 11th August, was reported to have said that the Interim Government, without the support of the Muslim League, would before long certainly bring about a very serious clash between the communities. Although, he said, final plans for direct action had not yet been settled, there were scores of ways well known to Calcutta Muslims by which the League could make a thorough nuisance of themselves, not being bound to nonviolence as was the Congress.

As a counter-blast to this, Mr. K. Roy, leader of the Congress Party in the Bengal Legislative Assembly, addressing a meeting at Ballygunge on the 14th, said that it was stupid to think that the holiday for Direct Action Day was being decreed by the Muslim Bengal government in order to avoid commotions. The holiday, with its idle folk, would create trouble, for it was quite certain that those Hindus who, still wishing to pursue their business, kept open their shops, would be compelled by force to close them. From this there would certainly be violent disturbance. But he advised the Hindus to keep their shops open and to continue their business and not to submit to a compulsory *hartal*. So Mr. Roy himself was setting the stage for the very clash that he feared. It is in the nature of all too many of the people of India that they are wont to provoke trouble rather than to be discreet and to compromise.

It was now the turn of the Sikhs, so at the same meeting a prominent local Sikh leader in a fighting address, recalled to the memory of the audience how in the communal riots of 1926 the Muslims had been soundly beaten. He announced that if rioting did start the Sikhs would back the Congress and between them they would give the Muslims a good thrashing. From this it would appear that he rather looked forward to a little battle.

So it can be seen that all those who were principally concerned were doing their best to prepare the lists for the coming joust. They could hardly have done better if they had had a combined committee to arrange the grisly tournament. As I have said, I had issued orders in July to bring three more battalions into Calcutta in order to see that the rules of the tourney were obeyed. From the examples of the riots of the previous November and February we thought that this considerable reinforcement would suffice.

On the 12th August Brigadier Mackinlay, commanding the Fortress, ordered all those units which were on an Internal Defence role to be confined to barracks and drastically restricted military movement in Calcutta for the 16th. Later, he confined all troops to barracks from the early morning of the 16th August. Caterpillar broadcasts, which were our usual Internal Defence information broadcasts to all troops in Calcutta, started before 8 a.m. on the 16th and went on throughout the disturbances.

August 16th, a warm, sticky, familiar day in the monsoon, broke quietly over Calcutta. The buses, taxis and rickshaws plied their trade as usual. The trams were not running as the Tramway Workers' Union always managed to add to our difficulties and to the crowd on the pavements by declaring a one-day strike whenever trouble was coming, so that their employees might not miss the spectacle.

At 7.30 a.m. we heard that Hindus had erected barricades at the Tala and Belgachia bridges to prevent Muslims from entering the city and taking their processions to the middle of the town to the Ochterlony Monument where a mammoth Muslim assembly was to be addressed at 3 p.m. by Mr. H. S. Suhrawardy, the Chief Minister of Bengal. Brigadier Mackinlay, as usual, visited Police Headquarters at Lal Bazaar about 9 a.m., finding the police not unduly worried and forecasting that, though there would be incidents, violence would not be on a great scale. The worst time was expected to be in the afternoon when the meeting broke up. During the morning the anticipated incidents occurred. Houses were burned in the north and east of Calcutta, probably due to Muslim leaders compelling Hindu shopkeepers to close their shops, and the rank and file pulling people off their bicycles and off the buses. The Hindus, on their side, were trying to prevent Muslim processions from marching through Hindu quarters of the city on their way to the meeting. Brigadier Mackinlay's impressions as to the likely extent of the trouble were confirmed on his visit about midday to the civil officials, the Inspector General, Deputy Commissioner and the Additional Secretary to the Government. The police were satisfied, although the incidents were widespread at the time, that they could deal with whatever was to come without aid from the soldiers.

Up to two o'clock the crowds were gathering round the Ochterlony Monument and our Intelligence patrols were out covering the town. Incidents were occurring. The police about Sealdah and Bow Bazaar at the north side of the city had opened fire once and used tear-gas to disperse violent mobs bent on communal strife. Just before 3 p.m., on application from the police, the Fortress Commander ordered the York and Lancaster Regiment to be ready at once to move to Sealdah. At 3 p.m. Brigadier Sixsmith, acting as Area Commander, met the Governor and the Commissioner of Police. The last named said that the situation was out of hand because, although the police could disperse the crowds, they reformed directly his patrols had passed on. The Governor at once set off with Brigadier Sixsmith and the Commissioner of Police to have a look at the town for himself. They saw hooliganism but nothing yet to warrant the application of military force; however, they found good reason why the soldiers should be held ready to move directly they were required. All agreed that when the soldiers came in they would keep open the main roads, freeing the police from these roads for other and more detailed work. The York and Lancaster Regiment was therefore sent at once to a position of readiness in the Sealdah Transit Camp.

Meanwhile, an immense Muslim crowd was gathered about the Ochterlony Monument and Mr. Suhrawardy was addressing them. Our patrols reported that he said that the

Cabinet Mission was a bluff, and that he would see how the British could make Mr. Nehru rule Bengal. Direct Action Day would prove to be the first step towards the Muslim struggle for emancipation. He advised them to return home early and said that he had found Muslims peaceful in the course of his passage through the town and that he had made all arrangements with the police and military not to interfere with them.

Our intelligence patrols noticed that the crowd included a large number of Muslim *goondas*, and that these slipped away from the meeting from time to time, their ranks being swelled as soon as the meeting ended. They made for the shopping centres of the town where they at once set to work to loot and burn Hindu shops and houses.

Hitherto, south Calcutta had remained comparatively quiet, as it had been in the February riots. But shops were closed and feelings were tense.

At 4.15 p.m. Fortress H.Q. sent out the codeword 'Red' to indicate that there were incidents all over Calcutta.

There was now the usual demand on the part of the administration for more troops and for the troops to picket all over the town. This demand has been put forward in every big riot I have ever witnessed. Brigadier Sixsmith gave Mr. Suhrawardy the usual reply that the troops best fulfilled their task by keeping open the main routes and increased their effectiveness most economically by throwing out mobile patrols from these main arteries. In this way the greatest number of police were released for their proper duty of preventing crowds uniting on the main routes and at the nodal points.

The situation was clear in the neighborhood of the areas dominated by the troops but, as was later apparent, obscure, for lack of information, in the *bustee* (slum) areas.

At 6 p.m. curfew was clamped down all over the riot-affected districts. At 8 p.m. the Area Commander received a sudden demand for troops in the Howrah area. He brought in the 7th Worcesters and the Green Howards from their barracks in the north of the town. This is what they saw.

As they drove in they found College Street Market ablaze, the few unburnt houses and shops completely sacked; the road outside was strewn with charred embers, empty shoe boxes, broken furniture and other litter; the air was heavy with the fumes of gas shells the police were using to disperse the crowds. In Amherst Street looters had dragged a safe into the road and had succeeded in opening it before they were disturbed. In Upper Circular Road fire-bugs were dragging lighted pieces of kerosene-soaked sacking across the road to start fresh fires, the remainder of the mob cheering them on and looting until the fires became too hot. At this time there was no evidence of the terrible killings that had taken place; the streets were clear of bodies.

At one place in Harrison Road an agitated man dashed out of a garage and after stopping the Company Commander's carrier, proceeded to pick shotgun pellets out of his leg with a penknife, the while he told how his petrol pumps had been raided by *goondas*. After concluding his story he solemnly presented the officer with the pellets and, with a prayer that the troops keep a close eye on his garage, disappeared into the bosom of his family, who were apparently unhurt, but who wailed loudly and incessantly either in support of his story or in sympathy for his injury. Later on, at about 5 a.m., things seemed much quieter, and it was not until well after daybreak that dead bodies began to appear in the streets and killings started afresh. It often happened that one passed along a clear street but on return five minutes later discovered several bodies, sometimes in the road, sometimes loaded on coolie barrows. Many of the bodies were newly dead, but not a killing was actually witnessed at that time.

At 3.30 p.m. the three British battalions then operating performed a combined sweep and entirely dominated the centre of the city. Curfew was imposed and at 10 p.m. we withdrew one of the battalions to Fort William to rest before further operations on the following day.

Night brought with it little cessation of the rioting, only the Roza celebrations, the daylong fast, drawing Muslims off the streets for their meals after dark. The storm had burst and this time brought with it a torrent. February's killings had shocked us all but this was different: it was unbridled savagery with homicidal maniacs let loose to kill and kill and to maim and burn. The underworld of Calcutta was taking charge of the city.

The York and Lancaster Regiment cleared the main routes about Sealdah and threw out patrols to free the police for work in the *bustees*. But the looting and murder went on in the alleys and kennels of the town. The police were not controlling it. Daylight showed not a sign of bus or taxi: rickshaws were battered and burnt: there were no means for clerks to get to their work. With the banks on strike for this one day, the 17th, there were all the more idle men loafing about the town.

In the middle of the morning, Sir Frederick Burrows set out with Brigadier Sixsmith, Brigadier Mackinlay and a military patrol to tour the afflicted areas. In Harrison Road they found big fires burning and large mobs assembled. The patrol went at them and quickly dispersed them, driving straight on through rioters carrying loaded sticks and sharpened iron bars. They scattered to right and left and the Governor's party drove through, but it was obvious that their mood was thoroughly dangerous. Returning by another route, the party saw a man being beaten to death less than a hundred yards away and ordered the police to take action at once. The police were slow to get out of their vehicles and before they had come into action three people were beaten down and lay dead on the road. A British police sergeant dispersed the mob with one shot.

At 11.30 a.m. the escort to the Governor stopped at the junction of Harrison Road and Amherst Street. There was a large crowd to the south in Amherst Street which dispersed as troops and police debussed and advanced towards them. To demonstrate to the Governor how the mobs reformed, the police and troops withdrew to their vehicles, out of sight in Harrison Road, upon which the people came out of the side streets again and advanced to within thirty yards of the Governor's party. Troops and police appeared once more and the mob rapidly retreated, leaving a freshly-stabbed man in the middle of the road where they had been standing.

The night's rioting had been fierce but the bloodiest butchery of all had been between 8 a.m. and 3 p.m. on the 17th, by which time the soldiers got the worst areas under control. During this period the south of Calcutta was set ablaze with the fury that had caught the north and centre: swords were being used and the crowds were charging madly hither and thither. Motor patrols of the 1/3rd Gurkhas drove into the melee. More and more dead lying in the flood of spouting water cocks were seen by our Intelligence patrols as they scoured the city. Police reports were coming in of heavy fighting all over the town and of police intervention with bullets and gas. The pall of smoke from burning buildings spread overhead between the horror below and the light monsoon clouds of heaven. The dust and the sickening noise of killings rolled out from Garden Reach, Kidderpore, Metia Bruz, Beliagatia and along Lower Circular Road. Looting and destruction were in full blast all about Park Street. European householders could not leave their houses: there they and their families sat, besieged and living on the tinned foods of their store cupboards.

C.D.L. tanks with strong searchlights joined the troops at dusk and the eerie flickering of their lights as they passed from street to street playing on the dead and on the devastation in which they died, made a Dore's Inferno of Calcutta.

In the early hours of the 18th, the 1/3rd Gurkhas moved into the Dock area. From then onwards the area of military domination of the city was increased. Static guards took over from police guards and a party of troops under Major Little-boy, the Assistant Provost-Marshal, did valuable work in the rescue organization for displaced and needy persons. Outside the military areas, the situation worsened hourly. Buses and taxis were charging about loaded with Sikhs and Hindus armed with swords, iron bars and firearms.

At midday, the Governor and the Army Commander set out on a tour of the city with the Chief Secretary and Mr. Suhrawardy, escorted by a combined police and military patrol. Except in the bustee areas there were no fresh mobs, but in the *bustees* looting, arson and murder held their horrible sway. Wherever the party stopped, hostile crowds closed in on them and heads appeared on the housetops above. One Muslim shouted to the Chief Secretary, But you must not shoot: you will disturb the peace of our city!

Mr. Suhrawardy was eager to expose the depredations of Hindus against his co-religionists, pointing an accusing finger at peaceful men and charging them with lying in wait for Muslims. He was asked why Hindus and Muslims could not live in friendship in civil life when they managed so well in the Army. Mr. Suhrawardy replied that Hindu and Muslim unity would not exist very much longer in the Army. He was right and we knew it. Directly the British officer left the mixed mess of Hindu and Muslim officers would part into two cliques and the parting would soon be reflected among the men.

Police and soldiers were getting tired, and the load of quelling the violence was falling more and more on the troops as the police wearied and lost heart. Raj Mohan, Jorasanko and Tarachand Dutta Streets and Bhowanipore in the south fell into pandemonium. Military patrols rushed in and opened fire, wounding two of the crowd. At 3 p.m. the Command ordered the 5th Division to reinforce Calcutta from Ranchi and ordered the Norfolks in from Ramgarh and the 3/8th Gurkhas from Parbatipur in North Bengal.

On Sunday, 18th August, the York and Lancaster Regiment again left the Fort to relieve a battalion in the dominated area. However, just as they were moving out they learnt of serious trouble in north Calcutta, in the Shampuka and Jorabagan Thanas, and received their orders to move to that area and to take over control. Everything was quiet and seemed normal until they crossed Vivekananda Road, going north of Chitpur Road. The state of things from there on beggared description. Furniture, bedding, boxes and household articles of all kinds littered the road so that even the two light tanks which were leading the column had to pick their way; indeed some of the wheeled vehicles had to stop to clear debris before they could pass. Corpses became more frequent, and on the Gray Street-Chitpur Road crossing the leading tanks had to stop so that troops mounted on them could clear some of the bodies to one side to give room for vehicles to pass and disperse a fighting mob. Over one hundred and fifty bodies were cleared from this cross-road the next day and it was here that one of the chief *goondas* of Calcutta died fighting with a knife in each hand. His green three-ton truck was standing in Gray Street and proved of great use in the street clearing which was soon to follow. Three hundred yards farther up the Chitpur Road there had been another pitched battle and over a hundred bodies remained to witness the fact. In Central Avenue, by a Hindu temple and in the surrounding street entrances, there were another forty dead. All in all there had been what must have been the worst carnage in the city. Early in the evening our men found a small Muslim *bustee* in the Bag-Bazaar Street which had been burnt down; the occupants had either fled or had been killed, the dead bodies of three children bearing evidence of the crime. The interesting part of this incident is that from three different sources we were informed that the burning of this *bustee* was the work of nine *goondas* who were paid by a named person living in the neighborhood.

On closer inspection of the bodies in this area we found that many were horribly mutilated and in one particular place a man had been tied by his ankles to a tramway

electric junction box, his hands were bound behind his back and a hole had been made in his forehead so that he bled to death through the brain. He was such a ghastly sight that it was a wonder that the soldiers who were ordered to cut him down and cover him with a nearby sack, were not ill on the spot.

The rest of that night passed without incident and in the morning the battalion had opportunity to probe beyond the streets which had occupied all its attention in the remaining hours of daylight the previous day.

This probing brought to light only one important fact that had not been discovered the previous night. There were the odd bodies in sacks and dustbins that were beginning to make their presence known, but the big discovery was that of the wholesale slaughter in the Sobhabazaar Market. The Market itself was strewn with bodies, and the tiny hovels of the shopkeepers which bounded it held gruesome evidence of the awful conflict. One room contained fifteen corpses and another twelve, but those two rooms were outstanding. At the western end of the bazaar there had been a rickshaw stand. The rickshaws had been smashed to bits and it appeared that the pullers had been massacred in toto. From among this shambles we rescued two live children, both wounded and one already gangrenous. As might be expected they were dazed and seemed half-witted; their mental and moral systems must have sustained a shock which might easily have driven them mad. They would never be the normal people they could have been. The doctor did his best with their wounds and sent them into hospital. Bodily they would mend, but mentally—a shrug of the shoulders was his verdict. Most of the dead in that market had not had the remotest idea what was happening or why.

On the afternoon and night of the 18th August the Calcutta garrison made one supreme effort and gained complete control of north Calcutta. With this success they then turned their hand to clearing the city of its dead, shepherding lost persons into the Refugee Camp and restoring confidence.

The next day, with encouragement from officers and men, shopkeepers started cautiously to open their shops and efforts were made to induce tramway workers to return to duty. Incidents continued throughout the day but it did seem that the lunatic fury of Calcutta's population had worn itself out. The stench of their murderous work of barely three days was terrible, particularly about Sealdah station, the area of which Major Livermore tells in his story in Appendix V.

On the 19th more work was done in clearing the streets and in general rescue work of destitute and injured. The Chief Minister, who throughout was more critical than helpful, alleged that the Military Rescue Service was ineffective. This meant that his staff had to be taken round to be shown what that Service was doing before they could be convinced.



The south flared up and the East Lancashire Regiment was sent there to damp it down. In the evening the 4/7th Rajput Regiment and 3/8th Gurkhas arrived: our anxieties were now at an end. There were fresh troops to replace the tired battalions. Indian Pioneer Companies were ordered in to help clear the streets.

Bit by bit police patrols were taken out by the military and hour by hour by this means the police gained confidence and resumed their duties in the streets.

That is the bare outline of this manifestation of berserk fury. The one thing that stressed itself time and again was that had the police only known the extent of the strife that raged in the gullies and *bustees* on the night of the 16/17th and on the morning of the 17th itself, troops would have been demanded earlier and the tumult more quickly quelled. In the palmy days of the Calcutta police, this information would have been gained and passed back far sooner than it was.

I do not know – no one knows – what the casualties were. On one night alone some four hundred and fifty corpses were cleared from the streets by the three British battalions. For days afterwards bodies were being recovered from sewers and tanks. All one can say is that the toll of dead ran into thousands.

By the 22nd August, despite the continuance of isolated killings, and the occasional dispersal of growing crowds, Calcutta was quiet.

The Army had had a grim time, the grimmest being the clearing of dead from the battlefield. It had served Calcutta well, not only by the use of force on the streets but also in its rescue and medical work. Our doctors had issued 7,500,000 units of anti-tetanus serum to the Surgeon General of Bengal. To no small extent our administrative services had helped to feed the city. For a short time the city was grateful to the soldiers but not for long. Newspaper attacks on the Army, unfounded allegations, began once more to appear in due time.

Trouble was now raising its head in Eastern Bengal and the 1/3rd Gurkhas were ordered off to Chittagong on the 22nd August. The Battalion reached Chittagong on the 24th to find that place in a highly inflamed condition, casualties up to the previous evening amounting to forty-five.

## XIII

### INTERLUDE

THE cataclysm of August 1946 obscured for most of us, at any rate for the close participants, the straws that were blowing about the Command in an autumn wind laden with the germs of the sickness yet to visit India.

Among labor in our provinces there was a growing awareness of the power to be gained by combination. The active Professor Abdul Bari was consolidating his hold on Labor unions in Bihar at the expense of the Congress Socialist Party; an Association of Ordnance Factories Employees was formed, bringing into our sphere the troubles of our civilian employer colleagues, troubles from which we had been pretty free for a long time; while the Military Accounts Office in Patna elected now to start a strike on the day before Direct Action Day in Calcutta. A company of Gurkhas were very soon on the Accounts premises to see that there was no violence. Strikers picketed the gates and some of them lay down in the road to prevent vehicles entering the compound. One of them got himself pinned between two lorries, an army and a civil vehicle. Luckily rain intervened and, as usual, dampened ardor. Shouts of 'Quit India!' 'Jai Hind!' and 'Revolution!' greeted passers-by. But it all fizzled quietly out and morning brought cooler heads back to the office desks.

From the United Provinces came reports of attempts by Revolutionary Socialists to tamper with our soldiers.

In Bihar, we learnt that a number of the few British civil servants and police were asking to leave on the 1st January 1947, and that the vast majority would be gone of their own accord during the year. This meant that if there were anti-British agitation, then there would be no protection for the widely-scattered Europeans of the planting areas of the province. It added a little to one's cares and to the difficulty of one's problems, as the number of troops was continually reduced through demobilization. Moreover, the Bihar police were again restive under the influence of improved terms gained by employees in the recent postal strike and their own dissatisfaction over the mean increases lately granted to themselves.

Muslim feeling was one of acute disappointment at the formation of the Interim Government and of resentment at being thus treated—as they put it, being placed under the heel of Congress Hindus—after their proven loyalty to the British in their repeated refusals to take part in subversive movements throughout the war. Thus the Muslims tended ever to flock to their League standard and to impose implicit

confidence in its high command. Indiscriminate attacks on Congress Muslims in Calcutta by their Hindu neighbors served to recruit more Muslims than ever to Mr. Jinnah's party. The Congress Left were pained at the assumption of office by their party, seeing in it a lost chance of revolution, for which they had been eager for a long time. It seemed to them that office peacefully assumed was not half so worthy a prize as that which was wrested by force after the spilling of British blood.

Shah Nawaz, ex-I.N.A., was agitating for the re-employment of I.N.A. men in the Army, but not even Hindu employers of labor were showing any eagerness to take these men on. A new body appeared, which proved in our time to be ineffective, the Indian Ex-Services Association. It had been formed in Bombay after the R.I.N. Mutiny, and later opened a branch in Bengal. All its published utterances were of the extreme Left, while its attempts to influence our Indian soldiers were futile.

So August passed into September, and saner men began to assess the results of the Calcutta riots. There must have been some 4,000 killed and 10,000 injured. Surprisingly, in the circumstances, relatively few cloth and food shops had been looted. After an alarm or two the populace settled into an uneasy truce, both sides shocked at the recent carnage, each side afraid of the other, while the *goondas* of both sides indulged their lust by stabbings in side alleys of the great town. The life of the city was completely disorganized. For weeks afterwards refugees were being collected from places where they had fled for safety.

Outside Calcutta itself, at Metiabruz and at Howrah, there had been nearly a thousand casualties, a very big killing indeed in ordinary times: now almost disregarded.

As a result of all this, certain sections of Calcutta's political population began to think that a coalition government was the only way in which the two religions could be controlled.

In the latter half of August there had been some communal rioting at Dacca and since then a continuous and steady stream of stabbings, looting and arson. Casualties were nearly 200: the majority Hindu, showing from whence aggression was coming in East Bengal.

Bit by bit it was becoming clear that if there were to be more trouble it would go into the outlying districts and probably into East Bengal—notably Dacca which was already bubbling—where the Muslims were in such a vast majority as to be able to settle accounts with their Hindu neighbors without risk to themselves. Stabbings and robbery were on the increase: newspapers vied with each other in vicious communal sensationalism. As the Muslim League was still havoring in its decision whether or not to enter the Interim Government, there persisted a most disturbing atmosphere of political uncertainty. The troubled air was further agitated by Muslim-sponsored

articles and aggressively worded pamphlets persuading the people that the Cabinet Mission and the Congress Party had sided together against the Muslim League.

In Bihar, the first revulsion of horror at the dreadful happenings in Calcutta was soon replaced by a rising hatred between the two communities, with the Bihar government apprehensive of grave trouble in the near future. The Press pealed forth a violent tirade of communal bigotry, taking encouragement from similar articles now once more appearing in Calcutta papers, as virulent as those which inflamed the masses to their unholy work of mid-August. Provocative handbills and posters were on the increase.

It was a gloomy picture on which to gaze, only Assam and Orissa giving any relief at all. Soldiers were sent out on flag marches through the most affected parts of Bihar with some temporary improvement of the situation. But emotions were too tense to encourage us in the belief that Bihar would not sooner or later follow the evil example of Calcutta.

On the 5th October there was very nearly another big explosion in Calcutta. Hindu religious processionists shouting Hindu national and political slogans moved about the city and, despite governmental prohibitions, bawled them the louder outside Muslim mosques. Finally, one Hindu was stabbed and it looked as though the fat was in the fire; but nightfall and the evening meal sent the protagonists back to their houses to await another day. The next evening an old Muslim woman was found murdered in a manhole at Entally, along with two decomposed corpses. A fight started but soon ceased, as the fracas of the day before had ceased.

In Calcutta the local Sikh element became aggrieved at the disarming of some of their members who were carrying daggers and *kirpans* (swords) of considerable size. Particularly, they objected to British soldiers disarming them. Two colonels of British regiments thereupon invited a Sikh deputation to come and see them and their regiments. The deputation was so soothed by the courtesy and friendliness shown to it that this was the last we heard of their troubles.

A short-lived hope of better feelings came when Mr. Jinnah decided that the League should join the Interim Government.

Suddenly, all eyes were turned to East Bengal, to Noakhali and Tippera. How the trouble first started it is impossible to say. One tale is that some Muslim youths approached a well-known Hindu and asked for money to raise organized bands of *goondas* of both sects. He paid but then refused a later demand. His house was attacked. Be the cause what it may, this is some account of what happened.

It was not long before Hindu Congress, which had always taunted the Army as being a mercenary and repressive body, was clamoring for more and more soldiers to help in quelling this Muslim outburst.

## XIV

### DISTURBANCES IN EASTERN BENGAL

#### *October*

IN the third week of August we had sent the 1/3rd Gurkhas to Chittagong to reinforce Eastern Bengal.<sup>41</sup> A note of alarm had been sounded from there and we wanted to be ready to meet the probable repercussions of the hideous work in Calcutta. Calcutta was still patrolled by troops and communal feelings were still running high, while the efficiency and morale of the police was steadily deteriorating. A reserve of troops had in addition to be kept centrally at Ranchi to watch Bihar, which was restive, and the distant United Provinces, where a large Muslim population existed among a Hindu majority. This left few troops available to take on what might well be a considerable commitment in Eastern Bengal.

There was one favorable factor on our side in that area and it was that the Muslim majority was so large that it had no need to fear the other community: thus, Muslims would only assail Hindus out of sheer villainy and in sheer villainy only a limited number of their co-religionists would join.

By sending the 1/3rd Gurkhas to Chittagong we released one company of the 8/12th Frontier Force Regiment to rejoin its parent unit at Dacca. Ever since the Hindu-Muslim conflict in Calcutta during August, both civil and military authorities had felt anxious about the state of communal feeling in East Bengal.

Reports received at Command H.Q. during the six weeks before the trouble started certainly indicated tension in the rural area, particularly Noakhali and Chittagong. Civil intelligence was sadly lacking so that no authentic report, in fact nothing beyond the usual rumors of the time, came out from East Bengal. It was not therefore until the 2nd October that, sensing that these were more than rumors and acting in anticipation of news of disorder, the Governor of Bengal and General Ranking arranged for troops to be sent to Comilla, where they felt that the situation would be the most delicate and that there should be some additional backing for the police. Accordingly, a Company of the 4/2nd Gurkhas left Calcutta for Comilla on the 3rd October. So little was the local civil administration perturbed by what was going on about them that the Commissioner of Chittagong on the arrival of the Company protested against its being sent to him.

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<sup>41</sup> See Map No. 3, and Appendix VI.

On the 7th October, as there were definite symptoms of trouble starting in the Fenny area, at the request of the Deputy Commissioner of Chittagong a company of the 1 /3rd Gurkhas was sent there. Their arrival appeared to have a quietening effect and nothing further was heard of disturbances until the 14th October. On that day, Press reports indicated trouble in the Noakhali district. These reports showed that a deputation had met the Additional Home Secretary, presumably on the 12th or earlier, and that a new magistrate had flown to the district and more police and military had moved to the localities. Thus, by the 14th October, the Government was aware of the disturbances.

On the 15th October, the Area Commander, General Ranking, was approached by the Additional Home Secretary with a request that a company of the 4/2nd Gurkhas at Comilla be placed under command of the Administrative Commandant, Chittagong, as there was trouble at Noakhali. Even then there was no indication that a situation had arisen which was not within the capabilities of police control. The only indications of trouble that we had were reports of a general nature, drawing attention to the possibility of trouble in East Bengal, but none had yet been received which indicated that the Noakhali district was likely to flare up any more than any other district of East Bengal.

On the morning of the 16th, alarming reports suddenly appeared in the Hindu Press. These were much exaggerated as it turned out, and had a great deal to do with starting the ghastly series of wholesale murders in Bihar soon afterwards.

Eastern Command at once issued orders that the disturbances must be stopped as quickly as possible as these were now a matter of concern to the whole country: that a responsible officer should go over at least to get the true facts of the case, if not to take charge: that another battalion be moved to Chittagong, if necessary by air, thus releasing the remainder of the 1/3rd Gurkhas for use in the disturbances.

The Area Commander, General Ranking, asked for a short postponement of troop movement as he was still much in the dark about the situation and said he was about to attend a conference with the Chief Secretary and the Inspector General of Police. It was decided at the conference that the Inspector General of Police and the G.S.O.(1) Bengal and Assam Area should fly to Chittagong that afternoon to ascertain the true facts of the situation and coordinate measures to deal with it. In General Ranking's opinion and in that of the civil authorities the situation as depicted in the Press was grossly exaggerated and the troops already on the spot and in process of being sent there were adequate. Until he had more accurate information he could not be sure of dispatching his men in the right strength to the right places.

General Ranking rang up the Chief Secretary and asked for his agreement to the use of the Dakota aircraft on loan to the Bengal government for the carriage of civil supplies and for the movement of troops to Chittagong. At the same time, he ordered the G.S.O.

(1) Bengal and Assam Area to put another company of the 3/8th Gurkhas at notice to proceed by air to Chittagong if required.

On the evening of the 16th General Ranking decided that the company of the 3/8th Gurkhas earmarked to fly to Chittagong should, as a result of a conversation he had had with his G.S.O. (1) at Chittagong, now move to Chandpur by rail on the morning of the 18th, as it was estimated that its arrival there on that day would be early enough.

On the 17th, although general information was scarce, reports received indicated that the trouble was so far confined to the districts of Noakhali and Tipperah, south and west of the railway Chandpur-Lacksa-Noakhali, and that it was tending to move west and north-west towards Chandpur and the river Meghna.

In the evening, the G.S.O. (1), Colonel W. S. Lethbridge, returned from Chittagong and made his report to the Area Commander. Colonel Lethbridge, directly he got to Chittagong, had attended a conference of local civil and military officials. He there coordinated the plans for civil police and soldiers to work together to suppress the outbreak.

Gangs of hooligans from outside were making for areas where Hindus were in a small minority and, there collecting the local toughs, were beating up the Hindus and burning and looting their property unless bought off with a considerable ransom. They had thought out their plan of action well, blocking and cutting the roads as they proceeded. Most of the known trouble was north of Noakhali and Colonel Lethbridge soon realized that full information was not coming in and would not come in until the troops were out all over the affected areas. With the difficulties of the country, although the troops would soon be on the move, this would take time.

A company of the 4/2nd Gurkhas was dispatched the next day to Faridganj, another of the 1/3rd Gurkhas to Lakshmipur, and Force H.Q., with the rest of the latter battalion, moved off to Chandpur. Another company was sent for from Calcutta and a tactical train capable of lifting one hundred men was arranged for.

Our information in more detail now amounted to this.

The possibility of disturbances organized by the Muslim leader, Ghulam Sarwar, had been foreshadowed some time ago by several sources. Unfortunately this information was regarded with suspicion and extra police were not moved into the area as early as they might have been. All concerned with the prevention and cure of disorder were thus handicapped, and especially so in an area lacking cross-country communications. Roads were few and by this date after the rains the waterways, mostly too shallow for boats, were nevertheless deep enough to impede the use of cross-country vehicles.



The state of disorder prevailing in East Bengal had been gravely exaggerated. The number of dead was at that time reliably estimated as in the region of two hundred. On the other hand, very many Hindu families had fled, widespread panic existed, and it was impossible to say if particular individuals were dead or alive.

Ghulam Sarwar's gang was estimated to be about one thousand; a certain number of ex-army personnel were reported to be adherents. The main gang had split into smaller gangs of one hundred and fifty to two hundred and these had been working in conformity with an obviously worked out plan. The mode of action was to demand tribute from Hindus in various villages on pain of forcible conversion or death. Many had paid, others had been converted, most had fled, and a number who resisted were killed. Unfortunately, there were amongst these some men of repute, such as a Mr. Rajendra Nath Chaudhury and members of his family, and this fact made for these highly colored and exaggerated reports. Conditions were bad enough without being embellished by the Press.

Hindus evacuated villages en masse, leaving their houses at the mercy of the robbers who looted and burned. The trouble, which had originated in Noakhali and spread north, later appeared to be moving north and east of Chandpur. The area in which gangs were operating was roughly Comilla, Fenny, Noakhali, Lakshmipur, Faridganj and Chandpur.

Early in November we held a Press conference at which we gave what we then knew of the situation and affirmed that the damage was being done by a gang of about one thousand. We were correct in our facts but did not escape the gibes of many of the Press who scoffed at the idea of their lurid reports having been overwritten and would not believe that the wide-spread ravages which they had imagined, were the work of only one thousand men. Frequent air reconnaissance's with efficient control posts showed that the wild reports of villages burnt were quite unreliable.

On the morning of the 19th a special reconnaissance by the staff of Command Headquarters showed that life was returning to normal except about Faridganj where houses were burning and the recent ruins of others could be seen. Chandpur and Raniganj were full of refugees. However, such trouble as could be detected was now in a small and confined area.

That evening the Governor expressed himself as satisfied with the application of police and soldiers to the restoration of law and order in East Bengal but said that the local administration was about to face a difficult problem in handling refugees and in keeping up the food supplies of the disturbed areas. He was anxious to get the refugees back to their villages by restoring confidence among the inhabitants. He asked for more troops, not for the disturbed areas but for the villages and towns outside, so that confidence might be restored there and the refugees induced to return to their homes.

Eastern Command sent in the Headquarters of the 161st Infantry Brigade and two battalions, the 4/7th Rajputs and 1/1st Punjab Regiment, under Colonel Thapar of the latter regiment officiating in command of the brigade.

It was not long before the usual complaints started to come in about the biased action of troops, always false accusations by Muslims against Hindu troops. Many of these were against troops who had not been in the area at the time. Mr. Suhrawardy, the Chief Minister, came out himself and on the 20th November leveled a number of charges against Colonel Thapar and tried to insist that the troops should be confined to their camps and cease partaking in the restoration of peace. General Ranking refused to consider this course and the troops continued to deal with the troubles.

All this elicited from Eastern Command a special Order of the Day on the 2nd November to Colonel Thapar:

Please convey my thanks to all officers and other ranks under your command for the splendid work they have done and are doing in connection with the disasters in East Bengal. I am fully confident that in spite of the unfounded complaints being made against the troops, all ranks will continue to perform their duties with the same vigor and impartiality as hitherto.

Our estimate was that the total killed in this episode was well under three hundred. Terrible and deliberately false stories were blown all over the world by a hysterical Hindu Press, and these stories did infinite harm in India by kindling in Bihar and the United Provinces the Hindu desire for revenge. This in turn, after the Bihar and United Provinces outbreak, kindled the indignant and violent emotion which flung the Muslims of the Punjab into their civil war of reprisal. Measures of pacification went on for some months. It will be noticed from the account given by the 4/7th Rajputs in Appendix VI that the battalion did not return to its home station until the 15th December.

As tempers cooled and the general difficulties of movement in a waterlogged land were overcome, stock was taken of the situation. This survey confirmed that the newspaper reports were absurdly overdrawn and that casualties were far fewer than generally reported. I again emphasize here that these willfully mischievous reports were directly responsible for the tragedies in Eastern Command later in 1946 and indirectly at least for the acute irritation which led to civil war in the Punjab. The object of the uprising had been conversions to Islam and not extermination of Hindus.

In affected areas the Hindu population had panicked and fled, in many cases women and children being left behind in the villages whilst the men dashed for safety to Chandpur and other towns and even to Calcutta. Refugees were mostly of the better

classes and seemed prosperous and well-fed. The Army was doing all it could to help in the distribution of food in order to induce evacuees to return to their homes. One of the impediments to restoring normal life was the influx of so-called Welfare Workers from Calcutta. These Hindus flowed in as fast as the refugees flowed out and a large number of them were no more than political mischief-mongers, some even *goondas*. Volunteer 'helpers' were throughout a far greater nuisance than a help.

For instance, a visit to Sealdah Station in Calcutta on Monday the 21st October showed it to be bristling with arrangements for 'refugees', most of whom appeared much more like well-fed citizens of Calcutta than people who had left everything in order to save their lives.

The station had been partitioned off with ropes by the various rival refugee parties who were displaying different flags and banners. Waiting at No. 5 platform gate was a line of about fifty men, all wearing a cardboard label in their shirts, trying to get on the Goalundo train. They had no tickets and their leader said they were relief workers going to Noakhali in East Bengal to help the refugees.

Another difficulty was that many Hindus had been forcibly converted to Islam and those miscreants who had done the deed, rather than face the consequences when we caught them, were intent on abolishing evidence by killing the converts. Our men had to move secretly and swiftly to prevent the slaughter.

The Governor of Bengal ordered the immediate arrest of Ghulam Sarwar, the local firebrand; so a company of the 1/3rd Gurkhas accompanied by police officials went out after him and laid him by the heels. Meanwhile, our officers were contacting all ex-servicemen in the district to gain their assistance in bringing normal conditions back to troubled villages and towns.

As usual, accusations against the Army now came in from both communities, assisted by their Press. They were always that Hindu troops had discriminated against Muslims and vice versa, while to this was added a new one that the Army had been using civilian guides and that this had resulted in innocent people being killed. All these accusations were investigated and proved to be false. The morale of the troops remained high: it was the commanders who had to deal with the accusations and thus to prevent the civilian population from undermining the confidence that the troops had in themselves and in their own impartiality.

Operations went on throughout November, troops and police combing out the area, breaking up gangs and capturing malefactors. There was no doubt in our mind that some of the subordinate officials were for communal reasons obstructing us in tracing and arresting Muslim evildoers. For one thing, lists of these men took an inordinate time for the local police to prepare and without the lists nothing towards our object

could be started. Informers were very loth to come forward with evidence. Until such time as the *goondas* were rounded up it was certain that if the soldiers left the area trouble would at once break out again. The delay was exasperating. In some places local officials were even encouraging false complaints against the troops in the hope that they would be moved.

We pressed for the refusal of bail to those arrested so as to prevent a recrudescence of violence through their return to their villages.

The troops remained in good heart throughout, working with great energy and realizing the importance of their task. Their living conditions in the flooded countryside were rigorous.

Stabbings, arson, looting, acid-throwing, continued in Dacca, with little vigorous action on the part of the police to stop them. In Howrah, the police had to open fire on a violent crowd on the 29th September. The civil Indian administration, junior and senior, higher and lower, were siding with their own communities.

In Assam a tea estate manager was threatened by a mob of striking coolies and stabbed one. Rioting ensued. The police stepped in and used their rifles.

By now the situation of the Nationalist or Congress Muslims in Hindustan had become almost impossible. Hindus suspected them as Muslims: Muslims hated them more than they hated the Hindus for they regarded them as renegades. The more the Hindus or Congress whipped up anti-Muslim agitation the more precarious became the position of these unfortunates. It was this which finally forced many of them into the ranks of the Muslim League.

The swing-over from anti-British and anti-Army feeling may be readily judged by the statistics of military vehicles burnt out by irate mobs in Calcutta. During the riots of November 1945, 46 were a total loss; in the riots of the 10th to the 14th February 1946, 35; from the 10th February to the 15th August 1946, only 3; during the Calcutta riots from the 15th August to the 17th September, none.

## XV

### THE BUTCHERY OF MUSLIMS IN BIHAR

#### *October—November*

IN October, on the abolition of Central Command, the United Provinces were added to Eastern Command's territory, a considerable accretion of responsibility.

October saw the continuation of desultory killings and acid attacks in the narrow Calcutta gullies, and it saw Eastern Bengal so turgid with the forces of communal hate as to burst its swollen veins. Mahatma Gandhi came to Eastern Bengal on his mission of peace after the bloody outburst and he walked the countryside escorted by a posse of police and local officials, terrified that if harm came to him then Muslim officials would be the target of all Hindustan.

In Bengal the government clamped down a heavy foot on the Press in a fairly successful attempt to quench its communal fire. The names and communities of assailants and victims were not to be published, no description of the desecration of a holy place and no photographs of any communal disturbance were allowed.

From now onwards, for a whole year, the troops were hardly ever off the streets of Calcutta. Time and again they were on the streets in great strength, as many as thirteen major units being employed in the spring and summer of 1947.

In the United Provinces communal hate was mounting as a result of the Bengal troubles, and a mob attacked Muslims at Chheroki railway station.

Towards the end of the month it became possible to make some sort of appreciation of what the East Bengal riots had meant to the community at large.

Published reports, Hindu-inspired, in the newspapers had made the conflagration out to be far worse than it had been and this by now was well known, but Congress circles refused to go back on their original estimates, professing to distrust the most solemn official statements. While casualties—some 200 dead—were found to have been less than expected, it was admitted that looting and arson had gone unchecked over a wide area and for some days. In sum, it may be said that Hindu papers and organizations made the greatest possible political capital out of this affair, the more to inflame the hatred of Hindu for Muslim and to make certain that the former would have their revenge at some time and at some place where revenge could most easily be got.

In Bihar,<sup>42</sup> things were looking dark. At Chapra on the 25th and 26th October, a communal riot broke out, resulting in 63 dead: two days later, at Bhagalpur, there were over 50 casualties.

In Bengal and Bihar there was the usual stream of labor strikes. In Bihar, too, Professor Abdul Bari turned his attention to the already disloyal Bihar policemen, vying for their favor with the Socialist J. P. Narain and with the now notorious discharged constable, Ramanand Tiwari, who later rose to prominence in the violent troubles of this police force.

It was a feature of the Calcutta strikes that, as often as not, when Hindus struck Muslims remained at work. Thus labor unity was not obtainable, so that the police suffered less than they might while we soldiers were not called on to help.

On the 4th November police opened fire on a mob at a place called Bihar Sharif in Bihar, inflicting seven casualties. At Khaira there were twenty cases of stabbing and at Arson thirty dead Muslims were found.

The Bihar massacre had begun. The Hindu was revenging himself on the Muslim for the killings in Eastern Bengal.

Of all the terrible doings of 1946 this fearful carnage was the most shocking. Its most dastardly side was that great mobs of Hindus turned suddenly, but with every preparation for the deed, upon the few Muslims who had lived and whose forefathers had lived in amity and trust all their lives among these very Hindu neighbors. It has never been ascertained who was the organizing brain of this well-laid widely-planned plot of extirpation. All that we do know is that it went to a fixed plan and schedule. Had it not been so, such large mobs, fully armed with prepared weapons, would never have collected in the time and moved with such obvious, fiendish intent from victim to victim. They were Biharis who did this fell thing. They were Biharis whom we expelled from our Army after the Mutiny of 1857-8 and never again enlisted.

The number of Muslim dead, men, women and children, in this short, savage killing was about seven thousand to eight thousand. The Muslim League tried to put the figure at between twenty and thirty thousand. Our reports show this to be a considerable exaggeration but, equally on the other side, was it false to assess the casualties at some two to three thousand dead or even less. The atrocities committed were terrible and a foretaste of those to come at Garhmukteswar a few weeks later. Women and their babies were cut up, butchered, with an obscene devilry that a civilized people cannot even conjure forth in their imagination. If this was what was done to our own people in

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<sup>42</sup> See Map No. 4, and Appendix VII.

the Mutiny then there is no punishment that we could have inflicted on such cruel ruffians that would have fitted the deed. All we can do is to forget.

Our Hindu soldiers, when asked why they used their weapons so freely in this affair and whether they did not feel a little revulsion at firing on their co-religionists, replied that they would have liked to wipe them out after seeing what they had seen.

Weeks afterwards, rumors reached us that this orgy had been planned by the Marwaris, Hindu traders, of Calcutta in revenge for the loss caused to their businesses by Bihar Muslims in the killings at that town in August 1946. I never found any proof of this. I only give it as being the sole suggestion put forward to us to explain the origin of these ghastly happenings. My own belief is that the Hindu Mahasabha was the brain behind this devilry.

It was unfortunate for Major-General R. Ekin, who was then commanding Bihar and Orissa Area, that Sir Hugh Dow, the experienced Governor of Bihar, was absent from the province from the 31st October to the 5th November, for Ekin had thus to deal direct with the provincial ministry, whose Ministers were unaccustomed to handling situations of this sort, while their want of knowledge of the Army and of experience in the method of operating troops in support of the police, led to constant needless demands for small bodies of soldiers to be sent here, there and everywhere.

Bihar had been skinned of its battalions to help in subduing the riots in Calcutta, the 9th Brigade, 7th Worcesters and 4/2nd Gurkhas having been dispatched there: this, added to the crowding of the war-worn railway with military traffic for the Bengal troubles and the consequent necessity to move all troops in Bihar by road, made troop reinforcements into North Bihar, the seat of the trouble, a slow operation of some difficulty. Ranchi to Patna by road was two hundred and eighty miles: at Ranchi were the reinforcements, around Patna the trouble.

We knew by now that the Bihar police were of little use. They had been rotted out by the very party of the Ministers who now held office. Subversive action had been in progress to undermine the loyalty of the police to the then Government—British—, while their will to act resolutely in the suppression of outbreaks against law and order had been rocked by constant threats of reprisals to be taken later against them after the British would have handed over power. The police were therefore dispirited and incompetent. We had said for some time that if there were more troubles in Bihar the whole brunt of them would at once fall on the Army, the cushioning of the impact by the police being no longer practicable.

Therefore, to keep the populace mindful of the presence of troops, General Ekin sent out columns far and wide throughout September and October on what we termed 'flag marches'.

On the 27th October the storm broke, at Chapra, and the Commissioner at once sent in a request for the 4/3rd Gurkhas to take over the town. An easy way out for him. A company of the battalion went to the aid of his police.

Unfortunately the provincial ministry had authorized the celebration on the 28th October of Noakhali Day, to mourn the death of Hindus in East Bengal earlier in the month, thus rousing to fever heat the emotions of about the most hotheaded people in the world. This ill-advised action had been taken against the counsels of leading men of both communities and it had much to do with provoking to a fresh intensity the feelings of the communities against each other. Stabbings started in Patna town itself. Two companies of the North Staffords entered the town to be ready for eventualities. By the 31st October Bhagalpur, over to the east, was in the throes of rioting and forty Muslims were massacred at Teragna station. One of the two companies of the North Staffords was directed to Bhagalpur and the 4/10th Gurkhas stood to.

The next day the 1st Madras were on the move for Nawada and Bihar Sharif where more trouble was expected.

The Prime Minister of Bihar stepped in, saying that he did not wish British troops to be used. This was purely a racial matter with him. But he further complicated the issue by putting forward a military plan of his own, involving the splitting up of our units into small bands dotted over the countryside. It took time to persuade him that soldiers were not police and must act in bigger bodies in support of his police, whose business it was to provide these small parties ahead and to the flanks of the troops. He was asked to impose a curfew and to proclaim Section 144 of the C.P.C. to ban assemblies of any sort.

Mr. Bakshi, the Hindu Commissioner of Patna, now requested the help of troops in Patna, specifying tasks which, as Brigadier Goadby said, would require a whole division. The 4/10th Gurkhas went into the city. Troops were also in action at Bhagalpur by the evening of the 1st November and soon afterwards the 3rd Bihar took over the protection of the Grand Chord railway to relieve the Inspector General's Military Police for other work. By the 2nd November disturbances were widespread over North Bihar and there was threat of labor riots in the industrial areas of Jamshedpur and Dhanbad.

Eastern Command on 3rd November reinforced Bihar from the Command Reserve at Ramgarh and put a Brigade H.Q. under Brigadier Salomons at General Ekin's disposal to drop its network of communications on, and take over control of; a part of Patna Sub-Area from Brigadier Goadby.



False reports of huge movements of rioters were whistling in from panic-stricken Indian officials impeding the proper coordination and completion of the military plan of operations over the whole of the disturbed area. It was difficult enough in all conscience with fourteen thousand square miles of violently erupting country, half-flooded and sadly lacking in roads of any sort. On the 5th November the Ministers returned to the charge, demanding detachments of from four to six men in every Muslim village and saying that troops were not taking firm enough action against violent mobs. The latter accusation may well have been true then (it was not so a few hours later) because these troops had not been blooded in the Calcutta horror and were still pervaded with the policy of minimum force. There was a paucity of magistrates: the civil authority demanded action but provided little on their side to aid in getting it.

What most struck our officers at this time was how calmly these Hindu Ministers took the awful tales, mostly true, of atrocities. They could not, it seemed, be shocked.

Command now ordered Major-General D. Russell to put 5th Division H.Q. in Dinapur and to take control of the whole of the disturbed area with all his resources. In this way North Bihar was covered with a fully organized network of wireless, motor D.Rs and a complete Divisional Intelligence system. This put an end to rumors and to fruitless investigations of reports from civilian sources.

On the morning of 3rd November the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, and Pandit Nehru arrived at Patna. At midday the Army Commander and the Defence Minister came in by air. That evening Pandit Nehru, the Prime Minister, and the military authorities reviewed the situation. At last the curfew and Section 144 were imposed.

By the 6th November troops were out all over the area and were getting control of the situation. The Bihar police had behaved in a far more adequate manner than was anticipated, due to the personal influence of Mr. Creed, the Inspector General. There is no doubt that Pandit Nehru's own influence, his ubiquity and the speeches that he made, had a most quietening effect on the large masses of people whom he addressed throughout the disturbed areas. A contributory cause of our getting on top of the disturbances was the lack of those sensational Press reports which had so hindered our efforts and so increased panic in East Bengal. Little news reached the Press until the disorders were well in hand, so that the usual inaccurate reports and alarming headlines which so inflamed communal outbreaks were absent for this once until too late to do harm.

In order to show what the soldiers themselves were doing all this time, I give below an account of the doings of Lieut.-Colonel Venning and his 1st Madras Regiment. In Appendix VII will be found the stories of the 4/10th Gurkhas under Lieut.-Colonel E. D. Murray and of Major G. Leech, I.A.O.C., who was the senior officer at Jamalpur.

It was on the 1st November at 9.30 in the morning that Area Headquarters rang up Colonel Venning, telling him to get on the move at once by road to Nawada and to push two companies forward to Bihar Sharif. By midday he was off and reached his destination at 5 p.m. the next evening, to find that although there had been few casualties yet the area was in a highly emotional state. Before dawn the following morning he pushed on to Bihar Sharif and sent troops on to Fatwa, Islampur and Hilsa. His forward patrols were thrown right out and found that murder, loot and arson had started in remote villages. They evacuated refugees and began arresting goondas. Westwards his patrols moved over a wide expanse, telling the civil population that troops had arrived and would open fire wherever they saw violence.

Venning went on to Fatwa itself and found an attack going on at Juthli. There he met Colonel Murray of the 10th Gurkhas, and they tied together their plans. Returning, he heard that Bikatpur was being attacked, so with another officer and a small force he sped off in that direction, only to find himself too late, the mob melted away, leaving several women and children in a badly mutilated condition. While he was dealing with this, another report came in and he was off again to another village, too late to prevent the burning of the village, where about twenty women and children and a few old men lay dead on the ground, stripped naked and burnt. That evening he returned to Bihar Sharif. Later that day a small patrol under a British officer left Fatwa for Nimi, where they lit upon a mob of a thousand surrounding the village. The patrol at once opened fire and went in, driving off the mob and managing to succour the seven hundred Muslim refugees, delivering them to Fatwa by three the following morning. During the drive back the mob, increasing in numbers and ferocity, repeatedly challenged and attacked his small escort, attempting to get at the evacuees. In the night the escort's job with these large numbers of women and children was one of great hazard and difficulty. Time and again during the night the soldiers replied with fire, shooting into the darkness where masses of black figures appeared, unable to know what damage they were doing but only able to realize that they were having some success.

Another patrol to Khaira east of Bihar Sharif, under a British officer, found twenty Muslims who had been stabbed; eight were dead but the rest were succored. The village had been looted and was in flames. This patrol made a couple of arrests.

Other patrols went out over a wide area through the night, one of them just after midnight reaching Kanchipur to find the attack over and a terrible slaughter. Two hundred Muslims lay dead. Fifteen were found alive but wounded and were carried back to Fatwa. The whole village was in ashes. Just after daylight on the 4th November a strong patrol dispersed a mob of about two thousand which was collecting for an attack.

At 11 a.m. in the morning the Madras Regiment stationed patrols all over Bihar Sharif to keep the peace during Pandit Nehru's visit while he spoke to the assembled people of

the town. Early that afternoon patrols were out beyond Barkandi and to other unnamed villages. To one of these a patrol of one platoon was sent, guided by ex-servicemen armed with shotguns who had had information of an impending attack. Patrols were now getting on to the scene of trouble before much damage was done. This platoon came up with a mob of five thousand who had just started their attack, at once opened fire on them, knocked out about fifteen, drove them off and entered the village, whence they removed seven hundred Muslims of all ages and sent them to safety. That evening the Barkandi area was up in flames again and Colonel Venning himself went out to find the village burnt and eight hundred refugees scattered about looking for help. These he sent back under escort in his transport and himself went on with one section, guided by local inhabitants, to the village from which the assailants had come, in order to make arrests. The inhabitants fled at his arrival but he managed to come up with them and to seize a few men who were identified as having actually taken part in the attack. All about him mobs were roaming the whole countryside, rending the air with their shouts and their threats. In this sort of confusion he decided that it would be useless with his small party to attempt anything further that night, so he set off about midnight back to his headquarters, only to find on the way that ration vehicles which had been sent to Gaya were blocked on a bridge by a violent mob of about six hundred. His men dismounted and under a British officer advanced on the mob with fixed bayonets. Before the advance of these twelve men their opponents fled.

That night patrol reports of firing and violent crowds, captures of *goondas*, evacuation of thousands of Muslims, continued to pour in. There were tales of his patrols having to protect refugees throughout the night from unceasing attacks by large mobs of many thousands, sometimes armed with shotguns.

Other reports came in from civil sources and patrols went out to disperse assailants, to penetrate to the villages and to bring in the sufferers, time and again under heavy attack. One patrol, getting back to its headquarters, found that the place had been surrounded by angry mobs and had to force its way in, bringing the refugees with it.

The 5th November was a repetition of the 4th with the one difference that now the troops appeared to be on the spot before their enemy on almost every occasion. Only in a village west of Hilsa were they forestalled and there they had to open fire on a mob of over a thousand. They actually counted on the ground one hundred and fifty Muslim dead while the evacuees whom they brought out were in the last stages of exhaustion and mostly wounded.

On the 6th the work went on, the heaviest attack being one by fifteen thousand men at a village called Tehara which lay a desolate ruin when our men arrived. Nearly four hundred dead were counted, mostly killed with shotguns or knives. Many had obviously been burnt alive whilst some wells were filled to the top with dead. Of the hundreds evacuated, about a quarter were badly wounded and in a very bad way.

That morning Colonel Venning left Bihar Sharif for Hilsa, but at Fatwa one of his transport officers reported to him that Nagar Nahusa was being attacked. On the road he met one Abdul Bias, a Congress Muslim, who confirmed this and pleaded with him to go to the rescue of that place. So he took with him as many men as he could in one three-ton truck and about a mile from the village, where the track became impassable, he dismounted his men and made in the direction of the noise of battle. He could hear the cries of the mob attacking the village and as he hastened forward saw smoke rising from several burning houses. On reaching the village his party saw that the mob of between five and ten thousand were surrounding the village, burning it, looting it, and as they penetrated they saw these fiends killing every Muslim they could find. They noticed that many of the corpses were in varying stages of putrefaction, so it was obvious that this attack had been in progress for several days. The determination on the part of the attackers throughout all these days to annihilate the helpless few is only fit for devils from hell itself. His party drove off the assailants and set to work on rescue. They found a few survivors, some two thousand, in a terrible condition, exhausted and unable to hold out against the attack much longer. Three times his men opened up on the mob before they finally drove them away.

The temper of the mob was extremely aggressive and one of his men was attacked at close quarters and wounded by *goondas* armed with spears. After dispersing, the mob again reformed at the eastern end of the village, endeavoring to attack again and succeeding in setting light to at least one more building. Even when the refugees were being evacuated the frenzied horde again attacked. All refugees in the neighborhood who had heard that the troops were out, attempted to get to them for protection but were slaughtered on the way.

There is no doubt that the resolute action of Colonel Venning and his Madras Regiment's soldiers saved the situation in the whole of this area, for these brutal mobs were taught a severe lesson through their considerable casualties.

Other patrols were in action throughout the 6th, breaking up the attackers' organization and rescuing their victims.

On the 7th and 8th November operations continued, until on the evening of the 8th Colonel Venning was able to report:

The situation is now considered to be completely under control but troops are very tired. They have been out continuously for four days and have had extremely little sleep during the time nor have they even been given opportunities for proper feeding arrangements. But by extreme efforts of all officers and men the worst is over: most of the Muslims have been evacuated to

centres of safety under military care or have been taken to centres where the Muslims are sufficiently strong to look after themselves.

He estimated that his men had brought in well over twelve thousand Muslims from an area of about one thousand square miles inhabited by half a million Hindus who were determined to exterminate the eighty thousand or so Muslims.

The record of Colonel Venning's operations supports everything that I have to say about the complete impartiality and soldierly behavior of the Indian Army under this violent test. His men were nearly all Hindus and they fought against great odds and with great determination against their co-religionists.

## XVI

### BYWAYS OF NOVEMBER

DURING November there was a sudden spurt of keenness in the Calcutta University Officers' Training Corps and in the Urban Infantry Battalion of the Territorial Force. Recruiting for the latter corps had been stopped, nevertheless numbers of recruits presented themselves demanding training where before it had been a matter of difficulty to get recruits at all for the unit. The reason was not far to seek. They wanted training and, if possible, weapons with which to fight and conquer the Muslims. The Battalion Commander agreed to train a few men who could soon be absorbed into vacancies in the battalion, but before long dropped this scheme on finding that many more than he had agreed to take were turning up for his training parades and were being instructed by his only too willing staff.

The U.O.T.C. was lucky in having Colonel Chakravarty as its Commanding Officer. He was a man of high principles and incapable of taking, or allowing anyone else to take sides in the communal trouble. His influence was excellent throughout. At this time there was in Calcutta a Vice-Chancellor of the University, Mr. Shyam Prasad Mukherji, former President of the Hindu Mahasabha,<sup>43</sup> then a party of no great moment but later to be a power in the land.

From Assam came the first breath of a policy which was soon to give us a lot of hard thinking and no little concern for law and order in that province. There were certain waste lands which belonged to the Assam government. For some time indigent Muslims from East Bengal had been squatting on these lands and thus claiming right of possession. The Hindu Assam government now chose this inauspicious time to set to work to evict Muslims from these lands. The latter were pretty certain to resist and it was expected that this would excite their co-religionists in Eastern Bengal and perhaps in Calcutta. Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang and Nowgong districts of the Assam valley were the most affected by this squatting campaign. In the event, ejected immigrants soon took to returning and rebuilding their ruined huts.

Muslim immigration had reached its peak during that period when the Japanese were advancing towards India through Burma. That the immigration had continued for so long unimpeded was due mainly to the Assam government having no planned land settlement programme. The immigrants, more hardworking than the Assamese, never embraced the customs or language of Assam. In time the immigration of these Muslims into Assam would upset the balance of votes in favor of Muslims and against Hindus.

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<sup>43</sup> A fanatically Hindu body whose policy was Hindustan for the Hindus.

Probably it was this danger which spurred on the Assam government to its policy of eviction. Immigration still goes on and there is every chance that the Assam plains will before long be a part of Pakistan. The Muslim League government of Bengal at once took up the cudgels on behalf of their fellow Muslims, Mr. Suhrawardy being the most vocal on the subject.

In Bengal the Hindu nationalist Press was again calling upon the masses to organize themselves for a fight against British Imperialism', at the same time accusing the British of being leagued with the Muslims in a sinister plot to keep communal unrest aflame until, tired out by civil strife, India once more allowed the British to take control of their country. This was, if anything, of some help to us for it drew the attention of Indians a little away from their communal hatreds and did tend to some small extent to unite the most violent elements in a struggle for something other than the outright massacre of each other. Our own feelings were still wholly in favor of the anti-British attitude as opposed to the communal, if there had to be any bellicose attitude at all. The former never had been a thing of really great danger in times of peace: its attractions were very limited and its emotions mainly artificial. The mass of the people of India, whom one met in the villages, were horrified at the idea of the British leaving India at all. There was not much doubt that in years to come Indians would look back at the last hundred years of British rule as the Golden Age of India. None of our advanced thinkers in England would ever have credited such a backsliding, while the Congress Party of India would have vented their scorn on such a suggestion as conceited and false. In September and October 1947, the appeal that the British should stay on in India was made by vast numbers of Indian 'men in the street' in Eastern Command. They had become tired of liberty: it appeared to them to be liberty to indulge license and greed.

Students were little to the fore at this time. Events were rather too overpowering for them, too serious, too rough and too likely to lead to bodily injury. In the United Provinces, they were demanding concessions for themselves in the cinemas, and the Government had to threaten to close Lucknow University if these boys persisted in their demonstrations and then, at last, arrested three hundred of them for defying a ban on assemblies of more than ten persons.

What was left of the British administration, wherever riots had occurred, was roundly accused by extremists, at worst of fostering these outbreaks and at best of doing nothing to stop them. Attempts to disarm some of the worst characters were now acclaimed to be a stripping of the means of defence from helpless men! The troops were accused of excesses. Each charge was carefully investigated and proved to be wholly false.

In Assam refugees from East Bengal spread reports of the terror behind them, and panic conditions almost prevailed among Hindus in the border districts of the province, provoking threats of reprisals from this community. These harassed people yet found time to manifest their dislike of the Gurkha inhabitants of the Command. This behavior

was likely to deserve punishment in the days to come when British control went and internal factions became marked. Boycott of Gurkhas in the bazaars and by petty landlords in the cities still went on. Our Gurkha soldiers were subjected to insults and molestations whenever they travelled. Their kit was stolen if they left it for a second on the journey. It is remarkable that the Gurkha, who is a man of much independence and considerable self-respect and who has little regard for the plainsmen of India, did not lose his temper and retaliate in violent and bloody fashion.

The Army's morale remained high although British troops and a few officers of Indian units found some cause for grumbling at the slowing down of the rate of release. We explained this in yet another note to all units in the Command.

The Indian soldier went patiently and, on the whole, contentedly about his duties. He had now seen enough of the horrors of communalism on the countryside to make him quite impartial whom he shot when he got the order to shoot. He was thoroughly disgusted. As yet, the main recruiting areas of the Army had not been affected. From Bengal and Bihar we drew few recruits. We knew full well that the great test would come sooner or later and that the Punjab would be the scene of a bitter struggle, if present political policies were pursued and if it were not recognized that, for some years yet, Indians would and could only govern Indians with a big stick. We did not think that we could hold the Indian Army upright against that storm—a blast in which their own homes, their own property, their own wives, children and relations would be swept away. Later, we shall see how the Army faced the storm and how far it managed to weather it.

In East Bengal our men were still out all over the countryside, bringing back confidence to persecuted Hindus and trying to restore the normal activities of village life. As was expected, their sole reward was yet another spate of baseless and highly vindictive allegations of misconduct. The Press took up these charges with zest and managed to create distrust for the Army in the minds of civilians, for that Army which was then their sole guard against chaos and a welter of bloodshed. Of the many allegations of rape now made against the Army, not a single one, after the most careful and painstaking investigation, was ever proved by any evidence whatsoever, including medical evidence, and the accusations were shown to be not only false but, in many cases, ridiculous.

Villagers themselves, with a first-rate lookout system, took no little part in helping the hated *goondas* to escape our patrols. Some of these criminals succeeded in evading us by submerging themselves in the marshes, breathing through hollow tubes on the surface, as German submarines in the end managed to evade our aircraft.

As October days shortened into the milder days of a Bengal winter we stood on tiptoe waiting for yet another ferocious Hindu outbreak or a Muslim stroke of revenge. Bengal



and Bihar had had their bloodletting and were tired. Orissa and Assam were too homogeneous in the first case and too lethargic in the second to follow their sorry example. We looked elsewhere with grave apprehension.

## XVII

### THE GARHMUKTESWAR MASSACRE

*6th-15th November*

THE tale of horror now takes us northwards into the United Provinces.

This terrible deed is marked by the savagery of the Jat men who did the brutal work and, some say, by the cold-blooded fact that the affair was previously planned. I am not certain if the latter fact is true but there may be others who know better than I. I think that Jat men did go to the fair all ready for trouble and particularly ready because this was the time of the Muslim Bakra Id when cows are killed and sacrificed, but I do not think that they came in organized bands or with a complete scheme for their dreadful work. Let it be remembered that this massacre was in the main the crime of Jats from about Rohtak and Hissar. These Jats are the same Hindu men from whom we have for years enlisted sepoy into Indian regiments. It seems that beneath the discipline which has been the cause of their good behavior in the Army there yet remains a horrid vein of inhuman, merciless ferocity.

Eagerly enough the local Hindus joined in where they could, even to guiding them to and singling out the poor huts in which Muslim families dwelt, unsuspecting little families with whom these treacherous guides had but yesterday jested and held friendly intercourse.

In the days of British administration supervision of the Garhmukteswar<sup>44</sup> fair was regarded as a test for a young police officer, but the test was mainly to see that the simple and devout pilgrims did not in their zeal succeed in drowning themselves in their own Ganges.

One festival had passed quietly by, the Hindu Dewali, and the third day of the Bakr Id had come, seemingly with peace. But communal relations were becoming increasingly bad, the result of all the tales, oral and newspaper, coming upwards along the valley of the Ganges from Calcutta and Noakhali, through Bihar to the United Provinces and to Garhmukteswar where the annual Hindu fair is held. The Calcutta killing had been heavy but even for both sides: in East Bengal the Hindu casualties had been far heavier than the Muslim but the affair, judged by our now accustomed eyes, had been a small one, the Hindu killed numbering some two hundred over a wide expanse of country.

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<sup>44</sup> See Map No. 5.

In Bihar the Hindu legions descended on the few Muslims and wiped them out, leaving about seven thousand dead. Hitherto the game had mostly gone in favor of the Hindus: it was hardly to be expected that they would seek for any further revenge and it seemed that perhaps their thirst for blood might by now have been assuaged.

Here at Garhmukteswar there was no provocation.

I have been told that it was strange how few of the facts of this orgy leaked out then or later. There was, of course, the Government of India's ban on news which was likely to exacerbate communal feeling: any sort of abuse could be flung at the British who were not prone to object or to become any less cordial towards the abuser's party, but nothing could be written that was irritating to either community.

Despite this 'stop' on atrocity stories it has yet seemed to us that someone quickly clamped down on this massacre a strong, impenetrable screen of censorship through which nothing could reach the outside world. The provincial government, willingly helped by its Indian administrators, soft-pedaled these outrages committed by Hindus, and the Hindu papers purposely emphasized the far smaller acts of retaliation by Muslims in the area of the disturbances, in order to cover up the misdeeds of their Hindu co-religionists. I am told that editions of the Delhi Muslim newspaper Dawn containing stories of the outbreak were completely bought up by wealthy Hindu party men as the newspapers came off the train at Meerut, and that this paper disappeared from the tables of British officials at Lucknow for a period of ten days. So here at last is some account of this holocaust to the gods, to the Cow, of the Hindu. Even now it is not easy to glean all the details of the thing that was done in the autumn sunshine and under the bright stars of those October days and nights by the banks of Mother Ganges.

During the early days of November the platforms of Delhi Junction were littered day by day with an ever increasing medley of eager Hindu pilgrims coming in to Garhmukteswar for the annual fair and for their ritual immersion in the Ganges. There they lay, men, women and delighted children, nodding on the dappled, sun-drowsy platform with no intent but to reach their bourne and to be shriven for another year. Not far short of a million of the devout came in from the United Provinces and the Punjab, among them large numbers of Jat peasants.

To cater for their needs and to profit themselves numbers of Muslims, men, women and children, came into the *mela* (fair) from Muradabad and Bareilly to set up stalls and to peddle their wares through the ten-mile long fair grounds speckling the sandy islands in the midst of Gangaji (Holy Ganges). In Garhmukteswar itself there lived some two to three thousand Muslims while about the neighborhood their communities were scattered in different localities. It is unbelievable that living in Garhmukteswar today

there are still Muslims, even after the happenings of which they were the wretched martyrs and of which I shall now tell.

On the evening of the 6th November 1946, at a side-show run by Muslims, there was a motor-cycling display called 'The Wall of Death'. There was a fair crowd watching when a Muslim performer threw a jest to a Jatni<sup>45</sup> woman spectator, probably one from Rohtak. A sudden shout went up that a Muslim had insulted a Hindu woman. At once on this alarm a number of small bands of Jats rushed out and, in concerted fashion, set to work to massacre the Muslim stallholders at the *mela*, spattered all about the fairgrounds quietly plying their trade. Practically every Muslim man, woman and child was murdered with appalling cruelty. Either here or later even pregnant women were ripped up, their unborn babies torn out and the infants' brains bashed out on walls and on the ground. There was rape, and women and children were seized by the legs by burly fiends and torn apart. These hellions looted and burnt the show, casting the dead and dying into the flames. Most were killed with spears but some of the killings were by strangulation which, it will be recalled, was the ritual method of the Thugs. The murderers' women stood about, laughing with glee at the burning booths, egging on their men folk.

Throughout these days the Hindus of Garhmukteswar town never lifted a hand to stop the savagery against Muslims nor raised a voice in protest against Jat excesses. The killing, let it be said now, stopped solely because the Muslim men, women and children were either dead or had run away. There were police present in sufficient numbers to put up a stout resistance to the rioters, if not to stop them altogether. Nevertheless only on the *mela* ground, and that half-heartedly, did the police make any effort to interfere. They were afraid rather than apathetic. Unfortunately there was not a single British police officer in control of the area of the trouble. The Senior Superintendent of Police, the District Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police were all Hindus. It was generally remarked in the Bihar massacre that wherever there was a British District Magistrate the rioting was quickly controlled or never occurred at all.

The next day a large body of these same Rohtak Jats, mingling with pilgrims on the traffic-choked, two-mile long road, led by local Hindus, left the fair grounds and entered Garhmukteswar town. All of a sudden they fell upon the Muslim quarter of the town, slaughtering with disgusting brutality all Muslim men, women and children. Women were raped and murdered and the houses burnt. The rest of the terrified inhabitants fled.

Through the high-walled, narrow streets the mob rushed, howling like beasts for blood, past the tall crumbling red brick walls and up the hill into the hospital compound. The Muslim District Medical Officer was killed, his Assistant and his wife. All Muslims

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<sup>45</sup> Of the Jat race.

attending for treatment they slaughtered on the spot. A Muslim doctor was murdered and his wife raped there and then. Thereafter she was paraded naked in triumph through the town. Somehow she escaped and with one arm broken waded the now desecrated Ganges and collapsed in safety on the far side.

Official estimates of dead sought later to minimize the slaughter. Besides the dead there were many who escaped with more or less terrible injuries.

The police, of whom there were some two dozen fully-armed men within a hundred yards of this latest scene, did nothing, apart from four policemen entering the town, firing over the heads of the mob and then again subsiding into inaction. The carnage went on despite their cowardly and ineffective effort.

The mob, tired out, quitted Garhmukteswar but returned that night. The police, probably for self-preservation only, opened fire and the mob retired. The Hindu Station Officer with the main force of police at the police station on the road, lifted not one finger throughout: the police at the *mela* outpost were informed of the killing but said that it was not in their responsibility, so they too did nothing. The only intervention was by four policemen and those were too timid to affect the situation.

News of this disturbance soon spread to the villages and to Meerut. In the latter place isolated stabbings started and went on in desultory fashion for the next fortnight. Out in the countryside trouble came with the dispersal of the pilgrims from the fair. At one place, Shahjehanpur, Muslims set to work to exact retribution by stopping some of the returning bullock carts, killing thirty Hindus – men, women and children.

It was a dastardly act but at least they were all killed outright with no attendant atrocity such as their opponents had committed. It is a fact that the Muslims, for some reason or other, showed unexpected restraint in the extent of their retaliation. It may have been that they were dazed by the speed with which peace and amity had been turned into conflict and hatred, or else that they held back from provoking the majority community to further atrocities against themselves. One of the most cruel of all these widespread horrors was the smaller Jat attack of the 10th November on the village of Harson near Ghaziabad where about forty Muslims – men, women, and as now seemed so horribly usual, children were atrociously massacred.

The isolated stabbings continued in Meerut and thence disturbances spread to Rohtak in the Punjab.

By the 15th November the pilgrims had passed on their locust-stricken way leaving devastation behind them and the peace of the desert reigned on smoking village and bereaved children.

I was never able to find out the casualties. The Indian administration minimised them and the whole affair. It is certain that one thousand Muslims died, perhaps two thousand.

Why did the few living not flee for ever from their shouldering homes? There was nowhere for them to go. All around were these same blood-thirsty enemies. They returned to await in the Devil's good time their inevitable end, death at the hands of their enemies or the eternal slavery of a scheduled caste. There seemed no hope for them nor for others of their co-religionists in the United Provinces and in Eastern Punjab.

Little of this terrible story ever reached the ears of the public outside—none went to England or to America. There was good reason why it should not.

Later on, bit by bit, we discovered that a good many Hindus knew of the impending tragedy. A certain Hindu officer—not under Eastern Command at the time—whose home is in Meerut, told one of my officers that he had known that the massacre was planned and had advised his friends not to attend the fair. He had not reported this warning to the military authorities as he thought all others knew of the plan. He then mentioned the name of a certain Indian provincial official who, he said, was fully aware of the coming horror. However, I am not certain that this was not a general local project of which he had heard and not one prepared by the Rohtak Jats.

Pandit Pant, Prime Minister of the United Provinces, later announced in Council that there would be a judicial enquiry into the affair. None was held.

On the 11th November the Regimental Centre of the Royal Garhwal Rifles, responding to a call from the civil authorities, dispatched into Bijnor a column 150 strong with a band, to keep the peace in the districts abutting on Garhmukteswar. The column toured the district, their attentions being greatly appreciated by the local inhabitants, as these two letters, copied as written, testify:

Collector.

Sir,

The superintendent of Police visited the town Dhampur with Military forces yesterday on 15/11/46. All Military officers along with their forces marched throughout the town with band. Their demonstration was very much appreciated by the public. It proved very effective for suppressing the communal tension, which spread in the town due to the recent dispute at Garhmukteswar. Both Hindus and Muslims took part in the demonstration and welcomed the S.P. and the Military forces. The S.D.O. also joined the demonstration on his way to

Sherkot from Nehtor. Tehsildar, N. Tehsildar and S. C. Dhampur helped me at all times for making the demonstration successful. This visit gave a good influence over the Gundas, and I am glad to inform you that there was not the least panic in the town since the visit of the Military. I on behalf of public am thankful for the arrangements you have made for our sake. I am also thankful to the Superintendent of Police, and the Military Officers who took pains in moving about throughout the city, on foot with the forces.

Sd.  
Chairman  
N. B. Dhampur  
16/11/46

\* \* \* \*

Collector.

Sir,

The Superintendent of Police came in the town with a large number of Military forces, and made a round throughout the town. The Military officers along with the Military Forces marched in the town of Dhampur, with band on 15/11/46. The marching was very much appreciated by the public, and crowds of people cooperated in demonstration. Gentry of Dhampur welcomed the arrival of the Military, and they made their party at Ejaz hall Dhampur. The visit of Military effected (sic) the panic tension which was spreading in the town due to the recent dispute at Garhmukteswar and the Gundas have been influenced. The situation has been turned since their arrival and there was not the least panic last night.

Submitted for information.

Sd.  
Tehsildar  
Dhampur 16/11/46

So the people were glad to have been saved from themselves.

On the 5th December the Garhwalis were out again, this time making in haste for Chandpur where a fierce riot had broken out. Muslims, towing Taziyas<sup>46</sup> in their Muharram procession, clambered over the roofs of houses, whether Hindu or Muslim. Hindus at once took strong objection and fighting started. Three Hindus were killed and forty-five others, mostly Hindus, injured. The police had acted promptly and twice

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<sup>46</sup> Tall ornamented emblems.

opened fire, dispersing the crowds. But there was every sign that neither side had yet had enough when the soldiers accompanied by some armed police drove into the town and spread out on patrol through the streets.

On the 7th December they were cordoning off a nearby village for police to search, seize looted articles and make arrests, thereafter flag-marching through the countryside. Their watch and ward continued by night and day until the 18th December when a company of the Indian Grenadiers relieved them.

We heard no more of Garhmukteswar.



## XVIII

### THE PASSING OF 1946

IN early December one of the worst occasions for annual trouble in Calcutta passed peacefully by—the Muslim Muharram festival. Only on the last day was there an outbreak of brick batting, arson and stabbing. At 10.30 p.m. that night a curfew was established and things quietened down.

Significant for the public was the increasing activity of the Hindu Mahasabha and of its militant body, the R.S.S. Sangh. Particularly in the United Provinces this party showed a great accession of strength, the R.S.S. Sangh now numbering tens of thousands.

1946 passed into 1947, with trouble everywhere in Eastern Command, the aftermath of the horrors of Calcutta, East Bengal, Bihar and Garhmukteswar, and with a lurid and lowering sky in the Punjab—the one province to which we in the Army turned all our eyes, almost regardless of what might happen on our own doorstep. If the Punjab burst, the chances were that the mixed units of the Indian Army would burst also and that all India would collapse. With India would fall the whole Asiatic system, already so precariously poised.

The feeling of responsibility was great: the feeling of frustration at the impotence of our Government, acute.

## BOOK II

1947

### XIX

## YEAR OF QUITTANCE

### *January-February*

THE year was born in torment. In North Bihar, in the United Provinces, all over Bengal and in the alleyways of Calcutta, the minds of men were taut with fear and benumbed with contemplation of the dreadful things that they and their brothers had done. Widows mourned their husbands, orphans their parents. Terror had given place to revenge and revenge in turn once more to terror. The *goonda* population fidgeted with the tools of their trade, still unslaked with carnage and looting. The prestige of the Army was high and all men turned to it for protection: the prestige of the police was low except in Assam and Orissa, where there had been no rioting.

Only the British and the 'tribesmen' walked safely in the great provinces of Eastern Command: all others had their being in dire dread of violent death.

The barometer of India, the Punjab, was falling with the gathering of the darkest of all our storms. It was this final calamity that we had been awaiting for the past year. It was now coming, and coming too before any sort of plan had been devised for the future government of India, coming at a time when India's instability would be at its very worst, with virtually no British control and with a central government that by its nature could not command the trust of the people.

It thus became necessary now for G.H.Q. to examine the officer cadre of the Indian Army from which experienced British officers were pouring off to England, on release, to the British Army and on retirement. The examination resulted in a decision to let things alone and not to retard the outflow of officers. The Army would remain true to the British connection provided that there was no direct reversal of policy by the Cabinet at home without first ascertaining how far the Indian Army would regard the reversal as just or not. Furthermore, Indian officers now had before them the rich prize of rapid promotion as their British colleagues disappeared from the scene. To have slowed the speed of that disappearance would have dimmed their hopes and made them discontented, while irritating an already tender body of British officers.

The one great danger lay in a Hindu-Muslim split among Indian officers. This danger had always been present and we had been apprehensive of it ever since the beginning of 1946. British commanding officers assured us personally in January that as yet there was no communalism among Indian officers but that if grave trouble did come in the Punjab then they were certain that communalism would appear. Moreover, they considered that it would be most difficult to hold together their mixed units of Sikh, Hindu and Muslim, and to prevent officers and men from drifting off to their homes in the Punjab. But, short of civil war, they felt they could keep their units together. It was a tribute to these British commanders and to their one or two regular British officers that we were willing to credit them with such influence in the coming crisis. Events proved that they were justified in their confidence.

In headquarters and service officers' messes, which were almost entirely Indian, the damage was becoming apparent by February, Hindus complaining of the aloof attitude of Muslims and Muslims of Hindus. But the bonds of discipline and tradition were strong enough to prevent any sort of outbreak. Talk among them was now becoming prevalent of the need to divide the Army into two contingents, Hindu and Muslim, in order to avoid breaking it to pieces unit by unit. This opinion we had held for a long time and now felt to be more justified than ever. We once more pressed for this to be done unobtrusively, beginning with the officers. Good reason for it could still be shown as it was far easier to recruit and to administer units which were each of a single class, where all accepted the killing of their meat in the one manner, where all ate the same food and ate it together, no matter whether it were *pacca* or *kachha*,<sup>47</sup> and where unwitting infringements of irritating caste customs would not occur. Events were catching up on our views.

In mid-January it was certain that Congress and the Muslim League would never agree to any scheme of unity for India. A chance meeting with Mr. Suhrawardy on his way from Delhi on the 12th January showed that his party would not partake in the Constituent Assembly and that they intended to play a waiting game, expecting the Hindu 'Interim Government to overreach itself by even more wrecking declarations than that of Mr. Nehru on his Independent Republic, declarations which would cut across the Cabinet award. He referred to control in India as having dropped from the palsied grasp of the British'. (That the Muslims would not enter the Constituent Assembly was certain but that, indeed, was only the first obstacle to agreement, perhaps not the greatest. For one thing Congress would later insist that the Centre should be financed by levying its own contributions, whereas the Muslim League would insist that it should be financed by subvention from the 'groups' which the Cabinet Mission had advocated.)

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<sup>47</sup> See Appendix I for an explanation of these terms.

It was fully expected at Delhi that this failure to agree would lead to widespread rioting, in fact to civil war. Responsible soldiers felt now that the Indian Army could not indefinitely stand the present strain, though it had behaved extremely well hitherto. It is difficult to portray to the reader the extreme tension under which we British officers lived in these days. We had to enforce our views on law and order, enforce law and order itself, and yet to tread with the greatest care so as neither to upset India's political leaders nor to betray or antagonize our Indian soldiers. There were all too few British regular officers now left to guide the Army through these dangerous ways. A false step, an inept or hasty word had to be put right at once before they created trouble and brought the storm that could so easily be brewed in that oppressive climate. To perform our role we had to have the support of both political India and of our own Army. Fortunately for us, political India, now becoming responsible, soon learnt to trust us and to rely on our impartiality and integrity where they anticipated that they would have difficulty in finding those same qualities among their own helpers. Despite all things, we longed for our day of quittance.

There was talk in Delhi, too, of the possibility of the Interim Government attempting to reinstate the Indian National Army in the Indian Army. At the best it was expected that they would demand the release and pardon of those who had been imprisoned for atrocities against their fellow soldiers in Malaya. It is pretty certain that the attempt was made and that a long-suffering British Commander-in-Chief firmly refused to countenance such an attack on the Army's prestige and discipline. But the Congress Party completely, and the Muslim League to a great extent, were both committed by their former promises, threats and denouncements, to a policy of appeasing the I.N.A.

Sir Olaf Caroe came clown on a brief visit to Delhi from the North-West Frontier Province. He seemed careworn. Little wonder if he was. His position was hopeless, with a Ministry which was out of keeping with the realities of the situation. Hindus and Congress Muslims ruled a predominantly Muslim League and fanatically Muslim population, while at the Centre at Delhi was Hindu Pandit Nehru in charge of Sir Olaf's Muslim tribes. Tribesmen were in a seething state of religious fanaticism and there was no policy for handling these turbulent frontiersmen except that Sir Olaf Caroe could not bomb them from the air. At this time he was persistently and wrongly accused of favouring the Muslims at the expense of an artificial and rickety set-up which expected his unqualified support in enforcing its rule on a hostile people.

It was patent that the Congress Party was now showing signs of splintering. It was significant that the Congress high command, at variance with its Left wing, at this time decreed that the party did not countenance the existence of separate parties within its framework. Sarat Chandra Bose, brother of Subhas of I.N.A. fame, now resigned from the Congress Working Committee. There were the followers of Pandit Nehru, of the vehement Sirdar Patel who seemed hardly able to stomach the Pandit's policies, and of the Leftist, Jai Prakash Narain, who popped his party in and out of the Congress ranks

as the whim took him. There was no doubt that any attempt by the British to take back control of India at this stage, however altruistic and however much some may have held it to be for India's benefit and so for the sake of world peace, would have at once cemented these cracks. The whole of political Hindustan would then have been opposed to the British. But Indians were apprehensive of the future and of their own politicians and deadly sick of the near past. Had we cared to do so, we could have struck at this time, jailed the leaders, taken control of the Press and reinstated an Anglo-Indian administration. There would have been some trouble but not much, for the common man's relief at the prospect of the resurrection of the now almost forgotten corpses of Law and Order, would have been intense. But that was not our way. The British, as is pretty usual with them, kept their heads and their sense of proportion and went on with their endeavors to hand India over to Indians.

The quite extraordinary amount of friendship shown to the British by all and sundry among Indians was most impressive. It seemed that they realized now for what we had striven in India and what Britain had stood for in their country. There is no doubt that, however lorded over by the xenophobia of their leaders, the trust that Indians had for us was deep and true, far more genuine than the spite of a few so eagerly accepted by our English Fabians, Left doctrinaires and inexperienced intellectuals. These, with their monopoly of righteousness, set themselves up as the self-appointed critics of the handful of rather robust, earnest and self-confident Britons whose business it had been to administer the affairs of four hundred millions of Indians.

G.H.Q. very wisely thought to keep the good esteem of the people for the Army by organizing public military tattoos and demonstrations. With our constantly changing units and officers, these were not easy to organize, but the trouble expended on them paid a good dividend. By the end of February we had staged shows of this sort in all important places in the Command. One of the best attended of the sideshows was that put on by the Medical Service. Here there were exhibits of modern appliances and cures and of the latest hygiene and sanitation. Wherever possible we brought in displays by police forces and local auxiliary corps.

No opportunity was lost of impressing on itinerant politicians and business men from England that India was perilously near a crash and that the fate of India was not, as some fondly imagined, an internal affair of India but an affair that most closely touched the future prospects of Australia, New Zealand, East and South Africa, the already tottering Burma, Malaya and Indonesia. Furthermore, that the collapse of India would bring tumbling down the whole structure of the Asiatic system.

Some, it seemed, believed that if we allowed India to fall into a Chinese chaos, then some sort of a government would finally evolve satisfactorily for India. But history had shown that whenever India relapsed into confusion a foreign nation had come in to take charge. In this present age it must be Russia. But suppose that chaos begat from India

one single leader, who would this man be? Undoubtedly no democrat, but a despot, and that in an over-populated country the pressure of whose population would force him to look beyond his borders to satisfy his people and to conciliate them. That would be the end of the countries I have mentioned. At first under the aegis of U.N.O. India would quietly expand southwards in Asia and Africa, and then, later, blatantly, till these countries were assimilated into the Indian system. His resources would come from Russia, an ardent backer whose empire would thus be expanded into the Southern Seas, cutting the world's surface in half from Arctic to Antarctic.

Chaos in India would lead to the downfall of the infant U.N.O. The North-West Frontier tribes would enter the plains of India: their blood-brothers over the Afghan border would follow them in: into the vacuum must then pour down the purely Afghan tribes, such as the Ghilzais; the Afghans would be drawn in, then the Uzbeks and Tajiks lying athwart the border Oxus; lastly Russian Islam would flood down. U.N.O. must stop the trouble. Then comes the wordy clash of ideologies leading to Russia's quitting of U.N.O. in quest of the dazzling prize, with her leg braced strongly on the start line of Mackinder's Heartland of the World, contesting the race with Chinese Communism.

It was thus that we spoke and reasoned in those days.

At this critical time, we British officers were wondering how to act if the Cabinet ordered us all suddenly to quit. Could we morally accept such an order, making ourselves parties to the terrible carnage that would follow? If we stayed, who would back us in our endeavors to restore order? The first question was easily answered: we could not thus go. We would have to try with our Army to hold the people from each other's throats and to keep some sort of workable administration in being, albeit mainly a military administration. Quietly, to this end, we laid our plans, putting in stores of arms and ammunition where we could find the reliable men, Gurkhas and Indians, to fall in on parade, receive them and be organized into effective fighting units. The only backing we could expect would be from our own local administration, from tough and decided men such as the Governor of Bengal. Maybe that such a cowardly course never crossed the minds of our Home Government, but we were too much concerned with the fates of all these people not to busy ourselves with plans to meet such an extreme occasion. To us it was not material who governed, so long as the government was strong enough to prevent the collapse of India with its awe-inspiring results.

Our Defence Minister, Sirdar Baldev Singh, impressed us as a modest and upright man. That he was ignorant of army affairs was not to be wondered at, but that he seemingly deferred to Sirdar Patel was not auspicious for the future. Too much was referred to this latter Minister, and neither the Defence Minister nor the new Indian Defence Secretary seemed to have freedom of decision on their own initiative. However, we felt sure that as the Defence Minister found his feet he would undoubtedly assert himself.

In mid January Malik Firoz Khan Noon came to Calcutta during the course of conducting an enquiry into the Bihar massacres on behalf of the Muslim League. He was compiling lists of those still missing. He estimated the Muslim dead at 20,000 and was of opinion that Congress had organized a plot to kill off the Muslims of India. (It seemed to me more likely that the Mahasabha was organizing such a plot at that time but certainly not that the Congress political leaders had done so. It would have meant that Mahatma Gandhi was a party to the latter, and that, antipathetic though he might be, was impossible.)

That the massacre was organized, he knew, and cited the preparedness of the Hindu population down to the provision of elephants and lorries fully loaded with offensive weapons, explosives, etc., and the rapid and organized assembly of huge Hindu gangs. (We were willing to allow that the Bihar government had wind of the impending massacre, but not, as many contended, that they actively connived at it.) He retailed instances of quite the most appalling atrocities against women and children which could be conceived.

He and Mr. Suhrawardy rightly pointed out that we were mistaken if we thought that there was no communalism in the Army and said that the minute the British officer was removed, communalism would break out amongst the Indian officers and spread to the men. (This had long been our view.)

They were persuaded, they said, that the British Cabinet intended to oppress the Muslims with a Hindu-British Indian Army and so force the present Hindu Government on India. They opined that without the British officer, civil and military, India would fall to bits.

Firoz Khan referred to his recent public speech in which he had said that in the last resort Muslims must seek Russian help, expressing a hope that the occasion might never arise but that in sheer desperation it might.

What then would Firoz Khan do now in view of the 'Quit India' resolutions passed in 1946 by the Congress Party, by his own Muslim League, and pressed by the forward European bloc so emphatically that the intellectuals of England and sympathizers in America had come to accept their sincerity? His view was that we should take back control of India at once before we weakened our British services too much: that, in doing this, the whole of northern and western India would be solidly behind us and there would be no trouble in Bengal. He believed that trouble in the rest of India would not cost more than 50,000 dead, whereas our present policy (aiming at that time, be it remembered, at a united India) would lead to chaos and to many millions of dead. They both expected that Islam, with India in chaos, would flow in from the north and suck Russia behind it.

I give the gist of this conversation so that it may be clear that these two representatives of their community were honestly in fear that we British would hand them over to—more, force them under the heel of—their arch-enemies.

Later in the month, as if to fulfill their gloomy prophecies, the Constituent Assembly, purely Hindu, declared its aim to be an independent republic, thus to tear off from the Muslims even the gauzy garment of British protection.

In January 1947 we could, had we wished, have just managed to take back control of India if we had thought that law and order were so imperiled as to justify our doing so. Thereafter, with possible disturbances in north India, their cleaving effect on the Army, with our I.C.S. British element depleted and British officers fast leaving the Army, we could no longer do so. From then onwards, either India must govern herself effectively, united or divided, or else we must release our hold before the ever-growing chaos. Dry-mouthed, we watched the unfolding of events beyond our military control.

One bright spot was that the Muslim League was gradually gaining strength under the inspired leadership of Mr. Jinnah.

This gave assurance of firm rule over great areas of north, west, and eastern India, reduced the size of our problem in the event of collapse and gave us certain firm bases from which to restart the exercise of control. We knew that it was not fatal to the future of India that the less virile people from Allahabad to Eastern Bengal should fight among themselves, for the Army, which recruited but little from most of these areas, would readily deal, and easily deal, with their disorders. That, to a great extent, narrowed down the task of keeping the peace in the first place to controlling the big centres of communication while we were dealing with the northern United Provinces into which the Punjab troubles would spread and so strike India a fatal blow. Thus, for Eastern Command, the problem facing us of keeping order and restoring order, even in the event of a sudden command to evacuate all British to the seaports which we feared might come, would be one that could be handled, albeit with difficulty. But we knew that the task in the Eastern Punjab would be beyond the powers of a then disrupted army. This would fall on the shoulders of Northern Command in whose territory the trouble would arise.

From all this, it is evident that for us the centre of interest, of apprehension, had forever shifted northwards. We kept our eye on the ball, the territories of the United Provinces which bordered on the Punjab; we made up our minds that whatever happened in the Punjab we would keep the northern and western United Provinces under control, even if we had to take big risks elsewhere, and whatever the pressure brought to bear to divert us from our object.



By mid-January the Punjab about Murree and Abbottabad was flickering into a blaze, Muslims on the aggressive against Hindus.

Simultaneously there was an India-wide round-up and search of the Communist Party's headquarters and branch offices. The search yielded little that was not previously known to us.

The Princes added their spoonful to the now agitated broth by passing a resolution confirming the reversion of paramountcy to the rulers themselves on the departure of the British, while starting to organize what looked then remarkably like a confederacy of over a score of States. The Muslim League at once supported the Princes in their fissiparous declarations, for the League, intending itself to secede, wished to see as many of the States as possible in their turn weakening India by secession. The Congress was opposed to any signs of independence on the part of States. A glance at a map of India will show how inconvenient it would be for Hindustan to have a system of independent princedoms lying across her internal communications, most of them eager to remain in the Commonwealth whether Hindustan herself wished to do so or not. In Calcutta a leading Congress paper warned the Princes and attacked the Cabinet Mission's award from which these privileged potentates are determined to derive the most benefit. It instanced menacingly the fates of 'Stuarts, Bourbons, Hapsburgs, Romanoffs, Hohenzollerns, the Houses of Savoy and Kara Georgevitch, James I., of England, Marie Antoinette', and set up as shining examples Edmund Burke, Montesquieu and Rousseau. Neither Pandit Nehru nor the Congress Press could have left the Princes in much doubt as to their intentions.

In the middle of February came the next crisis when the Indian Government virtually presented an ultimatum to the Cabinet in London. If the Cabinet would not expel the Muslim League Ministers then the Indian Government would walk out. Thus, the very situation from which patient and imperturbable hard work had saved India in the early autumn of 1946, was now a reality. The whole Muslim world of India proclaimed that the Hindus were trying to gain complete control of the Central Government. It certainly looked as though they were attempting a coup, despite the good reasons they could advance for their demand. Nonetheless, we must concede that it was inconvenient and damaging to their authority to have Muslim colleagues in ministerial office perambulating India shouting madly for Pakistan and at times reviling the very party from which their Hindu brethren were drawn.

If the Cabinet did expel the Muslim Ministers then the Punjab would boil up. It was possible, but unlikely, that the Punjab leaders might be able to keep their followers in check and follow the course of wisdom, trying constitutionally to oust the Unionist ministry of the Punjab. But it was more probable that they would be overborne by the wave of emotion that would sweep northern India at the stark idea of being governed by a completely Hindu government at the Centre, a reversal of all historical relations

between the two communities. In any case, to expel the Muslim Ministers would put more and more Muslims into the Muslim bloc and irrevocably widen the breach between Hindu and Muslim. That would be the least result: the greatest result would be an uprising in the Punjab which would destroy the sole instrument of authority in India, the Indian Army.

On the whole, the risk from expulsion would be very great.

If the Interim Government were permitted by us to 'walk out', then Britain would be left with this huge country on her hands without proper means to govern it. A quasi-military government alone could carry on the administration. If the provincial governments also walked out, then the situation would be parlous, for we recognized that British governors no longer had the means to govern under Section 93 – direct rule without a ministry. The chances were that provincial governments would not 'walk out', for by so doing they might well lose whatever favor they had already gained in the esteem of the people, at the same time leaving others to trespass.

As far as the Army went it was less likely to lead to serious consequence if the Interim Government walked out than if the Muslim Ministers were ejected. Few of the men had any concern whatever for the Interim Government whereas a large proportion of them could easily be scared by headlines declaring that Hindus had grasped sole power in India.

The Indian officers, so long as we explained to them that the 'walk-out' only brought about a temporary setback to national aspirations, would remain sufficiently placid. If we backed up this statement with a few words exhorting them to remember the bestiality of the civil population when it was stirred to violence in Bengal and Bihar, then they would see the good sense in saying and doing nothing which might lead to such happenings among the post-war soldiers of our reorganizing Indian Army.

In Eastern Command itself, expulsion of the Muslim members would leave Bengal reasonably quiet unless, and until, Mr. Suhrawardy declared Bengal a Dominion or independent. Directly that happened we would have violent trouble in North and West Bengal and in Calcutta. Assam would stand on the alert but not riot. Bihar would give little trouble, for its Muslims were too cowed by massacre to rise. Orissa, as ever, would be unmoved. In the United Provinces there would be serious trouble as the Punjab bubbled over its borders. So, for Bengal and the United Provinces we got our troops ready to move, prepared to denude other parts of the Command. At the same time we reviewed all our schemes for the collection and safety of Europeans in case the Interim Government walked out and the United Provinces and Bihar swung at once into an anti-British agitation, compelling the Army to take control without a police force at all or with one that was hostile.

Doubtless much blame will be poured on the greying pates of our Labour Cabinet, but surely they must at least be admired for the adroit way in which they, or the Viceroy who represented them, managed to turn aside such critical occasions as this so that they did not lead to India-wide turmoil.

A few days later, on the 10th February, came the famous Cabinet pronouncement from which we learnt that Lord Wavell was retiring, that Lord Louis Mountbatten was replacing him, and that power was to be handed over in June 1948. But never a word about the expulsion of Muslim Ministers. The Cabinet wisely ignored this ominous demand.

It was now to be expected that the Interim Government, seeing a short term set to its differings, would try to carry on while hoping that a new Viceroy could conjure some lively and acceptable rabbit out of his hat. While seeing that the Muslim League must now strive doubly to gain control of the Punjab and North-West Frontier Province ministries, we in Eastern Command breathed again and moved troops up into the United Provinces to meet the storm which would certainly break over Muslim efforts to seize power to the north.

A slight jerk was administered to our feelings of relief by the Manchester Guardian which was reported in India as saying that we might have to hand over power to a Congress central government by June 1948. Nothing was more likely at that time to set light to northern India and to launch hitherto friendly Muslims against helpless English residents than a suspicion that this might be our intention.

There now started a migration of wealthy Sikhs and Hindus from the Punjab into the United Provinces, notably into salubrious Dehra Dun. Muslims were openly saying that they wanted the British to stay on and administer India and to keep the peace. The Unionist Prime Minister of the Punjab was arresting Muslim League leaders. Rumor had it that he would demand a general election while they were in prison! As a consequence of all this emotion there was a drift of Congress Muslims in the North-West Frontier Province across to the Muslim League ranks. It was said that Congress was not paying its erstwhile Muslim supporters as it should. Thus was northern India bonding into a Muslim bloc. Rather naturally its agitators had orders that they were on no account to harm British people.

News came to us that the Punjab police were now failing to act against their co-religionists unless a British officer was present to compel them.

And so, in the ancient lands of Madra and Gandhara there was a pretty kettle of fish a-boil.

It is now time to see how all these swirling currents were affecting the stream of life in Eastern Command.

The decision of the Muslim League not to join the Constituent Assembly clarified the minds of Muslims so that all they now saw was their antagonism to the Hindu and his Congress. This in turn frightened the Hindu. From various parts of the Command came reports of both communities competing feverishly in the buying of arms and ammunition; in Chittagong in particular weapons were changing hands wholesale, revolvers fetching £40 to £50 apiece and rifles £50 to £60. Of all places Chittagong seemed the most likely to erupt in the very near future. Here we had a Gurkha battalion to keep the peace. At Saidpur in Eastern Bengal there was a small communal riot in January with some seven killed, several injured and fifteen houses burnt.

Reports were arriving of arms and ammunition having been smuggled into Punjab villages by soldiers returning on leave during the war and on release in 1945.

This was a time of preparation for the test of strength to come between the two great religions.

The arrest by the Unionist government of Muslim leaders in the Punjab led, in January, to a *hartal* (closing) of all Muslim shops in Calcutta, to the holding of an Anti-Unionist day and to attempts by Muslims to interfere with passengers on buses in certain areas of the town. Fortunately the confused reports of happenings in the Punjab and the suspense caused by the coming meeting of the All-India Muslim League, prevented Muslim Bengal leaders from precipitating a crisis until it was too late.

Furthermore, the All-India Muslim League decision of the 1st February not to join the Constituent Assembly and violently demanding its abolition, simply exacerbated feeling while leaving Muslims uncertain in their minds as to their present action and future prospects, without leading to an explosion. In the United Provinces many prominent Muslims considered the decision to be detrimental to the future prospects of Muslims in Hindu India, and so openly criticized it. All this led to sufficient wavering and indecision to prevent coherent and violent action, a condition which, as far as we were concerned, was thankfully to be welcomed.

It was therefore in the industrial field that the pervading spirit of unrest and lawlessness found its outlet. Colliery strikes, with the prevention of 'safety men' from attending to their work, led to flooding of pits and kept our sappers on tenterhooks standing by near pitheads for emergency work in the flooded pits. Infantry were sent to mining areas to reinforce the police.

On the 10th January Civil Supplies employees of Calcutta struck work and set out to picket Government offices in which were Muslim employees who had their own

separate Muslim union. The police at once went after them, beat up any who attempted violence and arrested many of them. Had it not been for this quick and resolute action on the part of the police, there would certainly have been a communal riot in Calcutta.

In Bengal, jute, cotton, textile and hosiery mills were out on strike, port workers were out, engineering workers, tramways and a miscellaneous collection of smaller industries. Typewriter firms, aluminum workers and bank clerks were threatening to strike. In all, 72 industrial concerns were out or expected to come out.

Communists chose this occasion to impress on tramway strikers that in certain eventualities Calcutta would become a blood bath and tramway workers would play with white heads as children played with footballs. Some people take their sport seriously.

Students sat on tramlines, had to be removed by police with tear gas and in general made a nuisance of themselves wherever their Leftist or anti-British inclinations took them.

Bengal Congress, being largely financed by rich Marwari merchants, did its best in the interests of its clientele to discourage this spate of strikes.

Our Calcutta soldiers were constantly out on the sweltering streets, patrolling, to give confidence to both parties and in particular to the police. It was not a soldier's role: it was pure police work but the soldiers had not the powers of search and arrest that a policeman possesses. Besides this, our technicians were standing by ready to man power stations, gas works and water supply, so as to keep essential sanitary services, light and water supplies going if the employees suddenly stepped out. Thus, the birthday celebrations of Subhas Chandra Bose, Netaji of the I.N.A., and Viet Nam Day, to show sympathy with Indo-China's struggle with the French, passed off almost quietly. The police did indeed have to fire and to use tear-smoke to move boy or girl students who squatted all over the roads on the latter celebration.

Beneath this bubbling scum of unrest there went on the desultory killings in the byways of old Calcutta.

About it all lolloped the toothless sprite of Famine.

In Assam evictions of Muslim squatters proceeded, inducing the Shillong Muslim League to signal to its higher command for permission to institute a civil disobedience movement in true Gandhian fashion. Fortunately, the Assam Muslim peasants were no more ready than anyone else to accept these Bengali Muslim invaders. At Mymensingh, on the Assam-Bengal border, there was a minor communal affray.

Our own military industrial troubles were small, for only the Central Ordnance Depot at Cawnpore went on strike in early January, necessitating the sending of infantry and extra police to the Depot to keep the strikers in order.

The Bihar government, in order to fulfill its pledges to the I.N.A., now formed a body called the Anti-Smuggling Corps whose business, it was proclaimed, was to prevent Bihar rice being smuggled into Bengal. This deceived no one, for it was most unlikely that Bihar rice, which fetched a high price, would be smuggled into Bengal where it fetched a low one. It looked more likely that border people would be coerced by the I.N.A. members of this Corps into bringing their low-priced rice into Bihar. Later, as I shall tell, Bihar had reason to regret the raising of this Corps.

While Congress were looking in the mouth the gift horse of the 20th February soon to be led in by the new Viceroy, and Muslims were rejoicing at the prospects of Pakistan which they read into the Cabinet statement, and the Left were cursing Britain for dividing India in order that she might regain her hold on that country, the Indian Army marched steadily on, straight to its front.

This was the first time that this generation of professional Indian rank and file had faced the reality of a sweeping change in their country's administration. Contact with the new type of urban-bred technical soldier had led them to think more about political matters than hitherto. The older men viewed with dismay the statement that the British would be leaving India altogether in little over a year. They did not want the British to go, nor did they want to lose their British officers. The newer men speculated eagerly as to their own futures, now brightening with the prospect of rapid promotion as British officers and other ranks thinned out.

Nearly all saw that the British Government was completely sincere, and trust in the British rose higher than ever. Some were beginning at last to see the necessity for 'classing' the Army and perhaps for dividing it. This feeling perforce led to the first slight distrust between Hindu and Muslim in old and tried units, tempered by the firm belief that whatever we said we would only draw out slowly, giving them all time to adjust themselves.

On the whole the Hindus, because of glittering prospects of promotion, and the Muslims, because they saw the chance of escaping from Congress-Hindu rule, looked favorably on the statement.

The British soldier cared for none of these things. He frankly rejoiced at the idea of India's liberty and wished to speed it on because he fully understood that it meant that he would the sooner leave India. He did not like India. Certainly, his was not the free life of Kipling's men. It was a stunted, severely prescribed existence, in a loathsome summer climate—and in Eastern Command it was nearly all summer—with unceasing

duties in aid of the civil power in which he ran much risk of false accusations of cruelty, housebreaking and rape, and for which he got few thanks from the local populace. All the time he had a name to protect, as we were at pains to explain to him. His behavior remained truly excellent, but he did want very badly to quit India.<sup>48</sup>

British officers of the Indian Army were wondering when the terms for their retirement from that Army would come out, what pensions and what compensation they would get. All that they knew was that the younger ones might transfer to the British Army, or be compulsorily transferred, and that the older ones would have their careers peremptorily cut short and be turned out on the world with their families to seek other employment, but with no qualifications to offer to prospective employers. Those who might be fated for transfer to the British Army did not think that their reception would be a particularly good one or that their chances of later preferment would be very favorable. These officers were therefore in a state of much uncertainty and restlessness, and before long came to regard with suspicion any terms which were to be offered to them. This continued to the very end, for less than a month before the 15th August there suddenly came an order cutting the pensions of a quite considerable number of them, by depriving them of the benefit of acting rank.

Even after the 15th August it was discovered at Delhi that a mistake had been made in an order, the order was characteristically interpreted adversely to some officers and the pensions they had expected at once cut. There was no competent authority, by then, to whom to appeal. By then, too, most of these officers had applied to retire and their boats were burnt. There seemed to be no chance of redress.

Here it is as well to record the names of the artillery and infantry units of the British and Indian Armies in Eastern Command in January 1947 which were available to us for the maintenance of law and order.

**UNITED PROVINCES  
80TH INFANTRY BRIGADE GROUP**

Headquarters	Bareilly
4th Indian Grenadiers	Moradabad
7th Baluch Regt.	Cawnpore
3/15th Punjab Regt.	Jhansi

**INTERNAL DEFENCE UNITS**

*British*

2nd King's Own Regt.	Cawnpore
1st Lancashire Fusiliers	Lucknow

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<sup>48</sup> Appendix III, Talking Point No. 37.

1st South Staffordshire Regt.	Agra
1st Wiltshire Regt.	Jhansi

*Indian*

8th Rajputana Rifles.	Allahabad
1st Kumaon Rifles	Allahabad
6th Kumaon Rifles	Benares
4/14 Punjab Regt.	Meerut
218 Garrison Coy.	Shahjahanpur
911 Garrison Coy.	Cawnpore

Stationed at Meerut in the United Provinces but directly under G.H.Q. were:

16th British Brigade Group  
1st King's Regt.  
1st Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regt.  
2nd Duke of Wellington's Regt.  
208 Field Regt. R.A. at Dehra Dun.  
and, at Agra, the 43rd Royal Tank Regt.

**YEAR OF QUITTANCE  
BIHAR AND ORISSA AREA  
5th Indian Division  
INTERNAL DEFENCE UNITS  
*British***

One sqn. 25th Dragoons	Dinapore
1st North Staffordshire Regt.	Dinapore

*Gurkha*

4/3rd Gurkha Rifles.	Muzaffarpur
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*Indian*

4th Mahratta Light Infantry	Ranchi/Dhanbad
3rd Bihar Regt.	Ranchi
214 Garrison Coy.	Ranchi
215 Garrison Coy.	Ranchi

**BENGAL AND ASSAM AREA**

73rd British Bde. Gp.	Calcutta area
East Lancashire Regt.	Calcutta area
York and Lancaster Regt.	Calcutta area
Green Howards	Calcutta area



60th Field Regt. R.A.

Calcutta area

### INTERNAL DEFENCE UNITS

#### *British*

25th Dragoons (less one sqn.)      Calcutta

7th Worcestershire Regt.              Calcutta

#### *Gurkha*

2/2nd Gurkha Rifles                      Ondal

4/2nd Gurkha Rifles                      Calcutta

1/3rd Gurkha Rifles                      Chittagong

#### *Indian*

2nd Kumaon Rifles                        Calcutta

8th Frontier Force Regt.                Dacca

3rd Assam Regt.                         Shillong

206 Garrison Coy.                        Tollygunge

Most of the 5th Division and the Bihar and Orissa Internal Defence units were still out all over Bihar restoring the people's confidence after the disastrous winter killings. As was usual and perhaps natural, the local government strove to cling to the soldiers and not to let them return to their cantonments and their training. Again and again we were told that as soon as we took a company or a battalion away from here or there, then the countryside would again go up in flames. Whenever we intimated that troops must leave them, the Bihar government appealed to high heaven, to the Government of India and to Sirdar Baldev Singh, to restrain us. It was sad that they seemed not at all too proud thereby tacitly to confess to their inability to administer their own province. Nevertheless, in due time, we started gradually to draw troops out and by mid-March had handed back to the civil administration all responsibility for law and order in Bihar. No untoward incident marred our going: far from it, our help and now our departure put heart of grace into the civil administration to attempt the tasks that lay before them. The first of all their tasks was to settle matters with their own police. Of this I shall speak in Chapter XXI, after making a closer survey of affairs in Eastern Command in this portentous New Year.

## XX

### THE NEW YEAR IN EASTERN COMMAND

#### *March*

MEANWHILE, due mainly to happenings in the Punjab, affairs were deteriorating in the rest of the Command. Khizr Hyat Khan had resigned his premiership of the Punjab and he and his Unionist ministry had handed over the reins of government. As the Muslim League lacked the support necessary to form a ministry, Sir Evan Jenkins, Governor of the Punjab, was forced to administer the province under Section 93, without a ministry. This expectedly brought a storm of protest from highly-placed Congressmen and many accusations that Sir Evan himself had engineered the campaign which led to Khizr's resignation. Some onlookers had for long expected the resignation and had thought that if the Muslim League could at last feel itself strong and secure in the Punjab, then there was just a chance that it might decide to partake in the work of the Constituent Assembly. Others, more justifiably, thought that it would hasten the inevitable, the division of India, for the North-West Frontier Province would undoubtedly follow suit before long and elect a Muslim League government. They were right. The more Congressmen protested at the collapse of Khizr's Unionist government, the firmer became the Muslim bloc of India.

India was now well set on the roads of united Islam and divided Brahmanism. In the long-term view there was as little hope of a united Hindu party as of unity between Muslim and Hindu. Congress and Mahasabha, one socialistic and the other theocratic, would see to that.

What we did know now for certain was that Muslim and Sikh were about to make a physical test of strength in the Punjab. The test came very quickly. Tara Singh, the Sikh leader, had been talking very large of the manner in which the Sikhs with their long *kirpans* (swords) would deal with the Muslims armed only with *lathis* (staves). It is not my business here to suggest who started the trouble. It is enough to say that if the Muslims were the aggressors, certainly the Sikhs provoked them to it. As these first riots in the model province concerned us only indirectly, we need not give them much notice here. The loss of life in the riot-stricken cities was not great, but the destruction of property was considerable. Muslim tribesmen poured in on the Abbottabad, Murree and Rawalpindi areas, committing murder and rapine. The most striking and ominous feature of these troubles was the widespread use of firearms, confirming our suspicions

that the majority of looted weapons from the Burma area had found their way into Punjab villages.

The Army again earned for itself, at the very hearth of its own Punjab homes, a great name for impartiality and the gratitude of all and sundry. Service men on leave and retired from the Army rendered valuable assistance in helping the afflicted of both communities, in keeping up the morale of the inhabitants, in steadying the panicky and in refuting rumors. Though the troubles were widespread from Peshawar to Murree, Multan and Ludhiana, these riots were courteous and chivalrous compared with the bestial brutalities of the coming summer.

The Sikhs had the worst of the exchanges and vowed revenge.

Sikhs returning from the Punjab to Bihar and Bengal were spreading all sorts of alarmist stories of atrocities, burnings and looting. The stories frightened Hindus and Muslims alike, the former fearing imitation of the Punjab in Bengal, and the latter fearing reprisals in Bihar and Calcutta. Congress chose this time to come out with its resolution for the partition of the Punjab, anathema to the other community. As a result, bands of Hindus and Muslims clashed in north Calcutta on the night of the 16th March. The police rushed to the scene and suppressed the trouble. By dawn on the 17th March the city was sizzling with rumor and counter-rumor and panic was rife. Murders continued stubbornly in the alleyways of the town.

Muslim Pakistan Day did not produce in Calcutta the expected ferment which Muslim loudspeakers merited, blowing insults and irritations at Hindus. The police forcibly removed the worst offender of these from Harrison Road and disposed strong forces throughout the affected area, keeping the two mobs apart. Removal of the loudspeaker so enraged the Muslims that they rushed out in a mob for Harrison Road and were only driven back by a cordon of Gurkha armed police at the point of the bayonet. The only other incident was of a Muslim boy who picked up a Muslim bomb in a Muslim latrine and blew his hand off.

Firing by troops and police occurred daily, as did stabbing assaults and bomb and acid throwing. On the 29th March the Kumaon Regiment opened fire twice in the Ultadonga area in north-east Calcutta. Our Intelligence men lit upon an acid-making factory in the Maniktalla road and cleaned it out. Just after midnight, early on the 31st March, the Kumaonis were again firing, breaking up a general uprising in the same affected area. That day there were no buses on the streets, drivers and passengers having been deterred by the attacks of acid throwers.

With the police unable to cope with scattered organized killings in Howrah, the York and Lancaster Regiment sent troops into that district while the East Lancashire Regiment handled outbreaks in Entally.

Loud complaints came from the Muslim quarter of Narekeldunga against the 2nd Kumaon Regiment which was most effectively keeping the area quiet. This was a *bustee* area, the worst sort of Calcutta slum, where the Muslim majority were rowdy and aggressive and had burnt every Hindu hut that the Hindu Kumaonis failed to protect in time. The Kumaonis took strict measures and stopped the trouble, so the truculent ones sent up to the highest in the Bengal Muslim government a wail against Kumaoni oppression and cruelty.

This was duly credited and handed on, like most of such communal invective, to the Area Commander, who took no notice of it and left the Kumaonis to their own good devices. This did not prevent rumors being spread, to raise the hair on Hindu heads, that the dreaded Punjabi Muslim police were to replace impartial Kumaonis.

By the 7th April troops and police had the troubles in Howrah and Calcutta well under control, in no small part due to the local government having proclaimed a State of Emergency in those places and having clamped on a nightly curfew.

Lawlessness had hardly broken the surface this time, yet our records showed that in the week up to 1st April casualties were:

	Killed	Injured
Calcutta.	85	607
Howrah.	11	95

a total of over 800 known casualties. How many never came to light one cannot say, but it is fair to assume that about 1,200 people were killed or maimed in those few days. Yet one cannot describe any particular incidents. Little crowds, little affairs in little streets; leaving behind them on the ground two or three dead with a few injured staggering away or being borne off by one side or the other. In the end, casualties climb into the thousands.

Police and soldiers worked together to restore peace and restored what we had come to regard as peace, a chronic situation in which individual *goondas* took their toll of isolated and unprotected members of the other community but in which mobs found no opportunity to battle with each other. That position held till the 14th August, with occasional bursts of more murderous activity. Elsewhere in the Command there were other outbreaks.

In the United Provinces a sharp and serious riot took place at Utraula, north-east of Fyzabad. This, oddly enough, was an agrarian uprising. The 8th Punjab Regiment stood to but were not needed. This stir set Kurja alight, where a fight between boys of Jat and Muslim schools led to a full-sized adult battle. In Cawnpore two rival processions

clashed, but serious trouble was averted by the police who opened fire and forcibly seized their banners, and by the King's Own who turned out and pushed patrols through the streets of the town. Curfew was enforced.

In Bareilly two people were killed and a curfew proclaimed.

Assam contributed its quota as a result of squatter immigrants from Bengal resisting the police at a place near Barpetta. The immigrants tried to cross from Goalpara district into Kamrup for illegal squatting. Police were forced to open fire, killing eight of them and wounding nine. In Bengal the Muslim Press at once went into peals of protestation, but luckily failed to stir their compatriots to reprisals. This, and the jailing of Muslim leaders in anticipation of a threatened civil disobedience campaign, were the contributions of Assam. However, they shook the Assam government sufficiently to make it demand from us troop reinforcements, despite the fact that there was already a battalion sitting in Shillong and that Assam had for long been lucky enough to possess a very fine civil armed force in the shape of the five battalions of Assam Rifles, consisting mostly of Gurkhas. The fact of the matter was that the government was scattering its police resources in small packets all up the Brahmaputra valley, their dispositions leading the uncharitable to suppose that their first duty was to ensure that the members of the government and their relatives came to no harm. Consulting our own Area Commander and our own Intelligence staff we refused any reinforcement at all in view of the perplexed affairs in Bengal and the United Provinces. We took a chance on Assam. Refusal led to protests to the Viceroy and to Sirdar Baldev Singh. The latter supported the Assam claim but we still declined to dispatch troops to Assam and were justified by events. Our resources were too stretched to permit us to waste a single man. I do not suggest that the situation in Assam did not on the surface appear critical: in fact, judging solely by the demands of Indian Deputy Commissioners sent to the Premier, from all over Assam, it would have been just to assume that a great Muslim invasion of Assam was imminent and, in places, had already begun. Even without these irresponsible witnesses, the affair had its perils. Mymensingh Muslims are a tough lot and courageous. It was they who most threatened the peace of Mr. Bardoloi's province. The Bengal Muslim League was reiterating its intention of organizing an invasion and there were certainly movements of parties of roughs and *ne'er do wells* towards the border. In one place a few men of the Assam Rifles turned out to cope with a mob of some 10,000 of these people, displayed determination and some automatic weapons and turned them back. In our opinion it only needed more such demonstrations by the Assam Rifles in order to frighten off the 'invaders'. We acted—or were inert—accordingly.

The threat of invasion was made to look a little more realistic by the organization of the Muslims into bands of eighteen men each, that being the number of troopers with whom Hindu Bengal under Lakshmana Sena had in A.D. 1199 been conquered by a Muslim leader, Muhammad Khilji. Had the Indian administrators and local Hindu

inhabitants taken a more active part in World War II, they would have gained that experience which would have saved their nerves a great deal of overwork on this lesser occasion. Sir Frederick Burrows assured us that the Prime Minister of Bengal had taken all steps to stop any organized movement by the Muslim League of Bengal against Assam and agreed that his information indicated unnecessary alarm on the part of the Assam government. We conveyed Mr. Suhrawardy's assurance to the Assam government through Brigadier Bain.

Throughout March and April legal action was being taken by the Assam government to evict Muslim squatters from State land, by force where necessary. Legally, the action was correct, but it was doubtless inspired by the determination of the Bengal Muslim League to fill Western Assam with Muslims and thereby so to alter the balance of population that there would be a Muslim majority in the area and so a good chance in days to come of Western Assam becoming a part of a Muslim province. Equally, the Congress government of Assam was determined to prevent this and so to keep the Hindu complexion of its territory. Therefore, much pressure was put on us to send troops to Assam in anticipation of disturbances'. Apart from our shortage of troops there was thus an added reason for not reinforcing Assam heavily and that reason was that if we did so it was probable that, even if our men were not used for the direct oppression of Muslims, they might well be used to replace those who would be ready and able to oppress them. It was not for us to become partners in a political intrigue on either side. If there were riots, well and good: then we could go in and impartially quell them if the Assam government could not do so. By then, we would know who were the instigators.

Finally, in April, in order to look after the Assam border and Eastern Bengal, we dispatched a battalion of the 5th Division to Eastern Bengal with strict orders that they were not to be used in Assam without our specific orders, for if Assam knew there was a chance of their crossing the border they would at once go over our heads in a demand for them to be brought over to Dhubri.

In Bihar a sharp riot broke out at Ranchi of all places, where never in our history had we known a communal disturbance. Houses and shops were burnt and several people were killed. The troops being called in, order was restored, but curfew remained on in the town for many days.

At the very end of the month came serious police trouble in Calcutta. So, at one and the same time, we had on our plate a Muslim 'invasion' of Assam, an Assam squatter campaign, serious and widespread rioting in Calcutta and its suburbs, a police rebellion in Bihar, to which I shall devote the next chapter, a riot in Ranchi, ominous rumblings of bitter clashes in the United Provinces, now a police mutiny in Calcutta, and on our borders serious fighting in the Punjab which was spreading to those districts – Ambala, Rohtak, Hissar and Gurgaon – which marched with our own United Provinces areas of

mixed population. If we wasted men on needless expeditions and failed to stop any one of these from getting beyond our control, then the Punjab fighting would spread and the Ganges would be as a river of petrol, racing the flames along its entire length from Hardwar to the Hooghli and flaring them across to Eastern Bengal and the Assam borders. The whole business was far too heavily fraught with terrible consequences for any one of us to be able to afford not to worry about it. Factions, other than the two warring religions, were lost to sight in this ocean of troubles.

Of fresh troops we had practically none. The 5th Division had been out for months in the wet of Eastern Bengal and the torrid plains of Bihar. The men had been under active service conditions without the compensation of extra allowances and rations, and on a duty which all disliked intensely. They were tired, so were the men of the Calcutta area and the rest of the troops of the Bihar garrison. Only in the United Provinces were there any fresh units and it was there that we expected to need them most.

Yet another calamity had added itself to our already congested programme.

The Gurkha armed police of Calcutta and Bihar are mostly 'domiciled' Gurkhas, men whose families have resided in India for one or two generations. In some cases they are half-caste, having an Indian mother. These men are only enlisted into most Gurkha regiments as clerks or bandsmen as they are not considered to be of the same steady material as the Gurkha straight from Nepal.

On the night of the 1st April a Gurkha armed policeman on duty near the Museum in Chowringhee called upon two urgently driven cabs to stop for examination. He brought his rifle to the ready and, whether by accident or intent, fired a round. This round brought one of the drivers down dead in the road. The driver was a Muslim, the policeman a Hindu. The Bengal government was Muslim. The constable was arrested and charged with murder. As a result, on the following night the Gurkha constables of D Company refused to carry out their duties and more or less confined the Armed Inspector to his barracks, demanding that the Commissioner of Police should come down and interview them. The Commissioner came, he talked to them and heard their complaint against the arrest of the constable and of his being charged with murder under Section 302 I.P.C. Then came the *fons et origo* of their grievance, their amenities and treatment as compared with those of the imported Punjabi Muslim policemen. The latter were regarded as Mr. Suhrawardy's personal bodyguard, to be favored in all things. They were brought in in a hurry and no immediate accommodation was available for them. Mr. Ispahani, a rich Muslim merchant and friend of Mr. Suhrawardy, at once offered his town mansion. Here they were housed in luxury and everything done for them. Daily they paraded the streets in their drill uniform and black berets, for all the world like our own soldiers. Most of them were indeed ex-soldiers. The Hindu population referred to them as 'The Pakistan Occupation Army of

Bengal'. In contrast, the Gurkha armed police remained in their wretched barracks, little more than huts, and with no favors of kindly treatment bestowed on them.

In short, the Bengal ministry, by unfair treatment and taking a communal line, was fast ruining the one reliable police force that Calcutta possessed, a force that had taken the government safely through all its disturbances of the past two years, despite abuse from both Hindu and Muslim papers—just as it suited their politics from time to time—and despite the cruel boycott by Hindus through long months of 1946. The Commissioner of Police released the constable and promised that he would investigate the matter of accommodation and other amenities so that the Gurkhas would be as fairly treated as the Punjabi Muslims.

An enquiry was held into the firing on the 1st April and the constable was unfortunately re-arrested (only to be released again later and the case withdrawn). The consequences of this action were that the next time the Gurkha police went out on patrol they used their rifles without provocation.

On the night of the 9th April four Gurkha armed police were attacked in Zakaria Street, a Muslim quarter. One was injured and another missing. At 9.15 a.m. the next day six Gurkha policemen fired in the direction of a returning patrol containing a Deputy Commissioner and three Punjabi Muslim police. There were no casualties. At 3.15 p.m. a truckload of Gurkha police was moving through the Zakaria Road area when bricks were thrown at them. They at once opened fire up and down the road, expending about 100 rounds. There was immediate panic. One boy was killed. At 7 p.m. that evening Gurkha police fired on two Muslims. All this happened at a time when Gurkhas in Calcutta were being fined by the Muslim government for wearing a khukri, their usual maid-of-all-work. During the 18th and 19th April there were several clashes between Gurkhas, both civilians and armed police, and Muslims. On the 18th April a Gurkha constable in mufti was involved in a brawl with several Muslims and received small knife injuries. He went off and brought about thirty of his fellow Gurkha policemen armed with khukris and rifles. They assaulted shopkeepers and pedestrians in the neighborhood. During this commotion another Gurkha policeman was stabbed and several Muslims injured. At 1 p.m. a Gurkha civilian was stabbed and died on the spot. A Gurkha police patrol, passing the scene later on, opened fire.

On the 29th April another Gurkha civilian was knifed. A Gurkha policeman, the worse for liquor, took up his cause, quarreled with some Muslims and was assaulted. A company of Gurkha police turned out and attacked the nearby Muslim *bustee*, killing six and injuring others. Houses were broken into and there was looting.

These and other irresponsible transgressions and acts of indiscipline led to these police being taken off all duties. If the Punjabi Muslim police are allowed to shoot Hindus, Sikhs and Gurkhas, then why should we not kill Muslims?



If the present preferential treatment goes on, then we cannot serve any longer. It was not until their grievances were remedied and they were put into better barracks that they returned to a more normal frame of mind and became again a reliable force. We, quite early on at the Governor's request, sent a British officer of a Gurkha battalion down to report on the conditions of service and amenities of these men. He listed their grievances, which were mainly those I have enumerated, and reported to the Governor through the usual channels. He insisted that the morale of these Gurkhas was high, despite their recent unruly behavior, and that proper treatment would soon restore them to their former efficiency and to their traditional impartiality. To help in this we lent the police one of our British officers from a Gurkha regiment.

There had been talk of disarming them but this we deprecated, for to do so might well have set going the three million or so Gurkhas who lived in those parts of eastern India. Our advice was taken and this indignity was not put upon them.

The incident gave one cause to wonder whether any mixed police force of both communities could possibly function efficiently under a strongly communal ministry. That adjective applied in those days to every single ministry in the five provinces of Eastern Command. It also applied to the Central Government in so far as the leading Sikh and Hindu members controlled the policy of that Government. Pandit Nehru was and is a shining exception.

Fortunately for us we were getting the upper hand of the Calcutta troubles when these Gurkhas went wrong, and that was lucky, for they had always been the one part of the police force that could be depended upon to stand on the burning streets when all but they of the police had fled.

In Calcutta an evil growth had recently formed. It was the Nepalese National Congress, a body of low-class domiciled and half-caste Gurkhas, led by a kami (shoemaker) and permeated with Indians of the extreme Left and of Communist views. This organism sought to attach itself to all organized bodies of Gurkhas in India who served the British directly or indirectly. Doubtless it had its suckers on the Calcutta Gurkha armed police. Later, it attached itself to the Army and did no small measure of damage.

The traffic constables of Calcutta were next upset because the pay clerk could not get to the office to pay them on the correct day. He was held up by the disturbances. However, this soon blew over.

Strikes were still continuing in Bengal and Bihar. The worst was the Calcutta port strike when the Hooghli River had not been dredged for some time. By the 20th March there were six feet less of water in the river. The shipping position in Calcutta docks was serious.

The Communist-controlled tramway men of Calcutta remained obdurate. They were supported by the public, we were given to understand by the Calcutta students, that public which suffered more from the immobilization of trams than anyone else. At a meeting in the University Hall on the 19th March, some 3,000 students with a mixture of Trade Union representatives vowed that the people of Calcutta would rather walk than travel on trams operated by workers whose just demands had not been met. They would rip up the lines and cut the cables first.

And so the public was committed!

At the Kalighat tram depot, a solitary tram loaded with loyal workers stood ready to go forth, its only route being through the area where a meeting had just been held and where it would certainly have met a violent end. It did not venture.

That evening students collected at this depot and started to stone the police. One came to think that these activities were a part of the University curriculum; if so, they were more popular than other subjects.

The tram strike went on and the public walked, because the students said they liked it.

It is pleasant to some to say I told you so to the rueful one who has had a fall. We refrained when the United Provinces government sent a formal protest to the Bihar government against the violent activities of the ex-I.N.A. Anti-Smuggling Corps<sup>49</sup> and its propensity for loosing off bullets into United Provinces territory to the grievous discontent of its inhabitants. But soon there was grimmer cause than ever for a feeling of smugness. Professor Abdul Bari, a leading light in the Trades Union movement of whom we have spoken before in these pages, and moreover the President of the Bihar Provincial Congress Committee, was motoring along the road to Khasrupur, south-east of Patna, when he was stopped by the local Anti-Smuggling patrol. Words were exchanged and one of the patrol shot and killed the Professor. There were many public professions of grief by leading Congressmen at the Professor's untimely death. These ex-I.N.A. men were very light on the trigger.

The Bihar government now decided to disarm their Anti-Smuggling Corps. It was expected that they would give trouble and the ministry asked General Stable for military help. General Stable said that he did not think it would be necessary to help in the first place but that in case there was trouble he would have soldiers ready to lend a hand. He said, moreover, that the only soldiers available for the task would be the 2/2nd Gurkhas, who had been prisoners in Malaya and knew the I.N.A. well.

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<sup>49</sup> See Chapter XIX.

I have said that political parties other than the two great contestants were barely able to put a foot on the Indian stage at this time. However, Dr. R. M. Lohia of the Socialist Party of India, who was now meddling with the Nepal National Congress, managed to stir up trouble in Nepal. In so doing he made the autocratic Nepalese government (who were already a little perturbed at Mr. Nehru's ideas of Socialism for all and unwilling to appear to him as what they were, conservative and self-interested) at once assume in the eyes of progressive India the role of arch-reactionaries. Dr. Lohia engineered a strike in Nepal's new and one and only cotton mill at Biratnagar, near the Bihar border. Before long his party managed to accuse Nepal of using the harshest measures to put down the strike and of shooting strikers. All this was false but Nepal, having no Press in India, was, to the delight of her accusers, in great difficulties in refuting these charges, or in denying rumours that she had cast agitators to the lions to be torn up and eaten. The party then sent an ultimatum to Nepal demanding the release of arrested strikers on pain of country-wide agitation in Nepal.

In the end, concessions were made and the strike was over.

The rulers of Nepal had very large personal investments in India, so it was most necessary, apart from political reasons, to remain on terms of friendship with the Central Government of India. It is a matter of doubt whether the concessions finally made by the Nepalese Princes in handing over regular units of their men to India have not been too big a price to pay for temporary comfort in their palaces in Khatmandu.

To show how scattered were the troops of the Bihar Garrison, here are the places at which detachments were still stationed to deal with the aftermath of the November rioting:

Dinapur	1st North Staffords less two coys.
Arrah	One coy. 1st North Staffords less one pl.
Bankipur	One coy. 1st North Staffords plus one pl.
	Two tps. 25th Dragoons
Monghyr	74th Fd. Coy. (5 Div.)
	214th Garrison Coy. less two pls.
	One tp. 25th Dragoons
Gaya	One tp. 25th Dragoons
Muzaffarpur	4/3rd Gurkhas less three coys.
	One coy. 2/2nd Gurkhas
Darbhangha	One coy. 4/3rd Gurkhas
Chapra	One coy. 4/3rd Gurkhas Motihari .
Jamalpur	One pl. 214th Garrison Coy.
Mokameh	One pl. 214th Garrison Coy.
Kharagpur	One coy. 3rd Bihar Regt.
Piska .	3rd Bihar Regt. less one coy. and two pls.

Purulia	Two pls. 3rd Bihar Regt.
Silwai	4th Mahratta Light Infantry less three coys, and two pls.
Dhanbad	One coy. 4th Mahratta Light Infantry
Jamshedpur	One coy. 4th Mahratta Light Infantry plus 2 pls.
Ranchi	One coy. 4th Mahratta Light Infantry plus 2 pls.

In closing this account of the happenings of March and of the first day or two of April, I will narrate one of the few incidents of misbehavior in a British unit and then describe the views that we held in early March as to the only manner left to us, in the then existing conditions in India, of handing over some sort of a peaceful state to our successors.

For several months there had been thefts of military vehicles from military car parks in Calcutta and Ranchi. Our information went to show that British soldiers were implicated, but never a clue could be found. Finally, Colonel Gregory came on information that led him to believe that on the night of st April an attempt was to be made to steal vehicles from Fort William. A three-ton lorry was used as bait and close to it hid a British officer, Moorshead, and a civil police sergeant. The thieves mounted the vehicle and started to drive it off. Moorshead called on them to halt. They drove on, refusing a challenge to surrender, so he fired in the air as a warning and then fired one shot at the thieves. With this he winged one of them and the man dropped to the ground. A second man, fearing a repetition of Moorshead's marksmanship, promptly surrendered. The third man, nicknamed "Killer" in true gangster style, managed to escape on foot. From this the whole gang was, hit by bit, rounded up: they were a crew of roughs who had got together in one of our British gunner regiments.

Their method was to take the vehicles to Park Lane in Calcutta where a boy of the name of Lalu awaited them. Lalu called the civilian drivers: the vehicles were handed over and driven away. A Jewish-Indian made payment on the following day. Typical of spivs, he ran a dance 'academy' or saloon.

Moorshead, having nailed the British side of the gang, then went on to help the police to pick up the rest. Arrived at the Jew's house they were just in time to catch the owner and a pillion rider who came with him on his motor-cycle. They now found that they had also bagged the gang that had been holding up taxi drivers at the point of the pistol and taking their earnings.

It was a great relief both to us and to the police to have this band of marauders behind bars at last. They had taken many weeks to find, their tracks always being crossed by Anglo-Indian gangs, the police and ourselves thus being continually led away from our own unswept parlour.

It is interesting to recollect now how we looked upon the All-India political problem in February and throughout March. We were still, as far as we knew, committed to handing over an India on the Mission plan; that is, an India which had some sort of central government. As yet, we had no official notice that India was to be divided, however much we in the Army felt it to be inevitable. Thus, the intention to attain unity, the inevitability of division, and the fatal consequences of leaving India in confusion, had all to be considered in our appreciating the Indian problem. At our headquarters we had fully considered for a long time the various aspects of division: now we considered the manner of handing over as much of India as could be handed over, and doing so peacefully. This is what we saw.

Firstly, we assumed that it was axiomatic that any government by Hindus must be by bureaucratic or autocratic, rather than democratic, methods. Thus, every reasonably stable Hindu provincial government must be given the resources to govern in this manner, if necessary by compulsion. That meant that each must be given a Hindu part of the Army with which to exercise its power. As a corollary to this the stable Muslim provinces must be given Muslim troops. As no British civil officials could conscientiously uphold the methods which these 'ministries' would use in order to govern, they must be removed. The 'unstable' provinces would then be the beneficiaries of the residue of the Indian Army, all its British officers not still needed at G.H.Q. itself, of any British troops whom the Home Cabinet could spare and of the British administrators now withdrawn from the 'stable' provinces. Thus, the 'unstable' provinces would be British-administered until they could be made 'stable'. We considered the Punjab and Bengal to be 'unstable' provinces. The North-West Frontier Province would be 'unstable' until it had a Muslim government.

The Indian Army would have to be reorganized into 'class' units, but this we had rather wearisomely protested for some time.

Thus, the Viceroy could hand over 'power' to all the 'stable' provinces as soon as troops could be placed at their disposal, and put under Indian lieutenant and major-generals and more junior officers. Handing over could then take place province by province. Moreover, the impossible position of British officers and British units being used to oppress minorities by force would be avoided, as well as the unnatural strain now about to be put on the mixed Muslim-Hindu units. Indians would get the promotion they longed for and would be given experience of responsibility.

Government at the Centre would continue as at the time. We hoped that to act in progressive steps in this manner would give everyone time to find the solution to India's troubles that we all so ardently desired, while keeping British-controlled forces in the Punjab and Bengal to operate in any badly disturbed area and towards the frontier. We anticipated that from it all would logically emerge some sort of impartial

British-Indian force additional to the Hindu and Muslim armies. This force we regarded as at first essential to a divided India.

Towards the end of March Lord Louis Mountbatten arrived. We went to Delhi to say goodbye to Lord Wavell, who was, as usual, quite imperturbable and without any rancor. There, too, we met the incoming Viceroy sparkling as a new Rolls Royce. The still serviceable tractor trundled out of Delhi.

At G.H.Q. Indian officers were cock-a-hoop at the bright prospects of easily gained promotion shining before them.

Our own Commander-in-Chief had by now sunk into a position of far less dignity than he had occupied before the new Interim Government was formed and before his position as Defence Member had been taken over by Sirdar Baldev Singh. Bit by bit his influence had waned. His position was the unenjoyable one which invited kicks from all and sundry, and ha'pence from none.

It is now time to turn, as promised, to the police rebellion in Bihar of March 1947.

## XXI

### THE BIHAR POLICE REBELLION

#### *March*

THE show piece of March in Eastern Command was the rebellion, for such it was, of the Bihar police and so, although it came towards the end of the month, I will tell the tale at once.

The Bihar police had been in a bad way for many months. It would be a long story to tell how its spirit had been progressively and consistently sapped. It may be said that its troubles dated from the violent outbreak of 1942 which followed on what came to be called the Cripps Offer. This civil outbreak took place in the United Provinces, Bihar and West Bengal. It was really an attempt to throw down by force the so-called British Government and in doing so to wreck our chances of defending India, thus letting the Japanese into the country. In the middle of a war, with such immense issues for the World, the British Commonwealth and India at stake, this rebellion right athwart our lines of communication had to be suppressed and quickly. It was suppressed. Those leaders who incited it thereupon vowed vengeance against the men who had dealt with it, a vow to which I refer more than once in these pages for its pernicious effect on our Civil Services in India's crisis. Prominent among these Services were the Bihar police. It soon became apparent that Britain, in fulfilling her promise to give India self-government, would hand over a considerable part of India to Congress rule, that is, to those who threatened reprisals against the police. The Indian officers and men were placed in a quandary. If they continued faithfully to serve the Bihar Government with its British Governor and British Inspector-General of Police, then they would be making things impossible for themselves in the future: if they refused to serve them, then it would be mass indiscipline. Whichever way they turned there was no security for their careers and for their families.

This uncertainty was the very opportunity that Congress and Congress Socialist Parties, no less than Communists, were seeking. They worked incessantly on it by threats and by winning over the constables to their own political creed.

Probably the most unpleasant side of all this was the intrigue that was being conducted by certain Indian police officials against their own British Inspector-General, a thoroughly competent and devoted man. In the end they made things so impossible for him that he retired. A Muslim, Mr. Hamid, took his place. He cannot have enjoyed the

early days of his tenure any more than the retiring Inspector-General had enjoyed his later ones.

In the last week of March the communal situation in the province was still very precarious. We had withdrawn our troops who had been sent in originally to deal with the Bihar massacre, the Hindu assault on a Muslim minority, but had recently dispatched the 4/3rd Gurkhas, a squadron of the 25th Dragoons, the 1st North Staffordshire Regiment and men of the Bihar Regimental Centre on three days of flag marching round the Bihar countryside to let the populace see that troops were about, ready to pounce if the peace were broken. On the 24th March these troops turned in to their barracks at Dinapore and Gaya for a rest.<sup>50</sup> The weather was by now uncomfortably hot and sticky. The men flapped the dirt out of their uniforms and equipment, shook out their bedding rolls powdered with Bihar dust and made themselves ship-shape in their long, low barracks. Pakistan and anti-Pakistan days had passed by peacefully, perhaps due to their lorry-borne march through the villages. There seemed to be no other 'Day' impending and officers looked forward to a period of peace and of the military training so badly needed by men who had by now become almost a highly armed form of police force.

The Bihar police were regarded by us soldiers as being in a chronic state of indiscipline but as being composed of so sorry a stamp of man as not to be worth our concern.

Suddenly, at 5.30 p.m., as a short sundowner appeared to be the next event of any interest and importance, the telephone bell rang and General Stable at Dinapore learnt from the Deputy Inspector-General of Police at Patna that the police had attacked their officers at the police lines and had taken charge of their barracks and armory. There was urgent need for military aid. A mutinous police in charge of their own armory, with to them unlimited ammunition, was not to be tolerated for a moment in case the habit spread and the Army found itself let in for a stand-up fight with small-bore weapons. So General Stable ordered the North Staffords at Dinapore and the 25th Dragoons at Patna to have respectively a company and a troop ready at once. Meanwhile the Chief Secretary rang through to say that the Deputy Inspector-General of Police and the District Magistrate were on their way with the latest and worse information and a written request for troops. General Stable ordered a second company and second troop to get ready.

At 8.30 p.m. a motorized column consisting of two companies of the North Staffords and two troops of armored cars of the 25th Dragoons were on their way to the scene of trouble, the Column Commander, Lieut.-Colonel Lawton, going forward to reconnoiter. By 10 p.m. the force was disposed for action and the District Magistrate warned the rebels at their armory that unless they came out singly and laid down their arms the

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<sup>50</sup> See Map No. 4.



armory would be attacked and taken by force. The armory garrison came out and surrendered: the North Staffords marched into the lines, took over the armory and rounded up the constables – an ignominious ending to their brave adventure. They did not oppose the soldiers and formally gave in.

Colonel Lawton kept his column at the police lines that night, patrolling into the city to make sure that the incident was to have no repercussions.

General Stable had in the meantime put the 3rd Bihar Regiment at Ranchi at one hour's notice to move, apprehending that the trouble at Patna would not be the only manifestation of the rottenness of the police.

A report now came in that the police at Gaya were on strike but that the local magistrate thought he could settle the affair peaceably. At Gaya Colonel Muller improvised a company of instructors and recruits from his Bihar Training Centre and prepared it for action.

A Joint Information Room was established for police and Army at Patna, Bihar's capital town. Night went by peacefully but reports were coming in to this Room of the police attitude hardening all over the province, particularly at Gaya and Monghyr. Information came in of an armed rebel truck moving in from Bihta, but too late to be caught. However, a little later in the day the Gurkha armed police and a truckload of North Staffords went out in pursuit of a vehicle carrying the leader of the rebellion, the notorious Ramanand Tiwari. Our men came up with it, cornered the rebel lorry in the city, and the Gurkhas opened fire on the enemy, who returned their fire. The rebels escaped, leaving one wounded man on the ground. The soldiers did not have to use their weapons.

Later, on the evening of the 26th March, the magistrate at Monghyr asked the Station Commander to get troops ready as he had heard that there was trouble at Jamalpur and he was sending a police party under the Superintendent of Police to report to him. By 9 p.m. the Superintendent of Police was back with the information that the Jamalpur police had seized their armory at 6 p.m., assaulting their British sergeant and taking the keys.

The Commissioner of Bhagalpur Division happened to be in Monghyr that evening and summoned a conference of civil and military officers, as it seemed certain that the Monghyr police would also go over that night. At 9.40 p.m. the conference met and discussed their plans to capture Jamalpur and Monghyr armories simultaneously, handing in a formal written request for troops to be sent in aid to the civil power. While the conference had been discussing, the police had been acting and had seized the Monghyr armory. Major J. Parfect was in command of the troops at Monghyr, the 74th

Field Company of Indian Engineers, who were working at a bridging training camp on the river. We now turn to Major Parfect's men and Monghyr.

At 6.30 p.m. on 26th March, Mr. J. S. Elliott, I.C.S., the Additional District Magistrate in Monghyr, came to Major Parfect and told him that at about 6 p.m. the police in Jamalpur had threatened to strike and seize their own armory. The Superintendent of Police and other civil officials had gone over there to find out what was the trouble and to clear it up if possible. He asked that troops might be available to aid the Civil if necessary. A platoon was put at fifteen minutes' notice to move. At 9 p.m. a civilian reconnaissance party arrived back from Jamalpur, reporting that the police there had mutinied at 6 p.m. at the instigation of Indar Deo Singh, a previously dismissed constable: they had assaulted the sergeant in charge and taken his revolver and keys and had refused to hand the armory keys to the Superintendent when he arrived.

At Monghyr those police who were in their police lines were still loyal but they were very likely to mutiny that night. An order had been received from the Government that the military were to seize the police armories at Monghyr and Jamalpur and arrest the mutineers. The Sergeant-Major of the Monghyr police had reported that his armory was still intact.

Major Parfect's military striking force consisted of three platoons of one officer and twenty-five men each, from his own company of Sappers; two platoons of one V.C.O. and twenty men each, of 214th Garrison Company, the garrison company in Monghyr; one section of one V.C.O. and ten men, also of the 214th Garrison Company. The force was armed with Stens, Brens and rifles only.

He at once sent two platoons of the 74th Field Company under Captain Sparks to seize and hold the Monghyr Armoury and himself took one platoon of the 74th Field Company and two platoons of the 214th Company to seize Jamalpur armory by threat of armed action.

Mr. Elliott meanwhile learnt that the Monghyr police armory had been forced and that arms and ammunition were being issued to the mutineers, so Major Parfect switched the whole of the 74th Field Company to compel the Monghyr police to surrender immediately, sending Lieut. R. E. Holmes with a platoon round to outflank their positions. He himself led B and C platoons straight through the Fort Gateway and on to the police barracks parade ground, hoping they would surrender when they saw a military force. Lieut. Holmes with A platoon moved in transport to his outflanking position.

At 1 a.m. on coming through the Fort gates, Major Parfect saw that the gate leading into the police lines was closed. On approaching to within thirty yards he saw a man put his rifle across the top of the gate and take aim. He immediately stopped his vehicle and,

with Mr. Elliott and Q.M.S. Harle, got out and went forward. There were two or three fires burning on the maidan<sup>51</sup> and he saw figures moving about carrying arms. Their attitude was threatening as they were shouting '*Andar mat ao*' ('No entry') and '*Hat jao tum log*' ('Go away, you'). Harle tried to attract their attention by raising his hands above his head and shouting '*S'uno!*' ('Listen'). This had no effect except for them to say '*Hukm nae manega*' ('We're not taking orders'). So the Major ordered the withdrawal of the four vehicles which had come through the gate and deployed two platoons on the top of the wall overlooking the lines.

On Mr. Elliott's request, Q.M.S. Harle called upon the mutineers to come out and surrender. He did this three times in Urdu with no result.

Mr. Elliott then required Major Perfect to disperse 'the unlawful assembly'. The latter detailed six sappers to fire a round apiece. The police immediately fired in reply, so he then called up a Bren gun and ordered the No. 1 to open fire. Q.M.S. Harle again asked for ten men to come forward and surrender with their arms, giving a guarantee that they would not be fired upon. The mutineers' tone had by now quietened considerably but there were still shouts of '*Hukm na manega*' and '*Hat jao!*' So the Bren gun again opened fire. This silenced them completely, but none came forward to surrender. Finally Major Perfect asked Area H.Q. to send him three armored cars in order to avoid having to put his men in to an attack over the open ground which might cause heavy casualties to them. Meanwhile the troops cordoned off the police lines and watched.

Between 3 and 4 a.m. the sappers brought into their lines the wives and families of Mr. Elliott and Q.M.S. Harle, to protect them from possible reprisals. At 4.30 a.m. Major Perfect left for Jamalpur with Mr. Elliott, arriving at the police lines at 6 a.m., where he found the area deserted and the armory open and empty except for a sword and a few bayonets. The lines appeared to have been deserted hurriedly as equipment and clothing were littered about. He decided to visit the Police Station and town outposts to verify the position. He found that all the men of the Stations had remained loyal and were on duty. So, after concentrating the armed constables (about thirty) from the four outposts on to the Police Station and leaving a section of 214th Company under a V.C.O. to look after them, he returned to Monghyr. On arrival in Monghyr at 7.30 a.m. he went to Lieut. Holmes, who had been commanding the right platoon during the whole night's affair. The latter now had a section inside the Police Station with a Bren on the roof covering the lines. He passed on the very interesting information that at about 4 a.m. he was on the station platform when the Coolie Train arrived. About twenty to thirty police had jumped out carrying arms and ammunition. They were led by a tall man in a *dhoti*<sup>52</sup> who was brandishing a revolver. This party moved quickly into the police lines. The set-up was now perfect as the new arrivals were the Jamalpur

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<sup>51</sup> Open parkland.

<sup>52</sup> Skirt-like garment.

mutineers led by Indar Deo Singh and this meant that all the mutineers were in one place. Holmes's further information was that shortly after the Jamalpur party arrived there was about five minutes heavy firing from the rebels in his direction and in the direction of the platoon on the Fort wall. At no time had his party yet opened fire. The rebels had been shooting at each other. By now, both Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent had arrived, bringing a policeman in a black beret. The Superintendent had sent this man forward as he was a rebel ringleader and knew the rebels, to advise them for their own sakes to surrender because armored cars were coming and on their arrival the military commander intended using force to overcome and seize them. At 9 a.m. Lieut. Varney arrived with his men from Monghyr just as five wounded rebel constables were brought out and taken to hospital. The first rebel then came out carrying his arms. He was made to deposit them on the bridge in front of the Fort gate and then permitted to come through. After this the rebels came out in a steady trickle, surrendering their arms. By noon the soldiers had moved in and checked the armories and by that evening had removed all arms to their own lines under a military guard. They erected a cage in 74th Field Company lines and to it marched the prisoners. The complete bag was one hundred and twenty-five.

We must now return to the 26th March and Gaya. That evening, as there was no settlement of the mutiny at Gaya, General Stable ordered the 25th Dragoons to send a troop of armored cars to that place and to help the Bihar men to seize the police armory by force. Lieut. J. Hadfield ran his cars into Gaya at 2 p.m. the next day and civil and military at once concocted plans to disarm the rebels. The latter had taken up positions in and on top of the armory and behind walls about it. The police officer in the leading armored car ordered the mutineers to surrender within five minutes but they refused point-blank. One car then opened with single shots from a Besa at an unoccupied building as a warning. The rebels replied with heavy rifle fire on the armored cars. All three cars now opened fire until the infantry were ready to assault at about 6 p.m. One last ultimatum was given to the enemy and they now started to come out unarmed, hands above their heads. We had had one Bihar sepoy wounded by moving too close in on the barrage! The rebels brought out their dead and three wounded.

The force then surrounded the treasury which surrendered by 9 p.m.

Meanwhile, a company of the North Staffords had moved on Arrah and forced the surrender of the rebels at that place, and a company of the 4/3rd Gurkhas had acted similarly in Chapra and Darbhanga. A company of the 3rd Bihar Regiment drove to Janshedpur and took possession of the armory.

By the 3rd April the police mutiny was over and the ring-leaders in gaol, just in time for the Area garrison to deal with the communal riots which now broke out in Ranchi town itself.

The Bihar police mutiny would appear to have been a very futile and strange occurrence were it not understood that it was a rebellion prodded on by Communists, designed to cast out altogether the Congress provincial government under Mr. Sinha. It was sponsored by dismissed, disgruntled constables, and its supporters were most of the serving Bihar policemen whose loyalty to the former government, supposedly British, had been undermined by the Congress Party.

Ramanand Tiwari, after his escape from the truck, fled to the refuge of Mr. Gandhi's house. There he remained in safety until later, when Mr. Gandhi advised him to give himself up. He was surrounded by the police a short time after, disarmed and taken in charge.

At once the Socialist Party of India started to demand the release of the guilty constables, even the ringleaders. This was not at first granted and the worst of the men were given fairly mild sentences, but at least they were sentenced.

It was poetic justice, which one marked with a little sardonic humor, that these very men who had been ripe to give the British Inspector-General some trouble earlier on, had thought fit to do their worst against the very men who had formerly incited them. Indiscipline easily becomes a habit.

Although this rebellion was the outstanding single event of March, it was only one of many flutterings in Eastern Command in the first three months of 1947.

## XXII

### PARTITION AS PRACTICAL POLITICS

*April*

FROM E.C.I.C.<sup>53</sup>  
ACTION HQ EASTERN COMMAND

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SITREP UP TO 2400 HRS 30 MAR (.) SLIGHT DETERIORATION IN GENERAL SITUATION FROM MIDDAY UNTIL EVENING IN EASTERN CALCUTTA AND IN HOWRAH (.) MARKED INCREASE IN ATTEMPTS AT ARSON (.) HEAVY BRICKBATTING AND SOME FIRING BY RIOTERS IN HOWRAH REPORTED (.) SINCE DUSK NOTHING OF IMPORTANCE (.) ONE COY OF Y & L SENT TO HOWRAH IN AID OF CIVIL PENDING ARRIVAL OF POLICE REINFORCEMENTS

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RECEIVED AT 2345 HRS 30 MARCH BY PHONE

On that note ended March 1947.

It now becomes increasingly difficult to record trends of feeling, political movements, changes and agitations and unusual happenings in the Command. All the smaller movements of the past were increasing in momentum as each party, almost each individual, jockeyed for place in the competition to scoop an undue share of the power that was so soon to be shed by the British.

All eyes were on the comings and goings at Delhi, and speculation was constant as to the fates of the Punjab and of Bengal in the event of what was now coming to be regarded as a certainty – the division of India.

In the Army we had our own special perplexity. This was the doubt that was now arising in our minds as to how much longer we would be able to distinguish between maintaining law and order and using forces solely to further the purely political ends of provincial governments, even perhaps of the Central or Dominion governments or of whatever authority was later to be. Now we were at the beginning of the peculiar state in which British officers were from this time onwards to have their existence and to perform what they conceived to be their duty. In the end, in October 1947, wrongly, to my thinking, British officials were to order and to organize and so to assume responsibility for dispatching troops of the Indian Union to Kashmir.

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<sup>53</sup> Eastern Command Intelligence Centre.

In Assam the Hindu commotion over the Muslim 'Squatter' campaign continued unabated.

In Calcutta the Muslim Government was definitely attempting to conduct on communal lines the suppression of disturbances. We had troops out on the streets helping the police. So we were in doubt there, too, whether we were not indirectly furthering some communal object and were not, in fact, tools of the local government.

Our position was becoming impossible, no matter how delicately we trod.

Except for Orissa, none of the provincial governments in Eastern Command was capable of maintaining law and order without the full assistance of the Army. In fact, we were keeping them where they were: without us they would collapse.

Seeing the possibility of collapse, we 'zoned' out the whole of the Command to individual units so that each could make it its special task to become intimately acquainted with a zone. Thus we would be ready at the shortest notice to step in and at least keep the peace in all important parts, taking the police under our control and restoring their morale and effectiveness.

Our task was complicated by the existence of mixed battalions. Had we possessed class battalions, we could have dispatched Muslim units to keep order in Muslim areas and Hindu in Hindu areas. Thus, knowing that by tradition and training the battalions would act impartially, we would not have had to place Hindus in primarily Muslim areas (or Muslims in primarily Hindu areas), always incurring the odium of partiality whenever they acted against Muslims. If there were grave trouble in the Punjab, Northern Command's difficulties in this respect would be formidable. It was not difficult for us to understand the anxieties of John Jacob away up in Sind when he was predicting the troubles in the Army which finally led to the Mutiny of 1857. This would not be a mutiny: it would, if the Army were not soon 'classed', just be a break-up of discipline and all soldierly behavior.

That the provincial administrations were deteriorating amid all this political confusion was confirmed by a letter written at the end of March and later published in a Muslim newspaper. This purported to be an exact copy of a communication from a courageous and very highly placed Indian I.C.S. official to a senior member of one of our Congress provincial governments. A few short extracts will show the points of criticism that he made and will more readily impress the reader than any precis that I might make.

In the last six months I have been watching with great apprehension the deterioration that has been going on not only in the quality of the work of

officers, but also a deterioration in the standards and morale of officers themselves....'

'Officers are so concerned with pushing their own interests, fighting for this or that job, looking after interests of their friends and lobbying for support amongst M.L.A.s and Parliamentary Secretaries, that discipline and efficiency have been impaired....'

'The old regime may have been good, bad or indifferent, but its officers certainly worked better for it than they are working now .... There may have been cases where an individual officer failed, but I know of no case where four Secretaries failed all together at one and the same time....'

'A short time ago the Commissioner .... was kindly allowed by Hon. Premier to come to Lucknow occasionally .... The first thing that this Commissioner did was to write and ask if he could come in to Lucknow for a period of ten days and he cleverly commenced his period from the 10th March. Since March 7, 8 and 9 were holidays, he was thus helping himself to nearly 14 days extra casual leave. Ten years ago no officer would have dreamed of doing such a thing ....'

'There is at the present moment a certain Commissioner who boasts that he is doing no work ....'

'No attention is taken of any rules or regulations ....'

'Lobbying for Secretariat and other posts is frequent, and often officers approach Parliamentary Secretaries and Hon'ble Ministers not only for posts in the province but for posts outside. The common procedure now is for an officer to go to Delhi and arrange matters first with an Hon'ble Member in Delhi ....'

'Generally speaking, lobbying for favors that is going on amongst I.C.S. officers is being continued with vigor by those below them ....'

'The two officers concerned were supposed to be responsible officers. It did not seem to occur to them that .... Secretary ships were not in their pocket to be handed out like lollypops ....'

'Continual vilification of the magistracy and the police does not make a bad officer good, and it might make a good officer bad. There have been so many examples of this sort of thing that district officers not only are losing, but in many cases have lost, faith in their work. They are criticized by Parliamentary Secretaries and sometimes Hon. Ministers from above and they are continually criticized by the small fry down below ....'



'I may add that the police force on which the administration depends is continually undermined .... Furthermore, it has to be remembered that the police force are Indians, and if it is a defective force in any way, then it is the fault of our own character. The critics might do well to turn the mirror on themselves, for when the police are accused of corruption, there are just as many complaints of corruption in District Supply Committees, and there are also other unsavoury tales ....'

So wrote a well-informed public servant. The condition of the Services became worse as time went on but I do not think that because they were so bad at the testing time it need necessarily show that they will always be bad. There are men such as the writer of this letter who are ready and determined to get the administration back at least to its former standards of behavior, if only they are given the support that they deserve. But, at the time of which I speak, we in the Army knew that we could place little reliance, if any, on the civil Indian Services to take us through periods of emergency and great stress.

In Eastern Command it was natural that political speculation should centre about Bengal and that superficially it should seem that our military attention must be given exclusively to it. We did not expect that in the end the partition or integration of Bengal would have a fatal bearing on India's future. The people of the province and of Bihar were too enervated by their climate and too faint-hearted ever to be able to stand long against the Army if it really used its weapons to stop them from fighting each other. It was on the martial northern United Provinces and mainly in the Jat-populated areas which stretched from there into the Punjab districts of Rohtak and Hissar, and on our borderland of Ahirs, Rangars, Meos and Gujars about Agra, Muttra and Punjab Gurgaon, that all our attention was focused. It cannot be too often repeated that the safety of the whole of eastern India depended upon our preventing the Punjab contagion from getting a mortal hold on the United Provinces with its vast Muslim population.

Muslim opinion opposed the division of Bengal, hoping that undivided Bengal would continue under a Muslim government and that that Government would never stomach its own supersession by one of another complexion. Above all, Muslims ardently desired Calcutta with its industries, port and wealth. The Hindu Mahasabha, violently Hindu nationalist and religiously bigoted, daily gaining strength under its able leader, Shyama Parshad Mukerjee, pressed for the carving off of the Hindu majority areas of Western Bengal. Hindu opinion, other than the Mahasabha, veered and backed for many days, one section toying with the redistribution of the province on a linguistic and industrial basis, as provided for in the Act of 1935. None the less, by the middle of the month most Hindu opinion had hardened in favor of partition of Bengal.

Despite this increasing hostility to Pakistan, there always remained quite a chance that the Hindus of Bengal would accept a condominium of Calcutta. The seemingly agreeable outlook of Muslims over this was probably due to their hidden belief that possession was nine points of the law, and their knowledge that at the moment the Muslim possessed the city and was indisputably top dog. The mood passed as Hindu politicians agitated and as Congress seemed to be gaining favour in the highest British circles. Pandit Nehru spoke publicly in support of partition both of the Punjab and of Bengal. His language at Gwalior was that of a dictator threatening the Princes and the Muslim League. It may have impressed some effete and self-interested Princes: it only alienated the Muslims. Calcutta Hindus spoke now of 'When the clash comes', and girded themselves, ready for a fight.

The partition of the Punjab apparently met with more unanimous acceptance in political Bengal, and this, to us, concerned with peace, seemed strange. We accepted that the Jat and Ahir areas of the Punjab must go to Hindustan but it seemed to us to be perilous to attempt to pass any part of the Sikh areas, with their considerable admixture of hardy, martial Muslims, under the rule of Hindustan. There was another aspect that was escaping notice and it was that unless the Sikh had a stern master, he was bound one day to try to re-establish the realm of Ranjit Singh from Peshawar to Delhi. Under Pakistan he would not be given the chance: under Hindustan he might make liberalism serve his opportunity. The most disheartening thing that appeared just now was the vindictive attitude of the majority of Hindus. In effect they said, 'Well, if the Muslims want Pakistan, let them damned well have it and with a vengeance. We will shear every possible inch off their territory so as to make it look silly and to ensure that it is not a viable country and, when they've got what's left, we'll ensure that it can't be worked economically.' The Mahasabha therefore redoubled its efforts and money poured into it which previously would have gone to the Congress Party. Swiftly the party turned from a thing of no significance into one of vital importance. Along with it grew the almost subterranean and highly dangerous R.S.S. Sangh, its militant body.

The oracular Mahatma Gandhi announced that division of India was by no means inevitable and that matters would be facilitated if the British left India at once. The impression one got was that he resented our handing over a reasonably tranquil country to our successors. Every time there seemed to have been a fair chance of our getting a settlement, whether of union or now of partition, he appeared to have tried to prevent it. It seemed that he grudged us British this final triumph of producing a good, workable native India. Was it that if there was to be a solution at all, it must be that of Gandhiji? Was utter destruction of India, with its disastrous consequences to the world outside, easier to be borne than a British success?

Partitionitis was spreading. In the United Provinces Muslims were drawing up plans for an autonomous Muslim unit in the north-west part of the province. Hillmen of Darjeeling were agitating for some sort of autonomy. Adibassis in Bihar were beating

the big drum of Jharkhand. The Muslim League of Bengal was supporting the Adibassi Separatist Movement in the hope of weakening Hindu Bihar by slicing off large parts of its territory.

Mr. Jinnah and Mr. Gandhi made a joint appeal to both Hindu and Muslim communities to keep the peace. This appeal made no impression whatsoever. Feelings were running so high, brains were so fevered, that no word of moderation could be heard. In Calcutta and in Delhi there was, if anything, a slight increase in the number of communal assaults. Rather than listen to their leaders all peaceful men looked to the Army and to the few remaining British officials to keep them safe.

At Raxaul on the 30th April, I was seated in my coach at the tail of the train waiting for the engine to be hitched on to drag us away to Muzaffarpur. Colonel Aitken, one of my staff officers, was on the platform. He poked his head in and said there was a big crowd and a lot of noise and waving of sticks at the top end of the train. After a bit he said that the whole crowd was coming our way. There was a great hubbub and much excitement and anger. As they approached, Aitken shoo'ed the main body away and the core of the mob oozed forward to disclose two Muslims, the one grasped firmly by Hindus, the other in protective attitude. Above all waved the forest of staves.

It transpired that they had come to the nearest British individual to settle their trouble rather than fight over it. They had sighted Aitken standing on the platform.

While Aitken kept superfluous individuals at a distance, I heard the case. A Muslim had brought a Hindu girl from Amlekhganj. He was on his way to the Punjab so, since it was naturally assumed that he was abducting her, a furious mob of Hindus had gathered at Raxaul station to destroy him. His friend interposed and induced the thoroughly frightened Lochinvar to let the girl go. She went at a gallop over the fields to her relations at Raxaul. She could have come to no physical harm on the short journey hitherto. I reasoned with the complainants for long enough to let tempers cool and then, in front of them all and in the usual 'loud and arrogant tone of the British', abused the abductor with every ready insult that the prolific Urdu tongue contains, learnt in a long sojourn among its people, and then asked the audience if they thought the criminal had had enough. They thought it was all right, so I directed them to conduct him back to his carriage and to see that he did not get out of it again for more criminal activities till the train left the station. They now felt that they were acting in the cause of justice and marched him off like jailers with a convict, mounting guard over his carriage in martial style. By now a policeman had arrived so I sent him after the crowd, telling him to see that my orders were carried out with proper decorum. They were.

An interested spectator was an Indian youth who represented one of the big Indian Press agencies. When they had gone I talked with him for many minutes for he had been the first to strive to make a communal issue of it all. I had shown him that there

would be much violence and cruelty if he persisted and he had agreed that the case should be left to me. He was typical of much of Hindu India, never sure of itself, bold and aggressive without, shrinking and uncertain within. He said at one moment how glad he was to meet me: at the next, he was suddenly spitting out hatred of the British and the very accusations which almost word for word one had so often read in the speeches of leading Indian politicians. Almost, he was two people, a split personality.

From the Punjab came news of the worsening of the Sikhs in their battles with Muslims: a bitter pill for this people to swallow, following as it did on the bombast of their leaders. Northern Command was forecasting two months for the Sikhs before they started on their war of revenge. Whatever the period of preparation, we all knew that the bloody business must continue to the end unless the Sikhs were completely stamped on by a powerful foe, and that the Sikhs would start the next chukker.

The Indian Army, with its prestige still rising on reports from returning leave men of the truly magnificent way in which its soldiers had conducted themselves in suppressing riots at the very lintels of their homes in the Punjab, was in pretty good fettle. The men murmured against their own kindred, civilian inhabitants of their villages, for the disgusting manner in which they had conducted themselves and for their bigoted hatred of the opposite community with whom they had so long lived at peace. A few of the most politically-tainted urban Hindu and Sikh soldiers took up like parrots the newspaper accusation that the British had engineered the riots in the Punjab for their own selfish ends.

In the ranks the absence of communal feeling was most marked, even at this provoking time, because the men regarded their own army as the only steadying influence in India. They were worried about their relatives in the riot areas. To solace them we had sent liaison parties up to Northern Command to report the whereabouts and fate of all families from whom the men had not heard for some time. The individual's concern was not lessened by the feeling of insecurity as to his retention in the post-war Army, and so of anxiety as to his future career; and by the delay in publication of his post-war terms of pay, for he was suffering no little hardship in trying to maintain a family on his meager allowances. Life in units out on Internal Defence was fairly harrowing. They lived in active service conditions. But, for all that, the battalions had to administer themselves and to perform their role, with ever dwindling numbers due to release, leave and demobilization, and ever-worsening administrative staffs. The experienced were leaving the Army and making way for those who knew nothing of the job. I do not know how they managed as they did. On top of all was the constant anxiety that Sikh troops would sour and refuse duty. The sense of duty shown by our leave men was an example to all armies. These men would go on leave, find their whole property destroyed and looted, their families scattered, indigent or even murdered, and yet somehow they would return punctually, report for duty and carry on as if nothing had

happened. Emotion overcame one when trying to tell them what one thought of their high qualities.

But this army had to be divided: even the Indian politician now said so. If it were not, it would be torn to pieces by the internal strife of its Indian officers.

The *Statesman* helped us by publishing editorials praising the impartial work of our troops, affirming that the Army was now really the one and only protection left to the people and that therefore it should be kept at as high a standard as possible.

On the other hand, strange and unfounded reports were circulating in Calcutta and getting to the ears of our soldiers. It was said that British political officers were touring the Punjab and the Punjab States asking people to sign a declaration that they wished the British to remain in India! The soldier found that servicemen on leave and after release were badly treated by civil authorities who were trying now to even things up with the soldier who had had preferential treatment during the war. Furthermore, the Bihar and Assam governments for long took much trouble to settle comfortably the ex-I.N.A. men but little or none to help the discharged soldier.

The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* upbraided Eastern Command for not issuing an injunction to all ranks, ex-servicemen and leave men, that they would partake in disturbances at their own extreme peril, as had recently been issued by Northern Command. There had been no need for it with us for our recruiting areas were liberally sown with Training Centres which were in close touch with all ex-servicemen, and by this means we kept tabs on them and influenced them. There may have been cases of soldiers and ex-soldiers participating in riots, but if so, neither we nor the police, both pretty well informed, knew of them. The paper relied on fictitious reported cases from Noakhali in East Bengal in 1946.

At last the terms were published for the retirement of British officers from the Indian Army. They were fair terms and officers were happy with them. Those who called them generous forgot that many of these men had families, no house to which to go in England, no qualifications at all for civil employment, few or no roots in England and no one to whom to turn for a job. They were, moreover, late in the field against competitors. In 1947 and 1948 there was much distress among these men seeking in vain for work. It is not easy, however hostile or cynical one may be, to agree that a major of twenty-three years' service can well find his future career behind a counter, as a grave-digger or peddling wares on the road – the jobs offered to some of them. The British Government, having ended their careers thus compulsorily and at short notice, was under an obligation to get its erstwhile servants some priority in obtaining suitable employment. It did not accept the obligation.

All too many Indian officers were pursuing their own careers, forgetful of what they owed to the Army. Much that has been said of lobbying by I.C.S. Indians can be equally applied to a number of our Indian officers. The houses of certain eminent Hindu politicians in Delhi were favorite stamping grounds of these aspirants for glamorous positions. One unpopular young man was told by his British general that he must leave the Staff and learn to become a good mixer by returning to regimental duty. He replied that he had been advised by a senior Indian officer, whom he named, that if he stayed on the Staff he was bound to get on: further, that if he also got to know well a senior Indian officer at G.H.Q. he would be still more certain to attain high rank: he now found himself both on the Staff and acquainted with such an officer, whom he again named, so considered that he ought to be excused from returning to regimental duty. He was sent back to his unit.

The only untoward military incident occurred in the Gwalior State Forces, not a part of the Indian Army. On the 25th March some 150 men of an infantry battalion refused to go on parade, complaining about the reduced scale of wheat rations. They demonstrated in Gwalior city and then made further demands. They remained on 'strike' and a few days later some men of another battalion joined in sympathy. The mutineers were rounded up, tried and dismissed. The dismissed men then took out a procession in the city, threatening to pillage and loot the shops. They were dispersed and no more heard of their threats.

Taking a general survey over the whole Command we decided that civil affairs were now far worse than in July 1946 and far more ominous of grave and widespread disturbance. Only if some political decision were to be made at Delhi which was readily acceptable on all sides could this prospect be at all improved. It was a fact that only the Army, the threat of its use, its activities and its prestige, were keeping in place the provincial ministries, other than Orissa, and that these ministries were leaning more and more heavily on the Army. In fact, the Army's burden was increasing daily while its resources were daily decreasing, with disbandment, demobilization, 'suspension' of British Infantry Regiments and the irreplaceable loss of its British officers. No one yet knows what India, the British Cabinet and the Commonwealth, owe to these British officers. Without their unselfish devotion to their regiments and their staffs, and their moral courage, neither Viceroy nor Cabinet had any chance whatever of bringing about any advance at all towards Indian self-government. We, and India, owe them everything.

It is now time to turn again to our domestic affairs.

As I have already related, one battalion of the 5th Division had been sent off from our small reserve with a watching brief to look after the borders of Assam and Eastern Bengal where squatters and 'invasion' were the order of the day. The 4/3rd Gurkhas were being disbanded, so Bengal had to yield up the 2/2nd Gurkhas to replace them in

still jittering North Bihar. 5th Division had to find a battalion to replace these on railway defence, for railway strikes were still threatening. With one thing and another our total Command reserve was down to two weak and tired brigades of the 5th Division. No Area in the Command could spare another man from its preoccupations to move to the help of its neighbor. Above all, although only a part of the United Provinces' garrison was actually out on operations, the whole garrison was completely tied to its ground by continual threats of rioting spreading from the Punjab. Only in Assam and Orissa was there a police in the slightest bit effective and efficient; the rest were demoralized, confused in their loyalties and almost entirely communal in their spirit. In Bihar the police had even attempted to throw out the Government by force of arms and to usurp its functions. In Bihar, Bengal and the United Provinces, there was now no buffer between popular lawlessness and the Army: thus, the Army would be called on at each slight disturbance, at the same time being the more weakened by the absence of a police force.

G.H.Q. now promised a reinforcement of up to one Infantry Brigade from Southern Command within six or seven days of our appeal. This guarantee was of the greatest value for it meant that we could take great risks, backing our opinion on futures, with a Brigade at call if we happened to put our money on the wrong horse. Hitherto, we had had no such easement.

It could not have come at a more critical or opportune time for we were looking out towards Assam and the northern United Provinces, opposite poles for us. G.H.Q. themselves took a big chance in thus compromising their few resources while facing dire catastrophe in the Punjab. We did not call upon the Brigade.

## XXIII

### COMMUNISM, SQUATTERS AND THE LIGHTING UP OF THE UNITED PROVINCES

*April*

COMMUNISM was at last becoming prominent enough to give us some concern. It was, as usual, battenning on the mortifying flesh of a deathly sick community whose body was that of a religious oligarchy and therefore the more rapidly dissolving and more nourishing to these carrions. There was reason to believe that the Communist Party of Great Britain was also fishing in troubled waters. It gave us a mild sense of liberty, in some odd way, to be watching traitors at work without needing either to stamp on them or to worry much what they did. The worry will come later, for the expansive patient is very nourishing to these shrill scraggy-necked birds. The Party was busy recruiting volunteers from among laborers, peasants, Hajongs and other hillmen. Naturally, the students and our old friends, the ex-terrorists, the Jaguntar and their fellow-travelers, will have gathered under the red banner. In Eastern Bengal and among the coolies in tea gardens of Assam, Bihar and North Bengal, they were becoming active. In the tea gardens they were not very successful as yet for most of the laborers were Gurkhas or aboriginals. In East Bengal it was the weavers, fishermen, the under-paid village chowkidars and Muslim peasants under rapacious Hindu landlords on whom they preyed. The food situation was bad. Bengal's supply was on the famine line. This suited our Communists. They started the Tebagha movement, which in itself was justified, in order to squeeze a bigger proportion of the crop out of the hands of landlords and into those of the tenants. But Communism being an oligarchic or even a dictatorial system, one is naturally disposed to credit it with selfish aims. It has incurred this suspicion and has only itself to blame for it. The Tebagha movement was designed to be violent. To some small extent it actually incited the peasants to use force so that the police had to step in. But it never became so serious as to bring us to intervene in its affairs, only seeming to add to the general confusion of life in East Bengal and on the Assam borderland. In Western Bengal also they were instigating tenants to be firm in their Tebagha demand.

Congress opposed the Communists wherever it could. Although we watched the potential law-breakers with jaundiced eye, I am prepared to acknowledge that in so far as they brought the under-dogs to combine against and to resist undue oppression, they were doing good in these days of 1947. It was more their methods, their vicious propaganda, their unscrupulous lies, and their known association with men whose



hands were not free from crimes of violence, that set us against them. That they would subvert the Army if they could was an added reason for our suspicions.

In Calcutta, tramway workers came back to duty on the 16th April, their trams garlanded by Communists on the first day of actual work to celebrate the Communist victory. Surprisingly enough, most of these tramway men are Communists.

They were Communists, too, who incited simple aboriginal workers to violence at Dinajpur, compelling the police to open fire, killing five and injuring many others.

Industrial troubles were constant in Bengal, Bihar and the United Provinces. The Ordnance Depot at Cawnpore struck work as part of an India-wide strike of Ordnance Establishments, and our Harness Factory came out in sympathy. At Chheoki, near Allahabad, the Ordnance Depot also came out. The Depot at Agra was still out on strike, its troubles taking a communal turn when a fracas took place between strikers and non-strikers, resulting in one Muslim being killed and several Hindus injured. Military and police came in at once and dispersed the crowds.

At Cawnpore Depot the British Commandant had a bad quarter of an hour with a hostile, excited, and unruly mob of civilian employees careering in and out of his office and jumping upon his table while he sat impotently witnessing their activities and bearing their abuse.

Gradually workers returned to duty till by mid-May most of our depots were once more working. At Kankinara, in Bengal, the Engineer Supply Depot civilian workers went on strike in May, so we closed the Depot, and paid off and dismissed all the workers, to their surprise and consternation. They were riddled with extreme Left and anti-British propaganda which rendered them quite unreliable either to us or their future masters. We set to work to enroll a completely new team.

It is opportune now to turn to the activities of domiciled Gurkhas in Bengal, guided as they were by politics of the Left. These people are a factor of much significance for the future of eastern India. Later on,<sup>54</sup> I speak of the whole of India's north-east frontier: here, I confine myself to the representatives in India of a people who are not, and never in the foreseeable future will be, Indians. It has been estimated that there are three million of these people between Assam and the United Provinces, mainly concentrated in Assam and Bengal. Some have lived in India for generations, others are birds of passage who come into India with their families to earn and save a bit to take back to Nepal. Nepal's economy cannot well support both her people and her top-heavy family of rulers, its kinsmen, bastard children and retainers. So poor peasants must seek a living outside. To Assam and Bengal they descend to work in the tea gardens, as

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<sup>54</sup> Appendix IX.

watchmen for business firms, as policemen, and in any position of trust where physical strength and pluck are needed rather than education of which they have none.

I emphasize that all these, however mangled by Indian contact, however inter-married, cling to Gurkha nationality. This we at Eastern Command throughout accepted. Events will justify our contention.

To represent these immigrants there were two political bodies—the All India Gurkha League and the Nepal National Congress.

The N.N.C. was a new growth produced by the Left Socialist, Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia, sprouting partly from the extremist elements of the A.I.G.L. Its first triumph was the engineering of the Biratnagar strike in Nepal of which I have spoken, and the institution there of a Satyagraha (passive resistance) campaign.

The A.I.G.L. was started by Rup Narain Sinha, a Darjeeling barrister, in 1942, for purely altruistic reasons. It now had as its president a domiciled Gurkha named Dhambar Sing Gurung. The Congress had sponsored him and his League in order to annoy the British and at some future wished-for date they intended to subvert Gurkha soldiers from their loyalty to the British. Thus, on a Congress ticket, Dhambar Sing became a member of the Bengal Legislative Assembly. In 1946 he had already declared that his League did not countenance the continuance of Gurkha units in the British 'Imperial' Service. The reason given then and later was that such service would prejudice the relations of Gurkhas with independent India.

The League ostensibly regarded its adherents as Indian Nationals and said so. It suited their politics and it will suit them for a while yet. Its relations with the Ranas, the ruling family of Nepal, were a matter of some speculation until after Dhambar Sing's visit to that country in late 1946. On his return he sang, not unexpectedly, a pleasantly friendly refrain. This, to us, was significant, for his politics had certainly not been agreeable to his despotically ruled fatherland. There was talk of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri being returned to Nepal, despite the fact that many of the inhabitants of these districts were Gurkhas who had left Nepal because of the impositions of the Nepal Raj, to find a freer life in British India. The hillmen of Kalimpong and Darjeeling dread a return to the rule of Nepal.

In Calcutta, for months past, there had been feeling against the local Gurkha population and no little persecution. This still further isolated the Gurkhas into their racial clique.

In the tea gardens of Assam and Bengal the A.I.G.L. won its battle with the Communists for the hearts of Gurkha coolies. These would rather turn to a Gurkha organization than to an Indian, no matter what the latter promised.

No one was deceived into believing that Dhambar Sing was anything other than a political adventurer. The operative letter in the name of his organization was the letter 'G' and on that he or his successor would probably in the end be wrecked. He was a useful agent for Congress and any leader of this league may yet be a useful agent for others.

There is thus some sort of organization in eastern India to which domiciled Gurkhas can turn, in itself not a Communist concern. So long as it exists its tendency must be to draw these people together; so long as they are drawn together will they remain a separate community in India; so long as they are separate will they be of a different nation from Indians and so long will they turn their eyes unto the hills whence cometh their help. If there were any chance in the near future of this virile Nepal being absorbed into a changing India, then matters would be different. I believe there is no chance of absorption until some vigorous new rulers replace the British.

The Gurkha community in India is thus of significance for the future. The Assam squatter evictions continued and the great Muslim 'invasion' was building up. A visit to Shillong in early April confirmed our view that the Government was both unduly apprehensive and not taking steps to concentrate its considerable resources for the protection of its frontier against possible disturbances from Bengali Muslims. The police had had minor clashes with Muslims in Sylhet and Habiganj. Assam Ministers informed us that they had arrested Mr. Kharad Hussain, M.L.A. Rangpur, Bengal Assembly, for inciting Muslims to lawlessness: that the new Pakistan fort at Mankachar was still in full use and that Muslim attempts were being made to establish two more camps, both in the Rangpur district, one near Sukchar and one near Gokalgunj. They asked for more troops at once; for one brigade to be stationed at Dhubri for one month. We stood firm on our demand that they should concentrate their 'Rail force' and Assam Rifles and handle the situation, before we contemplated any movement of troops to their aid from other parts of the Command. Finally, the Assam government arranged for Assam riflemen to be brought in from outlying districts to the seat of trouble. On this we informed them that General Ranking now had one battalion at twenty-four hours' notice to come to their aid if the Assam Rifles and police could not cope with the situation. This was the battalion that we had already stationed near the Assam-Bengal frontier. The Governor, Sir Andrew Clow, throughout acted as adviser to his Chief Minister and was of the greatest help in these discussions in which the two Ministers showed an obstinacy and lack of reason not usually associated with men so experienced in public life. It is probable that here again an absence of direct experience of military operations in either World War had left an unfillable gap in their knowledge. Of course, since they had demanded troops and we had refused, they were covered if affairs went badly.

The young Scots District Magistrate whom we had met at Sylhet, on our way to Shillong, was complete master of the situation, throwing into his wastepaper basket

with monotonous regularity the terror-stricken reports of his subordinates and their urgent appeals for police or troop reinforcements. These appeals, as with those sent direct to the Assam government, were as much in order to cover the appellant if they were not honored and trouble ensued, as for any other purpose.

One of the most terrifying things, if one were to credit the civil reports, was the building of the great fort near Mankachar on the banks of the Brahmaputra. This fort was erected, with many threats of dire things to come to Assam, by the 'invading' Muslims. We sent a British officer to have a look at it and he reported that the walls were made of rush matting and that even they only faced the Assam side. Inside were a few grass huts. The rest of the business, he said, was quite cleverly done with stage properties. From this base Muslim volunteers were disseminating exciting leaflets. *The Purba Pakistan Qilla* (Eastern Pakistan Fort) at Mankachar was being well stocked with warlike stores among which were rubber P.T. shoes for night operations, steel helmets, steel arrow heads, bamboo staves, stretchers, medical boxes, triangular bandages, Red Cross badges, water bottles, knives and 'long cloth' for bandages. The Hindu *Ananda Bazar Patrika* published letters in full purporting to have come from some of the garrison of the Qilla asking for the addressee to find and send the writer's woolen long pant left behind in a laundry at Mirzapur and requesting the dispatch of revolvers, rifles, ammunition and hand-bombs to the Qilla.

The Hindu Press of Bengal added to the prevailing sombreness by drawing attention to mounting tension in Eastern Bengal and bemoaning the withdrawal of troops (whom they had lost no opportunity of deriding) from those parts.

Meanwhile, the eviction policy was stirring the gallant and adventurous—against whom the Assam Congress was frantically organizing Village Defence Parties in every Hindu village of the Assam borderland—to drift to the help of their co-religionists. From Chittagong and Noakhali Muslim National Guards were reported to be on their way to the Mankachar base. A flight over the disturbed region revealed that the local peasants were unconcernedly tilling and working as usual in the fields despite a rather unusual collection of about fifty country craft near Rohamari floating *dak*<sup>55</sup> bungalow. These may either have been there for the crossing of the invasion force or for the more undesirable but usual commerce of smuggling. Thus, after a period of threatening speeches, processions and other signs of unlawful intentions, a crowd of some 7,000 to 10,000 Muslims encircled the Mankachar police station for several hours on the 10th April. A few of the Assam Rifles brought out their automatic weapons and ostentatiously started to fiddle with them. The crowd returned to its fortress area.

The Muslim High Command at Delhi, in response to an appeal for clear instructions, sent lukewarm and ambiguous permission to Bengal Muslim Leaguers to invade Assam

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<sup>55</sup> Posting or rest house.

and to continue the civil disobedience movement there. The Bengal Muslim League would take no part, a decision which was probably as much due to Sir Frederick Burrows' advice as to anyone else's. Mr. Suhrawardy had conciliatingly decided to have the Mankachar fortress on Bengal territory dismantled. In Dhubri, in Assam, Muslims picketed Government offices, Courts and Excise offices.

At Shillong we arranged for the 3rd Assam Regiment of 300 bayonets, Nagas, Lushais and Assamese, to leave that place on 12th April for a flag-march through the Dhubri – Mankachar area, with orders not to interfere between civil forces and Muslim invaders or squatters unless a very serious situation arose beyond the scope of the police and Assam Rifles. This tour did much good as well as bringing us firsthand information of what was afoot in this road-less, bridgeless and rather inaccessible countryside. It was also good training for the 3rd Assam Regiment, mainly Nagas, which was new and not yet fully formed. Their visit to Dhubri coincided roughly with a large meeting of protest of some 20,000 partially armed Muslims near Dhubri. The troops called in at Mankachar fort and inspected it from a range of three hundred yards, causing much alarm and a stand-to of the garrison.

On the 22nd April a Muslim National Guard tried to snatch an Assam Rifleman's rifle and was knocked out by another Rifleman with his fist. A crowd gathered and started to stone the two men, who retreated on the police station. One, however, was felled by a stone: the other stood guard over him. A third ran out of the station to their help and fired two shots into the crowd, killing one and wounding another who later died. This firing lowered the morale of Muslim agitators at Dhubri and made them loth to start trouble.

In the last week of April Muslim National Guards at Mankachar became truculent and the Assam Rifles had to fire twenty-seven rounds into them to bring them to reason.

An attempt by Mr. Bardoloi, Chief Minister, and Mr. Saadulla, ex-Chief Minister and now representing the Muslims of Assam, to reach agreement over the eviction policy, finally broke down, so matters remained in the same unsatisfactory state as before. We left Assam to its own devices and they were, as we anticipated, adequate to the end in view. By the end of the month activities in Qilla Pakistan were dying a natural death while feelings amongst local Muslims of South Salmara, who stood to be inundated thereby, were so strongly against Muslim invasion of their lands that they started to organize themselves to resist further aggression. By the 3rd May Shillong Sub-Area reported that all was quiet.

On the 4th May Sir Akbar Hydari, a Nationalist Muslim of Bombay, was due to take over from Sir Andrew Clow as Governor of Assam. It was hoped (not least by Sir Andrew) that the advice of a co-religionist would cool the heads of Muslims now so generous of unwanted help to their fellows in Assam.

We have spoken of the border troubles of Eastern Bengal. Internally, matters were little more happy. Mahatma Gandhi was there and was using the telegraph lines to some purpose. He informed Mr. Suhrawardy, according to the newspapers, that the case (for Hindus) seems to be for exodus or perishing in flames of fanaticism'. Those were not words likely to smooth the creases from anxious and angry brows, but there was substance in them, for quite recently the accused in the Eastern Bengal disturbances of the previous year had been inexcusably released on bail and were prowling about breathing fire and murder against Hindus who had informed against them. Muslim National Guard leaders were proclaiming their intention of raising a force of some two million armed men in Bengal. Influential Muslims were boasting that the first slice of East Pakistan had been carved out in East Bengal. Criminal lawlessness in Noakhali and Tippera was generally assuming alarming proportions; in particular, interference with and destruction of telegraph and telephone communications. It hardly seemed that the Muslim local officials and police were much troubled to ensure that law and order were kept, provided that events did not turn against their co-religionists. Mr. Suhrawardy's reply to Mr. Gandhi protested that he was in close touch with East Bengal officials and that conditions there were normal.

On the 29th April there was a communal fracas in Dacca with a few killed and injured.

In the rest of Bengal partition and anti-partition were sizzling away in the pot. Mr. Gandhi's view that if Pakistan was bad then partition of Bengal was equally bad, seemed to have no effect on his devout followers. They had made up their minds. In any case the Government of Bengal had good cause to deplore that political leaders had shown no capacity at all to control their parties in the recent disturbances in Calcutta. The ability of irresponsible elements to distract the life of the city by stabbing, acid, arson and looting was more than disquieting for the future. An example of the triviality of the causes that led to killing was that at the Hastings Jute Mill which resulted in the death of six and in many wounded by quite unavoidable police action. A black spot was noticed on the sun's face. This phenomenon was stated by Hindu workers to be a symbol of the Congress Tricolor. The claim was countered by Muslim workers who maintained that the spot represented the flag of Islam. As a result of this rather unreasonable argument a riot started with the fatal results I have mentioned.

This small incident was also significant of something else in our territory: that whereas hitherto All-India causes had led to violent commotions, from now onwards the tendency was more and more for local antagonism, jealousies and incidents to provide fuel for our conflagrations. Here we had a mobilizing of all Hindu resources of men, money, materials and persuasion to force a division of the province upon Bengal. Muslim antagonism to this was naturally to be expected, for they were not easily to be persuaded to hand Calcutta to their enemies. The attempts of a Muslim ministry in Bengal to supersede Hindu civil and police officials by Muslims simply increased the bitter urgency with which Hindu party organs worked to marshal their resources. The

police force was completely divided upon communal lines, with consequent loss of faith and natural alarm on the part of the European and Anglo-Indian population.

Throughout the province a vicious and irresponsible Press continued to fan the flames, using whatever arguments, false or true, favored their own prejudices—praise for the Army, allegations against the troops, vituperation of, abuse of, and distorted news of the doings of the opposite community.

But inside all this there was new cause for alarm. At last we were finding out where the rest of the stolen weapons of Burma had gone, for they were appearing in the hands of the worst elements of the *goonda* population of Calcutta and of other Bengal towns where the epitome of Hindu-Muslim hatred was to be found. Thus, in the middle of April, at an election of a president of the local Trade Union, a large body of Hindus interfered, using lethal weapons and demanding that the Muslims should vote for their man. A fight ensued in which one Hindu and eight Muslims were killed. The sitting President himself was beaten, believed to have been killed and his body thrown into a well.

The April tale of Calcutta and Howrah was a continuation of that of March, curfew being lifted occasionally only to be clamped down again soon after on the occurrence of some disgraceful incident or other. With the Punjab Muslim police behind them, Muslims were cock-a-hoop, driving their trucks through Hindu areas and insulting all and sundry. Recently firemen had been assaulted and killed by the opposite community during their fire-fighting duties in Calcutta. Things had thus come to a pretty pass, with arson the common means wherewith one community afflicted the other.

An allegation that the Punjab Muslim police had raped a Hindu woman led to a determined attack with firearms on Muslims by a Hindu mob in north Calcutta on the 19th April. The attack was well organized and marked the now concerted attempt of Hindus to wrest the initiative from the Muslims of Calcutta. Events played into the hands of Hindus and in the end, as we know, it was the Hindu who assumed the mantle of overlord and arrogant master. On the 23rd April a Hindu *hartal*, affecting even the railways, was held to protest against the alleged rape. It led to stoning of Muslim trams and buses and to promiscuous bomb-throwing and stabbing which went on actively well into the next day. On the 25th clashes were more frequent and tempers more bitter, inflamed by a true report that a popular Hindu doctor, ex-Capt. Sen Gupta, had been killed by a Muslim who went to him under the pretence of needing medical attention.

The forces of law and order were hindered by the Government's habit of promptly releasing persons arrested under the Special Powers Ordinance.

It cannot be said that the Magistracy helped us much. The leniency of their sentences was a byword. One man caught stealing two jeeps had previously been given six months R.I. Now, a second offence only earned him three months. A young foreign crook shot an opponent five times in a gang fight: he was given three months

Mr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee of the Hindu Mahasabha had indeed instilled a fighting spirit into the Hindu population of Calcutta. Their attitude, which had been despondent, was now one of elation in the spirit of battle and of determination to go down fighting.

To relieve the police, troops took over parts of the city on the 1st May; the East Lancashire Regiment the area about Maniktolla and Beliaghatta, 160th Field Regiment, Entally and Park Circus, 2/4th Gurkhas, Taltolla. We were now getting reports of inhabitants firing on Muslim police pickets and patrols and inflicting casualties—a new departure. The 2nd Kumaon Regiment went in with the police to search out stores of firearms and ammunition. The searches yielded large quantities of weapons of all sorts.

To show to what condition the city had been reduced, it was the custom for chaprassis of business firms in Hindustan 'to refuse to enter' Pakistan areas of the town. Sikh taxis would take a fare as far as, but not into, a Pakistan area. He had to walk the rest of the way.

So much for Bengal.

In Bihar and Orissa quiet prevailed. For want of other political diversions, large numbers of Orissa students turned Communist. The Students' Congress in Cuttack organized a volunteer corps which was taught drill and discipline by an ex-I.N.A. soldier. In Orissa, too, Communists were active everywhere but with little success in gaining recruits to their organization. They too had their military training from an ex-I.N.A. man.

Bihar policemen who had been recently arrested for mutiny were quite unrepentant, showing truculence and asserting that they would very soon be let out of prison. Both Socialist and Communist parties vied for the favours of these ruffians through the medium of ex-constables and jail workers. For us, it boded ill for the future efficiency of this already degenerate police force.

In the United Provinces, Curtis was sending out troops on flag-marches all over the Meerut<sup>56</sup> district to keep the people mindful of their presence and to give confidence to the police, just as he had successfully treated the eastern part of the province during the

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<sup>56</sup> Meerut Sub-Area was at this time commanded by an old soldier, of an old martial Muslim family, Brigadier Mahomed Akbar Khan, who had risen from the ranks in Probyn's Horse.



Bihar massacres of 1946. He was lucky in having a large body of Special Armed Constabulary, maintained by the civil government, but administered by him and under his direct operational control. These men had the training and equipment of light infantry with all the powers and experience of police. They and the Army, under single military control, were a most efficient combination.

In early April there was a short, sharp communal riot in Agra, necessitating intervention by the 1st South Staffordshire Regiment. A few days later the Agra police refused to draw their April pay owing to the reduction in dearness allowance. On the 27th April it was Cawnpore's turn, long overdue, to burst into flames. A communal riot brought in the 7th Baluch Regiment to the help of the police. The 1st May carried news of rioting in Charkari State, near Jhansi. This, for once, was not communal: it was purely political and did not require our intervention beyond the dispatch of the Administrative Commandant from Jhansi to investigate and report on what was going on.

These were the first ominous flickers in the United Provinces of the new civil war.

## XXIV

### DIVIDE AND QUIT

#### *May*

THE British heavyweights had been lumbering round the course, hock-deep in plough, their saddlecloths too heavily stuffed with lead for them to rise properly to their fences. Now the glistening coat of a fresh horse shone in the golden light of April. There was hope again. Despairing Indian citizens turned from bloody streets and desecrated countryside to their own hearths, to wait. As usual, in these unhappy days, the news that some sort of decision was to be made held the attention of contesting parties, keeping them taut with expectation, their hands from each other's throats, their eyes on the sky, If there was nothing else for which we who held the ring were to be thankful, at least there was this, that whenever it felt to us that the bowstring was ready to snap the bow, the Cabinet or the Viceroy stepped in and laid a restraining hand on the fingers that held the tabs.

All parties were coming to see that division had to be. It was the manner of division that now preoccupied them. Muslims struggled against the division of the Punjab and were divided on the issue of partition of Bengal. Except for a few forward bloc Hindus led by Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose, Hindus demanded partition of both the Punjab and Bengal. We observers knew that it was inevitable that the purely Hindu part of Eastern and South-Eastern Punjab should be lopped off from Pakistan, but we wished to see Sikhs put wholly under Pakistan for they were neither Muslim nor true Hindu and liked the latter little more than the former. In Bengal we hoped that an arrangement could be reached whereby both Muslims and Hindus would be able to use freely the port of Calcutta. Calcutta had been founded by an Englishman, and it had prospered on Muslim-grown jute and British-owned, Hindu-worked tea. It had a Muslim government. It seemed, despite its local Muslim minority, that it would be unfair to give the city wholesale to Hindus. For that reason we welcomed the attempt of Messrs. Suhrawardy and Karam Shankar Roy, supported by Sarat Chandra Bose, to keep Bengal intact as a province. The Governor of Bengal also smiled upon the project. We all foresaw a great deal of trouble if Bengal were partitioned against the will of Bengal political leaders. They may not have been able to stop a bloody riot, but they were well able to start one. This one would be for the extirpation of Hindus in Bengal. In the end, as we all know, Mr. Suhrawardy's plan failed.

Letters from England in early May showed that responsible people had not grasped the fact that firstly the Army must be divided and secondly that peace could not be kept

after that division if no part of the Army of the sub-continent remained in impartial hands. Many were no wiser in India. Even in May 1947, there were European and Indian business men and women in Calcutta who could not believe that all British officers of the Indian Army would soon be gone too. They took it for granted that the old Indian Army would remain. American friends said, 'But you British can't go: don't be silly, you won't go.' But we were going.

At Delhi in March some officers had announced their intention of resigning if the Indian Army they had known were reorganized into class units. But here now was the certainty that not only would it be so reorganized but that it would also be split in twain. But they did not resign: life was yet too sweet.

Late in May Mr. Jinnah, Sardar Baldev Singh and Malik Firoz Khan Noon had all said that the Indian Army must be divided between Pakistan and Hindustan if partition of India were agreed upon. The Malik announced that while the partition was being organized there must be none of the old anti-Pakistan British clique at the head of the Army. Beginning with the days of influence wielded at G.H.Q. by Hindu politicians during the fatal days of the I.N.A. trials, Muslim leaders had more than once privately voiced their distrust of what they considered to be the pro-Congress tendencies of our Delhi headquarters. The Malik now gave public expression to their doubts.

Opinion in qualified circles in India was that it would take two to five years to divide the Army satisfactorily, having regard to the complicated business of splitting its stores, depots, vehicles and factories. Without doubt, to do the business satisfactorily and to train up Indians as technicians and as officers, a minimum of five years would be needed. It would have been wise for Indians to have accepted this period without argument, particularly as the Army had to be ready to fight at any time on its frontiers. Its transparent weakness, were a shorter period agreed upon, would simply invite a more ghastly repetition of the numerous invasions of India. Some have called them 'raids', arguing that Hindu resistance effectively repelled the 'raiders'. When does a raid become an invasion?

The wisdom of Lord Morley's words that I have quoted in Chapter II was never more apparent than now. If five years were needed to re-deploy the Army then five years at least were needed to reorganize India peacefully into two States and to partition satisfactorily any part of India that was to be partitioned. It had taken five years—as Sir Hugh Dow, who had had most of it to do, pointed out—to split Sind off from Bombay. But the wine of British ways of thought and institutions, filling the bags of Indian politicians, lawyers, schoolmasters, business men and bankers, incited them to brook no delay in getting rid of us. It was these men whom we had inevitably brought to the surface of Indian public life rather than the sturdy rural leaders who would have

appeared had we only built from the first on the village and the village *panchayat*<sup>57</sup> system, the system indigenous to the country.

That Indian affairs were dropping from the palsied grasp of the British, rendering urgent its substitution by something more firm, was not so much due to the weakness to which Mr. Suhrawardy attributed it, as to the fact that the Protestant Christian democracy is incapable of exercising rule and control over foreign and backward peoples, for it mistakes emotional humanitarianism for government and is thus cruel in believing that it is kind and ethically justified in what it does. It is unjust to the simple and good and prefers the claims of the vociferous and clever. It waits upon *vox populi* where *vox populi* is either untaught or self-interested. Above all, it cannot understand any other system but its own—disregarding the arduous history of its own growth, the stages by which it came to be what it is.

The swift development of opinions during May is to be seen from the columns of newspapers. Hindu papers began by noting that recent chaos in Bengal and civil strife in the Punjab and the North-West Frontier Province had rendered the Cabinet Mission's plan obsolete for all practical purposes because, whether partition was or was not inevitable, Hindus of these provinces would never tolerate Muslim rule. In Bengal they had had enough of Muslim persecution. (Mr. Suhrawardy's chickens were coming home to roost.) Some of those papers still affirmed that the British had no intention of leaving India by June 1948 and that they would remain in power by fostering communal feuds, taking advantage of the resultant chaos.

Later, there were felicitations for the British in announcing that they would give out their plan for transfer of power on the 2nd June, but the goad had still to be applied. They were told that they must stop their faked mentality and either quit immediately or give their decision in clear terms. Mr. Suhrawardy's attempted coalition to save Bengal from partition was heavily castigated along with any report that he or anyone else wanted to get Dominion Status for a Bengal Dominion in the detested British Commonwealth. The presence of the British was harmful to Indian stability: they must go for they had no sanction to be the arbiters of India's fate.

Towards the end of the month the pressure brought to bear on Hindu politicians in Delhi by their newspapers must have been severe. The whole burden, right up to the Viceroy's statement of the 3rd June, was that the British had no part in India and must go forthwith. Indian leaders were, to quote yet another important paper, not to parley with the Viceroy for the transfer of power but to demand that the British must quit at once.

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<sup>57</sup> Council of elders.

Mr. Jinnah's mid-month demand for a land corridor between Western and Eastern Pakistan evoked a storm of resentful opposition. He would only get it over the bodies of non-Muslims, who rejoiced at the prospect of Pathans carving off the North-West Frontier Province and perhaps Baluchistan, and of the Hindus taking large slices of the Punjab and Bengal, leaving hardly any Pakistan at all for which to make a corridor. In any event, it was not for the British to judge the merits of the case: it was for India. At the same time the British were accused of creating conflict between Pathans and the Muslim League in order to get power by exploiting religious fanaticism. Lord Mountbatten's much-advertised coming to India to achieve unity had only resulted in an irremediable division, they said.

The Muslim Press pursued steadfastly its original line of partition of India, protesting against what certainly appeared to an onlooker to be the Congress campaign to coerce Hyderabad and other Muslim States. They were nervous about Calcutta, affirming that any attempt to hand it over to a Hindu raj would be stoutly resisted.

In this atmosphere of anticipation with attention partly diverted from each other, the two communities were at work marshalling their resources for what was now commonly talked of as the coming Civil War. Thus, the month held no outstanding event of lawlessness: there was too much preoccupation with preparations for war. Obviously, the militant volunteers of the different parties would be foremost in their preparations. It is therefore time to take a look at them, a diversion that will pay at this stage.

There had been a marked increase in membership, particularly in the most important organizations, the Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh (R.S.S. Sangh)—the Mahratta-sponsored armed force of the bigoted and fanatical Hindu Mahassabha—the Muslim League National Guards (M.L.N.G.), and the Congress volunteer groups. Provincial governments were fully aware of the growing danger of these private armies.

Volunteer organizations occupied themselves in training at their various district headquarters, in minor tactics, use of *lathis*, spears, hand-grenades and acid-throwing. To show the strength of these parties, it may be stated that earlier in the year the R.S.S.S. had organised at Delhi a rally of no less than 25,000 of its volunteers and that the banning by the authorities of this meeting was followed by a storm of local Hindu protest and a hartal among Hindu shopkeepers.

In Eastern Command the only really active bodies of the R.S.S.S. were in Bihar and, particularly, in the United Provinces. The growth, both in numbers and importance of both Mahasabha and R.S.S.S. in the latter province during the months before the 15th

August was most noticeable. They stood four-square against Muslims and were very dangerous enemies of peace in India.<sup>58</sup>

We have already noted the form of the Muslim League in Bengal and the activities of their National Guard both in Calcutta and in Eastern Bengal. From Assam now came news of the increase in strength of the M.L.N.G. in that backwater of political activity. Training was going on apace; the usual items—drill, P.T., *lathi*, dagger and swordplay, knife and acid-throwing, and the use of firearms.

The Khaksar organization—more or less Communist Muslims—was disintegrating for obvious reasons, the chief and most significant being that as Muslims they owed a religious duty to their co-religionists rather than a social duty to their Marxist creed. Moreover, a split occurred in their leadership. A few weeks later the movement was disbanded by its leaders.

Congress now saw the red signal and set to work to collect back to itself its dissident bodies, such as the Socialist Party. In doing this it automatically and intentionally drew back again into one fold all the militant bodies of Congress. Here it organized into one formation the Congress Seva Dal and forbade Congressmen to join any other volunteer party. Of all the volunteers now training these were certainly the least militant, since all they were taught in most places was squad drill, P.T., the control of crowds and preservation of order. This was much to the credit of their party. In some areas, it is true, a more bellicose system of training was adopted.

These were the most important private armies in Eastern Command. Outside were the Red Shirts of the North-West Frontier Province, now drifting into the local Muslim League as the Hindu danger became more apparent, and the Sikh S.A. Dal which was organizing in the Punjab and of which we saw only a few members in and about Calcutta. Other minor organizations are not worth mention.

Beneath all this was the hidden hand of Communism, daily growing stronger, daily widening its influence, closely in touch with the old terrorist groups of eastern India, arming silently and efficiently, but not hitherto having marked success where religious bonds held its prey together. It was locked then, as now, in a silent, deadly conflict with the vested interests of the Congress Party; independent of the Socialists—a pariah herd but very dangerous for India's future, professing a religion of its own, Communism.

And now, to while away our time during this period of expectancy, we can tour round the provinces of Eastern Command. We will start with Assam where Brigadier G. A.

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<sup>58</sup> The R.S.S.S. may well in the future represent the resurgence of the old Mahratta Power of Sivaji, with a strong Hindu bigotry as its driving force.

Bain was the Sub-Area Commander, an officer with a pleasingly light touch of caustic wit.

Muslim invasion activities were dying down, partly because rain necessitated early return to their fields, partly because these volatile Bengalis were rather tired of their play and wanted a change, partly because they were nostalgic, but mostly because they heard that there were likely to be great doings in the necropolis of Calcutta about the beginning of June and that battle headquarters needed their help in the city to destroy the arrogant Hindu. The invading forces had meanwhile adopted new minor tactics. Whenever a police patrol approached their reserves, horns were sounded and processions formed up on both sides of the patrol and moved along with them throughout, with intention to encircle the victim directly the latter looked like taking any untoward action.

In mid-May the Railway Force in Darrang killed three and wounded others of the eviction resisters. A few days later the provincial Rice Control Staff and its police escort fought a naval battle with smugglers up the river, killing two of them. The former incident was unfortunate, coming at the very moment when the good offices of the new Governor were influencing the two parties to arrive at a working agreement. It was a temporary setback to the chances of a permanent peace. However, the monsoon was approaching to swamp the fields, swell the rivers, render mass immigration impossible and to give time to others to find a solution of the troublesome problem. Sir Akbar Hydari, the Governor, took full advantage of the time and persuaded his Ministers to hold their hand in the worst-affected area.

Towards the end of May the Muslim League at Silchar appealed to the League at Sylhet for support as they themselves had no leaders left, what with imprisonment, waning enthusiasms and the causes I have mentioned. Three leaders, sent from Sylhet to help them, were promptly given ten months' imprisonment by the Assam administration. From then onwards Sylhet leaders refused to cross the Sylhet – Cachar border, but gave advice from the Sylhet side! Luckily, at Silchar was a Mr. S. M. Dutt, a first-class Superintendent of Police who ruled his demesne with a rod of iron, as he had ruled Nowgong in the 1942 riots. He was disliked by both communities for his strong and impartial ways, ways that were expected to prejudice his chances of preferment under a new government. He dealt with both parties with his usual forthright efficiency and kept the peace.

The prospects of serious trouble in this province owing to any boundary award between Assam and Bengal which might be made on the 3rd June, were not great. The one bone of contention would be the Sylhet district which looked as though it would vote itself out of Assam and into Pakistani Bengal. While this meant a loss to Assam of a fair-sized strip of agricultural territory, it also meant a loss to Assam of a large Muslim population, a not unwelcome deprivation when the province wanted to increase its

Hindu majority. So neither Hindu Congress nor the League was likely to make trouble over the anticipated fate of Sylhet, despite the adverse prospects of its Hindu landlords. The Governor, as a precautionary measure, reinforced Sylhet and Dhubri with platoons of Assam Rifles, and we put the 1st and 3rd Assam Regiment at Shillong at twelve hours' notice to move from the 2nd June.

While all this was going on Mr. Pawsey, the Deputy Commissioner of Kohima, uncrowned king of the Nagas, was out in the hills dealing with the truculent village of Pangre. Pangre men had taken seventy-five heads off the inhabitants of other villages two months before. Pawsey's Assam Riflemen inflicted some casualties in a mild affair with the braves of the village, burnt the village and returned to their barracks.

Another case of headhunting settled itself without the Deputy Commissioner's intervention. Panso warriors had been taking a head or two from surrounding villages for some months past. To settle their debt, neighboring villages of Sema Nagas slid into Panso at dawn in a concerted rush, seized as many Panso victims as they could, made swift play with their *daos*<sup>59</sup> and slipped out again with a prize of forty-five heads to decorate their village stockade.

Mr. Bardoloi, Premier of Assam, had been leading the Advisory Sub-Committee on Tribal Areas. He scarcely appeared to be the dynamic personality required to impress a hardy, frugal and bellicose concoction of mountaineers—mostly head-hunters at that. The Nagas were now putting forth their claims to be independent of India while Assam was urging them to join its province, using the honey tongue combined with sly remarks about India's armed strength. The Nagas addressed Mr. Churchill, and placed their confidence in the British soldier to give them a square deal—the British alongside whom they had fought this war. Alas! no soldier who knew them had the chance to urge their cause any more than to urge the cause of the Gurkha soldier, the political toy of a British Cabinet. They were small fry, friends of the British, loyal and ignored by a democracy which always seeks to woo its powerful enemies and succeeds in betraying its humble friends. The Sub-Committee were not having the success with the tribes so eagerly reported in a sympathetic Hindu Press: in fact, the tribes were indignantly denying flagrantly biased Press reports that they had complained against their British officials and that they were longing for the day when they could form part of free India. However, like all hill clans, these same hillmen could not live

long at peace with each other. Nagas and Kukis had both collected large numbers of modern weapons during the war. The Kukis were nomadic and often caused friction by squatting on Naga land. They were hereditary enemies. Some time or other, probably when British officials have left their country, they will fight. If they do, then, since the Assam government has allowed the Dimapur road to fall into disrepair, the Army will

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<sup>59</sup> Hatchet-like knives.



probably not be able to intervene unless the old airfields of Manipur can in good time be reconditioned.

Nearer home, the Kasi Siems of the Shillong neighborhood were urging their people and each other to stand firm against the devouring ogre, India.

In Bengal there was the Mahatma hinting that if communal fighting went on he might starve himself to death, and the *Statesman* suggesting that it would be better if he stumped selected parts of India with Mr. Jinnah, together preaching peace from the same platform. We wished they would for we had no desire to witness another such communal crisis as those we had weathered in the past year, particularly with a police force which had become so acutely communal that the populace itself was now using bombs, acid and firearms against armed police detachments of the opposite community. These were the results of excesses by Mr. Suhrawardy's Punjab Muslim armed police and consequent violent retaliation by the Hindu Gurkha armed police.

On the whole the chances of rioting in Calcutta soon after the 3rd June announcement would be pretty good if that announcement definitely handed Calcutta to one or the other community. If rioting came it would be highly organized, for both communities were by now past masters at setting a riot going. A definite pronouncement of this sort would turn the disappointed community against the British as well as against their native opponents. Furthermore, a disastrous fire had so damaged the decking and girders of the great Damodar bridge that reinforcements for Bengal from our reserve at Ranchi would have had to make a long devious detour by road, delaying by many hours their arrival at Calcutta. We asked that the 3rd June should not bring any announcement so definite and were assured that it would not. With that assurance we were better contented, though naturally it came to us almost on top of the fatal date and after we had made all our arrangements for the terrible struggle that would have set alight all Bengal and Bihar, whichever side the decision favored.

Latterly, Hindu opinion had formed a solid bloc, 98 percent being firm for partition of Bengal, with Calcutta in Hindustan.

With the growing confidence of Hindus there were signs of deterioration in the hitherto high spirits of Muslims. It was certainly a relief to hear responsible Muslims beginning to talk of the potentialities of Chittagong as a port if East Pakistan had not free access to Calcutta, and of the possibilities of centering the jute mills about that port, close to where the jute was grown, thus denuding Western Bengal of one of its chief industries. It was well that Muslims could console themselves with some alternative if their cherished ambition was not to be attained.

As the month wore on Mr. Suhrawardy's popularity with his own party wore out and that of Khwaja Nazimuddin rose. There were not wanting all the signs of Suhrawardy's

ultimate fall between the stools of Muslim and Hindu 'nationalism', in his attempt to rest one half of his weight on each stool and call the whole contraption Coalition and unity.

Happenings in Bengal were few.

In the camps of Midnapore district there were still large numbers of Muslim refugees who had either fled from the Bihar terror of the previous year or had been beguiled by Bengal Muslim League propaganda into leaving their Bihar homes for better and safer conditions in Bengal. These people were by now thoroughly disgruntled and had started to pilfer materials from Digri airfield close by. When our Garrison Engineer went to enquire into the matter, he and his staff were assaulted. One of his Sub-Divisional Officers was seriously hurt and the rest of the party also received minor injuries. The officer drew his revolver in self-defence and fired five times, hitting, with remarkable accuracy, five of his assailants. The assailants made off but soon afterwards set fire to three small villages near the camp. Dead and injured were later found at the site, including injured women. A number of cattle were burnt alive along with every single small thing these impoverished villagers possessed. The villagers and their friends thereupon set out in a body to retaliate. Local Congress leaders wisely advised them to desist but, most unfortunately, someone let off a few crackers and that sent them clean off their heads. They rushed in a mass upon one of the camps, wrecking, burning, destroying. Then only did the police open fire, unfortunately with as poor marksmanship as the sapper officer's had been good. Fifty rounds splashed all over the place except among the rioters. Luckily heavy rain came on, dispersed the mob and put out the fires. Nine dead refugees were later found on the ground, all of them with injuries in the back received as they fled from the assaulted camp for shelter at another. For some days afterwards Santhals, aboriginals, prowled round the camps with bows and arrows, only being finally driven off when police fired on them.

Attempts were made to derail the Darjeeling Mail, a goods train and the Surma Mail. Life on the railways was far from happy. Train crews were subjected to violent assault by members of Left unions and they and the public by students and other rowdy citizens; there were reports of women passengers being murdered or subjected to grievous insults; and from time to time came attempts to derail other trains.

As war preparations speeded up, so did the belligerents' zeal to acquire weapons and ammunition. Some British soldiers on patrol duty in Calcutta city were approached by an Indian who, after remarking on their good work, gave them a bottle of whisky. The next day he returned and asked them how he could get arms and ammunition. They said they would gladly supply his needs, so arranged a meeting for that afternoon. The British soldiers, on returning from duty, informed their officer, who passed the good news on to our intelligence centre. Major Moorshead dressed himself up as a private soldier, Bill Lambert, ex-Borstal boy, a bad character and the orderly in charge of the

armory. He and the rest then went to the meeting place and, after a lot of haggling in which he learnt that the three Indians already possessed firearms, arranged with them that by juggling with his armory accounts he would steal four revolvers and 400 rounds of ammunition. For various reasons he protested that he could not produce these for them until 2.30 p.m. a couple of days later. He then went off and arranged matters with the police.

The meeting took place, and as he handed the arms and ammunition to the Bengalis, lorries drove out of side roads and placed themselves across the gang's ways of escape and a police jeep drove in and arrested the trio. Thus we laid by the heels an important gang of arms thieves and dealers.

Prolonged searches by police and soldiers led to seizures of a quantity of arms, some being very ingeniously made local productions which stripped down like a Sten. One man had got so far as to build a firearm capable of taking .500 heavy machine-gun bullets, collected in 1946 from the American dump at Kanchrapara. Another had a complete set of blue prints for a Sten gun and was in the act of making one when caught.

As the great day approached, killings and commotions rose critically in Calcutta but died away again for the three or four days before the 3rd June. Trade within the town was at a standstill; virtually the only trade being done was with up-country stations. The city was as a city of the dead. Houses with doors shut: furtive creatures on the housetops running back from the balustrades as one caught their eye: litter and garbage everywhere: silence of the tomb in the worst areas. The beat of soldiers' feet as they prowled about the streets: their busy lorries coming and going. It lay as a rotting body, a silent accuser of political leaders who had wished British in England and Americans in U.S.A. to believe that there was no communal issue that was not of British making and which was not to be forgotten as soon as the British lifted their hand off the country. The great lie was sadly exposed by the mutilated and the dead, by the widows and the fatherless children, and by the desert that had been the busy town of Calcutta.

On the 23rd May we reinforced Calcutta, North, East and West Bengal. The orders for this move are in Appendix IV. In Eastern Bengal, despite constant reports of serious trouble impending and Mr. Gandhi's presence there, which kept all officials thoroughly nervous for his safety, attention was too strongly attracted towards Delhi for the antagonists to do more than panic and growl. A salutary dose was administered to growlers and hotheads in Dacca when the local administration imposed a seventy-two hour curfew which the victims opined was worse than being in jail, an experience that was not infrequent with some of them, protesting that they would never again court a curfew like that in their area. The 8th Frontier Force Regiment must have cordoned the area off even more efficiently than was its wont. During this curfew a

Muslim curfew-breaker was brought before a Pathan<sup>60</sup> Subadar of this Regiment. The law-breaker informed the Subadar that he was a member of the Muslim League and demanded favorable treatment. The Subadar gave him the rough side of his tongue, told him he had no concern whether he belonged to the Muslim League or the Mahatma's bodyguard and packed him off to the District Magistrate for punishment.

In Dacca, there was such a criss-cross of contending parties that a man of any party might well have to take a most devious route through friendly areas in order to get uninjured from one place to another. In Chittagong the people were near starvation and were suffering grave hardships in the untimely wet weather for want of galvanized iron sheeting for roofs. They had stripped off and sold all their own at immense profit during the war when we were acutely short of it. Now, it was the Government's fault that they could not replace it!

To illustrate the temper of the youth of these parts at this time, here is a small anecdote from Chittagong.

Early in March some Hindu girls complained that a Muslim student of the same class had abused them and pushed them. An enquiry was held. The Governing Body ordered that the student should apologize to the girls, otherwise he would be required to take a transfer certificate. The Muslim student was about to apologize when a number of his fellow Muslim students formed a 'Council of Action' and dissuaded the boy. This Council of Action then started on a programme of agitation and intimidation of the Principal and the Staff. The student having failed to make his apology by due date, the Principal suspended him from attending classes so the remainder of the Muslim students then went on strike and picketed the college. The District Magistrate, the Secretary of the local Muslim League and other Muslim leaders interceded and attempted to bring the students to reason so that a week later the students undertook to abide by the decision of the Governing Body. When the classes started, however, a group of students marched into the college compound, hoisted the Muslim League flag on the main building and then marched out shouting slogans. Later all the Muslim students came into the college compound and created a violent uproar, and as there was danger of actual violence, the Principal closed the college. It was later decided that the college would remain closed for the summer vacation. The point made by the Muslim students in this case was that it was against their 'national honor' to apologize to Hindu girls.

Another item of student news was that on the 15th May Hindu and Muslim students of the Dacca Intermediate College walked out of the examination rooms as a protest against the stiff examination papers. One caustic professor remarked that the time was approaching when students would attempt to set their own examination questions. It

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<sup>60</sup> Muslim from the North-West Frontier.

was a little alarming to realize that some of these youths were the prospective politicians of a future India.

In Bihar we had violent labor troubles at Jamshedpur and Tata's Tisco plant. No less than six superintendents of various departments had to be removed to hospital after being assaulted. Sir Jehangir Gandhi applied to our Intelligence Centre at Calcutta and was advised to get into direct touch with General Stable at Dinapur and the General Staff at Eastern Command at Ranchi. All and sundry among the superior staff were being assaulted while plant and equipment were being damaged. General Stable at once dispatched a company of the 3rd Bihar Regiment from Dinapur to Gandhi's help. Meanwhile, Tata's Accounts Manager, who was reported to have been responsible for the new grade system of pay over which the present trouble was started, arrived by air in the military bosom at Ranchi. It was said – with what truth I do not know – that after the superintendents had been assaulted and refused to work, the workers ran the plant themselves and in actual fact produced a record in steel production during this period, not only for Tisco but for the world in comparison to man-hours of labor! Bit by bit the police, backed by our men, restored the situation to control, helped by vital concessions to the demands of the Communist party.

Things were coming to a pretty pass in the Patna Camp jail where the arrested police havildars and constables held a meeting vehemently criticizing the ministry for taking action to suppress the police strike. Goaded on was the Socialist Party, one of whose leaders, jailed in Darbhanga, succeeded, with the ready approval of a timid jail staff, in turning his jail into a District Headquarters for his party, all and sundry coming and going.

Into Bihar now flowed the truculent Khaksar bands, armed with *belchas* (shovels) avowedly to help in the rehabilitation of brother Muslims, displaced and destitute as a result of the autumn killings.

Students of Bihar made a characteristic contribution to the unrest in their province by crowding ticketless into higher class compartments armed with staves, breaking open locked doors and windows and molesting any passenger who dared to protest against their entry.

The tempo of revolt in the United Provinces was increasing. In Bareilly on the 5th May there were stabbings with their resultant seventy-two-hour curfew over the whole city. Just before this, Captain Pritam Singh, a Sikh, was stabbed by a Muslim. Matters were not made easier in Bareilly by the fact that both the British Collector and Muslim Superintendent of Police were soon to be relieved at the same time, while on our side the War Office was demanding, and about to take, Colonel W. Bucknall, the well-trusted Administrative Commandant. The last-named officer was strict and downright and therefore held in esteem by the Indians with whom he dealt.

The Speaker of the United Provinces Assembly was constrained to remark, I believe the U.P. Government must give arms liberally to the people for defence. This was precisely what we did not want to happen: the people had far too many arms for their own defence and for lethal purposes against others. We wanted arms withdrawn, not issued. It was not enough to collect, as they did, all arms and ammunition held in stock by local licensed dealers: we wanted to recover the licensed and unlicensed arms now out with private persons.

There were communal clashes at Benares and Cawnpore.

On the 30th May, Brigadier Akbar at Meerut was urgently requested by the Collector to send troops to Kosi, north-west of Muttra. The Meos, a Muslim tribe who lived on the border of the Punjab and United Provinces, had attempted to infiltrate into a predominantly Hindu area of the United Provinces. The Hindus resisted strongly and there were clashes. In the meanwhile a village near Kosi had been burned to the ground. Fortunately the mobs possessed no lethal weapons or there would have been many dead in the melee.

This outbreak was significant. It was the first phase of a terrible scourging of Muslim peasants in this area, Gurgaon, and worst of all, by the Hindu ruling classes of Bharatpur and Alwar States.<sup>61</sup> The Meos are a very poor, backward tribe of Muslims living in a great sea of Hindus. Their fate was therefore fore-ordained and no leading Hindu statesman or politician would lift a finger to aid them. Soon, the minister whom we then regarded as the most partial of all was to take over States affairs—Sardar Patel. The Meos were doomed. Four companies of Mahomed Akbar's infantry reached Kosi on 31st May. This was Eastern Command's first taste of the brew that had been upsetting Northern Command for some months. I shall refer again to the Meos later on.

The Indian Army, little as the rank and file liked the prospect, was now becoming reconciled to the idea of a divided Army. This, in itself, was bound to have adverse effects on communal feeling in our mixed regiments. Nevertheless, despite this and the constant inflow of men from leave in the Punjab and the harrowing tales they had to tell of atrocities committed by the other community on their folk, we had not a single case of communal trouble of any sort. This was because the Army in the Punjab had shut its eyes to these horrors and carried out its duties impartially, and because the 'old school tie' was still so strong within our regiments.

We took the opportunity to congratulate one of our most severely tested Indian units on its behavior throughout the long ordeal of Calcutta.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> See Map No. 1.

<sup>62</sup> Appendix IV.

We were now losing our British soldiers. On the 7th May we were told that the 1st North Staffordshire Regiment at Dinapur was to go into 'suspension'. This meant that, while it retained a place in the British order of battle, it was to all intents and purposes extinct. One after another, from now onwards, these fine battalions of youngsters disintegrated and the boys themselves went off to find a new home in other battalions. They were welcomed and settled down happily.

On the 12th May General Stable held a big farewell parade of the North Staffordshire Regiment at Dinapur and said good-bye to them for us all. Eastern Command sent them a signal of thanks and good wishes. It was bad luck that just now, in the midst of their and our trials, the Home Government should have decided to cancel the British soldiers' concessions on canteen stores and their free air mail. It hurt them.

Amid all the goings and comings it was hardly likely that the Indian National Army could keep its fingers out of the fire. General Mohan Singh, proud founder of the first I.N.A., reached Calcutta on the 22nd May and had a rousing reception from his brother Sikhs who considered that Congress had been altogether too inattentive to their hero. At a reception in his honor he extolled the heroism of the I.N.A. and insisted that its defeat by the British was really a spiritual victory for the I.N.A. He also took the opportunity while at Calcutta to make bellicose passes at the future Pakistan.

But the I.N.A. themselves, as Mohan Singh himself now showed, had been caught up in the communal tangle and those of them who did not wish to seek obscurity on their farms were ceasing to have any association with their erstwhile army for which they had little loyalty and which they now wished to forget. As a force it was spent, its energies dissipated among the various parties, though its capacity for evil had not yet exhausted itself.

Then, on the night of the 3rd June, came the eagerly awaited announcement.

## XXV

### THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE 3RD JUNE 1947

SITTING in a drawing-room at Delhi listening to the radio, one had none of the feeling of drama that one expected. The fact was that by now our appetites were jaded: we had had a surfeit of crises, of high emotions, and of speeches more often vicious than helpful. All we wanted was to know what was to be done and whether all had agreed. I shall not concern myself with the speakers and their speeches. It suffices to say that the Viceroy had marshalled his facts carefully and logically and told us what we wanted to know – that India was to be divided, that therefore the Army must also be divided, that boundary commissions were to demarcate the border between the two States in the Punjab and in Bengal, and that the two States would, for a time at any rate, be dominions in the Commonwealth. Pandit Nehru spoke as a statesman, accepting the plan: Mr. Jinnah spoke as a lawyer, accepting the plan if his League Working Committee agreed to it also. He was the least cordial to the arrangement. Perhaps, with the prospect of the shearing in half of his beloved Punjab and the loss of priceless Calcutta, he had good reason to be shy of heartily endorsing the scheme.

Directly the scheme was out we flew off to our own territory to see how the Army was taking it and whether the population were about to tear each other's throats out. On the 2nd June, the Governor, General Ranking, the Area Commander, and Brigadier Thompson, commanding Calcutta, toured the city to see for themselves. We sowed thick with soldiers the streets of the worst affected areas. All that day and the 3rd June things were quiet in Calcutta and Howrah.

On the 4th June, in north-east Calcutta rival parties of Hindus and Muslims met in deadly earnest, using bombs, firearms and brickbats. The police rushed in and quelled the uprising. Throughout the city and Howrah the roads were carpeted with police and military, on foot, on picket and on patrol. and moving ceaselessly round in jeeps and trucks, their rifles and automatics at the ready. It was virtually military government, if not so in name, with the Governor as the commander and all under him a part of his forces.

On the 5th June, Hindus burnt a Muslim cart but there was no riposte.

Apart from the prominence of troops and armed police and the obvious determination of the Governor and Military Commander to allow no serious trouble in Bengal, there were other factors working in our favor. There was a split in the Muslim League ranks. One party was pro-Suhrawardy and favored his Sovereign State of United Bengal: the



other party was pro-Nazimuddin and favored what Mr. Jinnah had now come to accept, a partitioned Bengal. Also, it was known that the Muslim League Council was to meet on the 9th June in Delhi. From the Bengal League no less than sixty representatives were due to go to Delhi for the meeting. They naturally persuaded their fellow-workers to stand fast till after the meeting. In Eastern Bengal the Muslims were overjoyed at the idea of partition, not wholly unselfishly. For one thing, Dacca would become the capital of East Pakistan, thereby increasing greatly in wealth and importance, fertile ground for the speculator in real property. For another, Chittagong might well develop into a great jute and tea port: more profit for Chittagonians.

So the omens were not too bad in Bengal, the to-be-partitioned province, provided that we could stamp on any blaze that started in Calcutta where the local profit and loss account was only too clearly seen by all and where Hindus were daily growing more and more jubilant and arrogant. So we concentrated on Calcutta. Few of our commanders and staffs had a really restful night for weeks to come.

The Sikhs all over the Command were in great dudgeon at the alarming prospect of their rich Punjab lands being divided between Pakistan and Hindustan and of many of them losing all they possessed. But they were not yet so numerous in our cities that we need fear their activities. It was the possibility that they might yet win their case before a Boundary Commission for the inclusion of all territory as far west as Lahore that kept them quiescent. North Bihar was too predominantly Hindu to make it likely that that community would create trouble, while Muslims had already had a taste of Hindu brutality and needed no more.

In the United Provinces Meo disturbances had already started in late May on the Punjab border about Kosi. The award was unlikely to embitter still further the simple, rugged antagonists: they were too closely occupied. Hereabouts we turned our eyes ever northwards, waiting for the Sikh war of revenge.

At Kotali, near Kosi, police were in action using their rifles.

Newspapers accepted the inevitable and squared themselves for the final round, the actual demarcation of Punjab and Bengal boundaries. Hindu papers pointed out that Mr. Jinnah was giving his undivided attention to the consolidation of West Pakistan, notably by drawing the North-West Frontier Province into the fold, leaving Muslim Bengal to its fate. There seemed to be no little truth in that, judging by the curt way in which Mr. Suhrawardy's advances in the matter of his United Bengal had been met by Mr. Jinnah. Exuberant Hindu feeling can well be sensed in these extracts from two Hindu papers:

*Hindustan Standard*: 'Economics have a way of smoothing the rough edges of obstinacy and eccentricity and sooner or later it will do so in the case of Pakistan.'

*Amrita Bazar Patrika*: 'Let the principle of self-determination which has been accepted by the Congress and the League in the partition of India be the guiding principle in the final demarcation of the boundaries of provinces.'

Pakistan's claim to nationhood was to be ruthlessly driven to a conclusion favorable to Hindustan.

A well-founded optimism in Hindu prospects in the Bengal partition, a sometimes rueful acceptance of anything other than a United India – but acceptance all the same – did not prevent these papers from jumbling it all up with abuse of the British who had brought these innocents to their present pass.

It was wealthy Hinduism that rejoiced so greatly in the prospect of partition in Bengal for they were freed, with all their personal wealth, from the avaricious clutch of impoverished Bengali Islam.

The Communists had a grand time. They called the Viceroy a liar because he had said in his speech that in truth he did not want to see a divided India. They insisted that India had fallen into a British Imperialist trap whereby Britain weakened India by dividing her and then kept a strong hand in Rajastan (the States) and Pakistan, both separate from and independent of Hindustan.

Our students were now drifting away from Communalism towards Communism. There we left them when we finally quitted India. Judging by the rope their timid and imprudent parents and teachers had given them to create disorders during the times of British rule, it may be expected that they will take no small part in Hindustan's violent future.

In the Army, there was indifference except among the Indian officers. Their attitude was to become more manifestly unfriendly, Hindu to Muslim, until by September a Muslim officer in a mess of the Indian Army began to feel himself unbefriended and in danger. In so far as the men expressed their feelings at all, it may be said that the overriding feeling was one of general satisfaction that at long last Indian leaders had come to some form of agreement on a political method of attaining their object of independence. By a few, fear was expressed for minorities in Hindustan and Pakistan and for the security of their places of worship. (They did not foresee the bloody day that was dawning.) Muslim officers were satisfied that Pakistan had been gained and felt that, given time, they could make this State economically workable and strong in defence. Hindu officers had no fears for the financial and military strength of their State and said that an unworkable Pakistan would realize her mistake and return to the fold in good time. Sikh officers were apprehensive of an attempt to divide their territory.

Anglo-Indian regular officers felt bewildered. They wanted to serve India rather than bits of India.

The broadcasts of all three participants on the evening of the 3rd June had been listened to with great interest by the rank and file and were all duly accepted as quite right, especially that of the Viceroy who, after all, they considered to be the counterpart in sincerity and sympathy of their own British Commanding Officer. Even now, nothing would induce them to grasp the fact that all their British officers were going. The furthest they would go would be to say, 'You'll come back soon.'

Gurkhas took no interest. They said they were neither pro-Pakistan nor pro-Hindustan. They too just blankly refused to believe that they would serve anywhere or anyhow other than they had served in the past, and under their British officers. The Gurkha obviously found it impossible to encompass either the immensity of what was going on, or any of its implications at all. He found it confusing, so confined his thoughts to his everyday duty and to his family and parents. For us, it was exasperating that we were so wholly unable to make him understand at this stage and in good time what the future without doubt must hold for him. Before long, we knew that he would be faced with a choice in which we would not influence him, yet we could not prepare him for the crisis because he was blind to it and would not be prepared.

The Army remained true to its traditions.<sup>63</sup> As yet, apart from an insignificant few, it did not meddle with politics.

We ourselves had hoped for two things – that no attempt would be made to split the Sikh lands and that still it might be possible to keep a part of the Army as an impartial body. Our first hope was disappointed: would the second be disappointed also? We foresaw terrible trouble, even perhaps the collapse of India from the disappointment of this second hope. What had been done to try and bring it to fulfillment? What could be done? We listened with anxious ears but no rumor even of its consideration came to us. There was time yet, for Hindustan would find it very difficult to leave the Commonwealth so long as Pakistan and the Indian Princes refused to leave it.

Lord Louis Mountbatten, by his personal endeavors, had saved us from one imminent and terrible catastrophe. We had a sense of great relief and no little gratitude but we knew that the test was yet to come, only hoping that perhaps we would have discarded the authority which we could not wield before the great crisis was upon us. In fact, we may have rid ourselves of it in time, just in time, or perhaps the unwise acceptance by British officials of the Indian Army's move into Kashmir has morally involved us in what we have physically escaped.

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<sup>63</sup> Appendix IV, Personal Message from G.O.C.-in-C., Eastern Command.

Could Lord Wavell have done what his successor did? Others must answer that question. It seemed to me that he was bound by the Cabinet Mission plan and by some sort of British concept of Indian unity, so that he could not exercise the initiative needed to part the two communities and so provide a short-lived time of peace in which we could say that we handed over a readily-accepted responsibility in conditions of reasonable quiet. Possibly, whatever plan Lord Wavell had in mind would actually have achieved this end by another means. Only he can say.

We made haste to hand over. Had we delayed too long, forces that we could not withstand would have rent India from top to bottom. We ourselves might well have been personally safe but in the eyes of the world we would have been guilty. Today we are deemed to be the makers of a magnificent gesture of supererogation. What will posterity think of us?

## XXVI

### UNITED PROVINCES IN TROUBLE

*June*

*Though a man escape every other danger, he can never wholly escape those who do not want such a person as he is to exist.*

DEMOSTHENES.

PERHAPS readers who are not well acquainted with the affairs of India will welcome a simple exposition of the Plan of the 3rd June. I have, therefore, in Appendix III, shown how we explained it to our soldiers, British and Indian, through Talking Point No. 38.

It was a week or two before all the various and complicated considerations which had been exposed by the Viceroy's statement could be sufficiently digested to make it possible for us to see how the future was to develop, other than to know for sure that we were very near to another and far greater outburst in the Punjab. Two letters to the *Statesman* later in the month, both from Hindus, showed that whatever else the imminence of independence might be bringing to intellectual India, it was at least bringing heart-searchings and, at long last, a touch of realism. I quote these two letters from among many expressions of the same kind which one heard oneself at the time.

#### ON TAKING RISKS

SIR,

'Indian Sufferer' said: 'Though they (the British) stayed long in this country, yet they seldom made much attempt to study Indian culture; instead they criticized and condemned.' This is untrue.

For Hinduism and Buddhism, we are much indebted to European scholars, mostly British. I give below the names of the European scholars whose help is, in one sense, indispensable to those who wish to acquire a systematic knowledge of Hinduism and Buddhism, also of Indian art:

Max Muller, Deussen, Thibaut, Oldenberg, Colebrooke, Monier-Williams, Cowell, Wilson, Grierson, Macdonnel, MacNicol, McKenzie, Farquhar, Warren, Havell, Percy

Brown, Urquhart Saunders, Kennedy, Woodroff, Stevenson, Bishop, Copleston, Rhys Davids and Mrs. Rhys Davids.

Max Muller, Deussen, Oldenberg and Thibaut were Germans and Kennedy an American, the rest British. Max Muller excepted, all the others lived in India. Knowledge of Hinduism and Buddhism, in spite of one's proficiency in Sanskrit and Pali, would be incomplete without a study of their works. They shed much light upon the religion of the Hindus. They taught us the critical method and the science of chronology. Hindu Pandits have no idea of chronology.

Anderson translated Bankim's Indira into English. Mrs. Knight rendered Bankim's Bisha Briksha into her own tongue. Edward Thompson translated Ramprasad's songs, and his book on Rabindranath is a masterly production. Page of the Baptist Mission was a competent Bengali scholar. Sir Alfred Lyall was perhaps not a Sanskrit scholar, but his Asiatic Studies reveal a discriminating mind. J. F. Edwards is an authority on Marathi saints, and his Life and Teaching of Tukaram is one of his numerous contributions to Anglo-Marathi literature. Miss Rowlands of the Welsh Mission took her M.A. in Bengali a few years ago, and stood first. There may be others whose names I do not know.

I believe some Europeans have written notable books on Islam. Let a Muslim pronounce on this work.

Yours, etc.,  
CHUNI MUKERJI.  
Krishnagar, Nadia, June 20.

## RACIAL BIGOTRY

SIR,

The views expressed in your Editorial of June 14-15 are welcome because they have tragic significance for modern India. There was a time when Pakistan was considered a hoax. It is nearly a fait accompli today. The question arises how is the impossible becoming possible. The simple answer is that we caste Hindus are responsible for this division of the country.

Our continued social discrimination against the Muslims alienated them, I hope not forever, and created a gulf not now easy to bridge. The Hindus must not eat food touched by the Muslims, nor allow them entry in their temples, not even as visitors. Such blind and discriminatory Hindu orthodoxy practiced for generations has ultimately led to this division.

Unless the Hindus learn to treat their Muslim brethren on an equal footing, socially and politically, this unfortunate division has come to stay.

Yours, etc.,  
RATAN SINGH.  
Bikaner, June 17.

Early in the month we heard, as we had expected, but none the less with relief, that the Muslim League Council had accepted the plan and that on the whole the Muslim world of India was pleased that the Muslim State had been born sooner than any could have expected. Entire credit was given to the 'dogged tenacity, determination, will, incomparable strategy' of the future Qaid-e-Azam who had wrought the miracle. The extent of the sincerity behind these expressions may be gauged by the fact that only too many of those who used them knew well that they themselves must stay in Hindustan and there suffer the more because of their present enthusiasm for the thing the Hindu hated.

Previous Hindu opposition to a division of the country was in part based on the fear that all and sundry would try to secede from Hindustan once Pakistan had been conceded. We ourselves knew in Eastern Command of the demand for Dravidistan, Jharkhand for the Adibassis, Federation of the Eastern States, separation of Darjeeling and Kalimpong areas, Naga independence, Hyderabad and Bhopal on our borders, and a whole horde of others. In Hindustan there is and always will be from now onwards more that is fissiparous than cohesive. This will become apparent as soon as a sizeable opposition party makes its debut in India's parliament. I have already remarked that Hinduism is a religion of differences: it now proliferates disintegration, however much of an entity it may itself appear to be.

Along with Muslim pleasure at the outcome came their charges against the Congress Party of having delayed for seven years this simple solution. They pointed out that no less than seven years before had their Qaid-e-Azam advocated his policy. For lack of Congress acceptance of his plan thousands had died and communal relations had been embittered. 'It is an irony that Congressmen, condemning the hated British, should swallow an award of the foreigner rather than accept the remedy of their own people.'

Mahatma Gandhi gave his considered opinion that the British Government had lacked the courage, since the inception of the Cabinet Mission's effort, to do the right thing no matter what the cost. He went on to say that the British would certainly be blamed if any mishaps occurred. He described the Indian Independence Bill as a calamity. It was often rather difficult to interpret the Mahatma's oracle. If he meant that the British should have made an award on the lines of their Cabinet's proposals of May 1946, then he can hardly have been his non-violent self in expecting that we alone should have pressed through the award, no matter what the cost to others, risking inevitable

bloodshed. Or perhaps he was serious and heeded not the cost in life. If he meant that we should not have accepted partition without imposing conditions—one being the maintenance of an impartial force and another that the Sikhs should be in Pakistan—then his remarks were not unjust. As it was, on the military side at any rate, we were simply inviting an armaments race if we shared the defence forces out and left nothing to hold the ring. However, in view of Labour's golden promises when out of office, I dare say this complete rendering up of all authority and responsibility was inevitable.

Notwithstanding, the Mahatma, even the Hindu Mahasabha, originally so opposed to partition of India, regarded the plan as the best in the circumstances. So, on the whole, by the end of June there was no party of any consequence but was at least resigned to the Viceroy's plan while some were almost enthusiastic, if enthusiasm were possible for anything British.

The Leftists, the revolutionaries, terrorists and Communists, in fact all anti-British parties, were left at the post or indeed never came out of the paddock, for the race for which they had entered had already been won and lost. It was significant that Mr. J. P. Narain, the extreme Socialist, now appeared on the same platform as Pandit Nehru, the one to urge Congress to overthrow the rich and cherish the poor, the other to beg labor not to strike and to threaten the Indian States against the time of their recalcitrance.

As far as the British were concerned, the Mountbatten solution would enable them to get out of India peacefully, leaving the new independents to work out—or fight out, more probably—their own fate. We could feel the atmosphere of India changing. Educated Hindus were getting most polite to the British. The undemonstrative Briton was almost embarrassed.

Towards the end of June a visitor at any of our British Government Houses would see the head of the house busily concerned with packing up his goods and chattels and booking homeward passages. He had had his orders to hand over on the 15th August. There is now a natural tendency among Hindus seeking for a national tradition in their historical past to belittle the achievements of the British governors of India and to relegate them to obscurity. I think they swing the pendulum too far. At the least, all British governors represented and propagated ways of life and customs, many of which Indians have adopted and which will permeate India for centuries, leaving perhaps a mark for eternity, no matter who may yet enter or who may rise up to rule this great expanse. Moreover if the British have been remarkable for anything at all in India it is because they have created a record in the fewness of those who ruled those millions of Indians, and the peace that the few spread all over India, even before motor cars and aircraft helped their administration to gain touch with remote peoples.



The monsoon was long delayed, the delay bringing with it a rise in temperatures among the rivals for power in India. It was doubtful if there would be enough rain to save the crops this year. Famine was threatened.

Alert on our plateau at Ranchi we heeded every breeze that blew. One of the breezes that fanned the laden air came from the Indian States. The matter was whether the Indian States would willingly accede to either of the two dominions-to-be, whether they would coalesce into bigger units, and whether, if they did not elect to join either of the two dominions, one or other would coerce them into accession. If coercion, economic or political, were to be used, would it lead in the end to military measures and would the State concerned resist those measures?

Early in June the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* came out with an editorial which read ominously to us soldiers. It commented on the then impending announcements of independence by Hyderabad, Bhopal and Kashmir. It said, 'they must decide to join the one Assembly or the other, but in no circumstances shall they be allowed to carve out independent kingdoms and exploit the misery and starvation of their subjects'. This may have been humanitarianism or it may have been a first attempt to find a pretext for compelling the Princes against their will. In another Hindu paper the term, 'The Princely Challenge', was used and the Princes were warned not to go against the wishes of the people of their States.

We all know now that Bhopal and Travancore<sup>64</sup> toed the line after a good deal of hesitation: that Junagadh was threatened by the Indian Union which disposed forces for its subjection: that Kashmir, most of which for many reasons should have joined Pakistan, was no less invaded by Hindustan than by the tribesmen of the North-West Frontier: that Hyderabad stood out against pressure and threats from Hindustan.<sup>65</sup> But, even at the risk of becoming tedious, it is necessary for me, in order to tell my tale of the Army in the last days of British rule in India, to narrate the words and actions of Hindustan's leaders in the controversy over the States in so far as they helped out or increased our already heavy burden of worry. Today we shall be told that after all it was the duty of the Interim Government, not of the Army, to deal with any trouble that might arise. But that government was at sixes and sevens within itself and finally it was to the Army that it must have turned for the ultimate sanction of its policy or for the settlement by force of whatever violent reaction it had itself caused.

Meanwhile Muslim papers naturally supported the Muslim Nizam of Hyderabad in his declaration of independence.

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<sup>64</sup> See Map No. 8.

<sup>65</sup> And was invaded. The Indian Lieut.-General's pronouncement at the time had a ring that is all too familiar to us today.

Certainly the Muslim League and particularly Mr. Jinnah kept themselves more free from our accusation of tampering with the States than did the opposite party. That party accused the Muslim League of pursuing a Machiavellian policy in its liberal attitude to the Princes and in its refusal to agree to any sort of pressure being brought upon them to join the one or the other Dominion. It looked to an observer as though Machiavelli was already in the Hindustan Cabinet.

In mid-June the Mahatma appealed to the Princes publicly to come into the Constituent Assembly, declaring that India, already cut in two, could not endure further division. He deplored Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer's pronouncement that Travancore was to remain independent. It seemed to gall him that that State should have to stay a part of the Indian union while under a British Crown and then secede as soon as a true Indian realm was formed. He said that this was unworthy of any State and that if the British were party to such conduct it would be to their lasting shame. He hoped the British would act on the square. The Congress, he asserted, had no desire to annihilate the Princes. With Travancore he bracketed Hyderabad as a great sinner. Ninety percent of the population of the latter was non-Muslim.

Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer, Travancore's Chief Minister, pointed out that the Mahatma was well aware of Travancore's decision to enter the Constituent Assembly of a united India but that, now that India was to be divided, Travancore too, which had never been conquered during many centuries and had maintained a tradition of independence, wished to be independent.

However, for good or ill, the Congress Party was active in Travancore stirring the people against their rulers. Some of them came to the Mahatma, telling him that there had been police *lathi* charges against the people of the State, and that free expression was gagged. His view was that this declaration of independence was tantamount to a declaration of war against the free millions of India.

It was not comforting to us when even the Mahatma talked in terms of war.

The discussion then took another turn. Mr. Gandhi came down foursquare in favor of a new vogue, that of Pathanistan. Here was the champion of unity creating a fission when he denied C.P. liberty to do the same thing in Travancore.

C.P. pointed this out. The Mahatma was at great pains to show that the analogy between the two was a bad one. 'Pathanistan' was apparently urged in order to keep Pathans together, a rib torn out of the very body of Pakistan, thus to be autonomous but owing allegiance to the Centre. Travancore was different, he held, because it meant to be independent of both Dominions. There was much more on the matter, all rather unconvincing and leaving us to wonder what was behind the advocacy of Pathan

independence other than the desire to weaken Pakistan, and behind the insistence on Travancore's accession other than the firm intention to strengthen Hindustan.

About this time came a Press report from England that there was in Travancore thorium and monazite for the production of atomic power.

On July 1st Pandit Nehru, as reported by the Amrita Bazar Patrika, Vice-President of the Interim Government and Member for External Affairs, reiterated that there could only be two alternatives before an Indian State. They could join the Indian Union and participate on an equal footing in the Union's Constituent Assembly, in which case no question of paramountcy arose. But if some States could not accept the 'invitation' extended to them it was evident that when there was one strong government in India, it could not tolerate small parts of India having independent relations with foreign powers, as that might endanger the security of the country. This was not a legal question. It was a question of facts.

The relations between the East India Company and the States, for example, showed that one strong power could not tolerate any challenge by another power in India. The Central power must exercise some authority over any State and if that State challenged it, it must face the Central power. In the final analysis, what would prevail in the new age in India would be the will of the people. He hoped that this would be achieved by constitutional methods. No State that wished to remain independent could do more than annoy the Indian Union. 'We are not interested in imposing anything on them,' said Pandit Nehru. 'We are inviting them to be our equal partners.'

The appeal to a precedent set by the East India Company, particularly one of so robust a nature, was as interesting as it was unusual. The reported speech sounded a little dictatorial and certainly contained a threat.

So we were not altogether happy as to the future employment of the Army in pursuance of Hindustani policy towards the Indian States. The one thing that had not been said by any State, we duly noted, was that it would not join Hindustan because it feared to be mixed up in the coming bloody war with Pakistan and to be turned upside down by the Communism which was being so sedulously nurtured in the sleek, warm body of Hinduism.

On the 17th June the radio told us that Mr. Jinnah had said that, so far as he and the League were concerned, any State might declare its independence if it so wished.

This was the first open disagreement between the two Dominions. It had taken two weeks to arise.

The movement towards Pathanistan on the North-West Frontier, and in the North-West Frontier Province, was only likely to affect a few of our men for, although Pathans were well represented in our units, most of them were of the more sophisticated type and by now had identified themselves pretty completely with the interests of the Punjabi Muslim soldier who was the outward symbol of Pakistan and the Muslim League. From the higher military or strategical point of view it emphasized to us the burning necessity for that neutral force we so ardently desired, to care for the never tranquil and still clan-ridden frontiers of India.

But, already, far from looking out to West and East, to the great mountains, we heard on all sides a new speech about frontiers—astonishingly, the frontiers of Pakistan—Hindustan in the Punjab, and in Bengal, and in Assam. We were ready for the bitterness of the two communities but this talk among our own Indian officers, even the most senior, was something we had not expected to hear so early after the 3rd June. Eventually it would come, but surely not yet.

Down in Bengal, sweltering between warm showers, we had all things ready for these days of tension, awaiting the outcome of voting on the fate of the province. In Calcutta, teeming and reeking with garbage, we kept our ammunition boot heavily down on the two contending factions. There were thirteen major units of infantry, armor and artillery in Calcutta and Howrah, half of them out on the streets the whole time. The trouble was concentrated so we concentrated on the trouble. If we made sure of Calcutta then we were sure of peace in Bengal and Bihar. So, with Calcutta firm, we turned all our energies towards the United Provinces, mainly to block the intrusion into that province of violent bands from the Punjab. We threw out a border cordon and behind it operated mobile columns to stamp out at once the first spark of trouble and to restore the confidence of the provincial police.

A note written on the 9th June to a very senior official in the United Provinces at this time, to allay his anxieties at the prospect of losing British units, will perhaps form as good an introduction as any to a narrative of happenings in that province in the merry month of June:

Your letter of 29th May reached me only today, 9th June.

I am sorry if anyone has made so definite a statement—that I was taking away some of the British units from the U.P. That statement was misleading.

There is one British Bn. of the U.P. Area garrison which is at short notice to move to Bengal; I should only order the Bn. to move if I considered the situation in Bengal was more urgent than the situation in the U.P. That has not hitherto been the case and the British Bn. is still in the U.P.

A month or two ago, during the Punjab troubles, I had reconnaissance parties in the U.P. in case trouble spread to that province. I was then prepared to move a whole Division from Bihar into the U.P. This exemplifies my policy, which is to deal with the most urgent trouble with all the forces that can reasonably be mustered and then to turn to the less important before it boils up. At that time, when I was prepared to send a Division to the U.P., I was dealing with the local troubles of the Bihar police mutiny, the recent Calcutta riots and the threatened invasion of Assam by 30,000 Muslims for which the Assam Government was demanding from the Defence Member and the Viceroy that I should send a Bde. to Assam. The latter demand I refused, luckily rightly, owing to my intention to deal with what appeared to me to be likely to be a more serious and urgent problem in the U.P.

No Commander can afford to have potential reserves idle while he is dealing with a decisive operation. At present I have rather more than one extra Bde. of my reserve sitting on top of Calcutta and Eastern Bengal and that is why Bengal has seemingly accepted the inevitable and remained quiet. Bengal may have to be reinforced.

I can assure you that the needs of every province of this Command are daily before me and that I am aware of your present situation and of the potentialities for serious trouble in the U.P.

If I move troops from any province it is only because of the urgency of someone else's needs.

We must always remember that G.H.Q. Reserves held in the U.P., available for serious troubles there, are no less than two British Bns., one British Field Regt., and now moving in, 43 Gurkha Lorried Bde. and 80 Ind. Inf. Bde. These are being located north and south between Dehra Dun and Jhansi which is right on your border with the Punjab.

I know that you will realize from what I have said that I cannot give any guarantee always to keep any fixed number of British troops in the U.P. It would be a promise that I could not keep, particularly as one British battalion belongs to 73rd Brigade in Calcutta and is only temporarily held in the U.P. owing to lack of married accommodation in Calcutta. It is, in fact, part of the Bengal garrison.

I must assure you of my concern for the maintenance of law and order in the U.P. equally with other important areas of Eastern Command. Curtis also will doubtless have given you this same assurance on my behalf.

There was no doubt that in the U.P. ministry we had a body of helpers who were only too glad to see us apply ourselves wholeheartedly to the maintenance of law and order. Although the Congress Party was in power and we had more than one indication of personal communal animosity among ministers, yet the Premier himself, Pandit Pant, gave us an assured feeling that the government as a whole would go further than most to maintain the peace. It is possible that since the members of his government were men of means and therefore stood to lose a great deal by such commotions as had disgraced Bengal, Bihar and the Punjab, and since there was in high circles in the province a strong youth movement towards the Left, in opposition to the Ministry, there was here more incentive to take a determined line with malefactors. In the districts, it may at once be said that the majority of officials were communally tainted. This went for both the civil administration and the police. In a province with so large a Muslim minority this was serious. So the government itself had mostly blunt tools through which to work.

We had had one sample of Jat ferocity at Garhmukteswar in the previous winter and it was the Jats, both within the U.P. and on its borders with the Punjab, on whom we kept our eye.

I will try to confine myself at first to the terrible border troubles, those about Gurgaon, opposite Muttra, across the Jumna River, and then turn to what I may call the domestic happenings of the province. The Jumna River was to no small extent the barricade which held off roving bands of marauders and plunderers from our territory. In May we had already recorded an outburst of the Meos. It is the second chapter of that story that I now tell. Here is a note on these penurious farmers introducing the reader to the disgraceful story that is to unfold itself.

Meos had been enrolled in the Bengal Sappers and Miners since 1932 but had lately not been allowed to enlist. They were classed as Hindustani Mussulmans and should thus have been enrolled by the Bombay Sappers and Miners and, I believe, by the Jat Regiment, the Indian Grenadiers and doubtless some other Corps. The Meos complained that no one would enrol them and for this reason were slightly bitter. They are generally poor, do not emigrate freely, and consequently the large numbers of demobilized soldiers with small prospects of earning a living did not make for tranquility in the Mewat.<sup>66</sup>

The Meos are thick-headed, not well educated on the whole, and stubborn. Their main characteristic is extreme clannishness, in which respect they can become fanatical. When educated they prove that they are by nature quite clever, but like our Meo V.C.O.s who were often well-educated men with a broad-minded outlook on most matters and by no means blind to the Meo's faults, their motto is, 'My country right or wrong'.

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<sup>66</sup> Land of the Meos.

The Meo country is not a rich one. Jats and Ahirs out-number the Meos, but the latter reckoned they could take on the former at any time. In the past the area had been peaceful, outwardly at least. From time to time there had been pitched battles between the communities with, say, fifty on either side, and a few deaths may have resulted. This, however, seems to have been looked on as a private matter, a form of inter-village cricket, and no clash had been openly admitted to the authorities nor any casualties ever disclosed.

This had been going on from time immemorial, but communal troubles elsewhere and an influx of refugees or agitators made the present trouble into a civil war. The Meos had for very many years possessed arms which they had hidden in the jungle and brought out in times of stress.

They have a fanatical love for their arid country and are determined to stay there or die. They would not have moved under any system of exchange of population and would have therefore preferred Hindustan to Pakistan, unless persecuted beyond all endurance. They were not well organized behind any strong leaders, though there were one or two educated men in the professions who assisted them. The presence of demobilized soldiers gave them some military cohesion. Men on leave probably lent a hand in the struggle, though never openly.

There seemed little likelihood of their ever being brought to see reason by argument. They confessed that at peace meetings everyone spoke for peace; they then went away and gave orders for war. They had no respect for Mr. Jinnah or Pandit Nehru or any other politician nor had they any big man of their own who might talk them round. They had lost faith in all directions and had decided to fight to extermination rather than have their weapons taken away, be moved from their land, or be left in any way at the mercy of the Hindus.

Their loss of faith extended to the authorities in the Indian States (who were however unable to prevent their Meo subjects from coming to the aid of their fellows in British India), the police and the Army. Lack of faith in the Army was due to the belief that Sikh and Gurkha troops were being mainly used. One can imagine that this belief was followed by insinuations of partiality.

The Hon'ble Babu Purshottan Das Tandon, Speaker of the United Province Legislative Assembly, in an address to volunteers of a Congress Training Camp at Thousi, said that non-violence was out of date and that people must take up arms to fight against gangsterism. As his speech implied that Muslims were the aggressors, it was much resented by them, while at the same time it encouraged those Hindus of evil intent, particularly Jats, in their projects against the wretched Muslims. Hindu factions urged their followers to arm as the ministry, they alleged, was utterly incapable of protecting

Hindu lives. As a consequence all other parties, Sikhs and Muslims, set frantically to work to provide themselves with weapons against the day of slaughter. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Revenue Minister added fuel by publicly expressing his desire to exterminate the minorities and to unite Jats and Gujars in a Jat province. General Curtis at once protested officially and in no measured terms to the provincial government against their permitting a provocative speech to be made by the Speaker of their Assembly, and demanded that the government should control the utterances of its officials. After many weeks, all he heard was that the Central Government considered that he was meddling with politics in thus protesting. The plain fact was that these speeches made his role of keeping the peace to no small extent the more difficult.

In the last days of May Meo villagers were attacking Hindu hamlets in Gurgaon district between Pal wal and Hodal. The civil police were under strength and unable to offer any resistance.

I will now tell the tale of the Meo rising as we saw it, although, in doing so, I must break the chronological sequence that I have tried hitherto to follow.



## XXVII

### THE MEO RISING

*May–August*

As soon as we took over the territory about Delhi, on the 1st August, we came into close relations with the Meo risings<sup>67</sup> and the murderous activities in the states of Alwar and Bharatpur. Hitherto, we had had in our own borders only the overflow of the calamity. Our first task was to dig out the history of this bitter quarrel. Here I will try to bring the tragedy up to date.

Early in February 1947 some petty incident arose between Hindus and Muslims over the construction of a new mosque in a small village near Hattin in Nuh Tehsil. The matter was quickly settled, but this petty incident showed how different was the problem of maintaining law and order in this district from that in the other districts in the province. In most districts communal trouble rarely began in villages: it generally occurred in towns, perhaps spreading later to the countryside. In this district there was always a danger of trouble in the villages and particularly along the boundary between the Mewat, which is a miniature Pakistan, and the Hindu country to the east and north. This internal boundary is shown on Map No. 6. It roughly divides Gurgaon district.

Towards the end of March 1947 threats of trouble in the district first arose when newspapers began to talk of tension in the Ambala Division. Weight was added to this talk by the fact that on the 17th March the Governor of the Punjab visited Rohtak. This visit was taken as confirmation of the wildest rumors. A false report that a Hindu boy had been stabbed in the street by a Muslim put the whole town of Rewari into a state of panic. This panic spreading to the villages resulted in an unsuccessful attempt to stop a train two or three miles out of Rewari; some Muslim wayfarers were seized as temporary hostages in a Hindu village and others were attacked and beaten close to another Hindu village. At about dusk on 23rd March riots broke out in Dehri and Hodal. A detachment of the Rajputana Rifles from Delhi quickly restored order. The incident was purely a one-sided affair with Hindus slaughtering Muslims and, from all accounts, the trouble arose over a dispute between two Hindu menials. A Muslim had tried to settle the dispute and suddenly things had taken a communal turn. Ten Muslims were killed and about thirty injured. It is believed that there were no Hindu casualties. Muslim houses and shops were burnt. Only poorer Muslims and old men

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<sup>67</sup> Maps Nos. 6 and 7. As it is impracticable to show all villages on these maps, I have set in italics in the narrative certain of them which are shown on the maps. I hope this will give the reader a sufficient indication of the areas in which trouble occurred.

were attacked while richer Muslims, who might have defended themselves, were left alone. The village had a fine imposed on it of Rs. 90,000/-, of which only about Rs. 450/- had been collected by the end of August. Police and civil authority were unable to collect this or, in fact, any of the fines which they imposed. Villagers just refused to pay and the civil authority was unable to enforce its will on them.

Once again the Delhi Press commenced to play its luckless part. Accounts of trouble in the Punjab published by them did much to set the Hindu public of the district athirst for revenge.

In the northern Mewat the trouble started about 26th March when some Meos stole a buffalo from Nurpur, a Hindu Ahir village. A party of Hindus pursued the buffalo and recaptured it. On their way back with the recovered buffalo they were attacked by the Meos but, although no serious injuries were inflicted, Ahirs and other Hindu villagers took a serious view of the matter and on 29th March assembled in large numbers near Hassanpur (Taoru). A platoon of Gurkhas from Delhi arrived in time to prevent trouble. This incident took place on the border between the Mewat and the Hindu country. An attempt to hold a panchayat the next day, 30th March, failed and that afternoon the Meos burnt the Gujar village of Kotah Khandeola. Next day the Hindus retaliated by burning four Meo villages—Sakatpur, Ghairatpur, Dehri and Gangani. On the 1st April the Meos responded by burning Badgujar, Bisar, Akbarpur, Kherki and Baghanki. Up to this point all villages had been evacuated before being burnt and casualties were extremely light. On 2nd April the Hindus started trouble some way to the south and attacked from the neighbourhood of Dharuhera, burning three Meo villages, Ghatal Kurd in Alwar State and Khori Kalan and Rangala in Gurgaon district. The people of Khori Kalan, who did not expect a mob to attack them from the direction of State territory, were surprised and had not time to evacuate their village. Twenty-six were killed, including many women and children.

This started real hatred. The Meos burnt in revenge Rathiwas, Akeria and Ghatal Kalan, and on 3rd April, Nainwal, Sahrawas, Panchgaon, Bhurka and Dona Kheri. They also burnt what little had been left in certain other villages which they had earlier attacked. The Hindus replied by burning the village of Utaon.

The disturbances had happened in the most inaccessible part of Gurgaon district. Many of the villages attacked were surrounded by rocky hills, sandhills and ravines where it was quite impossible for any vehicle other than a jeep to move about the country. Fully armed police or military were limited to a speed of three miles an hour, so at first it was difficult to deal with the large gangs of marauders who were moving round the countryside. On the 25th May trouble took place in Nairungpur, a Muslim village, in which twenty persons were killed by the attacking Hindu mob and as many injured. The Hindu mob carried away their own casualties on captured camels. On the 27th May Meos started hitting back in considerable force. An armed mob of about 5,000 attacked

villages of Hindus, Jats and Ahirs in the jurisdiction of Nuh, Sadr Gurgaon and Taoru police stations. By the evening of the 27th May a large area between Sohna and Hattin was completely out of control and as many as thirty villages were afire.

News now came in of an affair near Kosi, north-west of Muttra. On hearing that an armed party was making for Saomdhad, a combined patrol of the 6th Kumaon Regiment and the 4/14th Punjab Regiment was sent off in the early morning of the 4th June to get contact with it. On the way the troops learnt that the 'enemy' were making for Kotali Meo, a Muslim village, so switched off and soon got touch with them, to find that they consisted of about 1000 Jats with a leader mounted on an elephant. The patrols demanded their weapons, a demand that was peremptorily refused and an attempt to seize them was resisted. The soldiers at once opened fire, inflicting casualties and securing many of the arms they were after.

Meanwhile, with strong forces of Meos and Jats collecting about Saomdhad and Seoli, a battle was impending. Two platoons of the 6th Kumaon Rifles hastened out to investigate and prevent a clash. The Muslim village of Alipur was found burnt, its destruction being the cause of a violent Meo attack on the Hindu villages of Marauli and Palare. Here, sixteen corpses were found floating in the canals but our men reported that the belligerents had not used firearms. It was all close-quarter work.

A patrol on the 4th June passed through a string of villages from Hadari to Baraura and Banchamet, confiscating spears, a country-made gun, cartridges and powder, and disarming small bands of law-breakers. Kenpore, Nagla Meo and Nangaonuan were found burnt. Here our men counted and collected twenty-six dead.

The month passed with its daily incidents and hurried movements of soldiers to cork the flow of raiders from across the Jumna River into our territory. The rapidity with which troops had arrived on the ground had by the 4th June made our border reasonably secure. One incident late in June will illustrate the nature of the fighting on our borderland.

On the 26th June villagers about the Muslim village of Kadirpur were suddenly evacuated and Hindu refugees poured across to the Punjab bank of the Jumna. The 4/14th Punjab Regiment, suspicions aroused, at once sent a patrol over the border and posted a nightly picket at Kadirpur. At 4 a.m. on 28th June an armed mob of 4,000 all but surrounded Kadirpur, leaving only the river side of the village open. At the time a Naik<sup>68</sup> and six men were in the village. He went out and warned the crowd that if they attempted to attack the place his patrol would at once open fire in defence of its inhabitants. Thereupon, the mounted leaders of the mob exhorted their men to advance and attack, saying that this was only a bluff and that there were no troops in the village.

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<sup>68</sup> Corporal.

The Naik, after warning the assailants that if they crossed a certain line he would at once open fire, returned to his diminutive force.

At 4.30 a.m. the mob came on in strength, using shotguns, cannons and home-made bombs. One villager was killed by a bullet.

The patrol held its fire till the mob was within a hundred yards and then opened up steadily, picking off the most prominent of their opponents. The fight went on for over an hour when a relief column of police arrived in three-tonner lorries. The mob, seeing this reinforcement, melted away across the river carrying many casualties away with them. The patrol picked up five dead, two of whom were identified as the sons of headmen of local villages.

The next day a large gathering of some 20,000 villagers collected west of the Jumna, intending to attack villages close by but never crossed to our side to contend again with the dauntless patrol. From Kadirpur we saw villages on the Punjab bank being set ablaze.

One of our biggest difficulties was the unhelpful attitude of certain members of the Provincial Legislative Assembly. I have already recorded the contribution of Babu Purshottandas Tandon. Others were no more sympathetic towards our endeavors to keep their homeland from pillage. At the Jat village of Kamar Mo, some three hundred Meos had delivered an attack. At the time there were four armed police under a police officer at the place, when, after the Jat villagers had fled, these constables fired a few rounds killing one or two Meos. The Meos, in their turn, took to their heels. Here is how a prominent Hindu legislator reported the incident in one of our Indian papers on the 5th June:

On May 28 morning I stood in the village Kamer just on the border of Mathura district, which was at that time facing the full fury of the Meos' attack. Mortars were booming for miles round, cannons firing, and rifle attacks were made. After the police guard fired the Meos retired after burning a village named Garhi Berbari. Eight Jats were killed and a number of them wounded.

As a counter to my narrative as seen through British eyes, the reader might like to see the rest of the statement. It is made by one who would naturally favor the Hindu Jat community and frown on the Muslim Meo and on the Punjab, now under Section 93 or direct government by a British governor, as opposed to the United Provinces now under a Congress Ministry. He obviously had not the high opinion of the Army that was held by the local inhabitants who owed life and property to it.

## JATS FORM MORCHAS <sup>69</sup>

Four Morchas<sup>70</sup> were established by strong Jat villages where thousands of them stood day and night in readiness to face the attacks of Meos and have since known no peace. On May 31 Hon. Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, Premier of U.P., came to Mathura <sup>2</sup> and I accompanied him right through the disturbed area up to Delhi. Six villages were burning on both sides of the road. Two of them were burnt before our eyes and when chased by us the miscreants escaped.

Armed mobs were moving about. Trucks, manned by Muslim League volunteers and Muslim National Guards, were running about and the vast area presented a scene of a battlefield.

The Premier was struck by the total absence of any Government beyond Kosi, the last town on the U.P. frontier. Thousands of Jats surrounded him and gave him an account of the loss and destruction they had to suffer. The Premier remarked that the most remarkable thing was that in spite of these losses and hardships there was no trace of fear on their faces. The police station of Hodal presented one Sub-Inspector and seven constables in the day; at dusk it was locked up and the police retired to take rest at night.

With all this the Jats stood well and though unarmed forced the armed, the Meos, to relinquish their claim for an independent state. Things are becoming comparatively calm and at places the Army has begun to appear after 10 days from the start. Though at a great cost, the Jat villagers of Gurgaon district have learnt a lesson in defending themselves without the help of the Government which did not exist for them.

## DUTIFUL TAHSILDAR

Only once for some time a Tahsildar<sup>71</sup> (a Muslim) came on the road and the first thing he did was to arrest a batch of Seva Samiti<sup>72</sup> relief workers who were taking food and water to the refugees.

It was neither a riot nor a disturbance but the first installment of what we will have to see in case we do not submit to the threats of a political organization.

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<sup>69</sup> See Appendix XIV.

<sup>70</sup> Muttra on our maps.

<sup>71</sup> Police official in charge of a *tahsil* or district.

<sup>72</sup> Hindus.

It is certain that Meos are still being incited and unless stringent measures are taken to disarm them and the flow of arms to this area from Bahawalpur and other places is completely stopped, there would be no peace.

The sense of duty showed by the district authorities of Mathura district was very commendable and one feels the difference at once as soon as he crosses the Mathura border into the Punjab. Also recommendable was the spirit of the Jats, specially their women who carried on their normal duties while fight was going on all around them.

Here are the items from Muttra area during the last week of June and early July. The patrol battle of the 28th June, already described, is not included.

- June 26. A Muslim traveler and his wife looted in Nohjhil tahsil.
- June 27. Four Muslim refugees murdered and their property looted at Kosi canal bridge on Muttra – Bharatpur road at about 1400 hrs.
- June 28. Passenger train attacked and looted at Jajampatti railway station at about midday.
- June 28/29. Muslim family of one man, two women and 3 children wiped out in village Konkhera.  
5 bodies found next day.
- June 29. Four bodies seen in canal near Madhuri Khund Farm, may be connected with Konkhera incident above.
- June 29/30. Six Muslim houses looted and one girl kidnapped in village Jhundawai.
- June 30. Muslim refugees looted near V. Ganjauli, police station Farah. Metre gauge train stoned by armed mob between Parkham and Bhainsa railway stations.
- June 30/1. Houses attacked and looted and 6 Muslims murdered in Bamrauli (Nurpur).
- July 1. Attempt to stop refugee lorry between Jhundawai and Parkham, Police Station Farah.
- July 1/2. Muslim Zamindar's house looted and burnt in V. Kirivi, Police Station Farah.
- July 2. Threatened attack on Police Station Farah, which did not materialize.

Regrettable as these incidents were, they at least showed by their paucity and small scale that the Army had broken up the bigger gatherings of Meos and Jats on our side of the Jumna and that only small and isolated incidents could occur. West of the Jumna the countryside was ablaze.

This pathetic letter to the *Statesman* depicts the state of affairs across the river:

### GURGAON'S PLIGHT

SIR,

One hundred and six villages involving a population of 212,000 have been burnt, looted or totally or partially destroyed in Gurgaon district. The roads are generally insecure. Nights, even at District Headquarters, are like those at Kohat and Bannu. From village and hamlet reverberate all sorts of country-made cannonry. To the local morgue are brought victims, babes in arms, octogenarians devilishly done to death. In the hospital lie the wounded.

Reports pour in of preparations for further reprisals. The rainy season is about to begin. But this busy farming community, which should have taken to the plough, is in the throes of fratricidal war.

The administration is making frantic efforts to restore law and order. The Commissioner of the Division has shifted his headquarters from Ambala. The small police force has been augmented from other districts, and by detachments of troops. But the trouble recurs with dismal frequency.

The All-India leaders of the Muslim League and the Congress are occasionally brought to witness the results of these pogroms—and motor home in the evening. A batch of these prosperous-looking sympathizers was asked to go back, as the grief-racked victims had come to feel that their misfortunes were in no small measure due to the propaganda of hatred which people in every society spread.

There is I suggest a remedy in this hour of desperation—Mr. F. L. Brayne.<sup>73</sup> He knows the masses of this district, the Meos, Jats and Ahirs. He may be old. But he can be brought by air. Word should be sent to him that the Gurgaon of his rural uplift experiments is on fire. His love for the people he served would compel him to come.

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<sup>73</sup> A very progressive officer in the I.C.S. who had accomplished much towards the uplift, moral and material, of village life in the Punjab.

The festering sore of bitterness would disappear through his efforts, and he would be able to send the people to their fields, for sowing.

If some such step is not taken it may take years to restore normal conditions. The task is beyond the genius of the local officials.

Yours, etc.,  
TARA CHAND.  
Gurgaon, June 18.

By the 3rd July it was possible to assess events on our side of the river border. The Commander of the 6th Kumaon Regiment, who was most concerned with the outbreak, reported on affairs in his own area. Generally, the same terms would have applied to the area in which the 4/14th Punjab Regiment was operating.

He said that the general situation had improved since the Battalion arrived in the area. At first no one was to be seen outside any border village by day or night, and at night about half the village was on guard. Even by day some border villages had guards posted. It was also common to find individuals walking about armed with spears and hatchets. Now, just over a month later, it was rare to see anyone armed and those who were, were arrested. Movement in the countryside was still restricted but quite free along the main and canal roads and between purely Hindu villages. No guards were being put out by day, though they still went out at night. In fact to a slight degree confidence was returning, but this was simply due to the presence and frequent appearance at all times of day and night of troops. Underneath the surface all the elements of panic still existed. He had visited a village about one mile from his Headquarters three days before, and had noticed a small fire on his way back to camp, at 9.15 p.m. The villagers heard him coming and when he arrived he found the entire population, armed with spears and hatchets, assembled on the edge of the village ready to repel the invaders. Although there are no Meo villages within miles of this particular village of Brahmans, the mere sound of voices approaching was enough to get them all out and it was unlikely that any of them got a wink of sleep that night.

No villages, only a few small hamlets, had been burnt in his area since the incident previously related of the capture of the elephant on about the 4th June. The air was still full of rumors but there was no concrete evidence that anything beyond normal unrest and crime was taking place. The exception to this was in the area east of Muttra itself where there had been murders and attacks on trains.

On the 10th and 21st June all Meo villages in the area of Kaman, in Bharatpur State, had been burnt by Hindus from inside the State. The results of these burnings had been that all Meos near the Bharatpur border, on the Muttra District side, were in a state of panic. Meos further inside the United Provinces, especially in the area about Kosi, were now



extremely apprehensive as they rather naturally wondered when the United Provinces Hindus would decide to burn them out also. They were clamoring for mass evacuation to Pakistan. The Meos burnt out in Bharatpur State had sent their families to places of safety and had come together in large bands in the hilly country. There they were doubtless sharpening their spears and plotting revenge. This revenge had already taken the shape of burnings of Hindu villages in Bharatpur State and it was expected that the Meos would swoop down on Hindu villages in British India.

The Colonel had frequently been over on liaison visits to Bharatpur State and had also had an interview with the Army Minister, the younger brother of H.H. the Maharajah. He had, however, to admit that although he had paid many liaison visits, so far no official or officer of Bharatpur State had visited any of his headquarters. The liaison in fact was a somewhat one-sided affair.

By the end of June he was escorting Muslim refugees to their destination in Pakistan. The Hindus strongly favored this exodus of Muslims. The Meos in one village had told an officer of his that if they were prevented from moving to Meo areas they would become Hindus, because things as they were then had become unbearable.

Gradually the Army, by the use of jeeps and wireless sets and air spotting of gangs, assumed control of the situation. Big mobs were broken up into small mobs and then dispersed. Numerous peace meetings were held during which discussions were conducted on the return of stolen property, cattle and abducted women. There is no doubt that they went some way towards bringing together the two communities who were then, and for long afterwards, terrified of each other.

The behavior of our Indian soldiers was almost beyond praise. They showed the whole district that an Indian soldier had no communal feeling in the execution of his duty. Small isolated detachments of troops all over the district protected the panic-stricken population and encouraged them to rebuild their ruined villages and to help the minority community within their villages. They met with a success which daily increased as confidence slowly returned.

The civil administration was now plagued with large numbers of Hindu refugees from Gurgaon district over the river and with panic-stricken demands from Meos on our side to be conducted across the river to districts where there was a majority of their own community. A scheme for making the majority community responsible for the safe passage of the minority through their neighborhood was tried with some success. Arrests were made and collective fines imposed for a breach of this trust.

The Home Guard or village defence parties inaugurated by the U.P. government were to our mind nothing but a communal attempt to impose Hindu domination over the Muslims. Whether it was so intended originally does not matter: that was the outcome.

Brigadier Mahomed Akbar, being a Muslim, and, apart from his own known impartiality, being keenly interested in the affair, came to an agreement with the Collector of Muttra that equal facilities for weapons and defence were to be provided to both communities where either was weak, since the course hitherto favored of arming only the majority was causing intense anxiety and panic among the others. He also extracted a promise that local leaders under the guise of Ministerial officials, whose sole object was self-aggrandizement to justify personal ambition, should be 'gagged' and in case of a breach of the order, be punished as were other citizens.

The police had lapsed into such a state of communal cleavage that few Hindu under-officers or constables would fire on a Hindu mob or Muslims on a Muslim mob. No Muslim constable would move out alone from a police station for fear of his life, while Muslim station officers wielded no authority whatsoever. Police passing through villages in Muttra district were being stopped by Hindus and stripped to see if they were circumcised as Muslims. Of all the police the most affected were those in Muttra, Bulandshahr and Meerut, precisely the most disturbed areas where their services were so badly needed. The civil police were worst: the armed police better: the military police, or Special Armed Constabulary, hardly at all affected.

There were many theories as to the origins of the killings and burnings in Meo country. One, a most unlikely theory, was that the Meos intended to set up an independent Meo State: the other, more likely, that the Jats still dreamt of Jatistan and that the egregious Hindu Mahasabha were whispering Jatistan into their ears and, along with Jatistan the natural and consequential extermination of Muslims in their midst. Perhaps one day the saffron '*Bhagwan Jhanda*' (Standard) might again fly over a Hindu kingdom. Sikhs and Sikh States were quoted as partakers in this ambitious plan.

That will do for 'British India'. Now we will see how matters had gone in the States of Bharatpur and Alwar.<sup>74</sup>

Communal disturbances between Meos (Muslim) and Hindus started in Bharatpur State on the 5th July 1947. Some 1,500 refugees, Hindus and Meos (mostly Meos), started pouring out of the State at Biwan and Singr on the Bharatpur and India border. Before this there had been, so far as can be gathered, a few individual incidents. The stream of Meo refugees continued from Bharatpur State for many days, spreading tales of attacks by Hindu armed mobs who had looted and burnt their homes and killed and wounded several Meos. The actual casualties in this disturbance do not appear to have been very heavy. As far as we could gather the State troops of Bharatpur State had remained neutral. There was no direct evidence that they attacked the Meos but they do not appear to have made any real attempt to prevent the Hindus from looting, arson or killing. On the other hand United Provinces Area had reports from refugees that

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<sup>74</sup> See Map No. 7.

Bharatpur State Forces had actually participated in the attack on Meos and in the looting and burning of their villages.

It appears as if the Hindus of Bharatpur State, seeing the disturbances in India, had made up their minds to carry out a combined attack on these Muslim Meos to drive them out of the State before the Meos could cause them any trouble. State Force officers of Bharatpur State had told us that the Meos had burnt their own houses and villages in order to bring the Hindu communities of the State into discredit! This of course was manifestly absurd and unworthy of consideration.

Reports started coming in to us from the 8th to the 11th August to the effect that Hindu mobs were burning villages in Alwar State. Reconnaissance flights were sent up and these reported that 80 percent of the Meo villages between Mandawar—Golah—Gotli—Salahera had been burnt, in an area about sixteen miles south-east of Rewari.

Our aircraft also reported armed mobs of Hindus, many carrying shotguns, moving from place to place while State troops made no effort to stop them, and from village to village setting villages and crops on fire without interference by State troops. On one occasion a patrol of State Forces led by an officer passed within three hundred yards of a mob who were burning crops and took no action to stop them. Worse than that, State Forces were seen leading, and mixed with, these Hindu arson gangs. The main burnings and attacks appeared to have started towards evening and by dark the whole area resembled a battlefield.

The situation in Alwar State on the 10th August was very much worse than at any time in the Gurgaon area of India.

As a result of reports reaching the 80th Brigade that a large number of Meo pensioners, ex-servicemen and their families were besieged in Mandawar village fort, Delhi Area begged permission of the State Department in New Delhi to enter Alwar and finally sent one platoon of the 1st Kumaon Regiment to Mandawar for the protection of these people. The platoon moved at once and arrived at Mandawar on the 14th August, by which time hundreds of men, women and children had been killed and wounded.

Major Dharam Singh of the Kumaon Regiment visited Mandawar and Silgaon on 17th August. The latter place was the scene of the great massacre on the 10th August which is described later on. He was mistaken for a State Force officer and asked by State Force troops where the Hindu mobs were, so that they could join them. A patrol under Major Dharam Singh visited Silgaon and counted 53 dead bodies in a very small area of the village, but, owing to the stench of rotting corpses, stopped further investigation. The State authorities were asked to arrange burial of these corpses which were being eaten by jackals and vultures.

Our men saw marks on houses in Silgaon where bursts of machine-gun fire had hit the walls. This was sure proof of State Troops having been in action.

The refugees begged for a panchayat, rehabilitation and protection from the State authorities. It was understood that the Ruler had replied that he would not agree to a panchayat but that those who received the Ruler's pardon might return on the understanding that they paid for the damage they had caused to the State.

Admittedly we had one side of the story only but Indian officers visited the State on several occasions and the State authorities never gave any reason for, nor tried to justify the use of State troops with Hindu mobs, nor did they try to deny their presence. Air reconnaissance reports showed that State troops were employed in these ghastly massacres in conjunction with armed Hindu mobs who were allowed to kill and mutilate Muslim men, women and children.

The greatest pity of all was that this area contained some of the finest Indian soldiers of the past. The refugees with whom our officers spoke in Rewari were determined not to return to Alwar State. They intended to settle in Pakistan and would undoubtedly bear a grudge for life against all Hindus.

The Meo refugees we met in Rewari were magnificent in the pluck and guts they showed, true to the great traditions of their Moghul ancestors. Not a whimper even from children of from two to six years of age who had received bullet wounds. In three cases children of five and six walked up and stood till told to sit down before us to tell their story, with a bound-up stump of a little arm and sword slashes on the head and face. These villainies were not committed by State troops but by Hindu mobs who assisted them in this most disgraceful outrage of modern times. These wounds were inflicted on the 10th August and the victims were interviewed on the 22nd August.

After this survey was made, the villages of Golki, Sherpur, Kherthala and Sikambas on the eastern border of Alwar State were burnt on 22nd August and some six to seven men killed and several wounded. We heard that two jeeps accompanied the mob.

It is difficult to find any explanation for the sudden outburst in Alwar State. 80th Brigade were of the opinion that a number of Meo refugees from Bharatpur State, who had taken refuge in Indian territory, combined with some of the Indian Meos and moved south towards Alwar town, looting and burning Hindu villages. (This theory has never yet been confirmed and is only surmise.) As a result of this, the Alwar Hindus and Alwar State authorities appear to have decided either to force the Meos to become Hindus or to drive them from Alwar State, as a menace to Hindus and to the State authorities.

It seemed to us that practically all Meos of Bharatpur and Alwar States had fled into Hindustan or Pakistan, with the exception of one village near Mandawar, which agreed to accept Hinduism, and the 1,400 Meo refugees in Mandawar Fort whose adventures we will later recount. State troops and Hindus encircled the village to make certain that the Meos who had agreed to become Hindus did not escape. Three Meos from this village did escape, saw our party at Rewari on 22nd August and requested that a military party be sent in to evacuate this village to India. It was pointed out to them that from the 15th August Indian States had to all intents and purposes become independent and the best thing they could do was to remain quiet till the trouble had subsided and then if they did not wish to stay they could leave the State with their belongings.

There were about 50 to 60 refugees arriving daily in Rewari, mostly from Mandawar, and approximately 200 to 300 leaving for Delhi refugee camps and for Pakistan. Those refugees with whom we spoke in Rewari stated that they would never return to Alwar State.

We will now relate the specific incident of Mandawar of the 5th to 15th August as told us by those who had partaken of the sufferings of these Meo refugees. The stories agree with each other so we need only tell that of one of our own men, a Muslim Lance Daffadar.<sup>75</sup>

On the 3rd August, on hearing at Mandawar that Hindu-Muslim disturbances had broken out in Alwar City, he went to Alwar, where he saw that Hindus in Alwar City were looting grain carts belonging to Meos who had brought rice for sale. He also noticed that refugees coming from riot-affected areas were stopped by State troops and police near the railway station and were not allowed to enter the city. While police and troops were holding the refugees, a number of Hindus who said that they had been sent by the Home Minister of Alwar State, came to the Meos and said that if they changed their religion to Hinduism the State would give them protection and that they would be assisted in rehabilitation. On the 4th August our Daffadar heard rumours that Mandawar was about to be attacked. He returned to Mandawar that same day and warned everyone of the danger. At the same time he warned the village of Tinki Ruri and brought all its inhabitants to Mandawar and then set to work to organize the defence of Mandawar village and Fort.

At about 5 p.m. on the 5th August Tinki Ruri was set on fire by Hindus and soon after 7 p.m. Hindus started collecting round Mainpur, a Muslim village near Mandawar. On the night of 5/6th August at about 4 a.m. two jeeps and one truck containing State troops contacted the Hindu crowd collecting at Mainpur and then moved in the direction of Mandawar. Soon after this, Hindus opened fire on Mainpur and attacked the place till 11 a.m. At Mandawar the State troops proclaimed that there was no danger

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<sup>75</sup> Lance-Sergeant of the Indian Cavalry.

of any sort and asked why pickets had been posted in the village. They said, 'We are here to protect you.' They then went off to nearby villages. The Daffadar noticed that when the State troops came out of these Hindu villages they brought with them numbers of Hindus and started moving towards Mandawar. Accordingly at about 10 a.m. Mandawar was attacked from two sides. The jeeps and the truck with the State troops now came back to Mandawar. The Meo garrison reported the situation to the State troops but the latter offered them no protection. The garrison then made a sortie and dispersed the attackers, the State troops thereupon moving off to Mainpur at about 2 p.m., their arrival signaling a second attack on Manipur by Hindus. This attack went on till about 4 p.m., with the State troops taking an active part. After 4 p.m. the Muslim villagers withdrew into their houses and continued defending themselves from inside their houses till the evening when the State troops and Hindu mob withdrew.

That night the villagers fled to Mandawar. On the 7th August, a party of men going to the railway station of Harsauli to make good their escape from Mandawar were attacked by a mixed party of State troops and Hindus and about 150 Muslim Meos were killed.

On the 8th August, certain State officials (names were given) told the Mandawar villagers that all their pickets should be removed from Mandawar and that the troops would afford them protection, but that if the pickets were not removed then fire would be opened on the villagers. So they removed their pickets and closed themselves up into two havelis (large houses).

At about 3 p.m. a Hindu mob rushed into the village, setting fire to the houses. As they neared the havelis the villagers opened fire on them. State troops at once replied. That evening the attackers returned to their prey. Next morning the same State officers again called out to the villagers ordering them to evacuate one haveli. This they did. Hindus there-upon burnt the village and looted it, but kept clear of the defenders of the haveli.

On the 10th August State officials detained four of the Muslim sirdars (prominent men) and sent a message to the garrison that if it fired on looters then these hostages would be killed. When the looting was complete they released the four sirdars. On the 11th August they demanded that the Meos surrender their weapons before being escorted to the railway station. Fearing treachery, they naturally refused to hand over their weapons. In the meantime Muslims in Alwar City made strong representations to the Home Member, Raghbir Singh, with the result that, pending any settlement, the Maharaja issued instructions that Muslims should not be persecuted. Thereafter these harassed people were left at peace. On the 14th August a detachment, one platoon of 1st Kumaon Regiment, reached Mandawar village to give them protection and on the 17th August Major Dharam Singh arrived. The villagers asked for an interview with the Maharaja. However, the Revenue Minister was sent on behalf of the Maharaja. Nothing

came of his visit. He said that he could not give any help, but that if these Muslims decided to stay in the State he would protect their lives only.

These unfortunates had by now no money, transport or rations so could not migrate. They were between the devil and the deep sea. Out of the twelve Rajput Muslim villages in Mandawar Nizamat every one, he believed, had been destroyed, while the villagers of Bhungara, ten miles from Mandawar, were all converted to Hinduism.

His conviction was that Congress had taken no part in these disturbances but that this devilry had been inspired by the Hindu Mahasabha.<sup>76</sup>

From other information in our possession we assessed the Daffadar's statement as at least go percent true, if not wholly accurate. The tale of Silgaon is even less palatable than that of Mandawar. It was told to us by another Lance Daffadar and twenty-four pensioners and other ex-service men.

On the 7th August Hindu mobs, assisted by State police, attacked the Meo village of Silgaon with 303 rifles, Bren guns and mortars. The villagers defended the village with what arms they had, and the wounded, together with the women and children, were put into the only two large permanent brick houses in the village. By the afternoon of the 10th August most of the defenders had been forced back into these two houses. The Hindu mob numbered some 10,000 to 20,000 armed with shotguns, spears, axes, swords and *lathis*.

On the evening of the 10th August a Major and a Captain of the State Forces came forward with a white flag. These two called for Subadar Amar Ali Khan, a Pensioner of 107th Bombay Grenadiers, and Jemadar Mahbub Khan, a Pensioner of the R.I.A.S.C., Lambadar (Headman) of Silgaon village. These two V.C.O.s came out. The two State officers said that they had been sent by the State authorities for the protection of the village and that if the villagers would bring out all their arms and dump them outside, and bring all the men out, the State Forces would protect them. The V.C.O.s trusted the State officers and brought out the arms, piling them in two dumps.

All the men were brought out and were made to sit on the ground in a bunch. The State officers, when they had the men out and the arms dumped, ordered the two V.C.O.s to follow them into the nearby jungle.

Suddenly a number of shots rang out from the jungle and the Meos sitting on the ground realized that their V.C.O.s had been shot in cold blood. The Meos jumped up and immediately the State Force Bren guns opened fire, killing many and injuring

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<sup>76</sup> It was in February 1948, after Mahatma Gandhi's murder, that the Hindustan Government temporarily detained the Maharajah of Alwar, in whose State the Mahasabha and R.S.S. Sangh had been active. It was the R.S.S. Sangh which killed Gandhi.

others. Many of the women and children had only come out to see what was happening. As soon as the Bren guns opened up, the Meos ran for the cover of the village. This was the signal for the Hindu mob, armed with swords, axes, spears, etc., to give chase. It was now that the main massacre took place. The wounded from the Bren-gun firing and the women and children were cut to pieces. Those who survived this savage butchery and treachery succeeded in reaching the two brick buildings and barricaded themselves inside.

The State troops then opened fire on these buildings with Bren guns, rifles and mortars. They piled wood and grass against the doors and set fire to it, but at 9 p.m. before the fire had really got going, it started to rain heavily and the rain put the fire out. After this State troops appear to have withdrawn in the heavy rain, but the Hindu mob continued to hammer on the doors and to try to break in. The rain continued and at 11 p.m. they also seem to have withdrawn.

After this the survivors, wounded, and women and children, crept out into the night and started north for Indian territory. During this night march of about fifteen miles to Rewari some one hundred, including women and children, lost their way, and went into Nabha State hoping to reach Bawal railway station, which was closer than Rewari. This unfortunate band crossed into Nabha State territory at dawn and were attacked by villagers of Nabha State, who first looted their jewellery and possessions, and then hacked them to pieces with swords and axes. None of this party survived the onslaught. The son of Subadar Amar Ali Khan (who was murdered on the 10th August), was wounded in the shooting and badly cut about with axes and swords in the stampede that took place. He finally collapsed in a ditch and was thought to be dead. Next day, unable to move and still alive, he was found by some Hindus who again wounded him several times with sword and axe. Three days later four men of Silgaon, hearing he was still alive, returned and rescued him and brought him to hospital in Rewari where some of our informants saw him covered in bandages from head to foot. The local doctors said that he had thirty-two wounds on his body.

They also saw children from eighteen months to seven years of age with bullet wounds and some with their arms cut off.

The 4th Battalion The Indian Grenadiers were interested in these disturbances. They therefore collected evidence on them.

The Battalion had over eighty men, Rajputana Mussulmans, whose homes were in Alwar State. Information was received in the unit early in August of communal troubles there but no details were known. On the 12th and 13th August a number of relatives of men of the Battalion arrived in the lines, having fled as refugees from Alwar. They said that State troops as well as Hindus had attacked the Mussulmans, of whom the majority had now fled from Alwar. Jemadar Mahomed Ayub Khan, on leave from the Battalion,



was reported to have been killed, the homes of various men to have been destroyed and their relatives to be dead or refugees.

The arrival of these refugees caused great anxiety amongst Rajputana Muslims of the Battalion, especially men from Alwar, one of whom absented himself from the lines on the night of the 14/15th August and returned after some days absence. On the 14th August a party of one V.C.O., one clerk and four Sepoys, all from Alwar, was dispatched with orders to contact H.Q. 80th Brigade at Palwal, to ascertain locations of refugee camps, visit them and gain definite information of the whereabouts of the men's relatives and the fate of the men's homes. They were given money from the Battalion fund to relieve any immediate cases of distress and were ordered not to enter Alwar State unless permitted by 80th Brigade.

The information that follows is based on what was heard by this party.

Towards the end of July there was an evacuation of Muslims from Bharatpur State into Alwar State and Gurgaon district. This was caused by the Bharatpur State troops harassing Muslims, setting their houses on fire and, it was reported, shooting them at sight. Refugees crossed a river dividing the two States. A certain Collector (Magistrate) of Alwar State met them on the 10th July and offered them protection in exchange for cash. He was given Rs. 2000/-. About half an hour later Bharatpur troops crossed the river and attacked the refugee camp, inflicting 150 casualties. Refugees dispersed into Gurgaon or fled deeper into Alwar. Disturbances rapidly spread all over the State.

On the 5th August the large village of Tijara, containing a considerable Mussulman population, was visited by a Minister of Alwar State and a jail official, both related to the ruler of Alwar, accompanied by other State officials. They set to work to incite the Hindus of Tijara and the neighbourhood against the Muslims. Later they sent for Lambardars (Headmen) Ilahi Bakhsh of Daika, Sawan Khan of Palas Ali and Rehmat Khan of Bilaspur and advised them to become Hindus. These happenings greatly alarmed all Muslims in Tijara area.

On the night of the 5/6th August at 8 p.m. eight Muslim villages west of Tijara were set on fire by unknown persons, causing further alarm among Muslims. Large numbers of Hindus from villages east of Tijara entered the town on the 6th August, camping near the police station.

At 7 a.m. on the 7th August these Hindus fired two small Muslim villages in the outskirts of Tijara. They later raised a cry that Muslims were attacking them and took refuge near the police station. At 10 a.m. an aircraft with 'Jaipur' on its wings circled Tijara low and made off. At 12 noon four jeeps and one 15-cwt. truck containing troops with Jaipur, Alwar and Bharatpur on their shoulder-straps arrived at Tijara police station. After a quarter of an hour at the police station, one jeep proceeded to the Fort

and three jeeps went to Nazim Barkat Ullah's house and opened fire with rifles and L.M.G.s, despite Barkat Ullah's plea that he was a State Nazim (Official). The troops entered the house and murdered all the occupants except Faruq Khan, Matin, the Lambardar, and Saidan, the sister of Subadar Habib Khan, 4th Battalion Indian Grenadiers. The corpses were heaped up and set alight and Barkat Ullah's house looted by the troops. They then went to Subadar Yasin Khan's house and opened fire as before. Troops trying to force an entry were fired on by someone inside with a shotgun and three were killed. The troops then withdrew and left the house alone. State troops then dispersed all over Tijara, shooting every Muslim they saw.

Subadar Major Tasaduq Hussain, late of 3rd Battalion Indian Grenadiers, left Tijara on 7th August 1947 but returned to register a report at the police station. On his way back to the jungle close to where his family had taken refuge he was attacked by State troops who killed him and all his family except two young girls, whom they invited to marry them and embrace Hinduism. Both girls committed suicide by jumping into a nearby well.

Muslims in Alwar outnumbered Hindus by three to one and were of martial classes.

It was therefore unlikely that the Hindus could overcome the Muslims unless very well armed and organised or backed by some stronger forces. This makes it all the more probable that the State troops did in fact actively help the Hindus, whatever denials may be made. Whether this was part of some preconceived plan or not cannot be said. It is very unlikely that large numbers of Muslims could have been driven out of the State merely by the action of inferior numbers of Hindus.

In addition to the Grenadier Regiment, other units, e.g. Indian Armoured Corps and Jat Regiment, enlisted men from the Rajputana States. The recent events in Alwar were bound to have a most adverse effect on our enlisted Rajputana Muslims and allied classes. At the time the only authentic information showed that numbers of Muslim V.C.O.s and men, both pensioned and serving, including many from this Battalion who served well and loyally in Burma, had been wantonly attacked, their relatives killed, and their homes destroyed or looted. Some of these men were among those who had elected to serve the Indian Union or Hindustan Government and not Pakistan.

The orgy of slaughter, arson, loot and horror which swept over these two States and which surpassed anything which happened in Gurgaon district, had once again caused panic in Gurgaon district, at last subsiding into passivity, and had delayed resettlement. Thousands upon thousands of Meo refugees swarmed into the district finding a meager subsistence in villages which could not afford to give them hospitality for very much longer. These refugees, most of whom had lost their all, eyed with hatred any minority Hindu communities in Hindustan. So the tension still remained so high that we could find no short cut to the return of confidence amongst the villagers. Only by the presence

of the Army, widely dispersed over the area, was it possible to persuade the district's own refugees to resettle. Any move of a detachment from a village of whatever community nearly always led to an evacuation of the village.

Any reduction in the number of troops in the district would have ruined the resettlement scheme, checked the return of confidence amongst villagers and most probably left the way open for further communal outbreaks. The hatred between communities was to take many months to cool down.

There were still quantities of arms concealed throughout the district for which systematic search was being made. The Deputy Commissioner, Gurgaon, who had just arrived, made the most vigorous efforts to rebuild the shattered civil administration which had virtually ceased to exist.

Later, we learnt that the Government of India had sent an officer of the Political Department to Alwar to ask the Ruler if he wanted help. The Ruler was understood to have said that the situation was under control but that he needed ammunition for his Forces. Later, on the representations of Brigadier Green, Commander 80th Brigade, an officer of the States Department went with Brigadier Green to see the State authorities. We learnt that this officer was considerably perturbed by what he saw and heard. That, and one platoon of Kumaonis and a patrol or two, was all the assistance these tortured, harassed, persecuted Meos, men, women and little children, had in their terrible straits. What is one to think of it all?

No one must imagine that the Meos were in no way to blame for their misfortunes. Hitherto, we have had no genuine information of what these Muslims did in the State of Alwar before the 7th August when the State Forces started their villainous efforts to extirpate them. We do know that they burnt Hindu villages but we do not yet know if they started the burnings, whether the Hindus started them or whether the affair, as with us, snowballed along from small, insignificant beginnings into the horrible deeds of which I have here spoken.

We were imploring higher authority, on the advice of the Deputy Inspector General of Police at Meerut, to send an arbitrator into Bharatpur at once who could arrange some sort of agreement between the Ruler and the oppressed Meos, whereby the latter could find future security for life and property. There was no hope of settlement without this move. Nothing happened.

As soon as we could make the necessary arrangements we took our part in a plan to evacuate Meos from these two States into Muslim areas in India. This was our last chance to help in this terrible calamity.

## XXVIII

### EASTERN COMMAND IN JUNE

ELSEWHERE in the United Provinces there was plenty of trouble. Troops were hastened to Pilibhit and Unao to help the police to deal with communal outbreaks. In Cawnpore the Collector had banned all processions but, for all that, on the 15th June a Muslim procession was taken out. The police opened fire, killed five and injured ten. Troops came on the scene and patrolled the streets of Cawnpore.

On the night of the 15/16th June serious rioting broke out near Budaun, south-west of Bareilly, and among the surrounding villages. Strong reports came in that one of the members of the Provincial Assembly was organizing this outbreak. Hindus had burnt to the ground the village of Chindoi where nineteen Muslim corpses had been recovered. The next night a frantic mob of Hindus attacked Muslims in another village five miles south of Budaun. There they killed seventy. A detachment of the 4th Indian Grenadiers drove out to Budaun, picketed the area and brought some measure of peace with a suppressed and snarling countryside all about.

More and more the impression was becoming a certainty that whatever protestations politicians might make, the people of Hindustan would not tolerate Muslims as equals. The Mahasabha was feeling its oats. Its odd stable companion at this time was the Communists who wanted chaos for their own ends. Mahasabha was now in conflict with the provincial Congress government. It put it abroad that the Hindu religion was in danger so all must rise and exterminate Muslims: that, for this, no sacrifice was too great: that confidence in the Congress Party was now lost: that Congress or the Mahatma was to be blamed for the creation of Pakistan, and so on.

From Bulandshahr district, about Pilkhua, there came a constant stream of reports of small communal incidents. A mobile column went to Pilkhua and from there patrolled the affected area. It was a district which had previously received particular attention from political leaders, members of the Legislative Assembly and Parliamentary Secretaries, with the results that they presumably desired. One of these in a public speech declared that the Indian Muslims had never been the rulers of India; only foreign Muslims had ruled the country in the past.

In another United Provinces village no less than fifty were killed in a clash between tenants and landlords. At Gober, near Bilaspur, eight people were killed and others injured as a result of an assault on a woman.

Into Dehra Doon there flooded nearly 30,000 refugees from the Punjab, many of them Sikhs and many of them well-to-do people from round Amritsar and Lahore, now wishing to buy houses and land and to settle in the Doon. The influx of Sikhs was ominous, for the Sikh was one of the two chief contestants in the Punjab and we knew with what arrogance, and contempt he regarded the ordinary Hindu. There were many vested interests in the Doon against which he was bound to stumble, not the least important being the domiciled Gurkha community. From Roorkee, a column of Sappers went to Hardwar to keep an eye on its very restive refugee population.

Towards the end of the month the outgoing governor of the United Provinces, Sir Francis Wylie, drew attention to the British Jack which had flown night and day on the Residency at Lucknow ever since its gallant defence of Mutiny days. The Rajput Regiment had its training centre nearby. That Regiment had taken a prominent part in the defence. It seemed fitting that shortly before the 15th August, the date of transfer of authority in India, this Regiment and a British regiment should, at a small ceremony, haul down the last Union Jack to fly. To have a dignified and peaceful ceremony it was necessary that some prominent Indian statesman should be present and should make a speech about the burial of the hatchet and brave men being brave wherever they fought and to whatever nation they belonged. It was doubtful if we could procure so generous and open-hearted a man to sponsor the ceremony. If it were purely a British ceremony the local roughs and fanatics would certainly try to cause an 'incident'. We wanted no 'incident' to mark the occasion albeit we could well cope with any that Lucknow was likely to afford. An 'incident' would have political repercussions of some significance. So, in the end we decided to remove the Jack ourselves and quietly, for we knew that, Dominion or no Dominion, it would not be long before it was desecrated. If it were desecrated, then the local Area Commander, the energetic and determined General Curtis, would, as President of the Committee which administered the Residency buildings and grounds, be compelled to deal with the trouble and, by then, we should have no ultimate British authority to support him. His position would be impossible.

The Residency flag at Lucknow, if anything in India, was the very core of all our prestige. Perhaps the British schoolboy of today has forgotten or never been told of the superlative defence of those battered buildings by a handful of British and Indians, men, boys and women. Perhaps he does not know that the shot-torn buildings were kept until 1947 as they were in 1857 and that our flag had ever since flown night and day above them. Contrary to usage, it had never been hauled down at sunset and flown again at sunrise. It had flown always. In late July we knew that certain people of Lucknow intended to pull down our Jack and to fly from the staff in its place the new Hindustan national flag—the Congress flag: for what reason, other than mischief, was not apparent. This was a British memorial to our dead and for this reason we would not have it hauled down by anyone other than ourselves. We had wanted it to fly forever, but it was too much, we knew, to expect those to whom we were to hand over our authority to be fair enough of mind to let it be. If they could not let it stay, then to avoid

our gallant dead, men and women, being insulted through its violation, we would haul it down ourselves in our own way. We did this, as I shall relate, in August before Independence Day.

In Appendix X, I have for the sake of history recorded the actual order under which the Residency was administered.

On the 10th June, to celebrate Independence Day', the Cawnpore students held their meeting at Massacre Ghat, Cawnpore, where, in Mutiny Days, British women and children had been slaughtered with all the accompaniments of treachery and brutality of which in 1946-7 Indians were themselves the unlucky victims but not unwilling perpetrators and witnesses.

It is now time to turn to Assam, where feelings were on the boil over the demarcation of the Assam-Pakistan border. The referendum to decide Sylhet's future was to be held in the first week of July. It was expected that the contest would be a close one unless some Muslim League big-wig appeared to persuade his local brethren to join East Pakistan. All too many of the local Muslims wished to remain in Assam with which they had many business and private relations. Moreover, they were not sanguine as to the ability of East Pakistan to pay its way. The proportion of Muslims to Hindus was sixty-eight to thirty-two but the Hindus had a small majority in educationally qualified voters. The Muslim League was better organized in Sylhet than was the Congress and it bent all its energies to persuade Muslims to vote to join Pakistan.

To begin with, the Congress government had already set to work to dispense with the services of its British civil officials, those who controlled the much-debated hill tracts being among the first to receive their notices. To make up for this decline in administrative strength the Muslim League now officially called off its Civil Disobedience movement and the government, as a gesture of conciliation, released the prisoners who had been jailed in connection with the movement. Only nine Muslim *goondas* of Sylhet were still detained. It was said that their release depended on whether they were on the electoral roll or not!

The Government of India, subject to Eastern Command's agreement, sanctioned the use of troops to keep the peace, to ensure that the referendum was impartially held and to prevent intimidation. We agreed. The referendum results were to reach Delhi by the 15th July.

One of the difficulties to be encountered by voters, police and soldiers alike was that at this time of year the whole countryside of west Sylhet was under water. Sunamganj subdivision, for example, could only be visited by river and its villages by country boat. Mr. Stork, I.C.S., Legal Remembrancer, was appointed Referendum Commissioner; there were to be 300 polling booths manned by a civil staff, under immediate protection

of the police. The police could do no more than that, so the Army's role was to 'dominate' the district and act as a mobile reserve. We collected all the DUKWs<sup>77</sup> that we could and sent them along to Assam, with the drivers and maintenance sections, to enable troops to get about the waterways and do their dominating. The referendum was to be held on the 6th and 7th July.

The 1st and 3rd Battalions of the Assam Regiment were earmarked for the Army tasks, the whole being put under Lieut.-Colonel Mohindra Singh Chopra, Commander of the 1st Assam Regiment. By the 1st July all troops and police were to be in position. On the 21st June officers were sent to reconnoiter their operational areas.

During the period of preparation Muslim League propaganda took on a religious rather than a political aspect, Muslim voters being told that anyone who voted to stay in Assam was an Unbeliever.

Naturally, the evictions 'front' was quiet during these portentous happenings.

Muslim League supporters flowed in from Bengal till it began to look as if Sylhet was to be another Sudetenland. The government wished to draw the attention of the referendum staff to this influx but it was not clear what the latter were expected to do about it. The harassed Commissioner and his staff received more and more agitated signals from Congress supporters, their Sylhet dictator demanding more troops, the numbers coming in being in his opinion ridiculously small, so small that intimidation was increasing. But he perversely objected to the Assam Regiment being used at all in view of its being manned by hill Nagas! It looked as if the Hindu party was preparing its excuses for the political defeat it was about to suffer. Muslim League supporters demanded that Muslim regiments should be brought at once to Sylhet and that at each polling booth one Hindu and one Muslim policeman should be posted. There were few Muslim police in Assam and there were no Muslim regiments in the Army, so we could not comply.

The police were stirred by Muslim reports of armed Sikhs being in Sylhet. These turned out to be the sappers of our 8th Field Company!

By the 1st July police and troops were in position, H.Q. Sylforce being billeted in Sylhet town. One of the fears of the referendum staff was that polling booth officials, who were coming from all over Assam, would fail to turn up or go to the wrong places. Already, the League had warned Muslim boatmen to take no Hindus to the polling booths--not that any Hindu would have risked his life with them if he could help it. Most of the Assam boatmen were Muslim, the employment being regarded as low class.

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<sup>77</sup> Amphibious 3-ton lorries.

As the great day approached rowdyism increased, particularly on railways and at stations. Muslim Leaguers ejected non-Leaguers from trains. Parties of Congressmen, sometimes supported by Nationalist Muslims, clashed with Leaguers at Jaintiapur and Maulvi Bazar.

There we will leave the Sylhet referendum until early July, when it will all be over. It is enough at this point to say that Sylhet elected to share the fate of East Pakistan.

There was little else happening in Assam. The impending war between the Kukis and the Kacha Nagas still hung fire but ever remained another liability for our soldiers. The Governor was busied settling the future of the tribesmen in Hindustan. His task at Manipur must have been simplified by the knowledge that if he removed his Assam Rifle garrison from that State the Maharaja would certainly have been murdered. Such a threat, combined with another to block the Dimapur–Imphal road and so to stop all supplies of salt, cloth, etc., would ensure the accession of Manipur State to Hindustan. A minor concern was that Manipur State had, indeed, territorial claims in Burma in the Kabaw valley: conversely, certain Burmese politicians laid claim to Manipur by a reverse process of reasoning.

Communist activities in the tea gardens led to violence in which Mr. Ellison, manager of the Hansara Tea Estate, was murdered by garden coolies.

An example of the twittery state of communal relations in Assam is afforded by a report that seven hundred threatening immigrants who were said to be advancing upon a village were, on investigation, found to be a wretched party of five men, their wives and seven children, who had been evicted from a reserve and were seeking shelter.

Apart from Calcutta, Bengal's troubles in these days were mainly industrial but in none of the violent labor happenings and disputes were the soldiers called upon to take part. The disputes were just a recognized and essential ingredient of the fermenting province. A thinning out of Muslims in the Calcutta and Bengal police forces was now due to start: while it was on, the force must be still further weakened, and weakened during what should be the most crucial months through which India had yet passed in the 10th century. It was not conducive to efficient administration that strong rumors were afloat that as soon as a Congress ministry came into being in Western Bengal, it would start proceedings against the British and other officials who had loyally served the outgoing Muslim ministry. European and Anglo-Indian members of the Calcutta police were disturbed at the prospects before them of having their services terminated without compensation or being forced to serve a government from whom they could not expect a fair deal.

In Eastern Bengal there were isolated incidents such as the banning of Hindu music, burning of a Hindu doctor's house, the hanging of the bones of a cow in Hindu houses



and threats to Hindus that their cattle would be slaughtered. In Dacca, on the 29th June, a Hindu team looked like winning a football match so Muslim spectators began to beat them up. To retaliate, a crowd of Hindus attacked a mosque and destroyed the Koran. The police quietened things down. Dacca was always lucky in having the Eastern Frontier Rifles there, a police corps consisting mostly of Gurkhas and well armed.

On the 2nd and 4th June there were attempts to wreck the train between Phulbari and Bhowanipore and between Akkelpur and Tilakpur.

Beyond these, there was little cause for alarm.

Five incidents were reported from Central Calcutta on 12th June, including three cases of stabbing—two Hindus and one Muslim—one case of arson in which a deserted Muslim house was burnt and one case in which a cracker was thrown at a bus. Forty-one Hindus and three Muslims were arrested in connection with these incidents.

Two incidents were reported from Howrah on 12th June.

In one incident, firing on a Muslim place of worship resulted in seven Hindus being arrested. In the other a bomb was thrown on a Muslim house. No one was injured and there were no arrests.

A report like this was typical of events in Calcutta during the first three weeks of June.

On the 10th June in the Bengal Legislative Assembly a decision was reached to partition Bengal. Members representing the non-Muslim majority districts decided by 58 votes to 21 that Bengal should be partitioned and that the constitution of the new province comprising these areas should be framed by the existing Constituent Assembly. Members representing the Muslim majority districts sitting separately decided by 100 votes to 35 against partition. In the Assembly the vote went for partition.

Hindus were jubilant over the decision, which undoubtedly meant Calcutta for Hindustan, and demonstrated their feelings by taunting Muslims, and by their arrogant bearing. The Muslims were correspondingly depressed and lost spirit, a feeling which later changed to one of morose desperation and a longing for revenge. The Hindu Press did not spare them in their belaboring of the now moribund League ministry of Bengal. Muslims recollected bitterly that under Group 'C' of the Cabinet plan they had been promised by their leaders Assam and Bengal and full Muslim Raj.

On the 21st June incidents in Calcutta increased to thirteen: on the 22nd there were twenty-one: on the 23rd twelve: on the 24th eighteen. The tempo was increasing. The Assembly's decision to divide Bengal, together with the unexpected acquittal of two Muslim policemen charged with rape of a Hindu woman, helped to inflame the

passions of the mob. In seven days there were fourteen dead and over one hundred injured. The worst elements were making ever increasing use of firearms, in one bomb attack alone thirteen Muslims of a funeral procession being killed or injured. Curfew again came into play.

In Howrah were still other incidents, culminating in lethal assaults by the mob on Muslim policemen and finally in the killing of a Muslim police officer with a Sten gun on the 6th July. On the 7th July the police officer's body was taken out in procession through Calcutta. Before it had gone far, hooligan elements joined the procession and slipped the bier away from its unarmed police escort. It then diverted the procession, gathering immense numbers of Muslims as it passed. As they went they brick batted Hindus, Hindu shops and cars, and were generally rowdy. Panic started: shops began closing. The police lost control. Before long the police themselves were forced to open fire to check the violence. The public replied with bullets. It was not till six that evening that the police, heavily reinforced and using tear-smoke, regained control and managed to recover the corpse, and to bury it in the Muslim cemetery at Park Circus.

Curfew was imposed and a company of Green Howards patrolled Central Avenue and its environs, reinforcing the troops already out on the streets. The cost was at least 20 dead and 148 injured. The actual figures would have been in excess of those reported. Hindus were the principal sufferers.

A new sport was starting. Jeeps filled with Hindus were seen flashing through Muslim quarters shooting up any who offered a target. Fortunately our army jeeps still bore their yellow stripes so the Press could not accuse us of partaking in this by-play. Calcutta had passed beyond gangster methods, it was. in the grip of anarchy.

From Darjeeling came muttering of the hillmen's desire to have nothing to do with either Pakistan or Hindustan but to lead an independent existence or to be under their parent, Nepal.

Life was distinctly uneasy on the Assam border, all over Bengal and particularly in Calcutta, and in most parts of the United Provinces.

Bihar and Orissa were much quieter. The Nepal National Congress had called off the Satyagraha Movement in Nepal on the Maharajah's promising progressive reforms, and the Biratnagar mill strike was over. Minor communal incidents did occur but none of importance. In one, two boys had a quarrel, so the Muslim father shot the Hindu father with an unlicensed double-barrel shotgun.

As though there were not enough troubles a quarrel over a water melon led to quite a number of dead and injured.

The 4th Mahratta Light Infantry and some of the 3rd Rajputana Rifles were out on flag-marches to restore confidence in Chaibassa and Purnea respectively in early June.

To our relief we learnt that the European and Anglo-Indian sergeants in the Bihar police were to get a square deal, compensation of pension where necessary, free passages and so on.

At the time, these men in the Calcutta and Bengal police were facing a bleak future. They called on us to help so we did what we could to get those who had served in the forces free passages to England and tried to get others with more authority to take up their case. Eventually, the Governor of Bengal persuaded the Ministry to treat them with reasonable generosity.

In Orissa the only bother was that the local government was apprehensive, quite needlessly, that Hyderabad would try to annex, with the support of local Muslims, both Koraput and Ganjam. One's impression in Orissa was that the prospect of making a good profit out of contracts to be given for the construction of their new capital at Bhubaneswar was far more captivating to Oriyas (people of Orissa) than even the matter of the Nizam's territorial ambitions.

At the passing out of the Indian Air Training Corps cadets at Cuttack most of the prizes, perhaps all, were books relating to Nationalist and Freedom movements, such as the history of the I.N.A. It seemed that this cowardly force was to form the pattern for India's future defence services rather than the men who so often put it to flight. Those men were now becoming disturbed over the possibility that those who lived in Hindustan would be forced to serve in the Hindustan forces, even if they were Muslims, and vice versa. Luckily, by the middle of the month the officially inspired Press dispelled these fears.

We were now facing the rapid 'nationalization' of the officer cadre of the forces. One of the terms of the agreement of the 3rd June was, we understood, that nationalization must be slowed down while the division of the Army was taking place. This would have been wise but it was not long before we began to realize that, whatever the terms of the agreement, Hindustan at least was not going to let its nationalization be slowed down. None of the Indian majors and junior Indian officers of Hindustan wanted to see nationalization go at the pace at which their politicians wanted it to go. They knew full well that it would take many years for them to educate their officers up to the standard required. But politicians and ambitious seniors would brook no delay. The odd thing was that these and the Press that served them had a quite mistaken idea that British officers wanted to hang on to their jobs. The British officer's outlook was that he would stay as long as he was really wanted and necessary, but that he did not enjoy his job as he used to for he saw politics creeping into an Army which he had kept free of the taint for close on a hundred years. He was also heartily sick of the abuse poured upon his

country and its doings by others who could never have done as well, or at least had never shown that they could do as well.

At the same time we learnt that the prestige of British officers of the Army was very high and that Hindustan would ask for the services of many of them. It seemed to us doubtful if good officers, after what they had witnessed of recent months, would accept the proffered service or, if they took it, put up with it for long.

Early in July the *Statesman* published an editorial which I give in full in Appendix III, for it embodied the feelings, though not perhaps the ideas, of many British officers in India. Deploring the splitting up of India's Armed Forces, in particular of the Indian Army, it protests that within the nine months allowed till April 1948, this huge reorganisation could not possibly be efficiently completed. The article further deplores a clause which decrees that no Muslim residing in Hindustan could join the army of that dominion and *mutatis mutandis* no Hindu could join the Pakistan army. This was a source of grievance which was later removed.

We would now have to set about dividing the Army. In a table in Appendix XII is the infantry class composition as we worked it out at the time, from which G.H.Q. India had to produce two quite separate armies.

We were perplexed as to how we should get British officers to serve on with the Dominion armies even long enough to enable the two armies to finish some part of their reorganization. Life in India was unattractive and precarious, not so much to life and limb, as to reputation and even to liberty. So long as there was effective protection for the British officer we could advise him at least to try the experiment. Directly that protection ceased to be effective, then he stayed at his own risk and we could advise him neither one way nor the other. What it really amounted to was that as soon as there was no longer any British authority whom his appeal was certain to reach and who could physically remove him from India, the British officer ceased to enjoy protection. It is not hard to see that as soon as Supreme Headquarters in India gave up effective control of transportation, protection would be inadequate, if it had not before that been inadequate for other reasons.

On the 1st June, Pandit Nehru, speaking at the All-India Congress Committee meeting, after expressing his horror and disgust at the Punjab and Bengal riots and describing them as planned attacks, asked how it was that British officers who coped with the Civil Disobedience movements in the past were unable to cope with the present disturbances. He went on to say that where there were Congress ministries, disturbances were brought under control but where the British exercised authority, there was chaos. This speech had a most adverse effect on the recruitment of British officers for Hindustan. The answers to his questions were simple and well known. The British dealt with Civil Disobedience movements in the past because, unlike this communal strife, those

movements lacked popular support and because the British had good instruments of their own making with which to exercise their authority. Now they had to work with inefficient and only too partial instruments. They were Congress ministries which allowed the terrible massacres of Garhmukteswar and of Bihar when only a British-controlled Army brought peace to the stricken areas. In the Bihar massacre, those districts which British officials still administered were hardly affected: where Indians were in authority we had had the trouble. The only ministry that was British-controlled at this time was the Punjab and everyone knows that the British made every effort to get an indigenous ministry there to govern this key province. Because Congress, Sikh or Muslim could not form a ministry we had ourselves to govern—through these same partial and therefore inefficient instruments.

The terms offered by the Indian Dominions were not attractive enough, with expenses ever rising, amenities diminishing and no compensatory advantages, to keep officers on, other than in order to gain time to look round for other work or to qualify for a better pension or higher gratuity. Had the Indian Army continued, even a part of it, to be as it had been, there would have been no difficulty in getting British officers to stay. But it was no longer, any part of it, the Indian Army. It was to be two armies and one portion of it, the Hindustan portion, was to be subject to the old Indian Army's traducers, the very men who had backed the I.N.A. against it and against its British officers. It was no use appealing to them 'to stand by their army'. In no sense was it any longer their army, the army they had built and loved all their soldiering lives. Such an appeal was made—and thrown back by the vast majority of our best officers.

Fortunately, the terms offered included three months' notice on either side. This was an escape clause that certainly attracted for a short period many more officers than would otherwise have taken on.

A question by Brigadier Low in the House of Commons, reported in the Indian Press on the 25th June, asking how many British officers and other ranks there were at present on the Indian establishment, brought a reply from the Under Secretary of State for India that the Government of India had said that it was contrary to their policy to disclose the information. Whatever may have been the reason for this refusal it was interpreted by British officers as an indication that the House of Commons no longer had the power to look after their interests. A principle, adverse to them, seemed to have been established. Our military machine was fast running down. Every wheel was sticking. After the 15th August the wheels would hardly move at all. With that prospect before us, we set ourselves to the task of dividing the Army while keeping the peace. With all these preoccupations for us, communalism was now encroaching on the last preserve of loyalty, the rank and file of the Indian Army, to make our task the more difficult. At times it seemed impossible for us to bring the Army through.

By the end of the month the loss of our British soldiers was becoming all too real to us. From Agra, Cawnpore and Lucknow our battalions were to be withdrawn to other stations outside the Command preparatory to their return to the United Kingdom. On the 16th August the first ship was to leave Bombay. One battalion, the King's Own at Cawnpore, we managed to hold on to, and that battalion, as part of 73rd British Brigade Group, was allowed to move to Calcutta to join its parent formation.

It was natural that British soldiers remaining in India should not, after the 15th August, take part in any duties in aid of the civil power. If they did, then they would be acting in a Dominion's territory without the sanction of that Dominion. That would be impossible. The only, and rather natural, proviso was that they could act in grave emergency to safeguard European lives.

There was much speculation as to who would be the first Commanders-in-Chief of the Pakistan and Hindustan armies. The appointments were probably less inviting than others of equal seniority, for the incumbents were bound to have a most perplexing time among all the political jockeyings and the political influences then at work in the Army and those which might yet be employed by certain senior officers.

In Delhi a committee was set up, representative of both future armies, with a British Major-General at its head, to divide up the Army and its resources. The Committee did its work smoothly and quickly and by early July we had in our hands the list of infantry units which were to go to the two armies.

G.H.Q., soon to be Supreme Headquarters, set to work to implement the Committee's decisions and things began to move at reasonable speed. Our difficulty was to get hold of our Muslim soldiers in order to collect them for dispatch to Pakistan. They were committed here and there all over the Command keeping law and order. We had been able, in reinforcing Eastern Bengal, to put what we thought would be Pakistan battalions in what we expected would be East Pakistan, but further we could not go in preparing for the future.

G.H.Q. sent out an appeal which we repeated to the provincial governors, asking for units to be released from Internal Defence roles. The poor governors did what they could but that was very little. They were too deeply involved in their own troubles. In Appendix VIII I shall speak fully of the story of the treatment of the Gurkhas throughout this time and show why it was that so many of them who had served, and whose fathers and ancestors for over a hundred years had served us British more loyally even than our own soldiers, were for a time turned against us by our own British Government and by our own War Office. Here, I shall say no more on the subject other than to affirm that I believe that out of all this coming and going neither Britain nor India will for long find in the Gurkha soldier the man they knew in the past.

To end a month of violent happenings, let us turn to our friends the students, to see how they conduct themselves at their studies. Here is a comment from the *Statesman* of the 23rd June.

The Intermediate Science examinees of Dacca, like Calcutta's medical students, recently did a hunger strike, because the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education refused to condone their walk-out in protest against difficult mathematics papers. They demanded that those who had failed in the papers and missed the subsequent ones should be considered to have passed, and although the fast was not wholly triumphant, the Board, demoralized, hastened to make concessions. Assuming that the fasters were ready to pass the doors of death rather than renounce their academic claims, the authorities were probably right to avert loss of so many young lives. But their action may further undermine India's much-shaken educational discipline, a consequence which all must deplore. Disgusting hooliganism was witnessed at the Matriculation examination in Narayangunj; detected while copying, a candidate tried to stab an invigilator within the examination hall.

## XXIX

### CLEARER ISSUES

#### *July*

*That ever upon the topmost roof our banner of England blew.*

TENNYSON, Defence of Lucknow.

THE general political and military situation in India was assuming a more definite shape. India was to be divided into two great Dominions, Pakistan and, as I shall continue to call it, Hindustan. There would be no joint government. Though the Army was also to be divided we nevertheless still clung to the dwindling hope that some part of it might be retained under impartial Commonwealth control, for we saw well the danger of war between the two Dominions after we had gone. There were still problems to be solved but we by now knew what they were. The division of the Punjab was to take place, to our grave apprehension, athwart the Sikh country. Bengal was to be cleft into two parts, one part to go to Hindustan as West Bengal, the other to East Pakistan. It was simply a matter of where the Boundary Commission would draw the line, now that Sylhet had decided to quit Assam and to join Pakistan. In the Army we were waiting for final orders as to what units were to join each Dominion, when and how the transfer was to take place. That we should find ourselves and our units in no small measure of chaos during this transfer of men, equipment and all relative accounts and documents, was more than probable. We knew that both Dominions would need British officers to help them during the reorganization of their armed forces but still waited for publication of the terms on which they wished to engage them. We knew for certain, too, that the Sikh war of revenge was coming, but we expected it after the 5th August, the great day of Independence, rather than before, because by the later date it was certain that the drain on our British officer resources would be weakening the will of the Army to stand firm and impartial against the might of Sikhistan.<sup>78</sup>

The States were generally falling into line, only Kashmir, Hyderabad and Travancore of the larger units standing out against accession to one or other Dominion. A *Statesman* report may be quoted:

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<sup>78</sup> The land of the Sikhs.



## SIR C. P. RAMASWAMI IYER ATTACKED

Trivandrum, July 25.—A murderous attack was made on Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer, Dewan of Travancore, today. The assailant escaped after inflicting injuries on the Dewan's face.

The Dewan was treated in hospital and is improving.

The Dewan, after participating in the inauguration of the centenary celebrations of Sriswati Tiruinal, was leaving the shamiana and going towards his car when the assailant suddenly whipped out a sword with which he struck at the Dewan.

The Dewan's Private Secretary, who was walking by his side, parried the first blow, but the assailant pushed him aside and dealt four blows at Sir Ramaswami and then fled.—A. P. I.

Even Travancore acceded in the end.

In the purely political sphere of Hindu parties we saw the rising tide of Socialism on which Mr. Jai Prakash Narain was riding as it flooded over great parts of the Congress sands. We saw, on the other hand, rolling on to another beach, the big seas of the Brahman Hindu Mahasabha, its side eddies washing over neighboring shores and dragging away their particles to increase its own. As the Congress Party split between the two Dominions so did the Mahasabha gain new adherents and so did its strength increase against India's oldest but now divided political party. Mahasabha, Hinduism, fanaticism, the refuge of Brahman, strict caste Hindu, and of all those Hindus whose vested interests claimed for them a firmly static society. Socialism, iconoclast, shadowed by Communism, demanding Congress cooperation and threatening hostility, striking at the very roots of the caste system on which rested the Mahasabha and Hinduism, as known to all Hindus except their pure philosophers. Hindu Congress: partly strict Hindu; partly almost irreligious, intellectual, anti-caste, Capitalist and Socialist and progressive. Thus from the bottom came Jai Prakash Narain, the Kayasht, hammering at Hinduism's living foundations, permeating poor men, peasants and factory workers with the idea of the people's rights against all vested, caste interests. His hammer head was the factory worker, for in the crowded shops there could be no caste: it was there that his great aim would be achieved as industry in India developed. In the field, he could only tilt at the landlords, good targets except that for them he could not readily collect together the bolts he wished to hurl. At the top, the intellectuals, westernized, the Nehrus, striving to pick away the caste system, the coping stone of Hinduism. They and Jai Prakash Narain were both hacking at the very thing for which the Mahasabha stood—in fact, at the Mahasabha itself. Little wonder that the victim took fright and

started to strengthen his walls and little wonder that he set to work in astonished haste to provide himself with a force that could go out to do battle for the Hindu body, amorphous but still instinct with life.

Of those who would have territorial ambitions on Hindustan there would be the Sikhs, with their traditions from Ranjit Singh, and the Jats, with their memories of the old Jat kingdom. Both menaced the heart of political Hindustan, the United Provinces. The Sikhs we had recently seen in action in the Punjab, the Jats we had seen as the terrible perpetrators of the Garhmukteswar massacre of November 1946 and now in their war of extermination with the Meos. In their frenzy these two peoples would spare none—man, woman or child. Finally, but by no means least, the Mahrattas, with their great fighting history dating from Sivaji, children of the R.S.S. Sangh.

It was not to be expected that Hindustan would for long ignore the presence in Hindu Bengal of the minute French enclave of Chandernagore. Whereas the British had for centuries left this small piece of France in quiet seclusion, the new masters were intent on terminating forever French rule within their land. They said so. It was amusing to hear that a French official had suggested to them that to keep Chandernagore French would give Indians a chance of acquiring the French tongue before going to Europe! The suggestion was treated with contumely.

Judging by the glowing tributes that the Hindu Press was paying to the efficiency, versatility and integrity of the Viceroy, ascribing to him most of the credit for the speed at which India and Pakistan were to attain to dominion hood and later crediting him with bringing erring Travancore into the fold, it seemed that Lord Louis Mountbatten had won a warm place in the hearts of political Hindustan, however chilly might be his niche in Pakistan. Thus it was expected that Lord Louis would be Governor General of the Dominion of Hindustan: it was not surprising that Mr. Jinnah should be Governor General of the other, Pakistan. If there was to be an indigenous Governor General of Pakistan then it was certain that Mr. Jinnah's claims could not be overlooked. It would have been highly dangerous to overlook them. The Economist expressed a not unnatural concern at the appointment of such a dictator as Mr. Jinnah to this post, in view of his known autocratic ways and of his intention to continue in politics despite the nature of the appointment he was to hold and the quality of impartiality associated with it. Referring to the unofficially tipped appointments of Generals Sir William Slim and Sir Francis Tuker as Commanders-in-Chief the journal went on to observe: Presumably, if appointed, they will not wish to fight each other and will do their best to prevent the blood bath which threatens to engulf the hopes of Indian peace. This appreciation of the outlook of these two men of blood was, I believe, as correct as the Economist usually manages to be.

Admiration for Mr. Jinnah's courage and determination must always be tempered by acknowledgement of his intolerance towards views other than his own. He was an

autocrat, the stuff of which dictators are made. With a powerful military nation beneath him he might well have been a figure to strike terror into a quivering Hindustan, but with a people who would surely be at sixes and sevens among themselves and who possessed much courage but few resources with which to fight, he would not be dangerous. The weakness of his nation made it imperative that he should court the good offices of Afghanistan, for in no other way but by cooperation with those beyond his western border could he hope to exert any decisive influence on the explosive tribes who menaced the very existence of his country. Concessions Mr. Jinnah might make in order to obtain this help but we knew that the Afghan Government was most timid to court and we realized that whatever he might undertake in that direction could not be brought to maturity before the British ceased to have any responsibility, direct or indirect, for the consequences of what he did. This was a selfish and short-sighted attitude of ours and only defensible by emphasizing that we could not in any case influence the future machinations of this new Muslim State, that its interests must be with its sister States, that we British by nature are prone to sympathize with the weak against the strong and, lastly, that we full well knew that the majority of educated Hindus, baulked of a Hindu hegemony in a united India, were then determined that Pakistan should not live. We hoped it would live and we thought that a staunch partisan like Mr. Jinnah would for a time give it its best chance of existing.

Having been Chairman of the Frontier Committee in early 1945, set up to ascertain how best the North-West Frontier could be run so as to avoid the huge expense of its garrison and its frequent costly wars, I was naturally deeply interested in the designs of our Cabinet for the more peaceful future of the lawless and highly humorous gentry of that Frontier.

The new Indian Independence Bill had at long last recognized the complete independence of the Frontier tribesmen, some 2,500,000 souls. With the *Afridi Jirga* (tribal council) as their spokesmen, the tribesmen implored Lord Wavell and then Lord Mountbatten that the British Government should clearly state that the tribal areas were not part of British India and that the successors to the British Government of India should negotiate with the tribes an entirely new agreement.

They had always emphasized that they were anxious to keep their own independence and identity but that, very naturally, their sympathies lay with the Muslims of India rather than with the Hindus. Their *maliks* (chiefs) now expected the Pakistan Constituent Assembly to initiate negotiations with them for the peace of the border.

The administration of this borderland had been a vastly expensive one. The Government had often, and with no small justice, been accused of 'governing' by bribe and subsidy. Although seemingly only two percent of the expenditure in 1947-8 had been devoted to allowances pure and simple to tribesmen, a considerable proportion of the three and a half million pounds remaining had been spent on employing tribesmen

solely to keep them quiet. They gave little enough honest work in return for the moneys lavished on them. It was a matter of arithmetical calculation as to whether they would have cost us that sum annually in lawless acts had we, instead of paying them, hit them hard whenever they kicked over the traces and murdered and pillaged our subjects.

Those who computed the cost of our Frontier administration solely from the budget figures, naïvely forgot that the cost was multiplied a number of times by the expense of keeping a large frontier garrison of regular troops in inaccessible country and not available to take their share with their brethren in their proper task of war.

The answer to the problem was, to my mind, to draw out the regular garrison, leaving only Frontier Pathan Militias of the same tribes as the inhabitants to look after their kinsmen, thereafter to build up under them a proper Frontier police from the people themselves and finally to substitute those police for the Militias. At the same time, to start certain schemes for economic and educational progress, putting the money into these rather than into debauching the tribesmen with subsidized idleness.

Kabul radio continued to support the Congress-sponsored move for the establishment of Pathanistan in the North-West Frontier Province. The radio called the referendum in the N.W.F.P., which would allow the people to elect to join either Pakistan or Hindustan, 'wrong both from the view-point of justice and democracy'. The referendum should have given all individuals the free choice to exercise their votes (and join Pathanistan, thus giving Afghan Pathans the opportunity of claiming Pathanistan for Afghanistan). Had the referendum been held on the issues of Pakistan, Hindustan or an independent Pathanistan, it would have been held on the right lines, it maintained. But it had become meaningless, particularly when a large number of people of the N.W.F.P. had expressed themselves against joining the Pakistan Constituent Assembly. At the end of the broadcast the announcer said 'The only door now open to us is to fight our case at the bar of world opinion against the British imperialistic plan.' The announcer might as well have been speaking from Moscow.

All Indian minds were now centered on one thing—Independence Day, 15th August. We lived in an atmosphere that was almost physically discernible for its ardor. It is not possible to describe one's feelings other than to say that we felt as though we were a disinterested spectator of a tense period of play between two football teams where the Boys were leading by a solitary goal over the Masters with only five minutes to go. One felt the crowd of backers of the winning side, their pleased anxiety, their anticipation of the referee's last whistle and of the jubilation that was to be theirs as they crowed their triumph over the losers. But with it all, one felt that a victory so easily gained, so readily given to the Boys by the opposing team of teachers, was not likely to do them very much good in the future, for it would not have knit them together in the permanent unity which would have come from a true and prolonged tussle with knocks freely given and taken.

We ourselves were a little apprehensive of this great Day. On Government and on public buildings the Union Jack had flown for many, many years. We had British troops and were not certain how they would feel about the hauling down of their flag. British officers of the Indian Army might take it more hardly than British soldiers. On the other side, emotions were being whipped up in Press and on platform which might lead to abuse of our flag and of our British soldiers on Independence Day. A small incident might easily lead to grave trouble or, at the least, to hurting the over-sensitive feelings of Indians. It seemed that they found it so unbelievable that the formidable British were so easily going to hand over everything to them that they still refused to credit the fact. For this reason, they were in a highly emotional and suspicious state, starting at every small straw in the wind as it brushed them, to see in it our – chiefly the Army's – desire not to honor their flag or their newly found nationhood. The national flags that we were to fly had to be made in Ordnance and there was a good chance that these flags, with Indian railways in their present chaos, would not reach outlying parts in time. If they did not and a bare flagpole greeted the dawn of Independence Day, then certainly it would be hailed as a dishonor to the flag, Press and politicians vying to expose the crime.

On our headquarters we had for some months already been flying a formation flag and not the Union Jack. Over my house I had flown no flag for over a year. So there would be no trouble about these premises.

Our Hindu officers were elated at the prospect of this great day: Hindu soldiers generally seemed indifferent to it, as they had been to all negotiations that had led to this pass. Muslim officers and Muslim soldiers were only glad to be going to Pakistan where they would be free of the presence of their now distrusted Hindu colleagues. As the day approached so did the gulf widen between the communities even in this, our steady Army.

We were by the end of July pretty certain that those odd bedfellows, the Hindu Mahasabha and some of the Left wing bodies, would continue to make trouble on Independence Day. These parties had always favored a united India, the former so that it could bring about Ram Raj – Hindu rule over all others – all over India; the latter so that it could unite both Hindu and Muslim extremists against any form of rule at all. The Mahasabha warned the Congress government of the United Provinces that they would launch 'direct action' on the 1st August if all their nine demands were not met by that day, their most important demand being the cutting down of Muslim representation in the provincial Services. Furthermore, they intended to observe the 15th August as 'Black Flag Day' and announced their emphatic refusal to approve the National flag of Hindustan as designed by its Flag Committee and their decision to pull that flag down wherever it was flown. This was open war. It was a pity that the flag of

Hindustan was the Congress flag for it rather invited insult from those who disliked that political party.

A tale of a small acutely communal happening in the United Provinces may exemplify hundreds of similar daily incidents in Eastern Command.

The Brigadier was President of the Allahabad Cantonment Board. The agenda of the Finance Committee Meeting in June 1947 included a recommendation that a Hindu, H., should take on the duties of officiating Assistant Tax Clerk as well as his own duties of Assistant Tax Collector, with an increase in his salary.

The ordinary monthly meeting considered the recommendation and by a majority of one agreed that an old Muslim employee, M., of great reliability and experience, should be promoted in place of H.

A Hindu lawyer present dissented, giving many reasons for disagreement, but it was apparent that the only one that mattered to him was that in making this appointment the post of a Hindu was being given to a Muslim when the proportion of Muslims in the service of the Board was already high. He then threatened to publish the affair in the Press. The Brigadier told him he could do what he liked but suggested that to publish this in the Press would only aggravate an already embittered communal situation in the city. He pointed out that there were 214 Hindus employed by the Board against 43 Muslims.

The lawyer replied that his own enquiries revealed 66 Hindus and 44 Muslims and 136 sweepers. He said that the Scheduled Castes, in the matter of services, were always taken as a minority and not as Hindus in totaling up the Hindu-Muslim representation. The matter came to us on the Hindu lawyer's appeal and we found that he was right in refusing to count the sweepers as Hindus, although, whenever it suited them to claim a majority anywhere, the Hindus never failed to include them in their numbers. So we were forced to support the dissident, the legally allowable Muslim proportion in the province being only 14 percent, but we suggested that the Scheduled Castes should also get a 14 percent proportion!

Fortunately, circumstances later reversed our unwilling decision and the Muslim, the more efficient man, got the post. To a Westerner it all seemed puerile: to India it was serious.

We were interested to learn towards the end of the month who were to be the new governors of provinces in Eastern Command from 15th August.

C. R. Chakravarty Rajagopalachari, Member for Industries and Supplies in the Government of India, a barrister and scholar, was to come to West Bengal. He was a

man of liberal mind and friendly to the British connection. It was he who in 1940 persuaded the Congress to offer cooperation in the war. Later in 1940 he was sent to prison.

Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, a medical practitioner of Calcutta, was to come to the United Provinces. He was at this time in the U.S.A. He too had been to prison. Mrs. Sarojini Naidu was to act in his absence.

Sir Chandulal Trivedi, I.C.S., was to leave Orissa for East Punjab and Dr. Kailal Nath Katju was to replace him. Dr. Katju was a Minister in the United Provinces government. He too was a barrister and had been to prison in 1940.

Mr. Jairam Daulat Ram was to come to Bihar. He was a Sindhi and a barrister also. In addition, he was a journalist. He had been wounded by police firing in Karachi in 1930 and had frequently been to prison.

We looked forward to meeting these eminent and deserving workers in the cause of India's liberty.

From time to time in these pages we have noted the intense communalism of the Indian Press and have referred to the serious damage it had been doing. It was therefore all the more entertaining for us to read in the papers of Lord Listowel's public congratulation of this Press for all it had done in bringing about this present successful conclusion to the Indian problem. We did not read Lord Listowel's words in quite the way they were meant—a confession of our own cynicism, living in those chaotic surroundings of hatred attendant on the conclusion of the problem and looking into the bloody future that we knew was coming. Not long before this eulogium the same Press in Bengal had been put under restrictions in the reporting of communal disturbances and allegations against the police: now it was hard at it serving falsehoods up about the rascally behavior of British troops on internal defence duties. I cannot imagine any Press that could have gone further to queer the pitch of any attempt at a constructive solution of India's troubles.

While preparations for civil celebrations for Independence Day were going forward the Army had other preparations of its own to make for the great occasion. On the 15th August, if matters were left to slide along on their own, we should find ourselves in a position in which no Hindustan unit and no officer, British or otherwise, of the Hindustan army (and vice versa) could cross into Pakistan to put down a disturbance.

As we anticipated disturbances on the Punjab borders and as there might be disturbances (although we did not expect them, for reasons which I shall later explain) on the East Pakistan borders, this prohibition was likely to lead to a serious collapse of law and order unless some means were found of getting round it. G.H.Q. and the then

Government of India devised a plan whereby an independent force under Supreme Head-quarters (our old G.H.Q. India) was to be set up and put in position in good time to handle the Punjab border dispute. This force was to be known as the Punjab Boundary Force—the P.B.F. As far as we were affected, after the institution of the P.B.F., it was a matter of our being able to control disturbances in East Pakistan, that is, East Bengal. Orders were passed whereby the Joint Defence Council of both Dominions could declare any part of India a 'Disturbed Area' appointing a British commander in the area to act on behalf of both Dominions. Added to this the soldiers could by Ordinance be given extra powers ordinarily only possessed by the police, and greater freedom in the use of their weapons.

As far as we in Eastern Command were concerned we did not expect to need the whole panoply which the Punjab rightly demanded nor to have to keep a force ready on the spot on both sides of the East Pakistan border. We nominated Major-General D. Russell, Commander of the 5th Indian Division, to deal with our border troubles and under him was to be his 9th Infantry Brigade, now on duty in Calcutta and soon to be relieved by the 123rd Infantry Brigade. On relief the 9th was to concentrate at Barrackpore, near Calcutta, and await the border trouble which we did not expect to eventuate, at the same time being so stationed that it could quickly tread out the sparks of Calcutta.

From the 15th August I myself or General Ranking at Calcutta could only enter East Pakistan for purposes of helping the East Pakistan Commander, Major-General Blair Mould, over any purely administrative troubles he might have, and then only after the two Commanders-in-Chief had agreed to our going. We could not, although we administered his headquarters and his soldiers, confer with him on any operational matter. Only General Russell could do this and only after he had been duly appointed to act in the 'Disturbed Area'. All this sounds farcical and I do not doubt that, had there been grave trouble on that border, both sides would have been only too pleased to know that we had gone in to see General Mould and to help quell it. However, it was in theory correct to proceed as we were directed, and theory, or good manners, mattered a great deal just then.

Everything was being done in a great hurry. We were trying to find some sort of accommodation in East Bengal for General Mould's headquarters. From the number and sort of objections that were being put forward against any place at all that we suggested, it seemed that the one thing that East Pakistan did not want was a military headquarters. In the end, in mid-August, after General Mould arrived, and after taking the matter to Army Headquarters (India) and to Supreme Headquarters in order to invoke the aid of Western Pakistan, we were able to induce the future government of the new sub-dominion to agree to housing him and his staff within reach of Dacca, the capital.



As yet no governor of East Pakistan had been appointed. Lord Killearn came to Dacca by air, took one look at the place and departed. It is hard to imagine a less salubrious land in which to live. Dacca is more or less cut off by a network of rivers and waterways: it has no cold season and its hot season is just damnable. From the heat there is no escape, for East Bengal possesses no hill station at all in Pakistan territory.

There is little more here to record about the feelings of the Army.

Mr. Gandhi himself was already deploring the splitting of the forces, prophesied civil war and said that the burden of defence costs would be far heavier than before (perhaps too great to be borne by either Dominion?).

The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* also deplored the split and said that henceforth it would never be possible to bring the two Dominions back into an Indian Union. The paper also prophesied war.

XXX

## EASTERN COMMAND ON THE EVE OF LIBERTY

*July*

THE Army was not without its own domestic troubles at this time. Though lost in the vasts of the great issues of which I have spoken in the last chapter, they had at the time a deep emotional effect on our officers and men.

Indian officers were staggered by the new pay code which was soon to come into force. Under this code bachelors and married officers were to receive the same pay. Under it, too, a lieutenant in the R.I.A.S.C. drawing Rs. 850/ – a month found his pay reduced to Rs. 450/ –. It was little wonder that they grumbled. Perhaps, since all grumbled, Hindus and Muslims may have found one small cause in common and so have been drawn just a little nearer to each other. It was not long before British officers were also shocked by a ruling, received by telegram almost exactly one month before many of them were due to leave the Army for good, that no officer promoted after the 1st July 1946 could count any part of his service in that acting rank. All officers had by now calculated their pensions under the terms already offered, counting in their acting rank towards their pension. There was only a month to go, and those pensions were now in some cases cut by as much as £200 a year despite the fact that these officers were being forcibly removed from the service and had no chance to make up the time now taken from them in order to obtain their full pension. They were in different case from the British Service officer to whom the rule also applied but who could serve on for full pension. It was unjust, but appeals to Supreme Headquarters and from there to the Secretary of State, brought no alleviation. Brigadier Low and Colonel Gomme Duncan as usual took up the cudgels in the House of Commons. It was not till January 1948 that the wrong was redressed by the British Cabinet, an act which was deeply appreciated but which should never have been rendered necessary.

On the 12th July the Viceroy addressed this message to British officers and men of the Indian Army:

### **TO BRITISH OFFICERS AND MEN SERVING WITH THE ARMED FORCES OF INDIA**

The Indian Armed Forces have now to be reconstituted in accordance with the policy agreed by the Indian leaders.

All concerned are convinced that British officers are needed for the period during which the Armed Forces are being divided and reconstituted.

The Commander-in-Chief and Senior officers of all three Services at Defence Headquarters are staying on for this period. The Commander-in-Chief, who is assuming the title Supreme Commander, will be responsible under the general direction of the Joint Defence Council of the two Dominions for reconstituting the Armed Forces. At the invitation of Pandit Nehru and Mr. Jinnah, I have willingly accepted the chairmanship of this Joint Defence Council as an independent Chairman. The Supreme Commander will continue to be advised by the existing Naval, Army and Air Staffs. When the task is done the Supreme Commander and these other British officers will go, but others will be required to see the Defence Forces of the two Dominions firmly established.

The strain which will be thrown on officers of the Indian Services in carrying out this reconstitution, in addition to ordinary administration and training, will be considerable and if a large number of highly trained and experienced British officers are suddenly removed the risk of a serious breakdown will be very real.

Pandit Nehru and Mr. Jinnah have expressed the desire and hope that the requisite number of British officers and Other Ranks, including technical specialists, will stay on. I share their feeling and hope that sufficient British personnel will volunteer, although I want it to be clearly understood that no one will be compelled to serve on if he does not wish to do so.

The terms and conditions of service under which British officers and Other Ranks will be asked to volunteer have been approved by the representatives of both the new Dominions and by me, and His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom have concurred. These terms will be published immediately.

I shall be proud to be associated with those who will stay on and help in this great task.

MOUNTBATTEN OF BURMA.  
The Viceroy's House, New Delhi,  
12th July 1947.

The message elicited no particular response and no particular criticism. The shock administered by the ruling I have just mentioned had left officers with little appetite for exhortations. Many of them wished to help their men through the next few difficult months but were not particularly eager to continue in a service where, they now considered, no promise given them was worth the paper on which it was written. Some

who could yet make their time for the next grade of pension elected to stay on in India using the escape clause of three months' notice: others who stayed were those who saw no chance of civil employment and who liked a better fed and less rigorous life than they were likely to get in their own country. They waited for conditions 'at home' to improve! They were those whose positions were not accompanied by any great responsibility. A handful stayed on out of personal ambition, hoping for higher rank and more honors.

Shortly afterwards it was announced that the British Supreme Commander would probably only stay till April 1948: this would leave a gap from then till August—at that time the date to which British officers were eligible to continue to serve in India—in which officers would have no British Commander to whom to appeal in case of injustice.

Later on, those who had expected and volunteered to serve for a year or up to a year in India in order to obtain these better pensions found that their brethren who had departed earlier were justified in their suspicions. In October 1947, with one stroke of the pen, their contracts were cancelled by their own British Headquarters as from the 31st December 1947. If they had gone earlier they would have been among the early birds in the quest for worms of employment.

Our S.U.L. officers (Special Unemployed List, known as the 'Suppressed Uncared-for List' who had sailed from England early in the war in a ship we termed 'The Drunken Duchess') who had left the Army in the thirties, remaining on the active list and returning to us to fight the war, were now streaming away home. We owed them a great debt: they brought back to the Indian Army experience and solidity that we so badly needed in those anxious days of war with officers and men so very young. Many S.U.L. officers had commanded their battalions with distinction during this war. We were sorry to see them go for the second time.

British soldiers were eagerly looking forward to Independence Day and to a change from ceaseless street patrolling. They were all the more keen to be relieved of these duties because of newspaper allegations concerning their behavior while performing them. Quite recently there had been yet another attack on them when newspapers reported that they had beaten up a *bustee* (slum) in north-east Calcutta on the night of the 17th July, entered a house, raped one woman and outraged 'extensively' the modesty of three others. The Communists daily asserted that as a result of this outrage shops and markets closed, students of all communities went on strike, protest meetings were held in many places, traffic was suspended and members of the Legislative Assembly visited 'the scenes of the crimes'. Most of this was untrue but certainly some M.L.A.s<sup>79</sup> went about the area seeking information and a meeting of about 500 people

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passed a resolution demanding suitable action against the British soldiers alleged to be responsible for the atrocities, and the immediate replacement of British by Indian troops. It was reported that at this meeting one speaker said that if there is a recurrence of such criminal oppression the students should unite to teach the brutes a proper lesson.

This particular allegation on the part of the Press was preceded by others of rough handling of pedestrians and of bribe-taking by British soldiers in certain curfew areas.

All these allegations were exhaustively examined and no truth found in any of them. That of rape and molestation was traced to a patrol which had spotted a curfew-breaker and given chase, not for the first time that night, only to be baulked by the sinner darting into a house. The patrol, tired of this game, broke the door in and looked inside. Not finding him, they left.

It was little wonder that Master Tommy had become thoroughly weary of looking after foreigners in a foreign country under a foreign government, mauled by a foreign Press. The next assault came on the 25th July. Here it is:

### **CALCUTTA 'FULL' OF ILLEGAL ARMS AND AMMUNITION LARGE QUANTITY SMUGGLED INTO CITY FROM ASSAM-BURMA BORDER**

By a Staff Reporter

Calcutta is full of unlicensed arms and ammunition, a legacy of World War II. Apparent to some extent hitherto from the widespread use of firearms in disturbances in the city, the fact has now been established beyond doubt as a result of investigation recently undertaken by the Special Branch of Calcutta Police.

It is now known that transactions in arms and ammunition, in some cases on a big scale, were carried on between troops and private individuals and organizations on the eve of the troops' departure from Calcutta.

Cases are even now being reported of sales of arms by soldiers to civilians, who sometimes purchase them at fabulous prices. A large quantity of arms and ammunition is also believed to have been smuggled into Calcutta from the Assam-Burma border, scene of much heavy fighting in World War II.

Examination by experts of the arms and ammunition already seized by the police reveals that they are mostly of American, British and Japanese make. They also include some made in France.

Relaxation of regulations and carelessness on the part of the military are responsible for this state of affairs, according to police officials. They maintain that, though some part of the unlicensed arms and ammunition may be stolen military property, the bulk may have been disposed of through illegal transactions.

Fortunately for us we had for some weeks past been conducting a very close examination of this side of our responsibilities. In India we were always far stricter in our security of arms and ammunition and far more severe on those who lost them than were other armies in the Commonwealth. We knew that the usual confusion of the aftermath of war and the laxity of discipline of odd units and odd parties sojourning in the Command, would lead to increased loss of weapons by carelessness and to sale of weapons by those who thought they could sell without detection. In 1946 we had done all we could to check these crimes and not without success, considering the conditions in this huge area of territory with hundreds of thousands of men passing through it on their way to demobilization stations farther north. In 1947 we began to settle down, the flow of men decreased and we started to get back to regular standards. Therefore, we tightened up on security of arms. It took time to seek out all the odd little units and detached bodies of men and to ensure that they were doing their part. At the time of this allegation we not only had with us all the figures of losses whatsoever and the

break-down of losses as between Army, R.I.N., R.A.F. and R.I.A.F., but we also knew the circumstances in which each loss had occurred since early in 1946. Losses had steadily decreased and security had steadily tightened till at this time losses were almost negligible. In six months only 10 weapons from the 200,000 men in the Command had been lost and not recovered. We knew, too, that relatively few weapons and little ammunition had been smuggled into Calcutta from the Assam-Burma border. The tribesmen had them and were most unlikely on that lawless border to part with them. They valued them far too much in their local feuds and headhunting expeditions. Our informed protest drew this rather cool correction from the newspaper in its issue of 26th July 1947.

### **SALE OF ARMS IN CALCUTTA**

We published on Thursday a report that relaxation of regulations and carelessness on the part of the military are responsible for Calcutta at present being full of unlicensed arms and ammunition. Our information came from police officials.

On further enquiries in British military circles in Calcutta, it is learnt that some time ago reports of thefts and sales of arms and ammunition by soldiers were received by them. Such reports, military authorities now state, were investigated and found to be generally exaggerated and in a number of cases false.

We knew who the police official was and we knew from where he had gleaned his information. It came from a privileged but inaccurate document. Neither the Inspector General nor the Commissioner of Police had authorized the statement nor did they agree with it.

It seemed odd that newspaper-men, whose advantage lay in the peace being kept, should have gone out of their way to lower the prestige of those who were doing more to keep that peace than was anyone else. Other papers took the lead from this one and relished the chance.

One item in the paper caused us some amusement.

'Four revolvers were seized from a man driving a high-priced car in South Calcutta.'

This was a trap laid by our Military Intelligence Service for persons who had approached troops with a view to purchasing arms and was carried out with the assistance of the Calcutta Police and with their full concurrence.

G.H.Q. India had rightly prohibited the sale by Ordnance of all arms including shotguns to officers and men of the Army, but the Bengal police were selling like hot cakes to their Bengali sub-inspectors a large consignment of .38 revolvers that they had recently received from a military arsenal.

In the middle of the month the Artillery of the 5th Indian Division gave a party in the evening at the Namkhum Club near Ranchi. The whole atmosphere was most cordial, British officers and their wives in friendly company with Indian officers of both communities. A few of the Indian officers' wives were also present. It was in the nature of a farewell party to the gunners of the Division who were going off to the Pakistan army. At this party the professional merits of Generals Slim and Taker were discussed as being now of common concern to all intelligent civilians. If there was to be Dominions and by me, and His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom have concurred. These terms will be published immediately.

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Examination by experts of the arms and ammunition already seized by the police reveals that they are mostly of American, British and Japanese make. They also include some made in France.

Relaxation of regulations and carelessness on the part of the military are responsible for this state of affairs, according to police officials. They maintain that, though some part of the unlicensed arms and ammunition may be stolen military property, the bulk may have been disposed of through illegal transactions.

Fortunately for us we had for some weeks past been conducting a very close examination of this side of our responsibilities. In India we were always far stricter in our security of arms and ammunition and far more severe on those who lost them than were other armies in the Commonwealth. We knew that the usual confusion of the aftermath of war and the laxity of discipline of odd units and odd parties sojourning in the Command, would lead to increased loss of weapons by carelessness and to sale of weapons by those who thought they could sell without detection. In 1946 we had done all we could to check these crimes and not without success, considering the conditions in this huge area of territory with hundreds of thousands of men passing through it on their way to demobilization stations farther north. In 1947 we began to settle down, the flow of men decreased and we started to get back to regular standards. Therefore, we tightened up on security of arms. It took time to seek out all the odd little units and detached bodies of men and to ensure that they were doing their part. At the time of this allegation we not only had with us all the figures of losses whatsoever and the break-down of losses as between Army, R.I.N., R.A.F. and R.I.A.F., but we also knew the circumstances in which each loss had occurred since early in 1946. Losses had steadily decreased and security had steadily tightened till at this time losses were almost negligible. In six months only two weapons from the 200,000 men in the Command had been lost and not recovered. We knew, too, that relatively few weapons and little ammunition had been smuggled into Calcutta from the Assam-Burma border. The tribesmen had them and were most unlikely on that lawless border to part with them. They valued them far too much in their local feuds and headhunting expeditions.

Our informed protest drew this rather cool correction from the newspaper in its issue of 26th July 1947.

### **SALE OF ARMS IN CALCUTTA**

We published on Thursday a report that relaxation of regulations and carelessness on the part of the military are responsible for Calcutta at present being full of unlicensed arms and ammunition. Our information came from police officials.

On further enquiries in British military circles in Calcutta, it is learnt that some time ago reports of thefts and sales of arms and ammunition by soldiers were received by them.

Such reports, military authorities now state, were investigated and found to be generally exaggerated and in a number of cases false.

We knew who the police official was and we knew from where he had gleaned his information. It came from a privileged but inaccurate document. Neither the Inspector General nor the Commissioner of Police had authorized the statement nor did they agree with it.

It seemed odd that newspaper-men, whose advantage lay in the peace being kept, should have gone out of their way to lower the prestige of those who were doing more to keep that peace than was anyone else. Other papers took the lead from this one and relished the chance.

One item in the paper caused us some amusement.

'Four revolvers were seized from a man driving a high-priced car in South Calcutta.'

This was a trap laid by our Military Intelligence Service for persons who had approached troops with a view to purchasing arms and was carried out with the assistance of the Calcutta Police and with their full concurrence.

G.H.Q. India had rightly prohibited the sale by Ordnance of all arms including shotguns to officers and men of the Army, but the Bengal police were selling like hot cakes to their Bengali sub-inspectors a large consignment of .38 revolvers that they had recently received from a military arsenal.

In the middle of the month the Artillery of the 5th Indian Division gave a party in the evening at the Namkhum Club near Ranchi. The whole atmosphere was most cordial, British officers and their wives in friendly company with Indian officers of both communities. A few of the Indian officers' wives were also present. It was in the nature of a farewell party to the gunners of the Division who were going off to the Pakistan army. At this party the professional merits of Generals Slim and Taker were discussed as being now of common concern to all intelligent civilians. If there was to be war, then it would be a good thing to know which side was the more likely to conquer! The supposed intention of the Nizam of Hyderabad to invade Berar was also freely debated. Before the end of the month, to our pleasure and satisfaction, we learnt that General Lockhart had been appointed Commander-in-Chief of Hindustan and General Messervy of Pakistan.

Of the large number of flies in our military ointment there was only one that gave us grave concern for we saw no prospect of picking it out. It was that in Bengal and particularly in the demoralizing atmosphere of dirty Calcutta our Indian soldiers, from unremitting duty on the streets, were getting sloppy and oafish to look at. There was

real danger that discipline would crack. Our position was a weak one as the Bengal ministry could always cozen us into keeping our men on the streets. They would at once say that there would be an outbreak if we took the men off. And so there would have been, but we insisted that until we disappeared from the town the police would never again show determination in handling trouble and never again get their confidence back. The affair of the Inspector's corpse of the 7th July described in Chapter XXVIII was indicative. There the police had shown an unenterprising spirit and lack of firmness which almost let the whole of Calcutta in for another of its dark periods of carnage. Thus, bit by bit, the civil authority obtained more and more help from the Army and the more it got the more tenaciously it clung to it and would not let it go. In conversation with the Premier of Bengal, Dr. Prafula Chandra Ghosh, we emphasized that no government could govern through its army and yet remain in authority and that we did not want to take the prominent part in government that was being thrust upon us.

It was our opinion and that of the Governor of Bengal that unless we tied the ministry down to a definite maximum garrison for Calcutta from the 5th August onwards, when our British troops would be finally off the streets, we should continue forever to pour our men into the same bottomless pit.

A tour over Eastern Bengal and Calcutta and conversations with officials, civil and military, decided us to demand that after August 15th the local government should regard as sufficient a garrison of two battalions in the former area and four in the latter. On the 2nd July we ordered the Gurkha battalion out of Chittagong and the 3/2nd Punjab Regiment from Comilla, both to Calcutta, replacing the latter with a Pakistan battalion, the 2/8th Punjab Regiment from North Bengal. All seemed fairly well in East Bengal, the Sylhet referendum had passed with little incident and it did not look as though there would be any trouble as an aftermath.

In order to give Calcutta a final clean-up before the 5th August we therefore reinforced it with the 1/3rd Gurkhas and then with the 1st Bihar Regiment from Western Bengal. Our intention was to boost up the activities of the police so as to enable them to regain their control in the month left to us before August 15th and so to permit us to reduce Calcutta, as we had now reduced East Bengal, to its permanent garrison. It is interesting to note the large number of troops that we were keeping in and about Calcutta solely for the maintenance of law and order in that city and its suburbs.

British.

2nd	Green Howards
2nd	East Lancashire Regt.
2nd	King's Own Regt. (now moving in from Cawnpore)
91st	Field. Regt. R.A.
25th	Dragoons (less a squadron at Dinapur)

Indian.  
2nd Kumaon Regt.  
4th Rajput Regt.  
1st Madras Regt.  
3/2nd Punjab Regt.  
1st Bihar Regt.  
8th Cavalry

Gurkha.  
4/2nd Gurkhas  
1/3rd Gurkhas

That is, thirteen big units, yet civil officials were on the 10th July clamoring for more troops from General Ranking who had none, and from Eastern Command who refused to give them. The circle was a vicious one. The civil authority asks for more troops and gets them: the police lose prestige and the trust of the public, so become more ineffective: there is then a demand for still more troops and there is still more lost prestige and so on. As soon as the local ministry realized that British soldiers were not to be there at beck and call after the 15th August and that we were reducing the Indian and Gurkha units to four, they became most agitated. Finally, we permitted a temporary garrison of seven Indian and Gurkha units for a few weeks after the 15th August, to be reduced as speedily as possible to the permanent garrison of four battalions. After the great day we bit by bit pulled our battalions off the streets, out of Calcutta and away, at last reducing them to four. This was to the great benefit of the police who did at last appear to be taking more pride in their ability to cope with Calcutta's frequent debilities.

In Bengal there was a strange form of diarchy for a time with Mr. Suhrawardy's Muslim League ministry still in the chair and Dr. Prafula Chandra Ghosh's Hindu Western Bengal ministry either growing up beneath them as a creeper or growing out as a knobbly sprout from a tree. Hindus expressed doubts of the capacity of Dr. Ghosh and his ministry to govern for they were the Khadi group, Mahatma Gandhi's non-violent, government-by-love party. Calcutta's *goonda* population was neither loving nor lovable. Dr. Ghosh started by staying the collection of the heavy collective fines recently imposed on those areas responsible for killings. Almost simultaneously he was demanding the institution of martial law. Dr. Ghosh was an unimpressive little person, as good as good can be, but more an employee than an employer.

However, whatever Dr. Ghosh's capacity for ruling might have been, there was one thing that was certain and it was that the Muslim police officers and men and civil officials would be shot out of Western Bengal's service before the 15th August, willing or unwilling. This, more than ever before, tore great fissures in the Calcutta and Bengal police, the Muslim officers refusing point blank to take any order from Hindu ministers. To make matters worse, European and Anglo-Indian police sergeants were on the verge of mutiny over the uncertainty of their future and through fear of reprisals that the new Hindu ministers might take against them and their families for obeying the orders of their Muslim masters. Many were resigning from the 14th August. The police were now

virtually useless. Among the rank and file there were signs of Communism, if we read happenings aright.

An occurrence at the end of June illustrates the state to which matters had gone among the police. A Muslim head constable was shot at in the Howrah area. A forty-eight-hour curfew and a fine of Rs. 20,000/- were imposed. At this the Hindus at once became turbulent. A day or two later a constable was shot. The next day the police refused duty, demanding stern measures against the locality. They were coaxed back to duty only to have two Muslim and one Hindu constable shot that very day. On the 1st July a party of a hundred Muslims returning from the cemetery was attacked with bombs, while guns opened on them from Hindu factories close by. Four died and nine others were injured. Another forty-eight-hour curfew was imposed. The next day some Hindus were stabbed and a Muslim constable was shot dead in the house in which he was on picket duty. The police authorities, fearing violent retaliation from their pickets, withdrew the men from the locality. The next day, having drawn arms and ammunition, 250 men of the armed police refused duty and, despite appeals from police and civil officials, over a hundred of them rushed out of their lines to take the law into their own hands. The Superintendent of Police and a European inspector made after them and succeeded in bringing them back to barracks, but the men still refused to go on duty until they were allowed to deal with the constable's murderer in their own way. At last, the Muslim Home Minister managed to persuade them to return to duty but they went with an ill grace. Two companies of the Green Howards were sent into the area to handle the situation.

No one can blame the Calcutta or Bengal police for their attitude. This book will have shown how intolerable had been the strain put on them. It is creditable to them and their officers that they had not, long before, taken the law into their own hands.

But much blame is to be attributed to the arrogant Punjabi Muslim police who were at the root of all these discreditable doings. They were being sent out of Calcutta to Pakistan before long and they knew it. For instance, in a Calcutta court some of them were acting as escorts, so they sat throughout the proceedings facing the Judge with their boots on the desk, refusing to put their feet down on the floor. Again, one of our officers saw a truckload of these men stop in the street, pull in three civilians and demand money from them. Two paid so the truck drove off with the third who later said he had paid two rupees. By the second week in August Calcutta was rid of these pests.

Our impression was that Muslims in the Command had accepted the situation with resignation. They were unhappy at the prospect of living under a permanent Hindu rule but could do nothing to avoid it except to leave their houses for Pakistan. That, most were not prepared to do. With Mr. Suhrawardy working for a united Bengal in cooperation with Hindus and with Khwaja Nazimuddin setting up in opposition to Mr.

Suhrawardy, the Muslims of Calcutta were without leaders, losing spirit and the desire to strive for their own interests or even safety. The former, Khwaja Nazimuddin, was elected leader of the Muslims in East Bengal, Pakistan-to-be, and the latter in Western Bengal where he, distrusted by the Hindus now in power, could do little to help his co-religionists even if he so wished. The Muslims in Calcutta had nothing to hope for: nothing to live for.

Outside Calcutta, Bengal was keeping more than usually quiet. There was one outbreak at Kharagpur in West Bengal. It all started from a quarrel arising out of the black-marketing of cinema tickets. It was not long before the quarrel took a communal turn and spread throughout the railway settlement. The local police were unable to deal with the disturbance so the Auxiliary Force turned out fully armed and rendered the great service it always had rendered in India's troubles. At the same time a detachment of the Eastern Frontier Rifles, an armed police force, left Calcutta for the scene. By the 25th July all was quiet again but neither community would go to work in the railway workshops for fear of leaving their families at the mercy of their enemies. About 200 had been killed and injured, many suffering from gunshot wounds. Large parts of the Kharagpur bazaar were burned.

For some reason or other the B.B.C. gave great prominence to this riot, wrongly asserting that soldiers had gone to Kharagpur. No troops went there and the riot was to us a small affair.

On the 31st July the Viceroy came to Calcutta to talk over the Bengal situation and the possibility of trouble about the time of the handing over of power - 15th August. We had had rumors of a Muslim plan to destroy Calcutta by fire, a vast self-immolation for Independence Day. Rumors, too, of Muslim police arming for the day. We surveyed Eastern Command's history for July.

Calcutta had gone through about as bad a period as it had ever had apart from the days of the great killings, but in the latter half of the month the sullen depression of spirits among Muslims began to tell on them. Communal clashes became less and less frequent. At times, the city was almost normal. The use of firearms by angry mobs and murderous individuals was now of common occurrence, with home-made Sten guns and other lethal weapons in the hands of the worst characters of Calcutta. Hindu and Sikh jeep-gangsters swept the streets with their automatics. The Hindus were on the offensive. The known casualties of Calcutta city itself in the second half of July alone amounted to 33 killed and 180 injured.

To show the daily toll being taken of men's lives it is worth stressing that the casualties of the 8th July were greater than those of the 7th July, despite the considerable riot on the latter day over the corpse of the police officer.

It was a strike on the 19th July which furnished the biggest single casualty list. Bata Shoe Factory Muslims were at work when they heard that members of the Hindu Union which had gone on strike were looting Muslim houses. The consequent casualty list amounted to close on a hundred.

The last few days of the month showed the population in a killing mood. Casualties mounted. On the 30th July eighteen people died from violence.

It was now that I had a letter from a learned friend in England saying that he had heard that his pet astrologer had been killed in Calcutta. I replied that I was sorry, but that it could not have come as a surprise to the victim.

We were starting to relieve the 9th Brigade in Calcutta by the 123rd, and caused it to be known far and wide that heavy reinforcements were coming into Calcutta. Reports grew in magnitude as they went from mouth to mouth until they came back to us as a great army on the move to subdue the rowdy city. The *Statesman* helped us to put about our intentions:

#### **WHILE MEMORY SERVES MORE TROOPS FOR CALCUTTA**

Aug. 4 —It is authoritatively learnt here that the Central Government has decided considerably to strengthen the military forces in Calcutta.

This decision has been taken to meet any emergency between now and the transfer of power on August 15. Reinforcements will arrive in Calcutta shortly. On their arrival, some of the city's present troops will be moved to Barrackpore, where they will be readily available.

To aid us, four circumstances were in favor of peace on the 5th August. Firstly, that Nazimuddin had obtained the premiership of East Bengal and he was on good terms with the Hindu Premier of Western Bengal: secondly, the 7,000 Muslim Bihar refugees had been sent back from Calcutta to Bihar: thirdly, all the senior Muslim police officers would have left Western Bengal by the 7th August for East Bengal: fourthly, the pestilential Punjabi Muslim police would nearly all be gone by the 6th August, and Calcutta streets would know their trucks and arrogant bayonets no more. With all these things in our favor we bent our attention ever northwards for we now had Calcutta under control.

Assam's great event had been the Sylhet polling which took place on the 6th and 7th July. For several days before there had been processions, speeches and shouting of slogans, the well organized Muslim League being to the fore in all these electioneering activities. They had brought into Sylhet hosts of their friends and coworkers, uniformed



volunteers'. All were alike a nuisance to us but probably terrified the more moderate Nationalist Muslims into voting for the League in the interests of their future skins. To offset Muslim activities the troops had been equally vigorous in patrolling, getting familiar with their areas and acquainted with every detachment of police, armed and unarmed. Throughout Sunamganj and wide expanses of Habiganj they patrolled by boat, the whole country being submerged, something that had to be seen to be believed. Throughout, the monsoon rain streamed down on the watery countryside.

Our men earned the praise of all and sundry, except perhaps of two Hindus of the Assam ministry who were determined to scarify every individual who had kept the peace and allowed Sylhet to secede from Assam. The Governor thanked the soldiers, and the Assam government, on his suggestion, gave them a great feast, with rum, on their return to Shillong. Mr. Bardoloi and most of his colleagues generously admitted that Congress had been fairly beaten in the referendum. Only the Home Minister continued his absurd accusations of partiality on the part of troops and police, but by this time he only roused the merriment of the other ministers. The Governor passed on to us a message of thanks from the Viceroy himself.

The rowdiest booth of all was the women's booth in Sylhet, but no really big fracas took place anywhere, the two biggest being firstly when Muslim League volunteers surrounded a village forbidding the Hindu inhabitants to vote. Railforce police ordered them off, but they advanced menacingly on the police who opened fire at once, killing one and wounding two. The Hindus got on with their voting. The second incident was after polling had finished on the second day when a bus-load of Congress supporters ran into a ditch in the dark. While trying to extricate the bus they were attacked by Muslims and some were injured. At the Governor's Conference after the polling, of all the sheaf of telegrams alleging intimidation, only one, it seems, was proved—that a Muslim had struck a Hindu on the head with his umbrella.

It was estimated that all would be ready for the Viceroy to announce the result by the 15th July so that if, as we expected, Sylhet were to go to Pakistan, our troops could draw out about the 17th July. However, what with one alarm and excursion and another, and the Governor's insistence on asking Pandit Nehru's permission to withdraw the soldiers, the men were not back in their barracks until after the 24th July. There they remained, at twelve hours' notice to move out in any direction, until after the Bengal Boundary Commission's Award was published.

Assam's only other preoccupations were the newspaper report that Dr. Tin Aung of Burma had publicly declared that Assam belonged to them. If this claim were pressed a large number of Government officials would be looking for other employment. Then, the All-India Gurkha League was still clamoring for Assam to take over the Darjeeling district from Bengal while the Lepcha Association (Sikkimese) opposed this and

proposed that it should be an 'excluded area' under Hindustan, with local autonomy, or else, better still, a part of Sikkim State.

The aboriginal coolies of the tea gardens contributed a curious incident. Some harmless strangers were suddenly suspected of being *orchas*, or child sacrificers, whereupon the coolies chased them, killed one and in triumph brought his body back in procession. Their feelings were distinctly hurt when neither the tea garden management nor the police extended to them the congratulations and sympathy that they felt they had so signally earned.

Preparations were now going forward for Independence Day celebrations. The Muslim League were claiming the right to attend together with their League banner. They had to be put off. There was to be a ceremonial parade in Shillong with the 1st and 3rd Assam Regt., detachments of armed police, Boy Scouts, Girl Guides and the Police Pipe Band from Sylhet. The parade would open with a Royal Salute to the Governor when the new flag of the Indian Union would be broken. There would be an inspection, a *feu de joie* and a march past. The Government's orders were that the national flag must be of *khaddar* (home-spun cotton) and that made officials scratch their heads as to where to get such cloth of the saffron and green hues required.

In the evening there would be a State Banquet.

Eastern Bengal, as we had anticipated, provided little excitement. Sylhet had seceded by referendum from Assam and would now be a part of East Pakistan. Muslims, both there and in other parts of Bengal, were jubilant. Nevertheless, they made use of their victory rather to assure the local Hindu than to intimidate him. At Narsingdi three thousand Muslims and Hindus gathered to celebrate Sylhet Victory Day. Had it not been that all Hindu and many European civil officials were voting themselves out and away from East Pakistan there is no doubt that communal tension would have been far less.

Occasional incidents marred what to us, so used to horrors, now seemed an Elysian, unearthly existence. On the 8th July a train slid into Akhura from Sylhet, bearing sixty Muslim National Guardsmen. One went to the bazaar, picked a quarrel with a Hindu shopkeeper over the price of a mango, was assaulted by Hindu spectators and shot off precipitately to the station. Thence he brought his fellow guardsmen and a brickbat fight ensued. Being outnumbered the M.N.G. withdrew into the train, there protected by an armed police guard. The train puffed off on its way through the intermittent monsoon showers and disappeared in the light mists.

Hindus dispersed to continue the daily round. Later, large Muslim mobs from the neighboring countryside, armed with *lathis* and knives, came on the scene. Hindus ran: Muslims pursued, some staying to burn Hindu shops. Police turned out and fired. Final figures included nine Muslim dead with some seventy Hindu huts in ashes.

In Chittagong mixed peace committees of both communities were doing good work ostracizing and boycotting *goondas* wherever they discovered them.

Nevertheless, in East Bengal Hindus generally held the opinion that it would be impossible for them to lead respectable lives, even fearing forcible conversion to Islam if they for long delayed their departure.

Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukerji of the Mahasabha was prominent among those who were trying to light up the fuse of communal hatred. His two-day conference of Hindus from North and East Bengal lost no opportunity of painting Muslims and their future hostile intentions against Hindus in as black a color as possible.

Meanwhile the Bengal Boundary Commission pursued its labors, to the ordinary man behaving, so far as some Indian members went, in a far from judicial manner. We had doubts as to whether the unlucky Chairman would ever be able to obtain any sort of decision from his members.

In Orissa there was minor trouble with primitive and effete eastern States but not enough to ripple the surface of the province's deep peace and contentment.

In Bihar the Loyabad colliery strike was over: our Mahrattas and technical troops returned to their stations.

Adibassis prosecuted their campaign for a separate State, attending meetings armed with bows and arrows, but their voice was weakened by a split in their organization whereby Mr. Heyward had set himself up in opposition to Mr. Jaipal Singh, their old and trusted leader.

Only at Muzaffarpur was there a sharp communal affray with a handful of casualties and three Muslim houses burnt.

The Bihar ministry seemed to be finding its feet a little. Its Premier, Mr. Sinha, was a cheerful, plump, toothless teetotaler. He had been in prison for eight years where he had, he said, been well treated and not made to work, and found only confinement irksome. His arrests had been very gentlemanly affairs and there was almost an understanding between himself and the authorities. He made a speech, was arrested and confined. All a matter of routine in which arrest was only a formality when he would himself have readily walked into the jail.

On the 2nd August was held the last Bihar police parade in front of the retiring Governor, Sir Hugh Dow. The armed police, mainly Gurkhas, made a smart and soldierly showing as they marched past. Sir Hugh presented medals, a ceremony that

was a little marred because the new police staff had all the names down but not the medals to which the names were related. The recipients were a good-looking lot, well set up, alert and well turned out.

The United Provinces afforded quite another spectacle. It was a diorama through which spurted flashes of violence. We were in no doubt as to the body of men who were stirring up this noisome broth—the Hindu Mahasabha and their friends of the R.S.S. Sangh. Pandit Pant was not the sort of leader of a government to be frightened by these people. At the end of the month he suddenly fell upon them and in a twinkling had several score of their leaders behind bars and out of harm's way by the 2nd August. To this is due, without doubt, the fact that from now onwards the strenuous efforts of our soldiers were successful in keeping this province from going the way of the Punjab. Had the Premier not taken this firm and resolute action it is doubtful if we could have found the number of soldiers necessary to perform our role, for even before Independence Day we were scraping the very bottom of our barrel to find men to pour over the Punjab border into the Delhi area, Hissar, Rohtak and Ambala to help the commander of the new East Punjab Area, Major-General Rajindrai Sinhji.

An application for release of his colleagues invoking habeas corpus was made by the Vice-President of the Hindu Mahasabha, alleging that its members had been illegally arrested, wrongfully detained and imprisoned 'without jurisdiction'; furthermore, that the Congress Party, also a political body, entertained malice against the Mahasabha, being afraid that the latter would come into power on the score of Congress' betrayal of the Hindu cause.

It is important to let the Mahasabha declare itself from its own mouth against the day when once more it raises its bloody head as it surely will. Here is an extract from one of its leaflets, freely and openly distributed:

Hindus! deathlike stupor has usurped you, venom of cowardice has gone into your nerves, every drop of your blood speaks of your demoralization. Sands of time are fast receding; if you wait any longer for Heaven to do you any miracle, you are bound to be extinct from the face of the earth just as happened with your people in Afghanistan and Isles of Janjira, not to speak of south-east Asia and Indonesia where every trace of Hindu life has been removed with systematic and cruel endeavor. The same thing is happening in the Punjab and land of Panni, the home of the Vedas, the abode of our first Sanskrit Poet, Valmiki.

After June 3rd declaration of H.M.G.'s we are face to face with another menace of a very serious nature. Pakistan areas are out; they will have an independent and free government. Pakistan shall be a homogeneous state without any alien element. Only an idiot will doubt its aims and its foreign policy. From the housetops the Leaguers have shouted 'Pakistan is just a jumping-off ground'. The

Muslim League aims at the conquest of Hindustan and conversion of Hindus into Islam. Being a homogeneous state Pakistan shall have greater possibilities of strengthening their war machinery, while Hindustan, a conglomeration of non-Muslim minorities and majorities with several crores of Muslim fifth columnists, is bound to remain a weak state, unable to resist foreign aggression and incapacitated to subdue internal rebellion if any.

We agree we worshipped Congress Leaders as Gods; but their betrayal of our people is a condemnation of all what they are.

Let us have Hindu Front. Let not our Political and Social sympathies waver to any other party. We should have the only one political party – the Party of Hindus.

Early in July General Curtis had addressed a strong protest to the administration in which he insisted that he should be warned of the coming deterioration of law and order in any area, before crisis was upon the civil authorities. He instanced, as one among many, that the recent outbreak in Philibhit was an organized onslaught and that he knew afterwards that many Hindus were acquainted of its coming; thus it was inconceivable that local officials should not also have been forewarned. It had only been on his own information that he had forestalled the trouble in the Muttra area and in Rohilkand by shifting troops before the catastrophe was upon everyone. He demanded a clearly defined civil policy and plan for dealing with budding riots where such appalling savagery and brutality was invariably manifested.

He drew attention to the significant fact that from the Garhmukteswar tragedy onwards all outbreaks had conformed to the same pattern in careful planning and organization beforehand. There had been surprise, and ruthless killings had started at once on the signal being given. There was no doubt which religio-political body was behind all these horrors, disgraceful to even the most brutal race and which had been widely condemned by all responsible Indian leaders. Seldom had his men been on the spot in time to avert disaster, for they had never been forewarned as he believed the civil authorities to have been. It was doubtful if the police, sown as they were with communalism, would ever provide the necessary warning, yet information was vital to any planning, and the administration had neither a proper intelligence staff nor proper planning staff. It was high time it had them.

A senior Army officer in the province reported that each collector wanted a small army to remain at his disposal all the time. 'In a way I don't blame them, as even the highest placed leaders realize that the police are biased because they have to look to their political leaders for promotion and even for daily bread. . . . Serious incidents which occurred in one district on the 1st and 2nd June, were not reported by the Collector concerned to the local Commander, who did not hear of them until sometime after the event.'

With transport overstrained and fewer troops soon to be available owing to the new troubles now looming in the Punjab, General Curtis' protests came none too soon. In June he had already warned the civil authorities of the conditions in his Command:

There are very few units at my disposal, all of whom have recently returned from a prolonged tour of duty overseas under active service conditions. They have had little, if any, leave during this period and consequently no opportunity to visit their homes or their families. Further, they have been living under active service conditions for considerable periods and have been involved in heavy fighting. On their return to India they naturally looked forward to service under normal peace-time conditions. I hope the troops will continue to do all that is asked of them, as they have done in the past, but they are entitled to some consideration and, in my view, it is essential that they get it for the sake of morale.

It is an established fact that once troops are deployed in aid of the civil power, local civil officials are extremely reluctant to release them and wish to retain them when their retention is no longer justified. In order to rest the troops and maintain units in an efficient condition it is necessary to withdraw them to their Cantonments as soon as their presence is no longer essential. This is all the more important in view of the limited number of troops at my disposal and the frequent calls that are made on them for Internal Defence purposes.

The United Provinces police were riddled with communalism, Hindu constables in many cases but grudgingly executing the orders of Muslim Station Officers or even altogether avoiding doing so on some pretext or other. It was but the continuation, rather more aggravated as time went on, of the swift deterioration of discipline with the rise of communal hatred which had set in ever since it was known that India would be divided and that the United Provinces would be in Hindustan.

In Dehra Doon anger was rising against the Punjab refugees, in particular against the Sikhs. These people were hiring houses at exorbitant rates so as to get into them, paying rent for a month or two, and then refusing further payment: buying up land and houses belonging to widows, obtaining possession and not paying the full amount: cutting off the villagers' water supplies and fouling the water: buying up all cloth and rationed food at high prices, leaving none or only that of bad quality for the local residents. Gurkha ex-sell/ice-men who had settled in the Doon were particularly annoyed about it all. It was only the serious communal rioting of September that later averted armed friction between inhabitants and refugees.

A new complication appeared towards the end of the month. In Rampur State is a Muslim ruler, the Nawab, with a majority of Muslim subjects. It is an island of territory

in what used to be British India—now the Indian Union. The State acceded to Hindustan, much to the disgust of the Muslim Rohilla inhabitants of the city who started to turn nasty. Before long they had the better of both the State police and the State troops, the latter being far from reliable. The Nawab at once appealed to the Indian Government and to Sirdar Patel in whose strongly Hindu hands was the control of Indian States. The Sirdar was determined that no State, Muslim or otherwise, should secede from his Dominion, so before many hours had passed we received direct and urgent orders to send troops into Rampur. We sent the 6th Jat Regiment. In this case the insurgents were Muslims who wished to carve out their own destiny. Later on we contrasted the speed in meeting the Nawab's request with the complete lack of response to our repeated appeals for troops to be sent to the help of the unlucky Muslims being obliterated in the Hindu States of Alwar and Bharatpur.

On the 5th August at 1 a.m. the 6th Jats left Bareilly for Rampur. They went into action, killing three Muslims, soon after they arrived. Thereafter, curfew was imposed and Jat pickets and patrols were out in the town. We heard little more of trouble from there but it cost us the best part of a battalion for many weeks, for the Government of India would not let us draw the troops out so long as the Nawab objected. His objections went on for some time.

Brigadier Mahomed Akbar was having a busy time round Meerut. Weekly, at a place called Khair, was held a fair known as Painth. On the 15th July there was at the fair a big crowd of between 20,000 and 30,000. *Goondas* had come with spears and axes prepared for trouble, so at midday there was a brawl and fifteen Muslims were killed and injured. The police dispersed the mob which collected then outside the town; thereafter it made for Bishanpore village where it wiped out the only six Muslim families. Of the fourteen bodies recovered, twelve were women and children. Troops drove into Khair that afternoon and picketed the area, arresting many who were carrying weapons. Thereafter—perhaps too late—all was quiet.

In Aligarh the next day there was a quarrel between Kayasht and Muslim boys, a riot, police firing and twenty casualties. Troops arrived that night to look after the place.

At Khurja and in a few other places there were isolated communal murders of lonely people.

In June and July the vast majority of deaths were Muslim: we were convinced that there was a plot to exterminate these unlucky people.

Across the border in Gurgaon district peace was reigning at last. Our refugees were returning to their devastated land. From Bharatpur State came alarming news that the Ruler had told the Meos that if they did not come back to their villages then those villages would be given to the Jats. How could the Meos come back when they knew it

was as much as their lives were worth? This ultimatum could only reduce the Meos to living on their wits in the hills and raiding into the United Provinces. We seemed to be exasperatingly Incapable of getting the Government of India to do anything whatsoever to save these people from the devilry of the Bharatpur State officials and their Hindu subjects, or even to send in an impartial referee to enquire into the true facts of what had been done to these wretched Muslims. As things were easier with us we now broke down finally any idea of a border between us and Northern Command, and our men of the 19th Brigade drove into their 80th Brigade area to help them. Showers had fallen, peasants all over the United Provinces were back on their fields tilling the soil, blissfully forgetful for the time being of their bitter feuds.

We had always been exercised about the fate of trophies and memorials that we ourselves held dear but which very naturally those who were to take over the reins from us would either regard as of no sentimental value to themselves or else, in some cases, as repugnant to their self-esteem. In messes there were many prints and much plate which recorded the victories of British-led Indian infantry and cavalry over Indian-led opponents. It seemed to us that these should be sent off to England, there to be kept as a part of our history. I fear that in the perhaps mistaken generosity of the moment few of these ever reached England and many will before long be either jettisoned or altered. In St. John's Church in Calcutta is the silver gilt plate given by the East India Company about 1750 and there are also old snuff-boxes and miniatures. There is a large painting by Zoffany of the Last Supper in which, with customary effrontery, he has portrayed his friends and his enemies. 'Judas Iscariot', I understand, sued him. Westmacott's memorials are a delight to look at. In the churchyard is Job Charnock's tomb, founder of Calcutta; hither the Black Hole memorial has also been removed. One wonders what will happen to all these historical and artistic relics and to the bronze statues of great Englishmen that border the Calcutta maidan.

The *Statesman* was concerned about our Residency flag at Lucknow.

### **LUCKNOW WITHOUT BRITISH GARRISON FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE 1857**

From Our Special Representative

Lucknow, July 27.—For the first time today since 1857 Lucknow is without a British garrison battalion.

The Lancashire Fusiliers, who were the last British units to do this duty, are now on their way to Bombay from where, it is understood, they will go to Karachi. They are likely to stay at the H.Q. of the Pakistan Union for some time to come under arrangements with that Government.



The Lancashire Fusiliers' place in Lucknow is being taken by a battalion of the Bombay Grenadiers.

### FLAG OVER RESIDENCY

After a period of ninety years, during which it was taken down only for renewals or repairs, the Union Jack will be unostentatiously removed from the Lucknow Residency on Aug. 14, a day before the final transfer of power to Indian hands.

Known as the only flag in the British Empire which is never taken down even at sunset, the Union Jack at the Residency has been flying over the ruins of this historic monument ever since the Indian Mutiny. It has, however, been changed over 200 times owing to wear and tear.

Recently certain members of the Forward Bloc expressed their intention to remove the Union Jack from the Residency on Aug. 15 and to hoist the Indian National Flag in its place. They do not appear to have been aware of an earlier decision by the military authorities to remove the Union Jack before that date.

It is not yet known what local military authorities, who control the Residency property, intend to do with the present flag. As it has an historic value, it is possible that the flag may be sent to London for preservation as a relic.

On the 31st July I returned to my headquarters at Ranchi by air from the United Provinces. On arrival I was told that a signal had come that day from G.H.Q. ordering Eastern Command to take over the new District of Delhi and the East Punjab by 00:01 hours on the 1st August. This took our boundaries up to the gates of Lahore. We had thought the Command to be over-big before, but now set to work to embrace and nourish this addition to the family. On the 6th August, when we had most of our problems clear before us, I flew to Ambala to meet Major-General Rees, commanding the Punjab Boundary Force, and Major-General Rajindrai Sinhji of Delhi Area—'Reggie'—a genial and humorous product of Malvern and Sandhurst. Chiefly, I had to link up the whole Intelligence organization. I had therefore sent my 'I' people ahead to prepare the way.

With our ever deteriorating staffs the problem of satisfactorily taking in this large new area was really insoluble. We could administer it but could not possibly control it operationally despite the fact that an appreciable area on the new border was controlled by the P.B.F. under Supreme Headquarters. We were much too remote. After Independence Day, on the 28th August, the new Army Head-quarters of India, at our request, decided to take over operational control while we continued to administer the Area. It was well that this arrangement was made for, at Delhi, they were on the spot and in touch with the grievous troubles which developed in the stricken Punjab.

Note. – In Appendix III, I have included two letters from the *Statesman* published at this time, bearing on the handing over of power.

## XXXI

### LIBERTY AND THE ARMY

#### August

*The words of freedom are seductive to all: its evils are known only to the actual sufferers.*

ALISON, History of Europe.

A FEW quotations from my notes of the time may convey more of the atmosphere in which we then toiled than would any words I could write today.

*13th August.* In air from Shillong.

The last few weeks have gone with feet of lead. One has longed for the 15th when the responsibility that we cannot fulfill will be someone else's. All the time there has been the strain of knowing how meager are one's resources, how much all depends on the very personality of one's British Commanders, that the police have ceased to exist and that everything at any moment may be thrown upon us soldiers. Then there is the Press which is always looking for a chance of hitting at us British, knowing we can get no hearing if we do reply.

Half East Bengal is flooded: villages alone just showing above the water. It's famine. The new Sylhet can help a little but it is usually (though wrongly) shown as a "deficit" province. The only other source is Burma but she's having a packet of trouble.

This shows how law and order has deteriorated in Sylhet. The Deputy Commissioner was handed a note to sign saying that Dr. X. (a Hindu) was moving on permanent duty to another part of the district. This, in case the Muslims stopped him and beat him up. Odd that the signature of a little Scots D.C. should be a safe pass, but it will be!

I note in the paper that Clive Street, Dalhousie Square, Charnock Street, are to be renamed Netaji Subhas Road. It seems very mean of soul for Western Bengal's government to eliminate the name of the man who founded the very city of Calcutta for them—Charnock—and who lost fifty percent of his little pioneering band of English folk in the founding. His successors have now presented it to Indians free of charge with all its riches. One would have thought that they had enough sense of history to leave the man's name on one of his streets.

'There's great play being made of at last getting liberty after a tremendous struggle. This is a pathetic self-deception. The struggle is yet to come.

### **10th August.**

'Since early in '46 my feelings have been of complete aimlessness. The feeling is stronger now for the Army's got no shape at all with all the changes in and swapping over of Pakistan and Hindu units. Also every now and then one gets a feeling of terrible weariness that has to be thrown off and quickly. We all get it. It must be because we have come into this picnic straight from a war in which we in the Army were right up against it, until 1944 and the second front opened. There's really been little rest for us . Today (Sunday) the post brings me a long scrawl from some anonymous Bengali Indian clerk accusing my A.A.G. of having flown the Command flag from 5th August so that we couldn't haul down the Jack and fly the Indian Union flag in its place! Says that in Calcutta we flew the Jack and that up here we've flown no flag till 5th August. Fact is it was G.H.Q.'s order some time ago that in Command, Area, etc., H.Q.s, a Command, etc., flag would be flown in place of the Jack. We put ours up as soon as it had been approved and made. There was no flagstaff on my H.Q.s till then. Also accuses A.A.G. of taking the file which deals with flag flying and giving it to a British clerk. All the files are with an Indian clerk. The good employee sent copies of his letter to Sirdar Baldev Singh, the Amrita Bazar Patrika and so on. I quote this as this nonsense is going on all over the Command at present.'

### **14th August.**

The Muslims of Calcutta are thoroughly downhearted and crestfallen and if only the Hindus would leave them alone and cease their aggression there would be every possibility that the present senseless murders, arson and looting would cease forever in Calcutta.

Three R.A.F. Dakotas, with my air-dropping and air-liaison units, are dropping rice on starving Chittagong villages of East Bengal.

On the 10th August a friend wrote to me from Delhi to record his first impressions of how things were developing there. His impressions were sadly disillusioning.

To take Pakistan first; their line is that of the loyal Dominion; strengthen the They have told . . . not to advance Muslim officers too fast. . . . I feel that in building up a strong team of British officers we are only postponing the evil day and that, a year hence, we will find that there are still no Muslim officers capable of taking over.

Hindustan are quite definite that the British connection should be broken at the earliest possible moment. They at present view us all with dislike and suspicion, and although they have agreed in the Defence Council to retaining a proportion of British officers, they are determined that there shall be as few as possible, and one can only get a British officer accepted for any appointment if one can prove conclusively that there is no Indian available. There is no question of accepting the policy that nationalization is to go slow during reorganization and partition. With the possible exception of the C.-in-C. not a single appointment is really firm and A.H.Q. can get no further in forming a staff, owing to the intensive lobbying. In spite of the existence of the Joint Defence Council, I am convinced that there will be a show-down very soon after 15th August in regard to the retention of any power or control by the Supreme Commander. . . . As regards the attitude of 'India' to Pakistan, it is deplorable. This attitude is: You have seceded from the Union and we are out to smash you economically and financially. Unfortunately, India is probably in a position to do so. As regards the division of military stores, for example, India has most of the depots and factories, and division cannot be carried out under the supervision of Supreme H.Q. as, owing to provision action being taken two years ahead, the final settlement will only be completed in 1950. There will then be either a blank refusal to part or there will be sabotage on a large scale of stores in transit. British connection and get as many British officers into their service as possible.

I am normally an optimist but these last few days have depressed me beyond words. . . .

Now my own diary again.

### **17th August.**

One's feelings now are mixed. One is glad that at last we British soldiers can force on to other shoulders the loathsome burden of Internal Security or Defence that we have unwillingly borne for the past thirty years: on the other hand all that one worked for – an efficient Indian Army, a united people (surely Congress must have learnt a lesson from Pakistan's secession? Surely they see it's more due to their own bitter-mindedness than to anything else?), a democratic, balanced India, has gone up in clouds.

*'My days have crackled and gone up in smoke,  
Have puffed and burst as sun-starts on a stream.  
Yea faileth now even dream  
The dreamer. . . .'*

Can anyone, by one huge effort, pump red blood through the veins of the slackening body of the army of the Indian Union?

Why worry when hate is everywhere to undo what one has done? Pt. Nehru in his autobiography talks of British disliking Indians as Indians dislike British. British don't dislike Indians. . . A very few I.C.S. men dislike Indians, educated Indians—very few— and a few British Service Army officers, who have been compelled against their will to come out here, dislike the whole country, people and all, and vent their feelings in that way. Nor do Indians hate British. For years we have said that this habit of hate would be hard to relinquish when we had gone: it seems to have seared itself into the very soul

I have a feeling that the Indian Union is being run by a team of clergy, Victorian governesses and school-teachers. It is the sort of team into which a "tough" might easily insert himself with dire results. He may be there now.

### **20th August.**

St. John Philby is in India and is now saying, like others, that we should have handed over government in India earlier –but to whom should we have handed over? It was only in 1924 that we had succeeded in getting reasonable administration in India when we finally took control of the North-West Frontier. Until then, we were in the formative phase. (We might have handed over some provinces, such as Madras and Bombay, but not all India.) Thereafter, we had not till today anyone to whom to hand over (and Heaven knows it was hard enough to find anyone now). If we'd decided to hand over to an Indian democracy then we should have handed over in fifty years time. We could have handed over what we had to any sort of government fifty years ago, but our forebears had seen Indian self-government in complete chaos in the eighteenth century and perhaps the British weren't prepared again to witness such degeneration.

There's a gibe today that we intend to hand India back in the condition in which we found it. It is not so far-fetched as some imagine.

### **27th August. Delhi.**

Rajindrai Sinhji needs 5 Bns. to do all his jobs about Ambala such as escorting trains. Jinnah says that after the sacking of one whole train of his people (D \_\_\_\_ and Mrs. D \_\_\_\_ had their bearer shot before their eyes on the station platform) he won't send a train from Delhi with less than an escort of 40 men to guard it. Sikh bns. are useless now as guards so we have to rely on others.

We scraped the barrel and sent Major-General Rajindrai Sinhji four battalions as quickly as we could, mainly from General Curtis' meagre resources in the United Provinces.

## **28th August. At Delhi.**

'... says that the Punjab Boundary Force is now going communal. That is no wonder. At Delhi they want my 5th Division to come up and replace the now tired 4th Division. I have said that I do not recommend it as 5th should crack up sooner than the P.B.F. since the 5th have been at this civil disturbance business for a year with hardly a pause. I will send up " Pasha " Russell to command in East Punjab if affairs in Bengal are not too bad to release him. I'll see on my return to my H.Q....

. . . said the Punjab police are completely communal now. I replied that there was only one way of getting permanent peace in the Punjab and that was to concentrate all Gurkha battalions up there and Madrassis and other reliable people and all guns and tanks and knock the Sikhs clean out of the ring. Put the area under martial law with a military governor and deal with it....'

A Signals British sergeant-major and a Muslim Signals officer went by rail from Delhi bound for Pakistan. The train was stopped by Sikhs who asked the S.M. if he was a Gurkha as he was wearing a slouch hat. He said he was British. They then asked the officer if he was a Muslim. The officer thought best to say he was a Hindu. They then searched his baggage. On finding in it some Muslim clothes they seized him and dragged him out, turned to the S.M. and shouted, So you have Muslim friends, have you? All right: we'll show you what we do to your Muslim friends! They then hacked the officer to bits before the S.M.'s eyes with their swords....

If the P.B.F. is communal then the Indian Army is done. The thing that we misguided people tried to build for a future India is broken.

Gurkhas shoot anyone, Muslim or Hindu .... says that Indian Cabinet are all out to get all the Gurkhas they can for war with Pakistan. Says Indian Union is afraid of Pakistan. (The Muslim swing against Gurkhas is important as Pakistan now regards them as Indian Union men.)

'... 40 British I.C.S. and police officers, selected men, could easily stop the rot in the East Punjab now.... The Press, having made a lot of this trouble, is now screaming loudly that the P.B.F. is a failure and is communal, etc. etc.'

## **29th August.**

'Both H.Q.s of the two new Frontier Forces are to be together in Lahore which is a good thing.'

## **1st September.**

Faridkot has said that he can't protect Muslims in his State, yet he asks us to allow him to look after the protection of traffic on his own railways. Why?

Had a talk with R \_\_\_\_\_. He had just come by rail through the Punjab and the Sikhs tried to molest his Muslim bearer. Latter passed himself off as a Hindu and R \_\_\_\_ had him into his own compartment to protect him. Another bearer who was with R \_\_\_\_'s man strolled along the platform for a walk and was found, with two other Muslims, at the end of his journey with his nose cut off and stuck in his mouth. He'd been caught by Sikhs, taken into another carriage and there dreadfully tortured to death during the night...'

The thing that gets us about Alwar is that for the Rampur trouble they just rushed troops in because it was an attack by Muslims on what then amounted to a Hindu Raj: Alwar, where State troops slaughtered Muslims, doesn't matter to them. They don't interfere.

P.B.F. is about 2½ divisions. The trouble is spreading to the south Punjab and into Kangra valley. I fully expect it to come to the U.P. very soon now.

Put out a Talking Point today to keep the units happy.

'Army H.Q., India, asking me for a brigade headquarters and a battalion for the Jullundur area. I'm sending up my last disengaged brigade H.Q.-161—but I've no infantry at all left to cope with their request for a bn. Am offering them a field regt., without its guns, as a substitute. I've sent them lately 123rd Bde., 3/18 Garhwal, 2/6 Raj Rif, 6 Jats, 1 Mahar from 5 Div., and all available men of Training Centres at Dehra Doon. They must have them, even if it leaves my Command with nothing in reserve and dangerously thin on the ground. Their need is the greatest of all.'

## **5th September.**

'If I were a Muslim now in Hindustan, I'd have an uncomfortable feeling between my shoulder blades wherever I went. The sooner the British are out of Hindustan now, the better. We can't be responsible any longer for what these people do to each other.'

So much for quotations from my own notes of those days. Throughout the Command, as Independence Day approached, we watched the Muslim barometer, for it was Muslim policy that would cause the explosion. Hindus were already crowing and spoiling for a battle. The barometer showed a deep depression all over Eastern Command. The fight had gone out of the Muslims: as we said then, They had had it.



They were resigned to take whatever was to come to them. For us, that meant comparative peace on the 15th August. We did not expect rioting anywhere in the Command although we did expect some Hindu onslaughts on Muslims here and there. Our talk with General Rees at Ambala in early August showed that he had no doubts that the Eastern Punjab would blow sky high over the Boundary Commission's award when it came. On the 11th August we learnt that Amritsar had had a bad blood-letting the day before and that Calcutta had had rather more trouble than usual that night. Both police and army had had to open fire. While we knew that we could now hold Calcutta in check we were equally certain that Amritsar was but the spark to fire a train of horror in the north. The local administration was powerless to exercise authority against mob rule, for it had not been organized and strengthened to tackle the coming task as had the Army. Had it been so organized the task of the P.B.F. would have been far easier, for as much as anything it was the communal attitude of the local civil officials and police that made the task of the P.B.F. almost hopeless from the start. The administration of the whole of India was simply jogging along on the remains of the prestige that the British had built for it in the past hundred years: in the Eastern Punjab even that remnant died long before the 15th August, killed by communalism and mob rule. The new Inspector General of Police in the Western Punjab was soon bemoaning the collapse of his police so quickly after the departure of their British officers. It was not long before the brunt of their work fell on the shoulders of the Anglo-Indian Inspectors and Sergeants who remained staunch and good throughout. It was not long, either, before we heard reliable reports of Pakistan being eager to have British troops on her side of the Punjab border. The Indian Union, we knew, would not risk the loss of prestige to be expected from making any such demand or even hinting at it, no matter what the cost in suffering.

The chief danger in the Punjab was that the Sikh outbreak was fundamentally tribal. Two I.N.A. men, indeed, were at the centre organizing this assault on their brother Muslims'. More than one bigwig in Sikhistan regarded himself as a possible—more, probable—successor to Ranjit Singh. A Sikh leader would spread this fierce people as a herrenvolk all over the United Provinces. If mob rule went on long enough an autocrat of all Sikhs would most certainly take the lead. Fortunately for India not only the hereditary leaders but also the new demagogues have hitherto shown themselves unable to combine.

Our territorial expansion did not give us the right to control the operations of the Punjab Boundary Force in any way. It was under Supreme Headquarters and it was for us to give it all the help we could, chiefly administratively. This was right, for it would have been foolish for us, a thousand miles away at Ranchi, to attempt to control General Rees and his men. We were better out of the picture altogether. By the end of August it was decided to set up another headquarters to take command of the whole of the Delhi and East Punjab areas and to operate all forces in those areas. I sent Major-General Dudley Russell to report to Indian Army Headquarters for instructions as the new

Commander. He set up a Lieutenant-General's headquarters at Delhi and from there controlled all operations using a new boundary force provided from the Indian Union's army, having its headquarters at Lahore along with a similar force from Pakistan. We continued to administer the troops in the territory now shorn off from an already too large Eastern Command.

Someone who was better acquainted with the Great Horror of the Punjab will write of it, I do not doubt. I hope that the story will be written, for the world needs to know the truth, to know of what sort were those who took violent part in it all. Leaders on both sides said how far worse were atrocities in the other Dominion's borders. But we who spoke with British officers coming hot from the welter, were certain that the fiendishly low standard of conduct was first set by the Sikhs and that it was only after some weeks that Muslims in Western Pakistan began to get down to their level. All our information went to prove this. It did only harm when important men of the Indian Union referred to the atrocities in the West Punjab and said that things in East Punjab were better than in the West. Had they concentrated their wordy onslaught upon their own people and cursed them for their savagery far more good would have been done. The same remark applies to Pakistan's leaders.

News of what was happening in the Punjab naturally filtered down to us. I will only give what I heard at first hand and will leave even that to a later chapter. Here we are too engrossed with the coming of Independence Day to be turned aside from Eastern Command.

Just before and directly after the 15th August our Intelligence Officers found the greatest difficulty in gleaning their information. Sources which had readily responded to questions and so kept us able at all times to assess the chances and nature of coming trouble and often to anticipate well into the future, were now loth to tell our men anything whatever. No amount of argument that we were all working for one and the same end—peace in our Indian Dominion—could draw the necessary information from them. They thought that in refusing it they were standing by their own country in which we were now foreigners. So that, while we on our part were giving out as before all the helpful information we could unearth, they were giving us nothing back in return. Our difficulties now were very great. Hitherto, we had tried to be ahead of events all over the Command by piecing together every smallest piece of intelligence into a composite whole and then seeing what sort of picture it made of the future. Now we would be lucky if we even kept level with events. We did better than we expected for our 'I' Service was well organized by the indefatigable Gregory. We missed little. Other sources of information were opened.

Added to this, our staffs were new and, naturally in the circumstances, very inexperienced Indians. Even then, they did not stay in one appointment for any length of time: they were shot about from week to week from one post to the other.

Clerks were now almost entirely Indian. Very few could draft a letter even in the simplest English terms, not many could type one efficiently. One of the chief reasons for the inexperience of Indian officers had already been given by the *Statesman* in a leader in 1946 in which that newspaper drew attention to the paucity throughout the war of Indian Army officers holding appointments from the rank of Lieut.-General upwards in any theatre of war.

Furthermore, since the war ended, two appointments to commands of high importance in India—the N.W. Army and Eastern Command—have gone to officers of the British Service. It is noteworthy again that the C.G.S. now in Britain conveying the C.-in-C.'s views on India's future defence requirements is of the British, not the Indian Army.

Such seemingly discriminatory arrangements on the eve of complete Indianization of the Indian Army are not easily intelligible. It might have been supposed that the officers who helped to make the Indian Army's name in the field during war should be the men to shape it in peace, not British Service officers—or even Indian Army officers who have seen little or no field service.

With this block in promotion at the top among senior British officers of the Indian Army there was little chance of Indian officers rising to positions of responsibility and gaining the experience they so badly needed for their independent future. We felt this to be most unjust to them.

On the 15th August came a tribute, welcome as unexpected, to hearten our tried British officers. It appeared in the *Statesman* and in some papers from England.

### ARMY FAREWELLS

Sir,

Today is historic in the life of the Indian Army, as henceforward it is no longer to be a British-Indian Army. It ceases to be under the control of H.M.G., but will be divided into the Armies of the two Dominions of India and Pakistan. For nearly 200 years Indians and British have served together in the Indian Army.

While it would not have been possible to produce so efficient a fighting machine unless the Indian fighting man—V.C.O., N.C.O., and sepoy—had been the first-class material he has proved himself in many wars to be, our Indian friends will support us in paying a tribute to the British officers of the Indian Army. We ourselves, as British Service officers, have had the opportunity of seeing the fruit of their work, and since all of them who continue to serve in the Indian Army are transferred to the British Army list from today, we take this opportunity to record our appreciation for all they have done. India

and Pakistan owe them and their predecessors more than can be expressed in words.— Yours, etc., JOHN SWAYNE (Lieut.-Gen., Late C.G.S. in India), READE GODWIN-AUSTEN (General, Late P.A.O. in India), KENNETH LOCH (Lieut.-Gen., Late P.A.O. in India), ARTHUR SMITH (Lieut.-Gen., in India).

### **August 15.**

A wide survey of affairs in the Command showed that our Army had not, by mid-August, the means to keep the peace. It was far too thin on the ground. Therefore, we issued instructions to our Area Commanders that directly they thought that affairs were beyond the control of the civil, they were to press for martial law and to go on pressing for it over a strictly limited area. We expected that if the civil administration gave in, then they would run whatever courts were needed. We ourselves would declare only very few crimes as punishable and those with death, and our men would shoot—on the spot, to kill, and if they missed then the law-breaker would get away. We would trouble no more over him: there would be no arrest. We knew full well that we could never, with our attenuated staffs and our running-down efficiency, administer martial law except in this crude way and in a very small area. But we also knew that if the administration refused our demand for martial law, then it would be bound to declare an alternative and we expected that alternative to give us all we needed without burdening ourselves with the real thing. Twice, in a great fix and urgent crisis, we later played this hand and were rewarded with what we had expected.

## XXXII

### 'INDEPENDENCE DAY'

**15th August 1947**

The *Statesman*:

*New Delhi, August 11 .— The Oath of Allegiance to Free India, which will be taken by the members of the Indian Constituent Assembly at midnight of Aug. 14-15, is as follows:*

*'At this solemn moment when the people of India by their sufferings and sacrifice have secured freedom, I, a Member of the Constituent Assembly of India, do dedicate myself to the service of India and her people to this end – that this ancient land attains a rightful and honorable place in the world and makes its full and willing contribution to the promotion of world peace and the welfare of mankind.'*

Since all that I speak of in this book revolves about Independence Day, it would be wrong to let that day go by with only passing comment.

From the *Pioneer*:

#### ASTROLOGICAL DECREE FOR AUGUST 15

*Benares, Aug. 7.*

The auspicious timings for performance of various ceremonies at the U.P. Government headquarters in Lucknow before India becomes independent, have been finalised after consultations with astrologers and Pandits of Benares.

The consultations were conducted on behalf of Government by Mr. Amolak Chand, Secretary of Mr. Sampurnanand, who came here last night.

As the result of these consultations it has been decided that the ceremonies will begin at 8-55 p.m. on Aug. 14 and will end at 2 minutes after midnight. — A.P.I.

On this 15th August 1947 we British, thrust on by our own intellectuals and by the United States of America, abandoned our self-imposed task of creating a new India, self-governing, democratic and international. We bowed our heads in the temple of Rimmon to the treacherous god of Nationalism and created yet two more intensely national States to flutter the peace of the world — we who serve the cause of Peace, the cause which we know can only be served by breaking down the ancient tribal barriers

that keep man from man and set jealous men at each other's throats. Through our weakness we have probably wrought ill for the future. I do not pretend that either of these new nations is any better or any worse than any other of us: I do say, however, that we were as wrong in principle to create them as we are now to act as midwife at the birth of yet a new nation, a new focus of unrest, the nation of the Jews, a foster child which we shall be loth to recognize.

It is fervently to be hoped that none of these peoples will fall on the evil days that have beset the ill-starred 'nation' of Burma.

The attitude of the various parties towards Independence Day celebrations may be of moment for the future.

The Communists were ready to participate chiefly because their intention was to do away with everything British in the country. Independence Day was the very symbol of their success. The Mahasabha were in general in favor of boycotting the celebrations because they symbolized the division of India as opposed to the unity of India under Ram Raj—Hindu rule. They would hoist their own flags and observe the day as a day of mourning. On the 15th and 16th, in Calcutta, they would declare a *hartal* of all shops. It was possible that if they pursued their policy they would clash with Congress supporters. The Sikhs gave a somewhat qualified support to the celebrations owing to their sympathy with their fellows in the Punjab who were boycotting the Day. There were signs that the Muslims would, if invited, join in the festivities.

For some days Muslims of Calcutta had been demonstrating in front of the houses of their leaders insisting that they should not flee from Calcutta. They raided the Muslim League office in Calcutta, broke up furniture, destroyed files and molested the staff. There was panic among Calcutta Muslims. Large numbers of them moved elsewhere, evacuating their old haunts such as Balliaghata and Maniktola and crowding together for sanctuary in certain predominantly Muslim areas of the city.

The feelings of Muslims in Calcutta may be taken as the feelings of Muslims in all the provinces of the Command: they were deserted, leaderless, depressed and on the defensive with almost a Hindu fatalism.

The Army had its difficulties too. Many of our units were earmarked for Pakistan so could not be brought into any Hindustan flag-hoisting ceremony. On the contrary they wished to hoist the Pakistan flag; this, in such hostile surroundings, had to be forbidden. Then there were mixed units of Hindu and Muslim where the latter had to be dissuaded from irritating the rest by displays of the green banner. Then there were Gurkhas, traditionally independent of the people of India's plains, who had often torn down this very saffron, white and green emblem which they were to be required to salute on the 15th August. All had to be handled with great care and tact. We had no

incidents in the Army to mar the day, only the same petty foolishness from the semi-educated such as the Bengali clerk I have already quoted.

We had expected to have a crop of 'insults' to the Indian national flag. We had done our best to obviate any chance of this while encouraging the populace to treat their own flag with decorum and not hang any sort of cloth representation from any sort of stick and have any sort of unorganized ceremony about it at any sort of time of day. There were charges of insult to the flag but not many and they were not as hard to disprove as we had anticipated. The most publicized was at Agra about which papers published banner headlines to rub it well into the struggling Army.

**CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY'S EXACT FUNCTIONS  
SUB-COMMITTEE TO REPORT  
ALLEGED INSULT TO FLAG**

From Our Special Representative

New Delhi, Aug. 20.—When the Constituent Assembly met today, five days after the historic midnight session, a suggestion that it should discuss reported incidents in Hyderabad State, Jubbulpore and Agra Fort of alleged disrespect to the national flag led to an interesting debate on whether the Assembly was functioning as a constitution-making body or as the Dominion Parliament (briefly reported yesterday).

This insult was later refuted. The national flag had been hoisted at the fort. A flag-hoisting ceremony, attended by thousands of people, had been observed according to programme on the open space outside.

As a specimen programme of Independence Day celebrations, I have taken that of Shillong and included it in Appendix XI, together with the programme of engagements from Government House, Bengal.

The day went off peacefully throughout Assam.

The parade at Shillong was good, everyone doing his utmost to make the ceremony a success. The Governor wrote a letter of congratulation and thanks to the soldiers. A silk flag had been prepared with all its toggles and cords by the Garrison Engineer but was replaced at the last moment by the Prime Minister with a flag made of khaddar with curtain rings attached. Fortunately it unfurled itself all right.

The Assam government, as a mark of appreciation, voted Rs. 1500/ — for a feast for the troops who took part.

At short notice the Sub-Area was asked to arrange an artillery salute of seventeen guns at midnight on the 14/15th August in front of Government House. In the absence of artillery the Garrison Engineer rose to the occasion with seventeen slabs of gun cotton, all of which went off.

After announcing that they would feed the poor and schoolchildren, the government found that they had no rice with which to feed them. The Sub-Area therefore produced fifty tons from its reserves.

A State banquet was held at Government House on the evening of the 15th August. About seventy guests attended.

In accordance with the new policy, the strongest drink obtainable was pineapple juice. It was a long evening for the Sub-Area Commander.

The Naga Independence Party of Khonoma in the Naga Hills seized the opportunity to proclaim their independence from the now independent Indian Union, but the proceedings then fell flat as they did not know what to do next.

In Darjeeling the Gurkha League forbade its members to partake in the celebrations.

Independence Day in Calcutta could not go off without some sort of a disturbance. This time it was not communal: it was just that the rowdy part of the populace wanted to be rowdy and *goondas* mixed in with them. Flag-hoisting parade in the grounds of Government House went off well but the public had been admitted and wanted their money's worth. So, when the parade was over, they rushed Government House itself. Here is an account of the day in Calcutta.

The Governor Designate, Mr. Rajagopalachari, arrived at Dum Dum Aerodrome at 1 p.m. on the 14th August. Sir Frederick Burrows and various other officials were there to welcome him. A note of humor was struck by the fact that the plane carrying Sir Frederick Bourne arrived a few minutes before the time scheduled for that of the Governor Designate. The crowd rushed to the plane but turned away in disappointment when they found it was only Sir Frederick Bourne and not the expected personage. The Governor Designate's plane arrived about twenty minutes late. As soon as it touched down, the crowd made a rush and surrounded the plane making it extremely difficult for the passengers to alight. Mr. Rajagopalachari was garlanded, and with difficulty got to the waiting car. There were very few police in evidence and those who were present were quite useless.

The greetings given him both at the airfield and on the drive to Government House on the whole appeared to be sincere though not exactly vociferous. There were a few small parties carrying black flags and notices, 'Go back Rajagopalachari', and yelling, but their



demonstrations were most unconvincing. I do not suppose that the total number of these demonstrators, who were split up into small parties, exceeded three to four hundred, and I doubt if any one of them was older than sixteen years of age.

The swearing-in ceremony took place at 1 a.m. on the 15th August in the Throne Room at Government House. There were large crowds in the streets outside Government House shouting slogans. A number of demonstrators outside the North Gate made it a matter of some difficulty for others to enter. The Throne Room itself lacked all dignity, being draped with electric cables, cinema and other cameras of all sizes, searchlights, recording apparatus, etc.

The ceremony went off according to plan, but any dignity it might have had was finally quite taken away by the shouts of Lights, lights, Cut, cut, and the photographers who with their portable cameras crawled about on the floor. How the oath-takers avoided falling over them it was hard to understand, as the photographers were jinking in and out between their legs.

Later, at 8 a.m., came the flag-hoisting ceremony at Government House. At the beginning, this ceremony went quite according to plan, except for the ubiquitous photographers. When, however, it reached the stage immediately after the breaking of the Dominion flag, the crowd burst through the South Gate of Government House and flocked into the grounds. They surged all round the dais, cheering and shouting slogans; the march past became a complete farce as all that could be seen was the troops' heads marching past behind and through the seething mass of people.

After the conclusion of the so-called march past, the new Governor entered his car and returned to the House. The crowd thereupon made a rush and swarmed inside and in a very few seconds were thronging the balconies and poking their heads out of all the windows. Although there were some 300 police on duty at Government House they made no attempt to do anything. Their attitude was one of complete impotence. It was perhaps a good indication of their likely effectiveness in the event of future crises. Once the original rush had begun it would have been extremely difficult to stop the crowd and nothing but drastic measures with *lathis* or even firearms would have had any effect. The crowd, although most unruly, was perfectly friendly, but if anything had happened to upset it, it would probably have become very ugly.

Sir Frederick Burrows was to have had a farewell ceremony in the Throne Room at 10 a.m. with a Guard of Honor outside the building, before his departure by launch from Outram Ghat at 10.30 a.m. Quite early it became obvious that it would be impossible to hold this ceremony and so it was cancelled.

The crowd more or less besieged Sir Frederick and Lady Burrows and their staff in their apartments. Owing to traffic jams in the streets it took some little time to get additional

troops to Government House and they arrived just after Sir Frederick and Lady Burrows had been able to get out of the House by a side entrance. On the whole it was better that they were able to get out under their own steam, and were not, as it were, rescued. They left Outram Ghat by launch at their scheduled time.

The crowd which invaded Government House was led by, and very largely composed of, youths of the student type. A good deal of damage was done by hooliganism and vandalism. Most of the silver that was out was stolen and we were told that the new Governor had thereafter only a few teaspoons left; ink was poured on the writing tables and rubbed well in. Some furniture was broken and a number of pictures either slashed or their glasses broken; the picture of Queen Victoria in the ballroom upstairs seemed to have attracted most enmity. £25,000 was generally quoted as the cost of damage done but this I feel may have been an overestimate.

The crowd was eventually cleared from Government House and the grounds by a detachment of the Kumaon Regiment which had found the Guard of Honor.

Calcutta itself was on this day crowded with scenes of great jubilation and fraternization among all classes. A change of atmosphere seemed to have set in on the evening of the 14th August and everybody continued for many days in a state of friendliness with everybody else. We only prayed that this kindly feeling would last.

Throughout the day there were strings of vehicles on the streets, lorries, buses, etc., bedecked with Indian Union flags and carrying cheering, yelling crowds. They were all very cheerful and happy, and as far as one could see showed no anti-European bias whatsoever. They were, however, very elated not to say fanatical, so that any untoward incident might have turned their jubilation into anger. That evening there was a ceremony at Calcutta Club. This was to have been attended by the new Governor, but he asked to be excused for fear that the crowd might break into and break up the Club as it had dealt with Government House that morning. There were comparatively few Europeans at the party; in fact I very much doubt whether there were more than thirty to forty all told. The ceremonial part of the programme opened with a speech by A. K. Basu followed by the singing of national songs and Indian dancing. After that it became an ordinary evening party; at the beginning it was completely 'dry', but later on became normal.

I give below an extract from the official programme which was given to all guests. What Mr. A. K. Basu has written gives some idea of his speech. This was very much on the lines of 'the blood of the martyrs', as were other speeches which he made during the day; he overlooked the fact that independence had been handed to Indians 'on a plate'. From what I heard at the time a number of the other speeches made in Calcutta had recognized the action of Great Britain as a generous and magnanimous act which had

drawn very favorable comparisons with the attitude of the Dutch in the Netherlands East Indies.

Most of one's acquaintances walked up to greet one, and in a very self-conscious way said, Please may I say "Jai Hind"? One's reply to such questions was, Of course – why not? The whole atmosphere of the party was most cordial, but as far as we could see there were very few Muslims present.

**CALCUTTA CLUB, LTD.  
MESSAGES FROM PRESIDENTS  
THE OLD . . .**

For nearly two centuries now India, the Great Motherland of countless millions, Mother of a hundred tribes, castes and creeds, has slept, fitfully and uneasily, even ominously at times. For long, long years her children have prayed and plotted, destroyed and died in the passionate hope and burning desire, that once again the Mother would take her rightful place of honor among the nations of the world. Great souls have suffered in solitude and loneliness, and even made the supremest sacrifice of life in order that someday the children of the Great Mother may rise and greet the Dawn in the wholesome purity of Freedom.

**THE NEW . . .**

Today the heritage of Hind comes to us as a flaming torch, the Torch of Freedom, burning high and bright, and we, the Children of the Great Mother, rise from the depths in which we nearly lost our souls to strive, to fight, to lay down our lives freely for the greatest goal of mankind – the Freedom of all nations and the purity of the world.

**SPIRITUAL CHANGE . . .**

Here we stand, a handful from India and England, with a sprinkling from the rest of Europe and Asia and even from the Americas. Waves of anger and bitterness have surged often and long around us, but this little edifice has stood up bravely for personal and social friendship and equality between man and man, irrespective of the land and climate of our birth. The Torch of Freedom today has lit up our countenances, as it will light up our lives, and the lives of our children's children.

**WHAT OF THE FUTURE?**

Is the Great Mother in peace and happiness? Who can say? Is any mother happy when her two beloved sons are at variance? Can she be happy because the two agree to differ? Let us, who strive to avoid the bitterness and anger of the past, remember that no matter where we are, or where we may choose to walk in future, this Club still remains

what it has always been. Friendships of the past, extending over many countries and continents, are but the background of the freer and greater friendships that wait before us, and be it from America or Europe, China or Japan, Indonesia or Persia, all roads lead easily and cheerfully to . . . Calcutta Club.

A. K. BASU.  
President (1945-46)

However, in Bengal generally, dominion hood came in a spirit of great goodwill, not to say sudden affection, after a year of bitter strife and on top of the last weeks of threats, aggressive gestures, the casting out of Muslims from police and administration and the passing into Calcutta of Hindu troop reinforcements. Why was there this sudden love? One cause we have given – the physical and mental depression of Muslims. There were others, among them being the idea of success achieved against the British, the old and forgotten anti-British agitation of the golden age which formed a temporary cement for the two hating communities. The love in Calcutta was impressive above all other places. Outside there were signs here and there of conjugal tiffs. In Murshidabad, now to belong to Western Bengal, Muslims were threatening dire things for the small Hindu minority. Nevertheless, the Great Love of Calcutta soon spread its benign wings over even recusant Murshidabad.

During the 16th and 17th August there were still a number of cheering lorry loads, although noticeably fewer than on the 15th. I can only imagine that the human throat could not stand the strain any longer.

On the afternoon of Saturday, the 16th August, the usual Saturday race meeting was held, and a football match played on the Maidan between a team of the East Lancashire Regiment and an Indian team. Everything went off quite amicably and people still seemed to be very happy.

The Area Commander considered it better to avoid incidents like the breaking into of Government House, so during these holidays had the gates of the Fort either closed or arrangements made to close them at very short notice. One lorry-load of slogan criers did find their way in one evening, but they were shoo'ed out very quickly and very easily.

But at Barrackpore just outside Calcutta the Bihar Regiment was out on the 15th August helping police to quell a riot in which over a score of people were killed and injured. To Bizpur close by, the Regiment sent a Company that night. There were over a hundred casualties. The next day Bizpur was cordoned off by troops while police searched for weapons. On the 17th curfew was relaxed for Muslims to pray, followed at once by looting. Troops opened fire and curfew was re-imposed. Lawlessness was rife: killings went on sporadically for nearly a week, numbers of people being treated by the hospitals for gunshot wounds.

At Delhi, Independence Day parade was a complete fiasco, quite a good-tempered one, but a fiasco all the same. Those who managed to reach the seats through a heaving mob found numbered seats but no lettered rows. There were insufficient police to keep the people within bounds. Troops were on parade and drawn up in good time but beyond that there was no ceremony: just a milling chaos through which the new Governor-General's carriage struggled midst its escort of scarlet-clad horsed Bodyguard. He broke the Dominion flag at the mast. Artillery fired a salute. The shouting crowd swarmed over all things, the soldiers like a bastion mole in the excited throng. Pandit Nehru was seen using no small measure of physical force to reach his place for the ceremony.

A subedar of the Rajputana Rifles remarked that that was the *namuna* (pattern) for the future. I hope he is not right, for the 15th August was an exceptional day of excessive and unreserved exuberance.

From the *Statesman*:

### UNION JACK ON RESIDENCY HAULED DOWN

Lucknow, Aug. 14. — The only flag in the British Empire which was never lowered since 1857—the Union Jack on Lucknow Residency—was hauled down last night about twenty-four hours before the transfer of power from British to Indian hands. The hauling down ceremony was kept a guarded secret by the military authorities.

The Union Jack on Government House, Lucknow, was lowered this afternoon with the departure from the city of Sir Francis Wylie, the last British Governor of the U.P. — A. P. I.

In one respect this was wrong. There was no ceremony. In the late evening of 13th August General Curtis and a few others repaired to the Residency and watched the Warrant Officer in charge of the Residency haul down the last Union Jack. On the 14th the flagstaff stood bare for the first time in ninety years. That night our sappers cut the steel flagstaff from its base, hacked out its masonry foundations, re-cemented the hole flush with the tower floor, and dragged the rubble down the tower steps. An incident was thus avoided.

On the 15th August there came a crowd bearing an Indian National Flag to lower the Jack and to hoist the new flag. There was no flagstaff and the passage up the steps was blocked. They stood about and parleyed with each other. The Premier of the United Provinces, hearing of the gathering from the police, drove down and bade them begone with their flag from a memorial to British dead. We shall not forget Pandit Pant.

The flag was sent to Field Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck for disposal in England. Similarly, the last flag that was flown on Fort William in Calcutta was sent to Sir Claude Auchinleck.

Had Kipling been alive his whole soul would have been stirred to expression by this event and by the event recorded below in the pages of the *Statesman*.

## **LAST BRITISH TROOPS LEAVE DELHI**

### **2ND DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S REVIVES MEMORIES**

From Our Special Representative

New Delhi, Friday. — The last British Army unit to leave Delhi, the 2nd Battalion, the Duke of Wellington's Regiment, was also the first ever to arrive in Delhi. In 1858 when it first came it was known as the 76th Foot.

The battalion left Delhi last night by train for Bombay where it will embark for Britain.

Last Sunday the battalion held a special farewell church parade, and the salute was taken by the Area Commander, Maj.-Gen. Rajendrai Sinhji. He gave the men a farewell message through their Commanding Officer, Lieut.-Col. G. Chadwick.

The second battalion fought in Burma both during the withdrawal in 1942 and in the return. In 1942 it was flown to Magwe in C. Burma, the only battalion to be thus moved to reinforce the retreating army. With the Chindits (the second expedition) the battalion returned and helped to drive the Japanese out of N. Burma.

We all did whatever we could to record our appreciation of the services of these young men from Britain's streets, villages and hamlets.

**MESSAGE FROM LIEUT.-GENERAL SIR FRANCIS  
TUKER, K.C.I.E., C.B., D.S.O., O.B.E.  
GENERAL OFFICER COMMANDING IN CHIEF EASTERN COMMAND  
H.Q., EASTERN COMMAND, RANCHI.**

4th August 1947.

To: All British Units in Eastern Command.

Today, 14th August 1947, is the last day on which you perform your duties in India as British Regiments of all arms have performed them for the last two hundred years. The British Army in India has been for all those years the firm structure on which our nation

succeeded in building for the first time in all history on India which was one single geographic and administrative whole. It is the Army from whose very body sprang the now renowned Indian Army. It was from your traditions and from your ways and from your spirit that the qualities of the Indian Army were born.

Your famous Regiments now leave India for good. Today, therefore, I am thanking you on behalf of every officer and man of Eastern Command for all that you have done for us in these past two difficult years. Especially, my thanks go to the Battalions which dealt with the terrible riots of August 1946 in Calcutta and those of Bihar which followed them.

I doubt if any period in the long history of the British Army has so added to the respect and prestige of the British Soldier as have these last months in India. In the most trying time, after a great war, demobilizing older men and receiving large numbers of younger men, disorganized by the usual post-war difficulties, you have set an example of steadfastness and soldierly behavior which one day will be recorded as having gone very far to save India in these last anxious months. As yet, we are too near events to assess your services rightly, but history will certainly make this assessment for us and it will be of the highest.

In these last few days of waiting, do well as you have done so far, and leave India with your fame at the peak of its honor. Take with you to Britain the willing spirit of cooperation in a cause that you have shown out here in the cause of India, and so strive for your country in its present distress.

On behalf of all ranks of the Indian Army in Eastern Command, your staunch comrades on many a battlefield of Asia, Africa and Europe, I wish you God Speed and a happy home-coming.

F. S. TUKER,  
Lieut.-Gen.

All over Bihar, Independence Day was celebrated with great enthusiasm by both Hindus and Muslims, all mingling happily together. With a salute of guns and a guard of honor Sir Hugh Dow drove for the last time out of the gate of Government House at Ranchi. The new Governor, Mr. Daulat Ram, was welcome to both public and Press, the latter (mainly Hindu) advocating that all communities should encourage a policy of forgiving and forgetting. At Ranchi there was a parade of detachments from the few units that we had in the place. It went off well although the stage management on the civil side was somewhat inefficient. The spectators, even those in privileged places, kept up a strident chatter throughout. The loud-speaker had not been installed in time so that the Commissioner's speech was quite inaudible to anyone, even to those sitting

close by. Half-way through, some employees of a local radio firm dashed on to the parade ground and fixed the mike. Even then the chatter of the spectators drowned the speech. All this was a pity and we regretted it very much for it detracted from the dignity of the ceremony. At the end there were no police to clear the way for the cars of important officials. These trickled along at foot pace behind the last marching column of Scouts who firmly held the centre of the road with their admirers and relations trotting along beside them.

There were bamboo arches covered with bright cloth all across the roads and national flags hung from all booths by the roadside. The rains poured down but the arches were left to disintegrate and strew the muddy roads with their once gay, now sadly soiled, adornment. With the new Governor coming soon to Ranchi the local administration did not think that the old flagstaff on the roof of Government House was high enough for the new flag. It must fly higher than the Jack. So they caused a long rod of bamboo to be lashed to the post, taking the National flag another fifteen feet up in the air. But the bamboo bent in the breeze. Day by day it sagged until in a few days the extension was horizontal, with the flag hanging vertically as though from heaven. Then it was taken away.

I regret to say that the students also benefited from the general kindness of the occasion. From Allahabad came a report that students were to be shown clemency on Independence Day. Those who had been found guilty of using unfair means in the last examination of the Board of High School and Intermediate Education in the United Provinces were to be allowed to sit for the examination in 1948 and 1949.

It is time to take another look round the Command, firstly at Calcutta where the early days of the month were days of dreadful violence lessening as the 15th approached until all was love and peace on that day.

In the evening of the 14th August some Muslim leaders visited certain Hindu leaders of the city and conferred with them. Thereafter, they went together to a hotel and there partook of refreshments. In this convivial atmosphere they decided that all disturbances must cease. Thereupon they dispatched about the streets truckloads of their supporters, Hindu and Muslim, shouting '*Ek Ho!*' (Be as one!) and '*Ek Hogaya!*' ('We are one!') Out from the *bustees* poured

Hindu and Muslim, meeting, shaking hands, dancing with glee, repeating the slogans with great voice. Early the next morning thousands of all types turned out into the streets, in hundreds of buses, cars, taxis, trams, shouting and cheering, arm in arm, together in the vehicles. Not a Pakistan flag was to be seen. Everywhere flew the new national flag: everywhere echoed '*Jai Hind!*' (Long live India!) and the slogans of unity.



Mahomedan Id, festival which had so often caused violence, passed quietly by – more, the same flags waved and the same slogans rent the air. Emotional, ever emotional, Bengal was stirred to its very bowels.

And why did Muslim leaders approach Hindu leaders on the 14th August? They knew full well that no agitation of theirs or their followers could alter the decision by which Calcutta might be in Hindu Bengal. They knew that the next day all power would be in the hands of a Hindu provincial government and that agitation would be ruthlessly stamped upon. They did not want to suffer so they decided to call off before it was too late all Muslim hooliganism and activities that might provoke the government to acts of repression.

Doubtless Mahatma Gandhi's influence was considerable in promoting amity but mainly it was exercised to persuade Hindus to cease from troubling Muslims, from tormenting them into acts of retaliation.

These episodes I now give are typical of the preceding days of violence.

On the 7th August we had a Sikh sepoy of the 3/2nd Punjab Regiment shot dead in north-east Calcutta while a small patrol was helping the police to search some houses, and a picket of the King's Own Regiment was fired at in the same area. On the same day Muslims armed with Sten guns attacked Hindu houses in north Calcutta where the police intervened using their rifles. The day yielded nearly a hundred dead and wounded from Calcutta and its Howrah suburb.

That same evening a local train carrying mostly Hindu *babus* (clerks), which had habitually stopped near Entally for the driver to throw out a present of coal for his village, was attacked by Muslims at this spot and one Hindu killed. The next day a train was stopped by Hindus who killed ten Muslim passengers.

In the early morning of the 8th August a mixed band of Nepalese and Bengali Hindus carrying Sten guns and other weapons went forth to burn down a mosque in North Calcutta. Near the scene was a Hindu police picket which did nothing to stop the miscreants. At once a disturbance lit up in which, with poetic justice, one of the delinquent policemen got in the way and received a bullet in the mouth. Soon afterwards, near Central Avenue, a Hindu police picket challenged a Sikh-owned taxi, whereupon the occupants at once opened fire, killing one constable. The picket replied on this vehicle and on another following close behind.

Only one anti-British incident occurred. That was on the 9th August when some Hindu youths put up a Congress flag on a big building in Balliaghata occupied by British troops who at once pulled it down. This the youths resented, complaining to Dr.

Prafulla Ghosh, the Prime Minister, who told them they had no business to do such a thing until the 15th August.

By the 12th August most of the minority Muslim areas had been evacuated by their inhabitants, leaving empty houses to be pillaged by greedy Hindu neighbors. The Muslims had collected together or gone to East Bengal. This fact, too, made it the more unlikely that there would be rioting on the 15th for there were no easy victims left in the way of Hindu mobs. Conversely, from East Bengal were coming trainloads of Hindus quitting Hindu minority areas.

Our Muslim Press of Calcutta claimed to have evidence that Muslims were being systematically annihilated. I would not dispute their claim without careful examination of the evidence.

Notwithstanding all these fears and the turbulence of the first few days of independence so close to Calcutta, the city remained for some days yet in happy temper.

On the 18th August we learnt of the award of the Boundary Commission by which the Sikh country was split in two and Calcutta went to Hindustan, to the Indian Union. Here in Bengal the Muslims were in no state to rise against their fate: by now we had come to expect no trouble from this decision. Once the Hindus were in power the Muslims had no chance of ousting them. Here was one-party government and it had come to stay for good or ill, undemocratic though it might be. The deplorable affair in Calcutta which is the subject of the next chapter was in no way directly due to this Boundary award.

## XXXIII

### THE LAST CALCUTTA RIOT

September 1947.

ARRIVED at Ranchi at 12.30 p.m. to be rung up by Ranking to say that there was trouble in Calcutta, Hindus as the aggressors. It looked like getting really bad. He'd only 3 bns. as one was out at Murshidabad, having trouble there. Police had asked him to take over part of Calcutta town.

At 8 p.m. Ranking rang up to say there'd been a pretty good row but night was quieter again. He'd seen the Prime Minister. Gregory rang up to say that Gandhi was still in Calcutta and that there were peace meetings and Muslim and Hindu National Guards going round together telling people to keep the peace. Hope they do! Says he thinks the trouble is localized now.

This is the story of the disturbance. On the night of the 31st August two Hindu youths of Calcutta paid their four *annas* (fourpence) each and entered a cinema to enjoy themselves for a couple of hours. The film was bad, the projector out of order and the picture jumped and sidled on the screen. So they complained to the attendant who was a Muslim. He told them that they could not expect anything better for four *annas*. This enraged the Hindus, an altercation took place in the high-pitched unlistening style of the East, one boy drew a knife and attempted to stab the attendant. A spectator seized his hand and dashed it back, the knife by mistake slightly cutting the boy's face. At once ill-disposed Hindus close by raised a howl of imprecation, magnifying the incident into a thorough-paced communal affray. They bandaged the youth, whose wound had been made by his own hand, and rushed him off to Mahatma Gandhi's house at Balliaghata. There they demanded from the ancient sage that he do something to get satisfaction for this wounding, for it seemed as if his peace policy had failed along with his device of non-violence.

Later on the boy's bandages were removed and he was found to have only a minor injury. The Mahatma then refused to hear more of the story, saying that he was weary and wished to sleep. He would not come out and see the crowd—the Mahasabhaites and Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose's Forward Bloc. These, bent without rhyme or reason on making violent commotion, cast stones at the house, broke the windows, forced their way in, smashing the furniture until at last the police persuaded them to go.

Quickly the bruit of this incident spread, bringing a sorry change to the genial face of the city. At 10.30 the next morning the first 'incident' occurred, when one who attempted a daylight robbery was beaten with sticks. Sikhs nearby at once twisted this into a communal issue and went about stabbing both Hindu and Muslim. The news flashed away into Harrison Road. Hindu and Muslim came running from the alleyways collecting into bands and, by 2.30 p.m., were hard at it fighting with stones and staves. It was not long before bullets began to fly from the Sten gun of a Hindu, who crept about the Muslim quarter killing old and young as he found them, riddling doors where he could not enter, sweeping the rooms where entry was easy. Muslims retaliated with torch and firebrand, lighting up Hindu shops. By 6 p.m. the familiar ruddy glow shone above the housetops.

Police were shooting in many places. At one, they opened fire only to be in their turn shot at by a Muslim Sten-gunner. They at once took complete cover, poked their rifles up in the air and shot down the road without taking aim. Then Sten guns opened up in sharp bursts, bullets flying all over the place about the hidden constables. On came a police carrier 'Stenning' furiously the concealed warriors. One of our officers stepped into the arena and succeeded in stopping the internecine conflict but not till the carrier crew had opened with tear-gas bombs and gassed the whole party. It was 8 p.m. before this area grew quiet under a curfew.

Shoe shops were extensively looted, their contents distributed all over the roads.

In the early afternoon some Hindus threw a bomb in Balliaghata killing two Muslims and wounding women and children. The courageous old Mahatma turned out Hindu volunteers, posting them at all the Muslim areas in the neighborhood, warning them that he held them personally responsible for any attacks made on Muslims in their sectors of responsibility. Henceforth all was quiet about Balliaghata.

Fortunately for us all, at 5 a.m. the next day Heaven opened its floodgates and poured out a great stream of rain all over the town. Within two hours the streets were awash, many places being three feet under water. This toned down the riot. There was looting and hooliganism but the back of the trouble was broken.

Casualties? About 500, we thought. Who started it? Sikhs, it seemed. The Mahatma declared his intention to fast till he was assured of peace in Calcutta. He sent out peace processions. They were brick batted, the Hindu leader of one being stabbed. But they and he persisted, both doing much good.

With our sparse resources, we took a serious view of this riot. General Ranking acted at once with all the troops at his disposal, calling in Gurkhas from Murshidabad to his help. He pressed the government to impose martial law in a restricted area and to reinstitute flogging for certain offences. Both suggestions were opposed but his

insistence had the effect of showing the government that we were determined that this outbreak must cease. They suggested a strict fifty-nine-hour curfew for the worst area with freedom for all to shoot curfew-breakers at sight. This was accepted. It gave us nearly all we wanted without the burden of our having to administer martial law. This was all in accordance with our policy. General Ranking's men now held the curfew area tight and used bullets to enforce the order. With very little bloodshed this quickly stopped the rioting.

We, with all our men on their toes in the United Provinces, with so many of our units helping in the Punjab, breathed again. It had been a very close thing in which the Mahatma had been worth two battalions to me.

Our next preoccupation was to induce the Mahatma to stop the fast he had started on the 1st September. We knew that if he died, then Hindus and Sikhs would turn upon Muslims and rend them to pieces. 'C. R.' (Mr. Rajagopalachari) suggested that General Ranking, the Commissioner of Police and he himself should go to the old gentleman and tell him that all was quiet in Calcutta but, on consideration, they found that they could not honestly go to him and tell him that story just yet. However, in a few days and before starvation had worked any harm, the Mahatma was informed of Calcutta's chastened spirit and once more accepted food.

On the 6th September we heard he was off to the Punjab, Mr. Suhrawardy going with him: or, more likely, meeting him there—the Mahatma third class by train, Mr. Suhrawardy by air.

The Mahatma had not had any too pleasant a time since he came to Calcutta. On his arrival he was met by a deputation of Punjabi Sikhs and Hindus. Eyewitnesses spoke of the terrible situation in the Punjab and of alleged atrocities to their people. They criticized him for treating the Punjab troubles in so offhand a way and urged him to leave Bengal and go to the Punjab. Later they threatened to 'squat' round his house in Calcutta, fasting to death if he did not leave at once for the Punjab.

He had induced the ample Mr. Suhrawardy to stay with him in his austere quarters in Balliaghata and there to share his frugal fare, in order to show the changed attitude of ardent Muslim towards ascetic Hindu. Mr. Suhrawardy must have found other sustenance during his absences from Gandhian care.

There were more troubles in Calcutta, a minor one being the opening up of a subversive wireless station which moved about in Calcutta and which, without proper 'fixing' instruments, we could never locate in time. Ships in the harbor did their best to get us a 'fix' but we never quite managed it.

European business men of Calcutta found, after the entente of the 15th August, that their employees worked far better, in a happier frame of mind from their new-found feeling of security. European employees felt confident that they would now have as good a chance as anyone else in the Dominion of India, their relations with Indians being more cordial than ever.

In Assam all was quiet. Among officials there was some speculation as to how long Assam would remain Hindu. East Pakistan lay across all the routes into and out of Assam from and to the rest of India and could, by closing them or imposing killing duties, strangle the Hindu province, should Assam insist on stopping Muslim immigration from Mymensingh. In forty years immigrants had already occupied a quarter of the Assam valley.

Brigadier Bain received a threatening letter which he passed to me for my better entertainment. He must have done something deemed wrong over the selection of candidates for the Indian Military Academy.

## JAI HIND

### *Sub: The 4th Ima Course*

We all the candidates of Shillong and other places of Assam Valley, that are not recommended by you; are going to marry your daughter as you are going to recommend all the candidates from the Sylhet district which has recently been separated from Assam. We hate the people of Sylhet district still you have recommended them. We shall kill you if you recommend any candidate from the Sylhet Dt. (Pakistan). Preference should be given to the candidate of Assam Valley instead of Surma Valley (Sylhet & Cachar district)

We shall kill all the British troops as you recommended all the candidates from the Sylhet district. You have disappointed all the candidates of Shillong and other places of Assam Valley. Pay Rs. 40/ – to each candidate of Assam Valley as messing allowance. I am going to Meerut via Sylhet to complain against you.

Dam/bloody/leave Shillong today. I shall take your chair from the 17th Aug. 47.  
Dam/swan bloody/Quit India today with the British troops. Go to London today.  
Dont call any candidate from Sylhet Dist.

Sd/ D. GOSWAMI,  
on behalf of the Candidates of Assam Valley.  
Jail Road, Shillong.  
Dated: 16th Aug. 47.

From Kalimpong in North Bengal came news of Gurkhas, who had been agitating for the inclusion of that region in Assam, now demanding the expulsion of Bengali officials and assaulting Bengalis in the hills.

We will tell of the cares of the United Provinces, of Delhi Area and of the Punjab in the next three chapters.

## XXXIV

### FIRST FRUITS OF LIBERTY: OVER THE BORDER<sup>81</sup>

#### August – September

*There is an accumulative cruelty in a number of men though none in particular are ill-natured. The angry buzz of a multitude is one of the bloodiest noises in the world.*

HALIFAX.

OUR new Delhi Area was also engaged by the 27th August in communal war which was spreading to Ambala. Luckily it had only just started by the time we handed these parts back to Indian Army Headquarters, for Eastern Command could never have directed operations so remote from Ranchi.

Now we can continue our tour farther north, into the Sikh country. I will not venture any opinion or statement of my own on this civil war but will leave those who experienced it to speak for themselves. It is well now that the contestants should see themselves as others have seen them.

To: Major \_\_\_\_\_  
Eastern Command.

From: Jemadar \_\_\_\_\_  
On leave in Dist. Jullundur  
(Punjab).

23 August 1947.

Dear Sir,

Very many thanks for your letter dated 6 August 1947. I received the letter on loth August and wrote to Sepoy the following morning. I think he might have received information in time. My daughter was improving but now no medicine can be had for the following. reason.

This country has become a battlefield since 16 August. One village attacks the other village and one community to another community. No body could sleep for a week. Villages are being destroyed and thousands killed or wounded. All road paths, Railways and post are totally cut off. It is not easy to go a few yards away from the village. Smokes & fires are seen everywhere all round my village. An attack is expected

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<sup>81</sup> For places mentioned in this chapter see Map No. 8.



today on my village. God knows whether or not this letter will reach you. Every days too many casualties take place in this country. Police sub inspector has even been killed in front of the Police Station. The moment which is passed is ours. No body knows what will happen during future moment. No military or Police help is available anywhere. Public is destroying to public.

Every body is realising the happy time passed under British rule. If this practice continues for a week or two, I think Punjab will be nothing but a heap of ashes.

At last I like to point out to you that if I remain alive I will try to return to duty as soon as situation is a bit clear. If the situation is NOT clear I may have to overstay my leave?

God knows whether it is my last letter to you? I am dropping it today but it is not known when it will reach you.

At last I offer my much regret to Brigadier and Mrs. \_\_\_\_ & yourself. I will try to write you all what hapens if I am alive.

I had left all my kit locked in my room. The duplicate key of the lock is in my safe on the right hand side of my table. If any move takes place before my return, could you please get it packed by Havildar Mukherjee and take it with the office. If no move takes place then nothing to be worried.

Your most obedient servant  
Jemadar.

\* \* \* \*

To: Major \_\_\_\_\_  
Eastern Command.

From: Jemadar \_\_\_\_\_

DIST. JULLUNDUR (PUNJAB),

27 August 1947.

Dear Sir,

Further to my last letter I beg to inform you the following:

All villages outside the radius of two miles from my village have been burnt to ashes by Gundas. From the very beginning we are taking the possible defensive measures for my village. Last night alarm signal was rung at about 2230 and we all passed the night awaking.

There are no signs of any military or police aid to restore peace in the country. Every day hundred of people are murdered & a property of millions is either looted or destroyed by fire. At present my family in the house is quite alright but nothing is known of relatives at a distance of 2 miles even. An air liner flies over the affected areas without rendering any help to the people.

Everybody is fed up with this freedom and all are anxious for the British rule as before. Much respect to Brigadier & Mrs. \_\_\_\_ and yourself.

All communications are still cut off.

Obediently yours,

Jemadar \_\_\_\_\_.

\* \* \* \*

To: Major \_\_\_\_\_  
Eastern Command.

From: Jemadar \_\_\_\_\_

DIST. JULLUNDUR (PUNJAB),

29/8/47.

Dear Sir,

With due respect I beg to inform you that all villages in this area are affected with communal trouble. Most of the villages have been burnt to ashes and some are half burnt. In my village we people decided to take defensive measures with no offensive attitude. All communities in this village are still untouched. It is impossible to go outside the village. Many have left their villages & are hidden in crops.

There are no signs of peace yet as no military force or police aid is available. Everybody is fed up with this trouble. All want the British to set up law & order as before. If this practice continues, it is quite possible that Indian leaders are attacked by public. They are undoubtedly cursed now.

The trains did not run since 16 Aug 47. Train ran only for two days but when too many casualties inflicted in it, they are again stopped. As soon as the situation is a bit clear I will try to rejoin my duty. But if I could not return in due time, can you please grant my 28 days victory leave.

Also please let me know whether you have received any of my letters since the trouble started. Much respect to Brigadier and Mrs. \_\_\_\_ and yourself,

Obediently yours,  
Jemadar \_\_\_\_\_

\* \* \* \*

To: Brig. \_\_\_\_\_  
Eastern Command.

From: Jemadar \_\_\_\_\_

DIST. JULLUNDUR (PUNJAB),

22 Sept. 47.

My dearest Sir,

Very many thanks for your kind letter dated 3 Sep. received here yesterday evening. It is heard that boundary force disbanded w.e.f. 15 September and I hope Major Sahib might be back now.

No train is yet running on the line near to my home. It is also heard that only special or refugees trains are running on main line which are also attacked by villagers and very heavy casualties inflicted. It is very easy to enforce Law & Order in cities where there is much military aid available at any moment but in the rural area it seems impossible by the New Governments. Every body is sick of this wretched life and desire the British to rule as before. Millions of people have been rendered homeless. Many who were masters of Lakhs a few days ago are no better than beggars. Peasantry is totally destroyed on the both sides. One who had not the courage to kill a hen even has now killed dozen of men, women and children. It is hoped that at least  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the population of Punjab has been killed. In rural area there are NO signs of peace or Law & Order as No military or police has even been seen. It appears as if there is no Government ruling over this area. Every body is at present at liberty to kill as many as he likes. Nearly 50% of my village folk have left the village of which a few have been killed. About 16 persons including children and women of my relative family are missing on their way from Pakistan to India. They were living in Lyallpur Distt. None of them has so far arrived here.

I intend to return to Ranchi as soon as the situation is a bit satisfactory. I wrote four more letters after those mentioned by you which you might have received by now. Much respect to Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_, Major \_\_\_\_\_ and Yourself.

I apologise for the inconvenience caused by my unexpected absence from the office.

My daughter has progressed her health a lot and it is hoped that she will be quite alright after a few days' more treatment. My son-in-law who was just near the Boundary in Gurdaspur distt has escaped with the help of his friend and Military Officer.

Very much thanks for your kind and good wishes for myself and my family.

I beg to remain Sir,

Your Most Obedient Servant,  
Sd/ (Jem).

\* \* \* \*

FROM A BRITISH OFFICER,  
Lahore Cantonment,  
West Punjab,

29.8.47.

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I am sorry I haven't written earlier. I have been landed with the job of . . . and I am on the run from breakfast till 9 or 10 every evening. The accommodation here not being very good we can't read or write in our rooms and I don't get much time to steal during office hours. . . .

. . . I believe that G.H.Q. now circulate some form of intelligence summary, so perhaps you are more in the picture about events up here than we were ten days ago.

I'm afraid it is still pretty grim. It started in the beginning of August with reasonably small parties of Sikhs beating up isolated Muslim villages in E. Punjab. It rapidly deteriorated until 14th & 15th August, when there was a pretty good blood bath in the whole of E. Punjab. Muslim villages and quarters of Amritsar, Jullundur and all the main towns were eliminated by arson. Women and children were butchered and anyone who defended them was as well. The Muslims then retaliated on their side of the line. Sikhs and Hindus got out of Lahore as fast as they could with the result that all the commercial world, banks and shops, more or less ceased to function. There were then streams of refugees going in both directions. I should say there are over half a million. They have no homes, no clothes and very little food. The E. Punjab Govt forbade refugees to take food with them into W. Punjab. These wretched people are wandering about dying of starvation, exposure, and attacks from Sikhs or Muslims as the case may be. About  $\frac{3}{4}$  possibly more, of the Punjab Boundary Force is S.E. of the border, where the vast majority of the 'incidents' have so far occurred.

The P.B.F. here is in aid of the Civil Power. On both sides of the line the latter is virtually nil, and at any rate in the east will give no assistance to Muslim refugees, and in the west to the Hindus and Sikhs. The local politicians appeal to the army to do everything for them. When anything can't be done, the politician's reply is a note to Delhi or the newspapers saying that the P.B.F. is one-sided and will give no help whatsoever to so and so. A telegram was sent to Supreme H.Q. saying that the P.B.F.

were killing 50,000 Hindus and Sikhs a day west of the line. I don't know where these local politicians were brought up, but they can neither listen to nor speak the truth.

Due to the atrocities committed here, and I don't think there can be any worse in history, it is quite natural that the troops in the P.B.F. should get affected. To a very small extent they have been, but the incidents in this respect are negligible. Unfortunately they have been exaggerated and given big publicity, which tends to make matters worse. The Muslims want B.O.R.s as they reckon they are the only troops who know what impartiality means and even if they would not be enthusiastic about doing duty here, they would at least protect adequately their women and children, which is the Muslims' greatest worry. Apparently the others won't play for fear of drawing attention to the matter, and give out as their reason that the Congress Party embraces all faiths, and makes no discrimination between Hindus and Muslims. Therefore it is impossible for their troops to be partial.

Although very sordid and insane, the situation is very interesting.

Yours, etc.

The 2/1st Gurkhas left Peshawar for Allahabad on the 31st August. At Lalamusa in the Punjab on the 1st September they saw two bodies on the line: farther on, near Lahore, bodies at frequent intervals on the banks by the line, right down to near Ambala. At Ambala Sikhs had had an orgy of killing.

The train was stopped about five miles outside Ambala in order to allow the doctor to attend to a badly wounded Indian lying at the side of the track. His head had been smashed in and the doctor did not give him more than an hour of life. To ease any pain, sufficient morphia was administered to keep the man unconscious before death.

The Battalion arrived at Ambala at 12.30 p.m. on the 1st September. On arrival in the Cantonment Station it found a train comprising five compartments and one flat bogey full of dead, and more apparently dead Indians lying in the station. Some of the occupants of the train were, however, only wounded so these were taken out and, after treatment by the Medical Officer, sent off to hospital. According to a statement made by the Railway Transport Officer, the train had been lying in the station since 3 a.m. that day.

Of approximately two hundred bodies on board seventeen were alive and sent to hospital.

And now a more detailed account of what the Commanding Officer of the 2/1st Gurkhas told me that he saw at Ambala on this occasion.

The Battalion arrived at Ambala Cantonment Station at 12.30 p.m. the 1st September, where the Indian R.T.O. reported that all ice, wood, etc., was ready for collection and loading, and that he was leaving the station for his lunch.

The Adjutant reported to the C.O. after about five minutes that a train containing dead bodies was lying on the next line to ours. On going to inspect this train they found five carriages, one goods wagon and one flat bogey filled with dead and wounded Muslims. Holes caused by Bren-gun bursts were visible on all coaches. There were some Hindu and Sikh policemen standing by on the platform whilst some of the slightly wounded and unwounded were getting into lorries. There were no doctors present. An Army guard was on the platform taking no action whatsoever. Appeals were made to Sikh civilians to help with the wounded, but they refused.

The C.O. ordered his Medical Officer and medical personnel, and four British officers, to get the wounded out of the train and carry out first-aid measures. Whilst this was going on the Battalion cleared the railway station, at the point of the bayonet, of the numerous armed Sikhs, etc., who were standing about and who, when asked to give help in getting the wounded out of the train, unanimously refused. The driver of the engine evidently intended to let the massacre continue by driving his train into the open country, and now only disconnected his engine at the pistol point. Our officers had seen piles of burning corpses at Sirhind, the next stop up the line.

During this time the wounded had been taken out of the train and first-aid had been given. The majority of wounds were caused by sword and spear thrusts. Among the more noteworthy cases were those of a small girl aged four or five with both legs hacked off above the knees but still alive: a pregnant woman with her baby ripped out of the womb—she died: an old man of about sixty, who had served in the Hong Kong and Singapore Artillery, with six spear wounds and still alive.

All wounded able to talk stated that the massacre was carried out by the Patiala Sikhs, and that the train had arrived at Ambala at about 4 a.m. that morning.

It was desirable that a senior Civil Official be present so the C.O. phoned the Indian District Commissioner who stated that he would not come to the station as he had not had his lunch. The C.O. then telephoned Brigadier Deakin, who sent immediate assistance, including doctors and ambulances.

The Brigadier himself arrived immediately upon receipt of the phone call and stated that he knew nothing of the business until this report at 12.45 p.m. and that he had at once placed the train guard (one N.C.O. and fourteen Indian soldiers) under arrest.

The R.T.O.—a Sikh Lieutenant of a Punjab Regiment—was confined to the station pending investigation.

Before the Battalion continued its journey at 6.20 p.m. Brigadier Deakin ordered a full military and civil enquiry into the circumstances under which the killing had been perpetrated.

FROM AN OFFICER'S WIFE  
JULLUNDUR,

1947.

D \_\_\_ and I arrived in Jullundur on 26 July at 4 o'clock in the morning, and went straight to Chamier's Hotel, which was to be our home for the next few weeks. We felt elated that we were together again after a series of previous separations. Though the climate was still hot and sticky, we were comfortable in the hotel which was equipped with fans and blowers, and oh! what luxury to find long baths and pull-plugs! The hotel staff were attentive and the food good, and we looked forward to a happy stay in the Punjab.

D \_\_\_ knew Jullundur well as he had been there for two months prior to my arrival, and, having unpacked, I was anxious to go out and take a look round at our surroundings. It was cooler by the evening, and we set off in the jeep for a breath of air and a quick survey of Jullundur. I thought it a pleasant cantonment, broad straight roads lined with trees, and large airy-looking bungalows with spacious gardens. We drove down the Mall (the main thoroughfare) and on our left were the Lodi Gardens dating back to the days of the East India Trading Company. Lovely gardens with tropical plants and trees, and Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs strolling through them on their way to their destinations. On we drove and there was the Club, with members sitting on the lawn under the fans and drinking their *chota pegs*. Next place of interest the H.Q. Bde. Mess, the hospital, men's barracks, and finally H.Q. Bde. with its sentries and familiar Red Eagle on the signboard. Next door to this was the bungalow where D \_\_\_ had been living for the past two months with \_\_\_ who was now away on leave, and where he was burgled two nights after his arrival there, this same gang of burglars having systematically gone through the lines stealing from the officers and men. We gathered some flowers from the garden to take back to our rooms, and then homeward bound: but one last request, please, could I see where the bazaar was situated so I would know where to do my shopping? With a small detour, it was on our way back, as unlike most Indian bazaars it was situated right in the centre of cantonments. We arrived to find narrow streets with kiosks and small shops all filled with everything from a bootlace to a grand piano! We stopped and bought an old copper jug which caught my eye. Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs gathered together in groups passing the time of day, and there was the usual noise and bustle of an Indian bazaar. Everyone was most friendly to us and gathered round in interested curiosity. We then drove back to the hotel, and I had decided I liked Jullundur.

Next morning a Sikh *darzi* (tailor) knocked at our sitting-room door. I looked at his credentials, they seemed all right; he was an ex-soldier and a nice old boy so I engaged him as a verandah *darzi* and set him to make some pyjamas for D \_\_\_. He left his machine with us and came along quite happily each day and quietly got on with his work. I was most impressed with his honesty. He gave me back every bit of thread and material he did not use!

Later, a young Muslim *darzi* was sent round by a friend, so I gave him a cotton frock to make. I thought rival *darzis* might fall out, but they were quite amicable and exchanged greetings as they came and went.

And so the days passed by. I saw D \_\_\_ spasmodically as he was working long and elastic hours, but we usually managed to walk along to the Club in the evening and sit on the lawn and have a drink. I gathered there was a certain amount of trouble in the rural areas between the Sikhs and the Muslims, but the British police officers with Muslim police subordinates were working in close cooperation with the Army and it was not anticipated it would develop in any proportion, and that Jullundur and surrounding areas would remain quiet, though considerable doubt existed as to what would happen when these officials and police were replaced.

The Brigadier's wife arrived and we became good friends, and shopped and played tennis together most evenings before our respective husbands came home.

I think the first indication I had that the communal strife was increasing and spreading was that I saw less and less of my husband, and the telephone in our sitting-room rang more and more often. Is D-- there? — this is the D.I.G. Police. 'Yes, will you hold on please.' Is D \_\_\_ there? This is the Intelligence Officer. And so it went on and throughout the night as well. In varying stages of dress and undress, awake and asleep, he would be called to the telephone and dash off in his jeep, and I would not know how many hours would elapse before I would see him again. My Muslim *darzi* vanished and I never saw him again. The Sikh *darzi* came last on the 14th August, then he too ceased to call and his machine remained idle in my sitting-room together with his unfinished work.

All officers were ordered to carry arms and to be dressed in uniform at all times.

Then one evening we were sitting on the Club lawn having a drink and there was a loud explosion from the direction of the bazaar. D \_\_\_ said 'that is a grenade'. We got in the jeep and raced to the bazaar. I'll never forget the look of fear and terror in the faces of the people, and one of relief when they saw us. Yes, a grenade had been thrown by Sikhs at a Muslim as they drove through the bazaar at some speed. The jeep was painted pale blue; the number was thought to be so and so.



The police were there idly standing round. The B.M. of Sub-Area arrived on a bicycle from his bungalow with holster slung over his shoulder. The hunt was on for the blue jeep, and this was eventually 'bagged' by the Army some days later.

Another British officer from the 2/7th Gurkhas joined us in Jullundur. D \_\_\_ and I knew him well and put him up with us in the hotel. He and D \_\_\_ brought me trophies of spears and *kirpans* which they had gathered whilst on day and night patrols in their jeeps armed with Bren and Sten guns.

The situation continued to deteriorate from now on. The bazaar closed completely (oh! calamity). I was told I could have my daily paper if I cared to go and get it! No more tennis – the markers and tennis chokras (ball boys) had disappeared.

So my role became that of waiting, often many hours, for the men to return. I gathered the impression of too few effective officers and too few effective men being available to stem the oncoming tide around us. The streets became crowded with refugees and one felt an atmosphere of complete inadequacy and despair. I felt I wanted to help these poor wretched souls, but there was nothing more one could do. The magnitude of the task was such that it called for a coordinated national effort, and not the comparatively feeble efforts of a few individuals.

The Bde. Comd. and his wife were now leaving, and as D \_\_\_ thought it expedient for me to go I left with them under armed escort.

The journey through was an interesting one as I saw at first hand hordes of Sikhs moving about the countryside attacking villages, burning and looting. It seemed mob rule had become the order of the day, and if something drastic were not done there was no knowing to what proportions it would extend.

## FROM AN OFFICER *Internal Defence, Punjab, 1947*

### *Introduction*

The object of this note is to present facts and personal impressions whilst in the P.B.F. during period up to 2nd September. The areas under review are the districts of Hoshiapur, Jullundur and Ludhiana.

Indian State territory within these boundaries was not within our jurisdiction. The States we were most concerned with were Kapurthala, which has several pockets of territory in the Jullundur Civil Division, and Patiala, Nabha, Malerkotla, etc., which were on the southern border of the Ludhiana District.

When 4 Div. arrived at the end of May 47 in Jullundur, our first aim was to obtain the closest cooperation with the civil authorities. This was thoroughly reciprocated and a very good team built up. It was apparent even at this early stage that in the event of large scale trouble, a combined H.Q. with the civil authorities was essential to efficient working. This was not actually put into operation as all the civilians at that time were British and were due to go very soon. We did, however, have weekly conferences, and I think that this 'team' would have immediately formed a joint H.Q. in the event of major trouble.

However, that was not to be, and the British officials were replaced completely by about 4th August. Up to this date the D.I.G. of Police, the Commissioner, the S.P., and the D.C.1 had all been British, and further to this the police force was mainly Muslim. This ensured the protection of the minorities. On the departure of the British officials, the Muslim police were removed from being in charge of the Arms Kotes (armouries) and Hindus and Sikhs replaced them. The next stage was that Muslim police were disarmed, the reason given being that they were to be transferred in a few days to Pakistan, and there was some danger of their deserting with their arms.

A further loss to us was the Contacts which the British officials had made in the area. To date, these Contacts had been invaluable, and had produced accurate and timely information. On the departure of the British, these Contacts 'faded out', and it is a notable fact that they were not handed over to the new arrivals. This had been the last 'request' from the Contacts themselves that the new Indian officials should not know about them.

Our conferences with the civilians continued for two more occasions, and then faded out. Our special telephones which had hitherto worked excellently started to give trouble. I felt that a barrier had grown up between the Army and the civil authorities.

#### The Massacre

The foregoing had all taken place gradually. During this period, there had been a number of isolated incidents of varying scale. Small attacks, resulting in a few casualties to either side. However, on the night 31 July/1 Aug., a village called Jhand, near Goraya on the Jullundur – Ludhiana road, was systematically attacked by a well-armed gang of Sikhs about 60 strong. The village had resisted stoutly, and had had 14 men killed and the outskirts of the village set on fire. The Army acted promptly, followed up footprints, etc., of the raiders into the adjoining Sikh villages and arrested several people who had been seen amongst the attackers. These were handed over to the 1 Deputy Inspector General, Superintendent of Police, Deputy Commissioner.

With acknowledgments to the Daily police who accepted them gladly (the British D.I.G. and S.P. were still with us). The police then proceeded with the case and the civil

authorities were asked to take drastic and emergency measures so as to make an example of the offenders. This was promised, and we were assured that the case would be hurried through the courts and the death penalty awarded. This was to take about ten days.

However, all the remaining British officials departed during the next few days and nothing happened regarding these men. We know nothing happened as we had several witnesses who would have been required for the prosecution.

The next serious incidents were north of Jullundur. In the first case, the Sikhs of Sus attacked and destroyed six or seven villages in the Garwah area, killing over 20 and the Sikhs of Haripur attacked Talwandi Araiyan, killing some 15 people. In the first case, the D.C. of Hoshiapur went out and imposed a fine of Rs. 1,200/- on Sus, which has so far not been collected! In the case of Haripur, the civil authorities did little more than take down the names of the casualties at Talwandi Araiyan.

It was then apparent that the new civil authority was not prepared to take drastic action against the Sikhs so as to protect the Muslim minority. Several responsible officials in my hearing stated that you could not really blame the Sikhs who were after all only getting their own back for Rawalpindi!

The pace now hotted up. The new S.P. of Hoshiapur was a Sikh. The D.C. was a well-meaning Hindu. Reports on possible trouble resulted in patrols going out repeatedly, often to find civilian reports completely unreliable. Finally, sufficient troops were called out to surrounding rural areas, leaving four sections only for Hoshiapur City. Hoshiapur City then went off in a big way and complete Muslim Mohallas were looted and burned. The only places looted and burned were Muslim. It was an extraordinary fact that adjoining Hindu shops and houses had been spared. I went up with the Bde. Comd. the next morning and found that 'all was under control'. I went round the police Thana and found that in spite of all the damage being done to Muslim shops, people injured being Muslim, the cells were full of 'criminals' also all Muslim. Not one Sikh or Hindu was under arrest. The Bde. Comd. immediately returned towards Jullundur to meet the Commissioner and acquaint him with the completely partial behaviour of the Hoshiapur police. The disciplinary action demanded by the Bde. Comd. was politely refused, as police morale may have suffered.

In addition to the above, a large-scale attack by the Sikhs had been made in the rural areas south and south-east of Hoshiapur to within a distance of only a mile or so. A large number of villages had been completely destroyed and about 500 Muslims killed. A refugee train was also attacked but was saved by the timely arrival of two British officers who engaged the attackers, killed several and drove them off.

All this literally within a stone's throw of Sikh S.P., who had, of course, received no information whatsoever.

Military patrols had estimated that the Sikh jathas (bands) in this area numbered several thousand, and up to 15,000. It is too much to ask me to believe that the large numbers of Sikh police in the area were unaware of this plan.

Up to this date, the only casualties inflicted on the Sikhs were by military patrols comprising either neutral or Muslim troops. There was no case on record of a Sikh or Hindu policeman having shot anyone except a Muslim. The situation in Hoshiapur was checked by putting in two platoons, one Pathan and one Punjabi Muslim.

### **Jullundur**

It was Jullundur's turn next. The Muslim policemen, having been disarmed, fled. At the Commissioner's specific demand, the Bde. Comd. had put Hindu troops into the City. The reason for this was to avoid another 'Amritsar', where it was reported that Muslim troops had fired on and killed Sikh and Hindu police, thus making a coordinated effort to restore order impossible. A further reason why this request had been acceded to was that we had no more Muslim troops available. All the civil authorities and the police had stated that they would keep the peace in Jullundur and that with suitable military aid there would be no trouble.

Jullundur, however, did go up in a big way. Again entire Muslim Mohallas were looted and destroyed. After two days, the civil authorities stated that their estimate was about 30 Muslims killed. We had seen that number of bodies in three houses alone! During this period, one coy. of Muslims had been made available (50 percent Punjabi Muslim, 50 percent Pathan). The civil authorities (it was now after 15th August) refused to accept Muslim troops! Finally, the situation was restored by the arrival of the 2nd Bihars whose two Christian Adibassi Coys. went into the City and peace was restored. During this period, in the rural areas immediately around Jullundur, several large Sikh jathas had been engaged by military patrols, and considerable casualties inflicted. Several prisoners were taken and handed to the police. These were in most cases released as police investigation had discovered that they were 'innocent wayfarers', not connected with the jatha. Gradually, complete mob rule gained its ascendancy over the rural areas. The Army was only just sufficient to cope with keeping the roads open and the large towns and cities reasonably safe. Refugees were pouring in by the thousand, and a dozen camps were organised by the Army around protected Muslim villages. In a very short time, 50,000 counted refugees were around us. Much larger numbers had been absorbed into the bigger Muslim villages that had still been saved by mobile patrol action.

The situation in the rural areas of Hoshiapur, Jullundur and Ludhiana was out of control. Pockets of refugees existed. Large Sikh jathas were spotted by Auster aircraft

and some were successfully intercepted. The troops were completely inadequate, and the police completely useless.

### **Ludhiana – a Success.**

The only untouched town was Ludhiana. The troops again were inadequate. Contrary to all demands from the civil authorities, all possible reserves of Muslim troops supported by C.I.H. tanks moved in shortly after trouble started, and in a few hours the situation was under control. Previous to the arrival of these troops, Daily Express Correspondent Sydney Smith had spoken to a Hindu Sub-Inspector of Police who was standing at a street corner of Ludhiana whilst a Sikh mob, aided by Sikh policemen in uniform, attacked Muslim houses and shot Muslims right in front of him. When asked what he intended to do, the reply was We are doing very well. We expect to exterminate every Muslim.

I met Sydney Smith an hour after this, and he was an astonished wide-eyed correspondent. He had heard us make allegations to this effect previously, but actually seeing and hearing for himself had finally convinced him.

### **Railway Protection.**

This was a continuous headache to arrange. The original appreciation was that a whole bn. would be required to protect the sector, stations, garrison trains, etc., and this was eventually made possible by the allocation of extra troops to our Bde. Gp.

At this stage, it is interesting to note that the Bde. Gp. consisted of six bns., two sqns. of tanks, and, of course, all the necessary auxiliary units. This force, though it sounds considerable, was not so as bns. were at half strength, averaging little more than 400 effectives each.

### **General**

By about 25th August it was painfully obvious that the officials of the Eastern Punjab were quite prepared to accept a large-scale massacre and exodus of Muslims from that area. The only method they had of stopping this was to take vigorous offensive action against the Sikhs, and this they were not prepared to do.

In fact, over wide areas where Sikh jathas ruled supreme, the local civil and police authorities reported that all was under control. The marauding Sikh had destroyed every Muslim village, killed large numbers of Muslims, and harried the columns of refugees until they finally arrived within areas protected by small military garrisons; often no more than a section guarding a village whose population had swelled to between 5,000 and 10,000.

The only area, according to the civil authorities, where matters were out of hand, was in the Dasuya (30 miles north of Jullundur) area where a Muslim majority belt had taken

in large numbers of refugees and had organised themselves against aggression by Sikh jathas. Here they had produced a varied collection of firearms, swords and spears, and the local police (Sikh) had failed to disarm them. This disarming of a Muslim village by the police was a prelude to its attack by Sikh jathas. I can vouch for this statement as I saw this at first hand in the village of Dakoha, just outside Jullundur. It was searched by the police one morning and was attacked by the Sikhs a few hours afterwards. Troops in the area fortunately arrived in time to prevent its destruction.

All civil officials and police were completely ineffective. The Sikhs had gained the ascendancy, and as a large number of officials and police officers were Sikh, it had been a very one-sided affair.

By this time too we had received large numbers of Muslim refugees from Kapurthala and Patiala territory. From my short contact with the authorities of these States, they were undoubtedly partisan. A high official of Kapurthala visited me one morning and asked if some Sikh and Dogra troops could stand by to avert trouble. Trouble from large numbers of miserable Muslim refugees streaming down main roads!

### **Conduct of Troops.**

The mixed composition of the P.B.F., as far as Bde. H.Q. was concerned, had through all this behaved reasonably. Muslim and neutral troops had taken forceful action against mobs. Hindu and Sikh troops had done their duty though they inflicted very few casualties, and to this degree they had failed. Mixed composition patrols under British officers had done extremely well. There had been no incidents between troops though tension was definitely growing, but complaints were throughout represented correctly and disciplinary action taken. This, I feel, was entirely due to the few remaining British officers who moved freely amongst all troops. The Muslim officers worked flat out to protect their own community, and they were kept in hand by British officers. Hindu and Sikh officers had to be persuaded in most cases to do their duty, and in most cases did so. There is no question that the best combination was a British officer with neutral or Muslim troops.

As will be appreciated, the most effective troops were Muslim or non-Punjab Hindu. The Christian Adibassis (our Bihar Regt.) and the Mahar (low caste Mahrattas) troops stand very high in my estimation, as they were genuinely impartial and worked extremely hard. Great credit must also go to small Muslim escorts of seldom more than a section who escorted thousands of refugees or protected villages holding large numbers.

Hindu and Sikh troop effectiveness was entirely due to British officers. The sight of an all-Sikh or all-Hindu guard on a refugee train or camp was sufficient to make every refugee leave and head for the nearest camp where either a mixed composition, or non-Hindu guard, was positioned.

It was a regrettable fact that troops were used whose homes were actually in the Punjab. We had numerous appeals from Sikh troops to help their families marooned in Pakistan, and many Muslim soldiers had families around Jullundur who had been killed or made homeless.

### **Conclusion.**

The civil administration and the police were completely and utterly useless. The Sikh element were hand in glove with the Sikh jathas and the Hindu element was either too frightened or was prepared to accept Muslim victimisation so as to gain closer cooperation with the Sikhs. I feel too that it was a bid for Akalistan by the Sikhs, and that has definitely been accomplished around Amritsar, Hoshiapur, Jullundur and down to Ambala. The States of Kapurthala and Patiala have provided sanctuary for raiding Sikh jathas, and also safe bases for them to operate from. Sikh jathas were frequently intercepted and sent scuttling across the State borders, and our Austercraft frequently saw jathas collecting within State territory.

We must not lose sight of the fact that all Muslim soldiers will return to Pakistan shortly. They were all very bitter too. I spoke to many and they, I think, did try to understand. Senior Muslim V.C.O.s and especially Sub-Major and Hon. Lt. Adalat Khan, 3 R.F.F.R., a Pathan, did magnificent work amongst Muslim troops, enjoining them not to exceed their duty and telling them that though large numbers of Muslims were being killed, they by doing their duty were saving the lives of many more. However, the seed of bitterness is there and I do not see them forgetting. In fact, there is a first-class set-up for a war between both Dominions.

A possible solution is for all civil and police officers to be brought in from, say, the south of India, and also to use troops who are non-Punjab, and whose own land is not involved in disorders. All officers must essentially conform to the same requirements; use as many British officers who have signed on with the Dominions to command and really run the area. Even this may not now be successful unless accomplished very quickly. The stream of refugees with terrible tales to tell increases, and the stories of bitterness increase from day to day. A change of population is economically and physically out of the question. It is also out of the question if peace is to be maintained. At the moment, the trouble is spreading and both governments will find they have failed before they have even started if drastic methods and 'foreign' aid are not introduced.

The Manchester Guardian unfortunately and unwittingly made things worse by blaming the British even for this calamity of hate. It simply lengthened the period in which Indians would refuse to accept responsibility for all these shortcomings.

This is the article as reported in the *Statesman*:

## 'GUARDIAN' BLAMES BRITAIN

London, Aug. 31.

'The Punjab savagery can hardly be received merely as another of the terrible catastrophes of the age, and then passed over', writes the Manchester Guardian in a leading article under the caption 'Indian Massacres'. Were these horrors not preventable? asks the paper.

It is easy, writes the paper, to say that Great Britain has no longer any responsibility, that India must settle its own problems and that if there is bloodshed it is not for Great Britain to criticise. But the tension which has caused the disaster grew up under the British rule and the British themselves produced no remedies. There is still a British Governor-General in India and a British Commander-in-Chief.

It was known that as soon as the Boundary Commission would announce its award, there would be disturbances, and to deal with these the Punjab Boundary Force was created under General Rees. Why then did this consist of only four battalions? Rural outbreak is harder to control than tumult in cities. But sufficiency of troops with jeeps and tanks and aeroplanes could have prevented the atrocities.

Many of these have been the work of units marching in military formation and such petty hordes can be broken up by machine-gunning from the air. By control from the air, the danger could have been avoided of clashes between troops and the police. If some Indian Regiments could not have been relied upon to take action against their co-religionists, there were the Gurkhas, and as long as the British troops are in the country who can deny that they also should have been used to prevent such crimes as the present?

Moreover, systematic atrocities such as have taken place cannot be improvised in a day. Police intelligence in India is good, and must have given warning of what happened. What attention was paid to its reports?

Concluding, the paper writes, These are questions of the past. What of the future? A week's evils have probably left consequences in division and hatred which will continue for years. A small palliative, and one which the honour of India urgently requires, is the uncovering of the organisers of these massacres and their punishment, if possible, by a joint tribunal of India and Pakistan.

The P.B.F. consisted of the best part of two and a half divisions. I doubt if more soldiers could have been scraped up from all India, except perhaps some armour from Southern Command.



There is no doubt that the appearance of British troops in strength in the cities of the Punjab would have had a great moral effect. They were too young and inexperienced to be used outside the towns. However, we were debarred from using them by the terms of the agreement with the two Dominions whereby, after August 1947, they could not be employed unless the disturbances directly threatened the lives or property of Europeans. As there was no such threat, and as neither Dominion asked for British troops to help them, the prohibition remained.

As I have said before, matters were made no better by the most highly-placed personages both in Hindustan and Pakistan stressing more the evils that were done to their people in the other's territory than attacking their own people for the evil that was in their hearts and the horrors they were committing. The newspapers gave great prominence to these provoking speeches.

## XXXV

### FIRST FRUITS OF LIBERTY: PRESS AND POLITICIANS

#### September

*Like to the apples on the Dead Sea shore  
All ashes to the taste.  
Childe Harold.*

IN the devastated Punjab, bloody war was raging, a war of horror that no British land had ever seen in all our history. It is of no use to try to excuse, to palliate what was done. Let us be clear about this war. It was a war of human creatures who debased themselves below the brutes of the jungle. It was Bihar and Garhmukteswar in every town and nearly every village of a great expanse of India. Do not seek to lessen its significance. It was as Bengal and the United Provinces would have been had they ever got out of control. It is a deceit to say that this was only an insignificant percentage of India's population that rolled bloodily about her fields. It was communal war at its vilest depths, the sort of war that fouled the millions of Calcutta, East Bengal and Bihar in 1946; the sort of war that other millions were almost strangling themselves on the leash to enter. It is symptomatic of the terrible thing that is in some Hindus and, sadly enough, inherited from Mongol ancestry by some of India's Muslims.

I have said that I will only tell of it in the words of others and I will adhere to that decision. Those who have spoken for me were reliable men who sorted their information and chose carefully their words. The politicians and newspapers, however, are worth at least a passing reference.

Early in September we find Master Tara Singh, the aggressive Sikh political leader, blaming the West Punjab government, a 'British' government, for this ghastly, wholly Indian, affair. He spoke at a Press conference in Delhi and was duly reported by the Amrita Bazar Patrika of the 6th September as saying that there were 'hundreds of cases' in which at the orders of British officers the military shot down innocent Hindus and Sikhs of Gurdaspur district. The efforts of the Sikh leaders to keep the peace had been of no avail as all the time the police and military were planning attacks on the non-Muslim villages.

He also accused the government of the West Punjab of being a party to rioting in their part of the province. The massacre of the non-Muslims, he said, started only after the new Muslim government had taken charge. The first act of the West Punjab government was to seize all arms from the minorities and to provide them freely to the Muslims.

This, Master Tara Singh alleged, was the direct cause of a fresh outbreak of rioting in the Punjab. It was all too obvious that he was shouldering off on to the British his own and his people's responsibility for the great disaster. It is today no less dangerous to find excuses for deeds of savagery than it was to give to the Germans the excuses we freely handed them for their crimes of 1914-18.

From other leaders, Muslim and Hindu, on the two sides of the border, we still listened to the usual stinging thrusts of verbiage, calculated each one to embitter communal feeling and to make unhealable the inflamed, discharging wound in India's body.

Pakistan's Premier said that the happenings in East Punjab had deeply cut the heart of every Muslim. He accused the Indian Union of not honouring the agreement come to in Lahore a few days previously. The Punjab Muslim League Council at the same time demanded the immediate fortification of the Pakistan-India border and compulsory military training for every Muslim youth in Pakistan. Begum Shah Nawaz demanded the same training for Pakistan's women. Another Pakistan Minister was reported as saying that casualties in East Punjab were 100,000, those in West Punjab, 10,000. Refugees from West Punjab were far less than from East.

Pandit Nehru, in an outstandingly conciliatory speech, replied that he had no idea whence such figures could be derived, and, affirming his desire for amity between the Dominions, regretted the tone of the Pakistan Premier's speech.

Sir Mohd. Zafrullah Khan was reported from New York as saying that murders of Muslims in East Punjab had gone on for more than a month and latterly in Delhi. He accused the Government of India of complicity in this matter and of failure to discharge their responsibilities.

The Indian Government, not so conciliatory, put out a Press Note protesting that Sir Zafrullah Khan had made no reference to the killing of non-Muslims in West Punjab which had gone on with slight interruption since March. Although the number could not be estimated with any degree of accuracy, the casualties there must have been very large considering the vast migration of non-Muslims now in progress. 'People do not uproot themselves by the million from their homes except when impelled by intolerable sufferings and unspeakable terror.' The Indian Government maintained that this had been caused by the hatred stirred up by the two-nation theory which the advocates of Pakistan had been preaching for years. Repudiating the suggestion that the Government of India had failed to discharge their responsibility, it declared that it was doing everything possible to put down disorder, to protect and care for refugees, and to provide escorts to those who wanted to move to Pakistan. While the Government of India had achieved a large measure of success in their efforts in these directions, the same could not be said of the Pakistan Government!

Mahatma Gandhi was now duly pushed into the ring. The Hindusthan Standard of the 27th September 1947 said:

**PAKISTAN'S ATTITUDE MAY LEAD TO WAR  
GANDHI'S NOTE OF WARNING  
INJUSTICE SHOULD NOT BE TOLERATED**

New Delhi, Sept. 26. — Mahatma Gandhi addressing the prayer gathering this evening said that he had been an opponent of all warfare. But if there was no other way of securing justice from Pakistan, if Pakistan persistently refused to see its proved error and continued to minimise it, the Indian Union Govt. would have to go to war against it.

War was not a joke: No one wanted war: That way lay destruction, he added.

Many papers displayed these remarks with banner head-lines. The Mahatma was at pains to explain away what to all of us seemed to be the conversion to violence of one who would have been expected to be the very last of all to confess to these ideas. Naturally, great play had been made by Muslim interests at the greatest of all Hindus threatening Pakistan with the terrors of war. The effect of the address was adverse to communal peace between the two Dominions.

So Mr. Gandhi was at pains to explain himself in his post-prayer speech of the 27th September, saying that newspapers had displayed his remarks about war in such a way that there was an enquiry from Calcutta whether he had really begun to advocate war. He was wedded to non-violence, he asserted, for all time and could never advocate war. In a state run by him there would be no police and no military. But he was not running the Government of the Indian Union. He had merely pointed out the various possibilities.

India and Pakistan, Mahatma Gandhi added, should settle their differences by mutual consultations and, failing that, fall back upon arbitration. But if one party persisted in wrong doing and would accept neither of the two ways mentioned above the only way left was that of war.

On the 27th September Pandit Nehru made a plea for tolerance, declaring that the events in the Punjabs and Delhi during the past six weeks showed that the people had gone completely mad. They had broken all bounds of morality and culture and had behaved like wild animals. Such acts, he said, would lead to complete disaster to the country. Delhi at least, the seat of Government, should be free from all disturbances. No government could tolerate lawlessness in the capital. Retaliation by anyone for what had happened elsewhere was futile. It must be left to the Government to take whatever action it thought necessary. He emphasised that private retaliation could not be

tolerated. He pointedly stressed that those who talked of establishing a Hindu nation by exterminating Muslims were short-sighted people. Obviously they had no place in the United Nations if they thought in terms of Hindu and Muslim nations.

The plea and the castigation for savagery were long overdue. Newspapers of the 27th September reported Mr. Churchill, that uncannily accurate prophet, as saying that the fearful massacres which were occurring in India were no surprise to him; that we were of course only at the beginning of these horrors and butcheries perpetrated upon one another with the ferocity of cannibals by races gifted with capacities for the highest culture who had for generations dwelt side by side in general peace under the broad, tolerant and impartial rule of the British Crown and Parliament. He could not doubt but that the future would witness a vast abridgment of the population throughout what had for 60 or 70 years been the most peaceful part of the world, and that at the same time would come a retrogression of civilisation throughout these enormous regions constituting one of the most melancholy tragedies Asia had ever known.

The Mahatma parried with the remark that Mr. Churchill had rendered a disservice to the nation of which he was a great servant and suggested that he was over-hasty in his sweeping generalisations. Mr. Gandhi asserted that dismemberment of India constituted an unconscious invitation to the two parts to fight among themselves. This, we judged, was an attempt to cast back on the British the blame for these hideous deeds.

One's own opinion was the sad one that Mr. Churchill had told the truth as it was, and foretold the future as it would be unless a miracle intervened. This book will have shown how inevitable, how necessary it was to divide India, if she was now to govern herself, in order to avert certain catastrophe. It was not even a gamble: there was no alternative.

While words of hate and bloody deeds were the daily coin of the two Dominions, more trouble blew up over the State of Junagadh. This State is away up on the western coast of India not far south of Karachi. It had a Muslim ruler with certain Hindu vassals, and many Hindu subjects. The Indian Dominion almost (if not quite) laid violent hands on this State a few weeks later to force it to accede to Hindustan. Its warships lay off the coast under the pretext of 'combined operations' exercises: its troops stood on the border of the State. How far the civil and military representatives of Britain were responsible for all this inexcusable display will one day be known. The Jam Saheb of Nawanagar,

Ranji's nephew, in his State close by, informed the world that the accession of Junagadh to Pakistan was an act which is unjustifiable from every point of view. Every point of view would presumably exclude geographical position and the religion, or nationality, of the ruler. One cannot resist a feeling of tedium at naive statements of this nature.

The Premier of Pakistan, Liaquat Ali Khan, replied to the Jam Saheb's manifesto by condemning it as full of untruths and containing observations that were not only ill-informed as to facts and legal position but, in view of the communal frenzy which was sweeping the country at the time, full of possibilities for incalculable evil. Firstly, it seemed that on principle the Jam Saheb did not like the idea of Junagadh acceding to Pakistan. He saw in it an attempt to disrupt the unity, integrity and security of India and called upon the Indian Dominion to defend Indian integrity from 'these infiltration tactics of Pakistan'. The correct position was that the Indian Independence Act of 1947 had left all Indian States completely free to join either one Dominion or the other or to enter into any treaty relations with either. Legally and constitutionally there could be no question of putting limitations on this right of the States. The Jam Saheb had stated that he was in possession of a scheme which showed exactly how the Indian Dominion would be disrupted by drives from Sind in the north and Hyderabad in the south. Pakistan was not aware of any such scheme, nor had it proposed any, but it was well aware of the tactics followed by 'our enemies', who were in the habit of circulating so-called schemes merely to excite communal passions. It seemed that the Jam Saheb had fallen an easy prey to the machinations of the enemies of Muslims and Muslim States.

Concluding, the Prime Minister asserted that the Jam Saheb had hinted at the possibility of an armed conflict between the two Dominions as also of wholesale massacre of the Muslim population of Kathiawar in the event of Junagadh sticking to its decision. In other words, this was intended to be a direct incitement to the non-Muslim population of Kathiawar, and particularly the non-Muslim States in that area, to resort to violent action against Junagadh Muslims. This was the most deplorable portion of a most reprehensible statement.

I must let this quarrel go with those few remarks. The State was far remote from Eastern Command.

With all this use of force, these threats of force, in her native land, Mrs. Pandit (Pandit Nehru's sister) was with great fervour and very seasonably declaiming in America against power politics.

Recrimination was not directed solely against the other Dominion. A Hindustan paper affirmed that Britain was supplying tanks to Pakistan camouflaged under the label of scrap iron, and that part of the consignments was going to Hyderabad. Furthermore some quarters here hinted that a certain group of British politicians had planned to intervene in India through the backdoor of Hyderabad and Pakistan as they had noticed that, despite Pandit Nehru's warning to the British and foreign Press for their tendentious reports from India, mischievous and misleading reports were still pouring into foreign countries. *The Tory organ*, the *Sunday Observer*, had urged in its editorial that the Government of the United Kingdom should arrange for and even compel all British women and children to leave India at once. The paper noticed that the *Observer* had not

mentioned anything about evacuation of British women and children from Pakistan. This gave an idea of what was behind this demand. Mr. Krishna Menon, Indian High Commissioner, had pointed out a few days before in Glasgow, where he had gone to participate in the launching ceremony of El Hind – first ship of Indian independence – that unless democratic opinion in Britain and the world took these tendentious reporters to task, India would be forced to consider their ejection.

There were more hints that the British military clique in India and Pakistan was directly and indirectly responsible for fostering communal troubles in order to pave the way for British military intervention in India.

The last sentence is perhaps the strangest, for my own military clique was only living for the day of its own deliverance from India and its violent politics.

The Commander-in-Chief in Pakistan, General Messervy, was compelled to refute allegations against his troops, deeply regretting that a military spokesman in Delhi had thought fit to publicise unconfirmed rumours of alleged killings and lootings of non-Muslims in Pakistan by Pakistan troops. All allegations had been found to be entirely baseless after thorough investigation. He concluded: Our troops in Pakistan have strained every nerve to protect the minorities and have shown marked impartiality in dealing with a most difficult situation, etc.

It was a new departure that a soldier should have tried to stir the sizzling cauldron of communal hate.

My notes of the time discuss the mischievous rumours that were flying round India in mid-September 1947 and the perplexity in which the Army found itself.

#### **Note of 19th September '47.**

My experience is that most of the rumours are of a nature hostile to Muslims, e.g. of Muslim units planning attack on Hindus, of Muslim hordes marching on Hindu villages, of Muslim atrocities, etc., and most of them are found on investigation to be false. In my opinion these rumours are started by some Hindu organisation, for they often bear the stamp of being put out with a purpose. I suspect the R.S.S. Sangh, the extremist and militant body of the Mahasabha.

However, whatever the rumours may be, they pale before the real fact, and that fact is: In Eastern Command, all Muslims, men, women and children now walk and have their very being in mortal dread of violent and savagely inflicted death. These wretched people have virtually no refuge, no protection.

There are large numbers of Sikhs and Hindus in this Command who are determined that the Muslims shall not live. They can kill suddenly and so almost with impunity, wherever they will, whenever they will and however many of their victims they will, before any hand is raised to stop them. Theirs is the initiative and that initiative will remain with them so long as the forces of law and order, civil and military, act after the event and not before it.

It is necessary that from the outset the initiative shall be taken by the Army.

An army is designed to deal with an enemy and not merely in a general way to keep the peace.

In its proper role it can plan and be aggressive at all times. In the second and wrong role, it wastes its strength and is always late.

We are past the time when soldiers can only fire when themselves in danger, or to stop violence, looting and arson.

The Army needs a definite enemy to strike at. If it is not given one then these disturbances will not cease for they will crop up whenever the Army turns its back, and they will thereby spread. It is not difficult to picture the final result when enemies thus multiply against the State. If the Army can clearly plan to knock out its enemy, then there will be success and much saving of life. The Army will cease to have the feeling of futility at always being too late.

As far as I know these enemies, they are today certainly the Sikhs and probably the R.S.S. Sangh and its parent body, the Mahasabha. Tomorrow, the Jats may join the Sikhs. The R.S.S. Sangh should be declared illegal at once and dealt with by every means possible. The Sikhs can be dealt with without an open declaration so long as the Army is directed progressively towards a definite and purposeful object.

The first step in this Command is to concentrate all Sikh immigrants from the Punjab into selected places where they can be brought under surveillance and so kept within definite bounds until these troubles are ended. Then, to disarm them completely.

As a start I am telling U.P. Area to approach U.P. government to get the immigrant Sikhs of Dehra Doon concentrated at Premnagar. This means that any Sikh seen outside this area will have to produce a pass or, if he makes an attempt to run or behaves suspiciously, will be shot. As soon as circumstances permit, I want these Sikh immigrants to be removed back to the Punjab, whether they wish it or not.



We asked that the Indian Government should declare the R.S.S. Sangh illegal and that it and its parent body, the Mahasabha, should be dealt with as enemies. Our request was refused.

As I transcribe my records on the 31 st January 1948, the radio is telling us of the last rites by the Jumna River for the dead Mahatma, killed, I predict, by an extremist of the Mahasabha, one of the R.S.S. Sangh,<sup>82</sup> perhaps a new or former member of the terrorist Jugantar or Anushilan which assassinated our Collectors at Midnapore in Bengal in the thirties and which hooked itself firmly on to the R.S.S. Sangh in the spring of 1947. The Congress Party did not condemn the murderers—in fact many encouraged them—of our Collectors, so they still have them in their midst today. In those days we caught one of these men and executed him, whereat the Congress Party staged violent demonstrations against us. They made him a martyr, uncomfortably like Horst Wessel. In India all assuredly reap as they sow. Congress's chickens come home to roost. One by one they will all come back.

It was fast being borne in upon us that, with provincial governments that were communally biased, if not absolutely communal, our officers were being expected to support a policy that was communal and therefore oppressive and partial. We had experienced this in Bengal in 1946 under the Suhrawardy government so were not new to it. But the difference now was that there was no British Governor to hold the scales in balance and guide the policy. It was time that British officers packed their bags, and many there were who got ready to pack by putting in their three months' notice. Some of those who stayed involved themselves wittingly or unwittingly in squabbles and policies that were better left alone by us British.

It came as an unwelcome surprise to learn on the 26th September that the little protection that Supreme Headquarters could give would, it seemed, soon be withdrawn. A Press Note issued on that day pointed out that the Supreme Commander was at present responsible to the British Government for the welfare, discipline and control of all British officers and soldiers serving in the Armed Forces of India and Pakistan: that these officers had entered into a contract for one year from the 15th August 1947, subject to three months' notice. When those contracts were entered into, it was contemplated that the Supreme Commander's H.Q. would probably not close down until the contract had expired, but, it announced, it was now clear that Supreme Headquarters was likely to close down very much sooner.

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<sup>82</sup> Later reports from India have shown that the Mahatma was indeed assassinated by a member of this nefarious body.

## XXXVI

### FIRST FRUITS IN EASTERN COMMAND

#### August – September

It is a relief to turn from the red horrors of the Punjab to the milder climate even of our United Provinces. About this time a special representative of the *Statesman* made an interesting survey of reactionary activities in the United Provinces, the spirit which now appeared to us the most dangerous of all influences for Hindustan's immediate future. It is most important, so I will give the gist of what he had to say.

The revivalist spirit was rampant in the province, accompanied by an intolerant puritanism among the upper class. This spirit of revival found encouragement from senior leaders of the Congress no less than from humbler folk whose capacity for a comparative assessment of values was not so well developed. Sometimes the attempt to return to the past was rooted in cultural pride as was instanced by the Education Minister's recent instruction to school-teachers to pay special attention to the Indian classics and to India's cultural history. Very rightly he reminded them of the dangers of losing sight of what they inherited in the realms of Art and Literature and the need to preserve and develop that inheritance.

But unfortunately the revivalist spirit was too often simply an effort to resurrect Hindu orthodoxy. There was of course also a feeling among many Hindus that the good old days of Hinduism were the best. The reaction had moved rapidly of late.

The Vice-Chancellors of five United Provinces universities unanimously decided to adopt Hindustani as a medium of instruction. Fortunately, the Correspondent pointed out, it would take some time for the full scheme to be developed and before then the feverish zeal in favour of orthodox Hindi might have somewhat abated.

For the Governor's investiture on the 14th August an influential Parliamentary Secretary had ordered that *dhotis* (full, skirt-like cotton garments) should be worn by officials. Most of the officials were used to wearing European clothes and it so happened that this particular order was unauthorised and so not obeyed. There was no denying, however, that it had the tacit support of thousands of Hindus.

At the investiture also the chanting of religious hymns was prominent, though the ritual was given a touch of catholicity by the inclusion of extracts from the scriptures of several faiths.

The revivalist movement had prompted a recent order restoring the ancient names to the great cities and rivers of the province.

It looked very much as though the Congress ministry would cast out everything that smacked in the least of alien influence.

A certain snobbery was engendered by which Congressmen pretended to treat with scorn all those whose ideas did not coincide with their ideas of a national way of life. Their conception was of a crude austerity perpetuating joyless life for rich and poor alike. Ministers did no entertaining, so took little social interest in anything outside politics and showed intolerance for those who wished to live in any other way.

The Correspondent quoted an instance of a Minister rebuking a senior Indian I.C.S. officer for smoking at a conference.

He rebuked him in the presence of about two hundred other officers, both senior and junior to him. This was a quite unforgivable show of intolerance which naturally had much publicity.

We began to piece together the causes of the Rampur rebellion. Hindus had been in no way involved and were, if anything, sympathetic towards the rebels. The quarrel was solely between the Muslims in the city and the State government itself and it arose because these Muslims objected to a Muslim State joining the Indian Union. They wished to be a part of Pakistan. Oddly enough, even the Hindus seemed to favour this choice. In the villages all remained quiet. Probably, those who stirred the people to violence were a few agitators who had a spite against the Chief Minister. They seized the opportunity of the Riza fast when tempers were easily frayed and when spiritual benefits would accrue to those who were killed, to set the mob ablaze on the pretext that the State had been false to its people by joining the Indian Union.

The students, of course, were to the fore in the later stages of rioting.

The Rampur police were quite useless owing to their fear of reprisals and because many of them had relatives among the rebels.

By the 10th August violence had died away.

All over the hitherto disturbed areas of Muttra and Agra, confidence was returning so long as the soldiers were out on the countryside, touring villages and hamlets and were to be seen on patrol by townsman and peasant.

Around Meerut, sporadic disturbances continued. Near Bulandshahr on the 17th August some Muslim butchers and bangle-sellers coming from market and some peasants in the fields near by at Sarai Chhabila were mercilessly slaughtered by Hindus of local villages. The police could find only one seriously wounded man: the rest had been burnt and only a bone or two were found in the water close by. One of our pensioners died here, leaving a widow, two sons and a married daughter whom he had been visiting.

But all this was child's play to the terrors of the Mewat, Bharatpur, Alwar and the East Punjab.

On the 29th August the Commander of the United Provinces Area received a very welcome commendation for his officers and men from the Premier, Pandit Pant.

I shall be glad if you kindly convey to the troops under your command a message on my behalf thanking them for the cheerful and devoted manner in which they have in these difficult times invariably come out to help in the maintenance of law and order in this province. I greatly appreciate the excellent work done by all ranks and officers, particularly so soon after their return from active service.

At the same time the Pandit spoke strongly of his determination to keep the peace.

We will take the sternest measures to keep the peace, and we will not tolerate any act that interferes with the maintaining of law and order. It is our deterrriination that, whatever happens anywhere, there will be peace in the U.P. We are alive to our responsibilities to 60 million people.

In the Army we were trying to get our Muslim soldiers away to Pakistan. Day by day, especially in Training Centres, Record Offices and small units, the Punjab atrocities were rubbing Muslims against Hindus and making for bad blood.

We watched the rising hatred with much care, patching holes here and there to keep it from bursting through the now weakened texture of our Army's discipline.

In bigger combatant units, feeling was not too bad, far better than it was to be by October when we had to segregate our Muslims from the rest. The 3rd Rajputana Rifles said that orders to despatch their Muslims to Pakistan were received amongst their Hindus with very genuine regret, the Hindus of the Headquarters Company asking for permission to give a farewell party to their Muslims, an example copied by all other Companies. At Delhi, amid emotions of genuine comrade-ship, Hindu officers gave a great farewell party to their Muslim brethren. It was so, too, at Eastern Command Headquarters. It could not have happened so pleasurably two months, perhaps even a month, later. One only hopes most fervently that circumstances may arise one day not

so far distant that will bring these former comrades together again in friendship and confidence.

On the other hand we had instances of Hindu detachments leaving Pakistan by train shouting, 'Down with Pakistan!'

'Down with Jinnah!' at each station they passed and even letting off their rifles at random. From Hindustan more than one troop train bore Muslim soldiers shouting similar taunts and provocations.

As the sorting out of our soldiers went on it became apparent that before long units in which the communities had hitherto been proportionately mixed would soon be heavily over-weighted with Sikhs. Apart from the possibility of trouble with so many of these warriors together in one unit, there was quite a chance of trouble among the Sikhs themselves. Although supposedly a casteless society, the landowner Jat Sikh looks down on the landless Labana and others of the poorer sort. This is a problem that India will face later.

With the transfer of Muslims had gone our Grand Old Man, Brigadier Mahomed Akbar Khan of Meerut Sub-Area, who was now to be a Major-General in command of the Sind Area at Karachi.

Our Army was crumbling away, and as it crumbled, the posters went up in Delhi's Connaught Circus. 'British Officers – Sack the Lot.' Yet Indians asked me why so few of our officers were staying on with their army.

By September we had come to know the new Indian Governors.

Assam's Governor, Sir Akbar Hydari, I.C.S., Nationalist Muslim, friend of Pandit Nehru, humorous and quick of wit, we have already noticed in Shillong.

Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, who was to be a temporary governor of the United Provinces, and finally stayed permanently, was small, sparrow-like, witty, urbane and of great humanity. She had no illusions about the streak of cruelty that is in all too many Indians and which made a shambles of Calcutta, Bihar and the Punjab. Labyrinthitis was her term for all those who had newly acquired power and did not know which way to turn, which course to steer. She was a lady of considerable charm, even at her age—and she would not mind a reference to that age either!

'C. R.', Mr. Rajagopalachari, for Bengal, is a scholar, a man of liberal outlook, who gives one the impression of being both a strong man and a good one. Though he dresses in Indian homespun cotton, he is a man of the world—of the Western world, perhaps. He, too, is full of a kindly wit.

Mr. Jairam Daulat Ram, Governor of Bihar, was dapper, serious, able, determined to the point of ruthlessness, perhaps Anglophobe, and was popular in his new province of Bihar. To Orissa I never penetrated after the 15th August when its former Governor left. The province was not turbulent so my footsteps, or wings, never led me thither. I was too much occupied in Bengal and in the north.

All except Sir Akbar Hydari seem to have kept a teetotal household, no matter what their guests were used to drink in the evening or what they wished to drink. This did not add to the feeling of hospitality and it made a Western guest feel a little as though he were not welcome for he knew that when he himself bade an Indian guest to his house he was at pains to discover what food and what drink his guest would prefer in order that he might welcome him.

August went out with both Dominion Governments to some extent installed; both Army Headquarters partly organised but functioning; Supreme Headquarters in office but obviously with its wings so clipped by Indian Army Headquarters that before long it would not be able to leave the ground; the Army in confusion as it sought to reorganise itself; Gurgaon and the nearby States still in a state of panic and devastation with tens of thousands of Muslim refugees outside the States; Bengal at long last quiet and the United Provinces smouldering from its last outbreak with sparks awaiting a breath to blow them into murderous life.

Finally, the students were being rebuked by Mahatma Gandhi.

The Mahatma attended the annual meeting of the University Students' Union in the compound of Science College, Calcutta, and there held a prayer meeting.

As Mr. Gandhi, accompanied by Mr. Suhrawardy and other members of his party, arrived, some students displaying posters demonstrated against the former Chief Minister of Bengal. Apart from this the meeting passed off without occurrence.

Later Mr. Gandhi, in his post-prayer speech, reprimanded the demonstrators for their behaviour and said that, by insulting Mr. Suhrawardy, they had insulted himself. Addressing the students, Gandhi said that everywhere there appeared to be anarchy in the student world. They did not give obedience to their teachers and to their vice-chancellor. On the contrary, they actually expected obedience from their teachers. It was a painful exhibition on the part of those who were to be future leaders of the nation. They had given an exhibition of unruliness that evening. He was faced with placards in a foreign tongue referring to Mr. Suhrawardy in unbecoming language.

A student must be under the strictest discipline. He could not marry or indulge in dissipation. He must not indulge in drink and the like. His behaviour must be a pattern

of exemplary self-restraint. Had they all lived up to that pattern they would not have done what they did at the prayer meeting.

On the 10th September, Brigadier D. Barker, commanding Meerut Sub-Area, went to Delhi to try and find out what really was happening, and to contact Colonel Proud, Sub-Area Commander. On the way in he stopped at Shandara.

There he found a riot just finishing, the crowds flocking hither and thither and standing about in the narrow streets. Police were loafing round doing nothing. He went on to the police station and found a Sikh Magistrate and Muslim Sub-Inspector doing the same. They had no ideas and no morale. Shortly afterwards some men of the Madras Regiment arrived and started to patrol the streets. The crowds slipped out of the way. Delhi was like a deserted city, but even that was an improvement on its recent past.

He then went out to Kotana on the 13th September. This was where a small police detachment prevented Muslim refugees from being pursued across the ford. They made a good showing. When the wretched Muslim refugees had crossed, the police fired on the pursuers, who shouted 'Why stop us? These are our *Shikar* (prey)!' They returned heavy fire at the police and tried to cross, taking cover behind bullock carts. Broken carts could still be seen sticking out of the water. With a confidence found anew from the example and support of our soldiers, the small police picket at Kotana had fought a stubborn and brave action through many hours.

Looking west over the river from Kotana he could see no sign of life, only vultures circling, and one burning village.

The Collector held a meeting and afterwards asked the Brigadier to present the monetary awards, a ceremony designed to boost police morale.

We have before noticed the considerable influx of refugees, mainly Sikh, into Dehra Doon. On the 14th September we saw the result.

The 2nd Gurkhas were celebrating Delhi Day, the anniversary of their great fight on the Ridge at Delhi in 1857, when a taxi-driver arrived at the Commandant's house, shaking like a leaf. He said that a bomb had exploded in the bazaar and that '*sab log*' (all people) 'were running'. The Commandant called out the mobile column of the 6th Gurkhas, and some officers of the 2nd jumped into a jeep and made for the town. There they found that the police had acted quickly, and that Mr. Hunt, the Superintendent of Police, was enforcing a curfew. The town was clearing when the soldiers arrived in their lorries and spread out through the streets driving the inhabitants indoors. The Hindus were undoubtedly the aggressors. There had been a Hindu procession and, it was claimed, someone from near a mosque threw a bomb, later diminishing into a brick, then into a stone, and the Hindus retaliated. That was the story. The facts lay about the

streets in the shape of dead Muslims, fires smouldering at the wooden doors of little shops, gutted and looted houses, the usual nauseating debris of Indian communal riot, with a monsoon drizzle diluting the blood in the streets and washing it into the gutters. We saw one non-Muslim corpse, a little Sikh girl.

The often-experienced crop of rumours came surging in, always of impending atrocities, assaults, burnings to be instigated by the cowed, suffering minority against the savage majority—rumours broadcast by this same politico-religious body. Unfortunately, the local administration was communal and regarded the extirpation of Muslims as inevitable and, since inevitable, therefore not to be unduly halted. The United Provinces ministry cleaned out this Augean stable with commendable promptitude.

In 1922 there had been a small riot of this nature in Dehra Doon, a very small one. Here today was one that cost in a twinkling over a hundred dead and injured. The soldiers stayed in the town for a few days. Other columns of Gurkhas wove out among the little villages to stop Sikhs and Hindus who were now murdering wherever they could find a few defenceless Muslims—men, women or children. Hatred and violence even spread to the tiny hill village of Chakrata, 6,000 feet up in the monsoon clouds.

A flight over the eastern Doon towards the Ganges revealed Jawalapur near Hardwar, a third gutted with fire, and five miles to the south of it a Muslim village lying between two Hindu villages, a blackened lifeless desert with vultures afloat above. By now our Sappers and Miners from Roorkee were in charge of this area and all was quiet.

The Army was now being used in Hindustan as a communal weapon. Too often it only reached the scene in time to prevent the luckless minority from revenging itself on the triumphant majority.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> September a patrol of seven men of the 1<sup>st</sup> Kumaon Regiment, under a Hindu officer, was out in the Bulandshahr district after a report of impending trouble. It passed through Pinauti where all was quiet. Later it saw smoke, so turned back to the village. There at 7 p.m. it found the village alight and a heaving mob of between 3,000 and 4,000 Hindus around the village, directed by a leader on an elephant. As the patrol came on, shouting to the mob to go, some of the rioters advanced on it. The patrol opened fire and, as the mob persisted, got down to the business with its automatics. The crowd drew back but, despite losses, came on again and the patrol opened fire again. The action went on for an hour, when the mob dispersed, dragging their casualties away with them into the crops.

The patrol then ran into the village, where it released some two hundred Muslims, mostly women and children, from a blazing house into which they had been locked.



Our men stayed close by that night, sending in for reinforcements which arrived before daylight.

Only one villager had been hurt, a woman who was killed in the fields. So, here at least, we were on the spot in time. Another patrol scoured the neighbouring villages and evacuated seven hundred Muslims to Rajghat for Aligarh.

At least one hundred of the raiders were killed, so we know that they suffered heavy casualties. It was for our men a commendable affair.

Two nights before, another patrol of the same regiment went out to save another Muslim village but was intentionally misdirected by a venal village tehsildar (village official) and never reached its objective. Over 150 Muslims died as a result.

At Agra we found the Kumaon Regimental Centre rather perturbed because one of their patrols from the 1st Battalion had come upon a riotous band of Hindus, had opened up at once on them and knocked out about fifty. These proved to be Ahirs from the very villages where the Kumaon Regiment takes its men. There were murmurings among the men. The Subadar Major of the Centre was a sensible soldier and only needed reasons to support the soldierly action of the 1st Battalion patrol. We supplied them with the remark that only a first-class regiment could bring itself to so impartial an action, and with the story of Henry IV directing the judge to punish the future Henry V, his own flesh and blood. All was well.

At Agra, too, we learnt that the Hindus and Sikhs of a Workshop Company were threatening the Muslim minority in the unit. There was talk of 'The Day', so we removed the Muslims and attached them to a Muslim Transporter Company in the same station to await in security their transfer to Pakistan.

I give these two instances to show what sort of perplexities were presented day by day to our regimental officers all over the Command. These domestic anxieties, together with the sight of wounded fugitives coming in untended on trains from Bharatpur, and the stories told by the ever-flowing stream of refugees from this and other States close by and from the Punjab, kept commanding officers for ever alert and expectant. News from nearby Gwalior State was not reassuring. That Darbar had flirted with the highly dangerous Mahasabha in the past: now it was acceding to a Congress government. As a result, there were stabbings in the streets.

All over the northern and western United Provinces there were by now incidents in the villages – Muslims being thrown from carriages by Sikh and Hindu passengers; big and small raids on unescorted trains; police firing on looters at Farah near Muttra; panic on the Bharatpur border; rioting at Moradabad; Amroha, Bareilly, Rohilkand, all on the

very verge of disaster; Dehra Doon, Saharanpur and the Hardwar area in the grip of rioting; civil authorities shouting for more and more troops.

Dehra Doon blazed up again on the 22nd September and had to be heavily suppressed by Gurkhas. The trouble spread to outlying districts with many casualties. Sappers were in action against a Muslim mob of close on a thousand near Jawalpur, killing a score of them. Even the peaceful hill station of Mussoorie had its killing.

We were overstretched, had done all we could to help the Punjab. From Eastern Command at Ranchi we sent our last two battalions to General Curtis. Now that things were a little better in the Punjab, we looked to our own concerns, found them thoroughly bad and urged that Delhi return our men from the Punjab and take firm military action in Bharatpur State. Bit by bit, and not before they were vitally necessary, our men came back to us, the 2nd and 4th Rajputana Rifles and the 6th Jats as a beginning. It was touch and go during September whether we could shore up the tottering walls of the United Provinces against the heavy seas that were battering it from the Punjab. With a less resolute and energetic commander in the United Provinces and less experienced subordinates under him we should without doubt have failed. We were there threatened by a widespread rising of Sikhs and Jats.

On the night of the 24th September General Curtis played our last card. We had not another man to put in to hold the wall and all was going against us except one thing—by now the police were showing signs of recovery.

At a meeting with the ministry that night he told them that the Army Commander intended to institute martial law forthwith in the northern areas of the province. If we did this then the whole world would know that the United Provinces government could no longer govern; suspicion would become knowledge of what had for weeks been a fact. If we could apply it there, then we could apply it everywhere in the province. He knew only too well that neither he nor I could find the officers to administer martial law in even so restricted an area. But, who else was to know? The response was to ask him what added powers came to us through martial law. He told them the conditions that he must insist upon and pointed out that under martial law all the odium of stern measures would fall on him rather than on them who were possibly less well placed to bear it. But they preferred the odium of imposing severe measures to that of succumbing to martial law. So they banned the carrying by Sikhs of *kirpans* longer than nine inches, gave the widest powers to Commissioners, agreed to segregate Sikh refugees in the areas about Dehra Doon into two places, Premnagar and Chakrata, and there to disarm them, to segregate Hindu and Muslim refugees—the latter to Saharanpur for better protection—put a considerable part of their police force under the direct control of General Curtis, and took other useful measures. This forceful action was worth many battalions to us.

General Curtis, who had served with Sikhs all his career, issued a note on the carrying of *kirpans*: the note was sent to Army Headquarters, to the United Provinces government and to all our Areas. He pointed out that there were now large numbers of refugees in the province and their numbers were likely to be further increased. Amongst these were many Sikhs, of whom a large proportion were armed with *talwars* (curved swords), which they called *kirpans*, slung across the body, and in addition they carried a sword. They thus had an advantage over every other community. Up to the end of the first world war, all Sikhs used to wear a miniature *kirpan* attached to the comb in their hair. As a reward for services in that war, they were authorised to wear *kirpans*, the length of which was restricted to, I think, ten inches. On return from overseas, *kirpans* were provided under regimental arrangements for every man in the battalion to which Curtis then belonged. Orders were issued for these to be carried at all times. After a month, the Sikh officers asked for the order to be rescinded. This was agreed to, and all ranks reverted to the practice of wearing a miniature *kirpan* attached to the comb. There would seem to be no religious justification whatever for the present practice of carrying swords, which gave them this advantage over other communities, and the mere possession of which was likely to lead to incidents when passions were aroused.

Wherever one went in the province one met Indians who said that they had heard that we were coming back to take charge or that we were not going at all – wishful thinking born of their agony.

Here, also, the students could not keep silent while great doings were about them. Mr. R. K. Bhatnagar, Convener of the United Provinces Students' Congress Council of Action, announced that a section of the Press had begun to believe the U.P.S.C. to be in action earlier than their 'direct action' was timed to start. So far the Council of Action had given neither the call for a no-fee campaign nor for a general strike. Its notice to the United Provinces government was to expire on the 24th September. Instructions for the struggle would be issued to units after that and then alone would students act. They should, in the meanwhile, remain completely peaceful and disciplined. An emergency meeting of the Council of Action was to be held on the 22nd September to decide the method of the struggle to be launched against the government. One representative from each district had been invited and he must make it a point to attend the meeting.

The Working Committee of the United Provinces Students' Federation issued notices for a meeting in Lucknow on the 23rd and 24th September to finalise the steps to be taken against the recent enhancement of tuition fees in the light of the latest press note of the Minister for Education and the decisions of the United Provinces Students' Congress.

Later in September we had some success in unravelling the political tangle in Calcutta which had made a small event on the 1st September into an historical one. Provocative leaflets, broadcast doubtless by this same Mahasabha and perhaps by the Forward

Bloc<sup>83</sup>, showing Hindu girls being paraded before Punjab Muslims, were found by us in the last days of August on the streets of the town. The pirate radio broadcaster had also been at work egging Hindus on to avenge the cruelties of the West Punjab. Then came a clash with Sikhs and Hindus against Muslims. Then the affair of the boy at the cinema came as a God-sent opportunity to turn peace into strife.

A very occasional red shirt denoted the formation of the Communist Red Guard. It was of little significance at this time, but may be more important to India in the years to come.

Here and there we heard of molestation of European women by Sikhs. Otherwise, Calcutta was again quiet though filthy.

In Bengal was proceeding a great switch of official and industrial employees between the Muslim and Hindu dominions. Wherever these unfortunates tried to sell up their property the opposite community so boycotted the sale that they bought it for little or nothing. In Hindu West Bengal there was slowly starting a privately expressed disappointment with the results of independence. It had been expected that dawn would break at once and that the government would forthwith embark upon constructive projects, agricultural, medical, domestic. Others hoped for greater persecution of Muslims. None felt satisfied.

In Muslim East Bengal there was a general restriction of exports of articles of food for Assam or West Bengal. The export of jute was closed down. Hindu professional men were boycotted.

Thousands of famished men, women and children, dressed in rags, were to be seen loitering in the streets of Chittagong day and night, begging for food and alms, a reminder of the pitiful scenes of 1943.

Reports of deaths from starvation were constantly dribbling in from the villages. The general vitality of the people had deteriorated from want of proper nourishment. For one thing, milk had become scarce owing to widespread mortality among cattle during the recent floods.

From Assam there was little to report—only that the Assamese, Muslim as well as Hindu, were about as provincial-minded as they could be, determined to stop Muslim penetration from East Pakistan, and that the Governor was remarking on the very weak state into which the administration has got, and the difficulty of getting orders carried out expeditiously or with efficiency, etc. etc., while Mr. Bardoloi, the Premier, was reported in the very same edition of the *Statesman* of the 5th October as saying that the

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<sup>83</sup> Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose's party.

administration in Assam was one of the best in India. The Assam government had obviously taken the Governor's words to heart and improved Assam's administration to a very high degree of efficiency in a very short time.

Bihar and Orissa remained at peace, only the Adibassis being at all truculent, parading at Ranchi and places in Sing-bhum with spears, bows, arrows and swords, defying the police and shouting slogans for their own independence from the hated and greedy Hindu. One always felt sympathy for these honest little dark men.

We had our troubles in the Army, mainly the growing hatred and restlessness where Muslim units and parts of units were kept kicking their heels, daily expecting the order to go to Pakistan, daily disappointed. In the Indian Armoured Training Centre at Jhansi were whole squadrons of Sikhs and whole squadrons of Muslims both waiting for despatch to their permanent units, almost sheek by jowl. The Commandant kept very careful tabs on all these difficult people.

Communal riots in the Punjab were affecting the morale of the troops. They were extremely worried for the safety of their families and unfortunately the breakdown of communications further aggravated the position. News in the Press was meagre and one-sided (depending on the political, communal party to which the paper belonged). This, coupled with the non-receipt of letters, was the cause of grave anxiety. The divergent views of the two governments through the radio and the Press were not at all conducive to a healthy atmosphere, for the troops were far more communal-minded than ever before.

We had liaison parties up in the Punjab with Brigadier Salomon, commanding the 123rd Brigade that we had lent to that Command. These parties sought out the missing relatives of our men in the Command. Army Headquarters in Delhi was arranging for radio broadcasts to give names and whereabouts of refugees so that our soldiers might at least know that their relatives were bodily safe.

At the end of August we had sent out circulars<sup>84</sup> to our Indian troops to tell them how deeply concerned we were for them in these anxious days, exhorting them to put aside all ideas of revenge and to treat the Muslim soldiers, now leaving them, with kindness and generosity until they bade them farewell. Mercifully, our exhortations and appeals fell on receptive hearts and we had no communal occurrence to disgrace the honour of our soldiers.

There was one foul episode. This was in a unit coming from outside into Eastern Command. Some Hindu and Sikh men of a paratroop formation passing from Pakistan into Dehra Doon on transfer, attacked, stabbed and threw Muslims out of the train near

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<sup>84</sup> Appendix III, Talking Points Nos. 39 and 40.

Moradabad. A following goods train picked up dead and injured. At Moradabad in the United Provinces the train was suddenly surrounded by the armed police. Some of these savages tried to escape but were prevented.

The officer-in-charge did his best to conceal the numbers of his men. However, the armed police did their job like soldiers and the party was brought to book.

We were lucky. I finally left the Command on the 17th November. By then we had had no bad communal incident among our men and expected none, for we were through that worst time when for weeks there was no movement at all of Pakistan men out of Hindustan. By mid-November, by sea at Bombay and by train through the Punjab, the exchange of men and their families was briskly proceeding.

The responsibility on the shoulders of our V.C.O.s was immense. One of our Subadar Majors told me that he himself was having a twenty-four-hour working day to prevent the battalion from breaking up from communal antagonism. They carried their burden loyally and manfully and behaved with a toleration that the whole of civilian India would do well to mark and imitate.

## XXXVII

### MORE REPORTS FROM THE PUNJAB

#### September

All men love liberty and seem bent on destroying her.  
VOLTAIRE.

One of my officers had cause to tour the Punjab<sup>85</sup> in September. Here are extracts from what he had to say. The Punjab slaughter had been going on for about a month.

*10th September. Discussing the situation in East Punjab with \_\_\_\_ (Police Officer).*

He is very worried about the position of the Sikh and Hindu refugees who are now in East Punjab. The East Punjab government appear to be doing little or nothing to rehabilitate these destitutes on the land or in the houses vacated by the Muslims. He has urged the East Punjab government to take immediate steps to set up some machinery to deal with this most urgent problem. While no machinery exists persons are quietly taking possession of properties without authority. Some large Sikh landowners from Montgomery district have come across into East Punjab and have laid claim to large areas of land vacated by Muslims. As he says, this will lead to serious trouble and end in the "Have Nots" rebelling against the "Haves".

*13th September.*

A reliable British lieutenant-colonel in the Pakistan Army stated that some 250 armed Pathans from the Frontier have drifted into Lahore and the surrounding villages. More have come to Rawalpindi. That a number of armed Pathans from Swat have moved over the hills into the Kashmir Valley, that the motor road from Murree to Srinagar is not safe, and that an arrangement has been made to evacuate Europeans without their kit from Srinagar to Rawalpindi by convoy.

*14th September.*

The condition of a trainload of Muslim refugees<sup>86</sup>. [Had it not been for the timely intervention of one of our Hindu battalions, the Royal Garhwal Rifles, the passengers on this train would have been virtually wiped out by Sikhs.]

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<sup>85</sup> See Map No. 8.

This train had already been derailed twice before, first 4 miles west of Kapurthala, and again just before reaching Jullundur. This is confirmed by the railway authorities. It is also learnt that these evacuees were searched by police and military in Jullundur and they were refused water to drink. On their arrival in Amritsar their condition was beyond description. There were dead and dying in every rail truck, and their beddings were covered by bile and excreta. The smell was almost unbearable. It is said that approximately too women were abducted at the first derailment and several killed. Police reports state that the train arrived in Jullundur 12th September evening with 145 dead, of which 100 had been killed and 45 had died for want of food and water. During the search by the police in Amritsar some 50 to 60 women and children died of thirst, hunger and sunstroke, as no efforts had been made to give these people water, although there was a plentiful supply in the station. No civil medical aid was available. The day was extremely hot, the search lasted from 9 a.m. to 2.30 p.m. and most of the refugees were in open or closed steel goods waggons.

Communal feeling had reached a high level in Amritsar on 13th September after a Hindu Sikh refugee train had arrived from Lahore [Pakistan] and refugees described to the local people that they had been detained at Badamibagh, Shandara and searched by the police. Also it was said that some of the women were stripped of their clothes, and one woman is supposed to have arrived in Amritsar without clothes.

After hearing these stories the Sikhs were determined to take revenge and took it. The local police were conspicuous by their absence during the whole of this outrage.

The total number of deaths from all causes for this Muslim refugee train while in Amritsar alone was about 120. Thirty corpses of Muslims from this train were collected by the railway staff from the vicinity of the railway station yard and platform.

Some 50 to 60 bodies were thrown out from the train between 9 a.m. and 2.30 p.m. as the people died during the search on 13th September. [Seen by one of my officers.]

Twenty-one corpses were counted by my officers on the 14th September lying around the train at the place of derailment. These died during the night 13/14th September. Only two of these had died as a result of the derailment. The rest, mostly children and old men and women, had died of heat-stroke, thirst and starvation. Some 50 percent of the evacuees had *atta* [flour] with them, and started cooking at dawn on 14th September. The main reason for the starvation was that they had been refused water at Jullundur and throughout the journey had not been given an opportunity to cook owing to derailments and attacks by Hindus and Sikhs.

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<sup>86</sup> Leaving Hindustan.



15th September.

Amritsar today.

Amritsar today resembles an armed camp. Almost every Sikh carries either a spear or a sword. Spears are illegal and the police have been told to confiscate them, but they are either afraid to do so, or have not the desire to do so. The police of Calcutta were bad enough, but the police of East Punjab are utterly and entirely useless. Practically no crime cases have been lodged in the past three months. The administrative collapse of the police and civil organisation of East Punjab is to some extent due to the fact that all records were in Lahore, and most officials and a large percentage of the constables and minor officials have gone to Pakistan. It will take at least a year or two of peace to build up a proper police and civil administration for this province.

In the meantime practically all Muslims, apart from those in evacuee camps, have left their homes in the Amritsar district for Pakistan. There is no necessity for Sikhs to carry swords and spears for their protection. These are being carried for display and swank, and so that they can rapidly collect into armed jathas for killing off Muslim evacuees. These evacuees are well guarded and *Musalman Ka Shikar* [hunting Muslims], as it is called, is becoming a dangerous task.

Now that the looting and killing of Muslims is becoming difficult, some of these armed Sikhs are taking to intimidation of passers-by at the Pul Porain [wooden staircase flybridge near the Railway Station, Amritsar], and at the Rego Bridge also near the Railway Station, and are demanding money from Hindus by threats. This is entirely a police matter and it is up to them to stop it. If they don't, and I don't believe they are capable of doing it, this will spread into general intimidation and lawlessness of the "Have Nots" against the "Haves".

The condition of the railway station is indescribable. Sikh and Hindu evacuees are everywhere, and the front porch and the whole station stinks of human excreta and urine. Masses of flies are carrying infection from the filth all round to the food the evacuees are eating, as they sit in this scene of "Disgrace Abounding".

When several lakhs further evacuees arrive, which is anticipated during the next few weeks, it is impossible even to picture the condition of this and other evacuee areas.

Little has been done to rehabilitate evacuees, and it is rumoured that rehabilitation officials are making considerable money in the allocation of ex-Muslim property. [Unconfirmed but almost certainly true.]

The problem of rehabilitation of this vast horde of destitutes appears, at any rate at the moment, quite beyond the scope of the East Punjab authorities. The authorities here and in West Pakistan are faced with the greatest evacuee movement in history, and in the case of East Punjab the problem is to be handled by a civil administration that is significant by its incompetence. How long it will take for lawlessness and disease to readjust the economic balance, remains to be seen.

Some of the events such as murder, brutality, looting, ill-treatment of women and small children in evacuee trains, the results of vicious hatred and communal fury, have outdone even Belsen and other bestialities created by the warped Nazi mind.

A British officer who was captured in 1942 by the Japanese and worked on the Siam Railway said, "I thought the Japs knew how to pack a train of P.O.W.s to the limit, but this beats them hollow."

*23rd September.*

*Amritsar. Another Muslim refugee train.*

This morning, 22nd September '47, it was learnt that two Muslim evacuee trains were standing at Mananwala Railway Station some five miles east of Amritsar waiting to get the all-clear to proceed direct to Lahore. The military here made elaborate arrangements to prevent any incident, but were sadly lacking in numbers of troops owing to other commitments. At about midday the first train went through Amritsar Station without any mishap, but an attempt was made to attack it near Khalsa College about four miles down the line. The attackers were driven off by a military picket consisting of one officer and 15 men that were on duty there.

This made the mob very angry and the military picket had to fire spasmodically to keep the mob from attacking them.

At about 5 p.m. the second train went through, but the train was halted near Khalsa College as it was found that the lines had been removed by the mob.

Immediately the train had halted a Sikh-Hindu Jatha of about 8,000 in number made determined attacks on the train with rifles, Stens, *kirpans*, spears and other weapons. The military picket, with the help of the escort of I.B.O., 2 Havildars and 12 I.O.R's of a Field Regiment (Note: both the picket and escort, except for one officer, were Hindu troops) were able to hold them off, but it was soon found that the picket was running short of ammunition, so they had to withdraw after expending all but one Sten magazine.

This picket withdrew to Khalsa College, where it informed Bde. of the situation and asked for help.

A Dogra company of the Baluch Regt. was sent out as soon as possible, but by the time they arrived at the scene of the incident the mob had overpowered the escort, having shot the B.O. and one Havildar, and injured 5 of the others (the lives of the rest of the escort were spared only because they were Hindu troops) and had attacked the evacuees, killing and injuring almost all.

The Dogra company opened fire and dispersed the mob, killing and injuring quite a large number (correct figures unknown, but the casualties from military firing can be considered as fairly high).

About 1 a.m., 23rd September, the train was brought back to Amritsar Station for the remainder of the night.

It may be noted that the civil authorities here had done absolutely nothing in the way of organising medical aid or giving the few remaining live evacuees any water. I requested one of the Dogra officers to detail some of his men to get water and give it to these people, and I and another officer assisted. I do not think I have ever witnessed such cold-bloodedness by any human beings as I witnessed last night from the civil authorities.

The previous incident (see my note dated 14th September '47), which occurred almost at the same place was a minor affair to this. In every carriage without exception the dead and dying were mixed up with the wounded – it was certainly a train of death; the train was also well riddled with bullets, they appeared to be mostly Sten and rifle bullet holes, and all the shutters and windows had been smashed.

It was estimated that there were 2,000-2,500 evacuees on this train, out of which 1,000 or more have been killed, the rest, with the exception of about 100, have been injured; through lack of medical attention another 50 percent of these will probably die during the next few days.

Throughout September I was along with the Railway Police struggling to save life and keep the trains moving in North Rajputana in conditions of the utmost difficulty. We succeeded in getting 5,000 Muslims out of Narnaul, a railside town in Patiala State, where there was a wholesale organised massacre going on. We got 6,000 out of Bharatpur, and had to fight every train through. On the 19th I got a wire telling me to hand over duties at once to C.C. Ajmer. We have the satisfaction of having brought off the biggest police job of our lives.

*The Tale of a Dogra Company (Hindus) on its Journey from Razmak to Lucknow*

The Company left Razmak for Bannu on 8th September. The night 8/9th September was spent in the Bannu Rest Camp where there appeared to be no signs of any tension whatsoever.

On 9th September we moved to Mari-Indus by road, providing an escort for B.O.s and I.O.R's detained at Bannu due to a ban imposed on the movement of all military personnel on the Bannu-Mari Indus line. This ban was imposed on account of the fact that a week previously two Sikh I.O.R's had been killed in the train while proceeding from Mari-Indus to Bannu. Sections of the Bannu-Mari Indus road were patrolled by troops of 2nd Frontier Force Regiment and there was very little movement of local inhabitants seen en route.

We were detained at Mari-Indus as it was not considered safe for us to move beyond Mari-Indus to Lahore via Mianwali due to the seriousness of the trouble then prevalent in the whole of the Mianwali district.

On 11th September we mounted a guard over 650 Hindu refugees who were brought to Mari-Indus for onward despatch to Mianwali where a refugee camp had been established.

While at Mari-Indus the non-Muslim shopkeepers in the camp repeatedly requested us to smuggle them away in our train as they considered themselves unsafe in present conditions. This sense of fear was further increased by the arrival in Mari-Indus of the Guides Cavalry (a Pakistan unit) on their way to Dera Ismail Khan, who openly declared that they would one day "cut them up for meat".

On 13th September we entrained for Rawalpindi. The train was not a military special and was, until half an hour before its scheduled time of departure, a normal mixed train carrying in the main Muslim I.O.R. leave details from Waziristan Area. At 6.30 p.m. orders were received from H.Q. Waziristan Area that the train would carry us to Rawalpindi.

Due to insufficient accommodation all Muslim military personnel were detrained and their accommodation allotted to our Company. It is reasonable to assume that due to the last-minute change in the composition of the train any gangs who might have been bent on mischief were not given enough time to organise themselves, and so no attack was made on the train. We arrived in Rawalpindi on 14th September. We were accommodated in the Rest Camp where there were both Muslims and non-Muslims in transit. There were no signs of any tension and troops moved about freely within the limits of the camp.

On 20th September we left Rawalpindi on a military special for Delhi. We were detailed as escort for the train which carried B.O's, B.O.R's, V.C.O's, I.O.R's and families. Every station from Rawalpindi to Lahore was patrolled by troops and no one was allowed on to the platforms. From what could be seen from a moving train, it appeared that things were normal. The train was detained overnight at Lahore (20th/21st September). The railway station was a mass of human beings, presumably Muslim refugees awaiting onward despatch.

On 21st September the train did not leave Lahore as was intended because a report had been received that a Muslim mob had gathered at Harbanspura and was waiting to attack any train passing that way from Lahore.

From a conversation with a Muslim V.C.O. at Lahore station, it appeared that it was the confirmed opinion of all Muslims that the Sikhs were wholly and solely responsible for the trouble in the Punjab. He declared that not a single Sikh was left in Lahore and it was the intention that not a single Sikh would ever enter Lahore again. He maintained that the Muslims had nothing against the Hindus and he assured us that if the Dogra company wanted to move about either in the station or outside, they were at liberty to do so and they would not be touched by any Muslim. This V.C.O. described in some detail the horrible outrages performed by Sikhs against Muslim women and children. He said the Sikhs were the enemies of the Hindus and the time would come when they would turn on and attack the Hindus. To support this he cited instances in Amritsar where the Sikhs had hauled down the Indian Union flag and hoisted the Sikh flag instead. This was evidently a false statement as all the way from Attari to Amritsar and beyond, the Indian Union flag was seen flying from all railway stations and overhead bridges.

On 22nd September the train left Lahore at 11.30 a.m. At Harbanspura we saw the results of the previous night's attack on a refugee train—dead bodies were lying on the railway track. Locals at Attari informed us that about 1,500 non-Muslims had been killed in the attack on the train and that the Muslims had been working all night to remove the bodies so as to show no trace of the attack. When we passed the place about 30-40 bodies were lying on the track and they were being removed under military supervision. The smell in the area was dreadful. At Attari, the first railway station on the Indian border, the train was given a rousing welcome by the local Sikhs. Food and water were distributed freely amongst all, including the troops. We were looked upon as martyrs who had been imprisoned by the Pakistan Government and had only just been set free. The main topic of conversation was the previous night's attack on the refugee train at Harbanspura. The population were infuriated and declared that not a single Muslim refugee train would enter Pakistan—every one would be attacked and the occupants killed. At Khalsa railway station (about ten miles from Amritsar) the train was again detained owing to the line ahead having been tampered with. The locals openly admitted that they had tampered with the line and that their intention was to

stop the up Muslim refugee train and slay every individual in it by way of revenge against the Harbanspura incident.

Troops report that at about 5.30 a.m. on 23rd September a body of Sikhs passed the station on their way home with their spears smeared in blood. It was rumoured that every Muslim on that train was killed and that the attack was organised as a minor military operation, with covering fire from L.M.G's and rifles for those who went in with knives and spears. All that remained in evidence of the attack when we passed through were empty boxes and torn clothing and patches of blood.

The train left Amritsar at 3 p.m. The smell from the dead bodies on the station was unbearable. The bodies were on some back platform and could not be seen.

All along the way from Amritsar for a distance of about ten to fifteen miles numerous groups of Sikhs with spears and swords and knives could be seen converging on a small railway station where a refugee-filled train was standing with no engine. It appears that the engine driver, having come to hear of the impending attack, detached his engine from the train and started off for Amritsar. We actually did pass a lone engine on the up line making for Amritsar. No attack was made on the train while we were in that vicinity as the mob had not then reached the station where the train was standing.

Beyond Jullundur there seemed to be no sign of trouble, though up to Ambala thousands of refugees (non-Muslims) were on the stations waiting to board trains.

At Jullundur I spoke to a respectable Sikh gentleman and he said that the Sikhs would now only let a refugee train go through to Pakistan unmolested provided one came from there unmolested. This he said equally applied to road and foot convoys.

At Delhi railway station a man was stabbed on the platform on which our train was standing. The crime was committed in the rear of the platform, an isolated place, where there were neither troops nor civilians. The man who committed the crime evidently made good his escape.

The train remained in Delhi for four hours. Things appeared to be normal. Sikhs with their nine-inch *kirpans* were very much in evidence on all platforms, especially where incoming trains were expected.

The reaction of the troops to the present situation is one of complete disgust. The plight of the refugees, both Muslims and non-Muslims, aroused their sympathy.

They maintain that both parties are equally responsible for the trouble prevailing in the Punjab. Some of the more educated are asking "What price freedom?"

### *A Report of his Journey from Montgomery to Meerut by a Sikh Subadar*

I left Montgomery by the Karachi Mail at 3.30 p.m., 22nd August '47. We arrived at Raiwind Jn. at 7.30 p.m. I had to change there and waited until 11.30 p.m. on the station. At about 10 p.m. some 200 Punjabi Muslims armed with swords attacked the station and looted the Hindus and Sikhs on the station. Some 10 persons were killed. There was a military train guard who fired and dispersed the looters wounding several of them. The guards appeared to be Punjabi Muslims of perhaps the Baluch Regiment.<sup>87</sup> When the train started I and a Punjabi Muslim Havildar and Hindu Sepoy got into the guard's van where there were two armed Sepoy guards—one Hindu and one Punjabi Muslim. As I was a Sikh I kept out of sight while in Pakistan as there was considerable trouble at each station over looting. We arrived at Ferozepore at 3 a.m., 23rd August. The train remained there until midday, when it departed. There was no trouble at Ferozepore. In between Faridkot and Jind States there were large numbers of Sikhs and Hindus at every station. They were checking at each station to see there were no Muslims on board the train. I took the Punjabi Muslim Havildar into my 1st Class compartment and hid him in it. There was a retired Sikh Captain in the carriage with me and he helped to hide the Havildar. The Sikh looters came on many occasions and I assured them that there were no Muslims in the carriage and even had to take oaths to this effect. If I had not shown them my pistol and threatened them, however, I think they would have tried to force their way in on more than one occasion. We arrived safe and sound in Meerut midday, 24th August, after a most harassing journey.

#### FROM ONE OF MY STAFF OFFICERS

*23rd September*

The present situation in both East and West Punjab has considerably improved, the reason being that the Sikhs and Hindus in West Punjab have all left their villages and are being concentrated in evacuee camps. For this reason there are no killings, lootings or burning of villages. The same has happened in regard to the Muslims in East Punjab. The only incidents that occur now are attacks on convoys, caravans and evacuee trains. These are heavily guarded with troops available, and attacks on convoys and evacuee trains are becoming more and more costly to the attackers. I visited Pakistan on two occasions and had long discussions with officers working in this area. There is no doubt whatsoever that the Sikhs of East Punjab are far more vindictive; they take every opportunity of derailing trains and attacking convoys with swords and spears which the civil authorities have not got the guts to confiscate. The attacks that are taking place on Sikh and Hindu convoys in West Punjab are more in the form of a reprisal for attacks taking place on Muslim convoys in East Punjab. If the Sikhs could be made to stop their

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<sup>87</sup> For some reason, the majority of Muslim soldiers were ordinarily reported by observers as being of the Baluch Regiment.

brutal vindictiveness then the Muslims would probably do the same. Major-General Chimni has a target of a fortnight for the transfer of this enormous population. It is more likely to take six weeks from the date of the writing of this note before this population can be transferred. If attacks on convoys, caravans and evacuee trains ceased, it would probably be possible to transfer this population within the specified fortnight. The season for sowing pulses will end about 1st October, the season for sowing wheat will close about 1st November. It is considered that there are approximately 1,500,000 Hindu and Sikh evacuees from West Punjab to be rehabilitated in East Punjab. Of this about 1,000,000 are agriculturists. Newspaper reports from both sides give figures of rehabilitation of personnel—for instance that 25,000 have been rehabilitated on the land. These newspaper reports and this propaganda from the government are gross misrepresentations of facts. Most of these people have rehabilitated themselves by taking up land evacuated by the Muslims in East Punjab. They have no ploughs, they have no cattle and they have no seed. In order that East Punjab should produce crops it will be necessary to supply at least 20,000 ploughs and 1,000,000 ploughing cattle together with the requisite seed by 1st November, and this task is far beyond the scope of any government, let alone the present government in East Punjab. Many of these evacuees will die of disease and others of hunger and starvation during the next year and, as many of them have no clothing, they will die of cold during the winter.

This disaster to the Punjab started with the veneer of politics. It is, of course, directly the result of the words and actions of responsible leaders and still more the irresponsible Press. Politics, leaders and the Press can be held to account for 20 percent of the responsibility of this crisis, the remaining 80 percent is entirely due to greed on the part of both communities in East and West Punjab. Muslims in West Punjab saw that by butchering and attacking Sikhs and Hindus who owned property and land, they could drive them out thereby acquiring their land, and exactly the same happened in East Punjab, where Sikhs and Hindus attacked the Muslims, driving them out in order to acquire their land. Both communities are equally to blame and the leaders of both communities and the Press of both communities are also equally to blame. The Punjab has been ruined financially for the next five years. The majority of the industries in West Punjab were owned by Hindus and Sikhs, whereas the Muslims have no knowledge of running these industries and they will be a dead loss until such time as the Muslims gain the necessary knowledge.

As regards casualties on both sides it is impossible to give any exact figure, and no exact figure will ever be given, but from investigations carried out it is fairly safe to say that something in the neighbourhood of 100,000 to 200,000 Muslims have been killed in East Punjab and 100,000 to 200,000 Sikhs and Hindus have been killed in West Punjab. The Muslims of East Punjab were poor except for those living in cities where they were running factories such as the carpet factories of Amritsar and therefore the gain to East Punjab is small from the financial point of view, but the loss to the Hindus and Sikhs



who were living in West Punjab is enormous. There is no doubt whatsoever that the police of both East and West Punjab joined in the slaughter and looting of minority communities. There is no authentic case of troops in East Punjab running amok and joining in the slaughter of minorities. In West Punjab on the outbreak of the disturbances certain companies of the Regiment in Sheikupura joined in; the officer in charge is under close arrest pending a court martial, the troops have been confined to barracks and the C.O. has been suspended. This is the only case of the Army taking a communal turn. Reports from several sources are continually being received of the Baluch Regiment firing. Practically every case is false. Typical of this type of information is that the Garhwalis fired while escorting a column of Muslim refugees from Taran Taran. The G.S.O. (Intelligence) was there on the spot. Some 60 Sikh goondas hung around the flank and the rear of the column with swords and spears and repeatedly tried to get in to cut up the marching column. This Hindu battalion fired on these hooligans repeatedly throughout the march which was some 12 miles, the number of refugees somewhere in the vicinity of now and the column 10 miles long. Frantic messages came up to the civil authorities to the effect that the Garhwal Rifles were firing indiscriminately at all passers-by. Although this is my own Regiment I should like to state that the complete impartiality and complete lack of communal influence in the Royal Garhwal Rifles is astonishing. N.C.O's and Riflemen when entrusted with the guarding of a convoy have not the slightest hesitation in firing on Sikhs and Hindus at the smallest provocation as soon as they get anywhere near the convoy. During my stay with them I was out on several occasions and witnessed this.

Political leaders of both sides have stressed the necessity for refugees to stay in their own areas and particularly for Muslims to remain in the Indian Dominion. Both sides have guaranteed the security of the minority community. If they could guarantee the security of the minority community why did they not do it during the past month? There is no doubt whatsoever that the Muslims now living in Hindustan have not the slightest confidence in the Hindu government as regards the security of life or property. It is my personal belief that sooner or later every Muslim will have to leave India because they will be forced out by persons who are determined to get their land and property. It is something far beyond the capacity of the civil administration to stop and the quicker the transfer of population takes place and the rehabilitation of the Muslim community, the better. There are a number of officers and men now serving in the Indian Army who have volunteered to serve the Dominion of India even though they are Muslims. It would be advisable within the next month or two to ask these persons if they wish to reconsider their decisions and give them the opportunity of going to Pakistan if necessary, otherwise one is likely to be nursing a viper in one's bosom.

The relation between the Army and the Sikh jathas is of interest. How long this particular type of relationship will continue is not known. The Indian Army is entrusted with the work of protecting and defending Muslim refugees during their evacuation. The Sikh jathas are intent on killing as many as they can. As a result the Indian Army is

repeatedly firing on Sikh *Fathas* and will continue to do so. The Sikhs appear to take this as the Army doing their job and seem to bear no resentment whatsoever against either Indian or British officers for carrying out the work they have been instructed to supervise. However, should the feeling of the Sikh *Fathas* change and an antagonism between the Army carrying out this duty and the Sikhs take place, then the situation will be extremely grave as these Sikh jathas would then start ambushing and attacking isolated trucks, thereby forcing the Army to use larger numbers of personnel in the escort of small parties.

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On the morning of the 7th September, Delhi, too, blew up with a loud explosion. It seems that it was started by non-Muslim refugees from the West Punjab of whom there were no less than 200,000 in and about Delhi. In Connaught Place in New Delhi, where such a thing had only once before been known, there was hooliganism and looting. Soldiers turned out to reinforce the police and picketed the streets. A drive through Connaught Place soon after the affray showed all Muslim shops burst open, looted and their contents strewn far and wide across the street.

For weeks afterwards no Muslim servant from the residential quarter of New Delhi could venture out of his master's compound to visit the bazaar. It was a reign of terror such as we had only too often experienced in Calcutta.

One of my majors was at Delhi railway station on the 8th September. He had been detailed for regimental duty at Delhi and Meerut. After finishing his duty at Delhi, he arrived at the station at about half-past seven on the morning of the 8th September to catch the train to Meerut. As he was entering the station he saw before him a crowd consisting mainly of Sikhs. On looking more closely he discerned about six Sikhs with large *kirpans* slashing a Muslim lying on the station platform. They had finished him by the time he had taken it all in, so he went on to the R.T.O.'s office on the platform.

At the R.T.O.'s office he found about a dozen British soldiers, all unarmed, waiting for a train to Deolali; some of them were from the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment. He asked them what was going on and they said the Sikhs (in all about 200-300 on the station) were searching around for Muslims and killing them. Within the next five minutes he himself saw three more Muslims chased and killed by Sikhs. He then asked the R.T.O. if there were any military guard on the station. He answered that there was, but it was not to be seen, so our major walked all round the station looking for them but failed to find any trace of them. However, he did see three more bodies obviously killed by swords. One was a Muslim soldier, probably a follower, judging by the way he was dressed. Then he returned to the R.T.O.'s office and Station Master's office to enquire about his train but was told that no trains would leave while the fracas lasted. So he tried to ring G.H.Q. in New Delhi for transport to get the B.O.R.s and himself away

from the station, but all the telephones were dead. He went back to the R.T.O.'s office just in time to witness three more murders, the last one committed about four yards from him.

He had noticed a Sikh in military uniform with a large *kirpan* leading these last murders. This was obviously the leader, for he was called to do the killing whenever a Muslim was found. After each killing he raised his sword aloft while the Sikhs around cheered. He was helped by others and usually followed by three or four Hindus who stuck spears into the bodies when they were dead.

After the last killing the officer walked up to this Sikh to learn his unit. He asked the Sikh if he was mad. Even if he had suffered in the Punjab, would he, if bitten by a mad dog, bite it back? He pointed out that his last victim was a very old Muslim who had no chance whatsoever of protecting himself. Although this poor victim had run towards the British soldiers, they could do nothing, being unarmed and completely outnumbered, while some of the Sikhs were carrying revolvers and at least two had rifles.

The Sikh replied in English smothered with bad language that he had better mind his own business or he would get it as well. By this time the major had taken a good look at the Sikh from close quarters and in his report noted that he had all the appearance of a military officer by his dress and by the way he held himself.

The Sikh then walked off, but the British officer had marked him well, hoping to find him again when he could lay hands on some armed military. Most of the British soldiers left the station by truck at that time, about 8 a.m., so he went up to the restaurant to get some tea. Near the restaurant he met a Sikh captain who said he was from Bengal and Assam Area H.Q. Both were heading the same way so they decided to go together. At about 9.30 a.m. the two officers went out to look for the Sikh ringleader. By then the military arrived to clear the station for some Airborne troops, about 200 Muslims, who had been waiting outside the station since early morning to get a special train for Pakistan. Under command of an Indian captain, the Hindu troops soon cleared the station very efficiently. Our officer told them what he had seen and then he and the Sikh officer walked about the station looking for the Sikh who had committed these murders, but there was no sign of him and most of the Sikhs had gone.

There was no further trouble on the station but the Pakistan special was cancelled owing to the tension. The British officer and the Sikh captain left on a train at 12.20 p.m. for Meerut. Nothing further happened except that on the journey they protected a U.P. Muslim police officer and his sister by taking them into their carriage, as the Sikh officer had found out that the Sikh refugees on the train were after them.

There was butchery on the trains running between Delhi and our United Provinces. On the 7th September a train left Delhi station: it got only as far as Nizamuddin, a mile or two outside, when Sikhs on the train pulled the communication cord. The train stopped and these so-called men got out and systematically butchered every single Muslim on the train. We were hard put to it to find train escorts from the United Provinces area to take trains into Delhi and were lucky not to have a major incident within our borders. General Curtis had, for some weeks previously, by pressing the local government, succeeded in getting armed police guards on to all the trains, and it is probable that the fact that he had for many days been alive to the possibility of this trouble gave him a flying start in train protection. It was between Muttra and Delhi that journeys were the most precarious in our borders. Army Headquarters (India) now introduced the death sentence for anyone in charge of a train or convoy whose charge was attacked and on which casualties were inflicted owing to his failure to act against the attackers. This was a confession of the state to which we were reduced in the Punjab.

Sikh savagery was appalling. Long after the victim was dead they would slash and slash away at the body, carving it up. They, and many Hindus, were like dogs that had taken to killing sheep—just an insensate, devilish lust to wallow in the blood of helpless creatures.

We had now come to the pass where our one and only hitherto reasonably reliable radio station, All-India Radio, was communal. There was nowhere in eastern India, except the Calcutta *Statesman*, whither we could turn for news.

## XXXVIII

### THE PASSING OF THE CRISIS

October – November

FROM the Arnrita Bazar Patrika:

#### GOOD-BYE TO 'ON HIS MAJESTY'S SERVICE'

Lucknow, Oct. 4.

*The U.P. Governor has ordered that in future the superscription 'On United Provinces Service' should be used on envelopes and other stationery in place of the existing superscription 'On His Majesty's Service'.*

*Jhak Khulgaya*, says a Punjabi—all restraint is lost, and lost for ever in the spilling of Muslim blood. That was what we felt in Eastern Command. The epitome of hatred, the Mahassabha and its half-secret fighting machine, the R.S.S. Sangh, were in full career, nail and tooth dripping blood. At Delhi Sirdar Patel was proclaiming what was now becoming apparent that there could be no peace until all Muslims had left the Eastern Punjab. Pakistan leaders took him up and protested against his intolerance. Pandit Nehru counselled moderation and peace and pointed an accusing finger at Hindu reactionaries who demanded for the Indian Dominion an all-Hindu State. Communists and Socialists, still intent on a united India, equally abused these same reactionaries. With these divergent minds it looked as though some sort of balance would be achieved for a time in eastern India. So it was. Our earlier weakness in troops was bit by bit made up from late October onwards by drafts of battalions slowly coming in from the Punjab to the United Provinces, as the fighting died down in the former province. With the extermination and eviction of Muslims, killing far and wide over the countryside decreased. All sadistic energies were bent to attacking the sorry streams of refugees who, with the little they could carry of their homes, slowly flowed along the main roads between the two halves of the once prosperous and happy Punjab, or passed over the border in overcrowded refugee trains. The soldiers' problem became narrower. It is to convoy these luckless people from their old homes of death and horror till they reached the strange new homes in an unknown place or died of exhaustion on the way to their promised land.

Even from distant Karachi, Hindu merchants and business men were fleeing from an unknown terror; perhaps needlessly, for Pakistan badly wanted them to stay and to continue the work of her prosperous port. Probably she would have protected them.

Pandit Pant in the United Provinces was exhorting Muslims to be loyal citizens of the Indian State. He had need to exhort, for he had in his province a potential fifth column of nine million Muslims.

All about us was talk of war. Even our Hindu Indian officers did not hesitate to tell us that within four months from November the two Dominions would be at each other's throats. Some pointed to the United Provinces and insisted that such large pockets of Muslims as Aligarh could not be allowed to exist right inside a Hindu population. They argued that they must be eliminated in order that they should not, when war came, rise in rebellion in aid of the Muslim power to the north.

In late October at Karachi, in Pakistan, even the coolies on the airfield talked of 'the war with the Hindus', and the war they meant was the fighting that had started in Kashmir. They regarded that as the first part of the big fight that was then beginning.

The two Dominions were by then leagues apart in sentiment and in actuality. Bank cheques, for instance, on Hindustan branches were not accepted by the Pakistan branch of the same bank. It was useless for politicians to talk of reuniting India. The seeds of hate against the British sown so widely by leading Congressmen were growing into great trees with a stinking crop of bloody fruit. We had warned Indians repeatedly that hate was all too fatally in use within the Hindu society of differences; they should not wilfully risk its increase. But they would not heed. Hate had become a habit: it is today a habit. No one can eradicate it: either it must burn itself out or else the system that breeds it must undergo a transformation.

Early in October Pakistan accused the Indian authorities of conniving at the crime of genocide. Who can say that the charge was unfounded?

India's riposte seems to have been to charge the British with selling to Pakistan serviceable tanks under the label of scrap iron. Her newspapers added to this an accusation that we and the United States were supplying arms and armaments to the Nizam of Hyderabad.

Communists yet beat the drum of hate against the British. They were about the only ones who could still take time from communal preoccupations to bang out that tune. Their line now was to accuse us of a deep-laid conspiracy to smuggle arms from Hindustan to Pakistan. Their proof was that a few British officers had in their possession a few unlicensed arms and unlicensed ammunition. They were foolish to be found in such a situation, at this of all times. The Amri'a Bazar Patrika, true to its xenophobia, had to take up the tune in order to indicate that the sin of communal hatred was matched by the vileness and treachery of British officers.

In mid-September Mrs. Pandit in New York said that 'We who come from the East, who are intimately familiar with the dire want and poverty and suffering and starvation that prevails there, may be forgiven for thinking, however, that ideology is less important than practice.' On the 12th October her brother, Pandit Nehru, was saying that the economic repercussions of the Punjab and Delhi riots meant that all India's plans for development had had to be suspended. All the idealistic thunderings of the past decades from India's leading politicians had led to practices far removed from their ideals and theories and to the sorry endings we have seen in these pages.

Myopia could hardly have been more severe than that of Dr. B. C. Roy (Governor-Designate of the United Provinces), who, at the height of the Punjab killings, on his return from America in November, told a Calcutta Press conference that the U.S.A. was in duty bound to help India financially or otherwise. The Marshall Plan was there to help in the reconstruction of Europe, for the destruction of which the U.S.A. considered herself to some extent responsible. What country, he asked, was more devastated as a result of World War II than India? The U.S.A. was partly responsible for India's war damage, etc., etc.

It is a fact that India gained more financially in the war than she ever lost. She suffered little war damage and money was poured into her by the U.S.A. and Britain. Since the war Indians have devastated great areas of their own land. Marshall Aid was never designed to restore the economy of countries so ravaged.

Far from seeking unity in the old India we had known, some provinces were steering towards India's Balkanisation by casting out from their governmental circles the one and only lingua franca India had used—English. In Bengal there was delay and confusion in the Secretariat because the order had gone out that minuting was to be in Bengali. By no means all of the staff and ministers themselves could speak or write this obscure tongue.

On the 12th November the Press informed us that the Supreme Commander's Headquarters were to close on the 30th November. The Supreme Commander, Field-Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck, had recommended to the Joint Defence Council of India and Pakistan that his H.Q. should be dissolved with effect from that date. They reported that the Supreme Commander had said that his reasons for this recommendation were that it was becoming impossible for him and his officers to discharge their tasks of reconstituting the former Armed Forces of British India into new and separate forces for India and Pakistan because of the absence of the necessary spirit of goodwill and cooperation between the principal parties concerned. Further, that the new Government of India had categorically affirmed their wish that the Supreme Commander's H.Q. should be closed on the 30th November as the task of reconstituting the Armed Forces had, in their opinion, been largely completed. In the opinion of the new Government of India, it was not necessary to retain the Supreme

Commander's H.Q. to finish the remaining work. This could be done by some other method to be agreed jointly between the Governments of India and Pakistan. The Government of Pakistan, on the other hand, were said to be equally insistent on the need for retaining the Supreme Commander's H.Q. in being as a neutral organisation until it had virtually concluded its tasks—that is until the 1st April 1948, the date originally laid down in the Joint Defence Council order of 11th August 1947, under which the Supreme Commander's H.Q. was constituted. The Pakistan Government considered that they had given and would continue to give full cooperation to the Supreme Commander's H.Q. The new Government of India also held that they too had given all necessary cooperation to the Supreme Commander.

Little as Supreme Headquarters mattered now in India, its departure meant the end of British control over the Armed Forces and that symbolised for the British officer the end of any sort of protection for himself and his family. Added to this feeling of uncertainty was the knowledge that if he stayed he would before long find himself involved in the violent quarrels of the two Dominions and perforce taking the one side or the other. It is characteristic of the British, nurtured on their team games, to take sides and to play all out for their side. Those officers at the top were doing this now, whether they realised it or not. An onlooker watched it with interest but with no surprise except in the one or two cases where personal ambition rather than the team spirit dictated the officer's attitude.

It was very easy for us to get involved in these disputes. The case of Kashmir and its counter-invasion has been mentioned. Later on, I shall talk of the case of Tripura State on the Assam border. With what now appeared to us to be the communal outlook of the external affairs office, no British commander could be sure of the purpose for which troops were demanded to go into the Indian States, while day by day it grew more obvious that the Government was becoming very 'light on the trigger' in using its army to persuade States to do what was right or to prevent anyone, either subject or outsider, from doing what in its eyes was wrong.

Our Hindu Indian officers held the view that Pakistan must fight soon while she had all the equipment left behind by Indian troops coming off the Frontier. Therefore, she would try to enrol all the British officers she could to help her get ready for the fray. Hindustan was getting rid of her British officers so that they might not stand between her and her prey when she found it necessary to pounce. So the talk went.

Needless to say, by now feelings between the two Dominions were so acute that India was straining her resources to the utmost to reinforce the Punjab border against Pakistan. In early November we again sent all we could to the aid of the Punjab, for by then our own Hindus, surfeited with the killing of Muslims, had temporarily laid aside their weapons. Only if there was war with Pakistan did we expect another widespread massacre. We were therefore only too ready to send northwards the little aid we could



spare in order to make a show of strength on the border and to keep our Sikhs from stirring up the Muslims against India. In the event of war, not a Muslim would be left alive in Hindustan: perhaps no Hindu would survive in Pakistan.

During October and November, after the reinforcement by Army Headquarters of our United Provinces garrison and after these fresh troops had gone into action, Eastern Command enjoyed a most unusual period of rest. There were many alarms: minor killings went on steadily in the United Provinces: but the civilian population as a whole gave us no serious cause for concern. It was within our own ranks that there was grave chance of serious killings between the now thoroughly disgruntled Muslim soldiers, detached from their parent unit, no longer belonging even to the Indian Army, and the jubilant Hindu sepoys.

Moreover, our Sikh soldiers were in a state of genuine anxiety and very touchy, for many of them had had no word of their homes and families in the West Punjab for over three months. We had no fear of an outbreak in the infantry battalions: it was on the Indian Regimental Centres and on the different Corps that we had to keep so careful a watch. But on the whole, what news now came through from the Punjab was heartening to those with homes in that province.

In Eastern Bengal, all about flooded Chittagong, there was famine. In Assam there was held at Shillong a Hills and Plains Week, the object of which was to bring the hillmen into closer touch with the men of the plains and so into greater sympathy. The tough and simple men of the hills had not seen much of their brethren from below until this week. They decided that a little went a long way and that they were better to remain in their state of seclusion and disdain.

Throughout the Command the Hindu Puj a and Muslim Bakr Id festivals passed off quietly as we had expected. From Bihar came no report of strife. Mr. Sri Krishna Sinha, the Premier, was reported by the Press as warning our little dark friends, the Adibassis, that reliance upon violence, and especially upon bows and arrows which were the sole weapons the Adibassis possessed, was worse than useless in an age of steel, high explosives and atomic energy. He was stated to have said that if the Government was forced to put down any lawlessness, 'responsibility for the consequences would be that of the separationists'. So Adibassis, too, were not to be allowed the benefits of self-determination.

It seemed now that the lesson of Kashmir was to be hardly learnt. Hindustan was heavily engaged there with grave military and financial commitments. Tripura State bade fair to emulate Kashmir. Here was a Hindu ruler on the borders of Assam, his State virtually an island in East Pakistan, for none of its communications ran into Assam—all ran into Bengal, into what was now Pakistan. Its large Muslim population demanded accession to Pakistan and so did its Hindu Chief Minister. Its Hindu Ruler

had acceded to the Indian Union. That Dominion now became apprehensive that the people might have their way, so ordered its troops into Tripura State. Luckily, Eastern Command could confidently assert that it had no troops to send, and if it had they could only get into Tripura by air, in order to avoid passing through Pakistan territory, whereas all aircraft were up in the north on the Kashmir venture. Assam was very urgent to move troops into the State but all the civil authority had in its own hand was the Assam Rifles, its armed police, and these had British officers who could not possibly be sent in on an invasion of a State at the behest of an Indian Government. So, fortunately, an impasse was produced—and we made the most of it—which allowed feelings to cool. Agartala airfield was, in any case, right up against the Pakistan border and within thirty miles of a Pakistan garrison, which would probably have moved at once if it heard of an airborne landing by Hindustan troops in Tripura State.

It was the same with Darjeeling. The Indian Union Government wanted to send troops there also in order to prevent the hillmen from rising to assert their independence. Had these troops gone, then there would certainly have been an 'incident' between them and the Gurkhas and before long the hill tracts would have been in flames with Gurkhas appealing to Nepal. Luckily, the only ready access to Darjeeling lay through Pakistan territory.

During the two months after the 15th August the drop in efficiency in the whole running of the Indian Army had been remarkable as British officers drew out for home. It was far more pronounced than we had ever expected. As soon as it was known that all British officers were to be out of the Army by the 31st December, except the very few who might volunteer to serve on, the whole bottom seemed to drop out of the Army. It was increasingly hard to get anything done at all and almost impossible to get it done up to time.

At this time, the British officer's greatest enemy was depression. This was born of a knowledge of failure—failure to produce anything of permanent value in India—the knowledge of a life wasted, the blank future before him; the detestable atmosphere of hatred about him; his own wrecked career and personal difficulties, particularly those of his family; difficulty of getting a passage for them and himself when he wanted it and of packing up and despatching his recently opened household goods; apprehensions of British customs duties on the little he possessed, and so on. It took a very optimistic and determined officer to remain happy and balanced through all his real and imagined troubles. His mails to and from England were bad: it was believed that his letters were being censored by the Indian Union Government without his being told. Nevertheless, the British officer carried on loyally and industriously right to the day of his departure.

The country itself was in chaos, letters suffering long delays or being lost; railways running to any time they pleased. It was quicker for a business man in south India to send a letter to Ranchi by air via England than by rail through India.

At last, orders had come to disband the Auxiliary Force, India. It was sad that at the end of their useful career of voluntary service they should have been so peremptorily dismissed. The force was formed in 1920 of Europeans and Anglo-Indians. It had frequently been called out in aid of the civil power and had formed a most valuable adjunct to the police in all civil strife, being well armed and utterly dependable.

It is fitting that this chapter should end with a tribute to this devoted force.

## XXXIX

### WHY DID WE QUIT?

IF I were asked to reply briefly to this question, I would answer, 'Because the United States and Russia made it impossible for us to stay; and because, realising that no true democracy can rule another people, we had, from the days of Macaulay onwards, prepared India for self-government.'

There was a multitude of other reasons, but we will discuss these first of all. It has been said that many in the U.S.A. were under the impression that Congress in India was the counterpart of Congress in the States. Recognising the bewildering ignorance of India on the part of the Imperial people who had conducted India's destinies for two hundred years, it seems quite probable that people who could only have taken a casual interest in this large country may well have suffered from a misapprehension of this sort.

By 1946 the British had reached the stage at which, in pretty nearly every international discussion, they were treading on such thin ice as 'oppressors' of Indians in the eyes of the U.S.A. and Russia, that their influence at conferences was being most seriously impaired. Peripatetic Indians were prancing about England, and particularly the U.S.A., shrilling in public places the terrible oppressions carried out by the British in India. I myself, in England in 1946, was entertained by a most honest and pleasant person to charges of floggings and wrongful imprisonments of Indian innocents at the hands of the British in India. The information had been gleaned from very nice Hindus whom the narrator had met in England. I asked if this kindly accuser, who would I think never speak ill of anyone except her own countrymen, could imagine me personally in such sadistic practices. Politely, I thought, she said 'No'. Yet, I explained, I behaved no differently from most of my countrymen in India, as far as I knew.

I call to mind a remark in the **Economist** of the 10th May 1947, reviewing a certain book, to the effect that the author was too much inclined 'to lean over backwards' when judging his own countrymen. These people in England gave to the outside world a lopsided picture of their fellows in India: none too sympathetic citizens of the U.S.A., forgetting their negro problem, absorbed every detail of this highly imaginative work of art. The fault was as much our own as ever it was that of any American.

Whenever any of our 'intellectuals',<sup>188</sup> our zealous observers, went to India to absorb the atmosphere, they headed straight for Indians of their own feather with whom to flock—

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<sup>188</sup> . . . there are . . . few people more impervious to reason and common sense than those who are convinced of their own intellectual superiority'. The English Middle Classes by Roy Lewis and Angus Maude. A friend has

straight for the educated urban Indians who spoke much the same language as they spoke, had the same chronic, perhaps healthy, discontent as they had, and who railed against the British in India in a manner entirely acceptable to their guests. After a few months, or even years, of wailing together, the British intellectual returned to his own land, there to expose his own countrymen to the glare of world opinion. Why shouldn't he? This is—was—a democracy and one which had lost most of its faith in its own destiny and in the virtue of its own people, especially in those who were not closely supervised by the progressives, the intellectuals, of England. Perhaps the only disadvantages of these particular people being given full rein was that they had, indeed, no faith in anything and so really no hope in anything or anyone, least of all in themselves. As Professor Gilbert Murray remarked some years ago, when writing of 'the moderns', 'The reverence and the admiration, the loss of self that are implied in a great emotion, are somehow difficult and unpleasant to him. He actually imagines that they are insincere.' Perhaps the trouble was that these intellectuals mostly, I think, writing men—were too complicated in character to assess aright the ways of more simple men who had, perforce, with their multitude of daily problems and the strain of affairs and climate in which they lived, to find simple solutions to their problems. But certainly the basic reason why they so frequently informed the world wrongly, was because they never met the Indians who really knew how Indians were treated by the British.<sup>89</sup> I refer to the Indian peasants who constitute the vast majority, ninety percent, of Indians. To meet them one must speak their tongue and know their customs or one is left in ignorance, for they will not hesitate to pull the enquirer's leg out to the fullest extent, especially for some small monetary gain. These people, from whom we in the Army recruited widely, were the first care of the British I.C.S. man and of the British policeman. They are the people who have suffered so intolerably in the ghastly Punjab holocaust and in that of Bihar and other rural areas. They never wanted their British friends to go: they wanted them back again but they will not get them.

Therefore, because of the very type of foreigner who most often attempted to portray to Americans in America the sort of tyrant beneath whom all Indians suffered, people in the United States were given a one-sided and, may I say, false impression of the handful of imperialist British who spent their lives administering India. With the idea firmly fixed in their heads that we oppressed, exploited and cheated our Indian subjects for the benefit of ourselves and of our native land, it is not surprising that the sentimental American, with memories of Boston tea parties, thought it was high time that the British got out of India. The accusation against us was in one word—Imperialism. That word denoted, it seems, everything that was evil in the innately evil thing, foreign rule, the more suspect by being British.

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recently defined an 'intellectual' as one whose education has outrun his intelligence. What with one thing and another, it seems that the 'intellectual' has had his day for the time being.

<sup>89</sup> The same thing is now happening in our African colonies. It has already happened in Burma. Would any wise foreigner judge the problems of France without being able to speak to Frenchmen in French?

At the Conference table, then, we started at a disadvantage by being dubbed imperialistic before we even opened our mouths—we who had taught the world the meaning of the word liberty within Empire.

Russians, of course, with their feet firmly on the necks of Asiatic tribes whom they had conquered and absorbed into their system both in Czarist and Soviet times, and their talons clawing at yet others in eastern Europe, found 'imperialist' a fine term of abuse and one that we could not refute for, as an Empire, we are and were imperialist in the pure meaning of the word. Russia had conveniently discarded the Russian Empire and turned it into a Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

It was of little avail for us to point to our Commonwealth Empire and to the U.S.S.R. and ask 'What's in a name, after all?' Every time we opened our mouths, and often when we didn't, Soviet spokesmen and Soviet papers spat the word imperialist at us.

We were thus in a weak position internationally. Americans thought we ought to give India her liberty for ethical reasons:

Russians made it impossible for us to remain longer by abusing us for being in India at all. Both conveniently turned a blind eye to their own imperialism in their own countries.

Living in about the truest form of democracy in the world, our people are accustomed to hear every man speak his opinion and to read what he has to write.

It was noticeable that as democratic ideas, as public expression of feeling, became the custom among the intelligentsia of India, so did communal antipathy become more acute. Newspapers had multiplied apace in recent years, and with the advent of each new sheet had come yet another spate of violently expressed opinion. Nothing, it seems, can in India's political world be done in moderation. Abuse and sneers were the daily stock-in-trade of the Indian political writer. Scarcely a bit of news came in but it must be given a racial or communal twist by reporter or editor before it was allowed to reach the public. The paper was far more a platform for propaganda than for news. It has thus become the principal canal through which has flowed the sour water of hatred, racial and communal, to irrigate the soil of India's soul and give birth to pestilential weeds of hate. Hate is a habit now in a huge religious community where mere differences and trifling primitive antagonisms were its heritage from ancient times.

However, the British, whenever they dammed these unwholesome waters, denied their own gods. It was all to the good, up to the nineteen-thirties, that they should exercise this control and so keep hatred within bounds for, even in those days, India was still regarded as reserved for the British. This was an anachronistic view but one that, for

want of leisure to grapple with other problems than their own, the Soviet seems to have unwillingly allowed to persist. War came and with it the loud refusals of the Congress Party to agree to India's participation. The two great critics, Russia and the United States, were not engaged and were at first determined not to become engaged: determined, too, for some months, to keep German favour by showing no partiality to the British or even by belabouring the imperialist head. Congress (of India) had a good hearing. The great 'democracy' of Russia must have stored all this up in its capacious heart.

The British had to live true to their democratic principles, so continued to attempt to induce India to take control of her own destinies within the Empire. The ultra-democrats of the Labour Party, who believed intensely in individual freedom outside the Trade Unions and outside all business and commerce in which the State positively could not meddle, pledged it to give India her freedom as soon as it could after taking over power in England. With Russia, the States and its own intellectuals goading them, the Party could not have promised less. At that time the gesture was one of self-denial for Britain: it was not realised then that it would a little later benefit her to drop control of India like a red-hot coal.

Indian 'nationalism' was recognised (though not defined), was to be accepted and to be made a reality as soon as possible. The World was told this and thereafter allowed a softer and more comfortable chair for a British representative at its meetings. It made some difference in the American attitude: little in the Russian.

As a democratic nation the British are more aware than most of world feelings about themselves and take more notice of them. Thus they easily became sensible of the antagonism of powers, great and small, to their rule and conduct in India. Therefore, at the end of the war, the political firebrands of India were set free again to light India's bonfires--some said 'her funeral pyre', and indeed they were nearly right. With their release, there soon came a slackening of controls on newspapers and on public speech. With this, in turn, came a marked increase in the flood of hate to which I have already alluded, resulting, as always in India, in violence.

We British are no more suited in India than in Palestine by nature, by upbringing and by our system of government and way of life, to deal with intemperate, cruel and foolish outbreaks of violence. We have given in and have drawn out of both countries. Intemperate people must be dealt with by more severe, perhaps intemperate, measures than we British are accustomed to use. Ninety years ago we dealt severely without trial with the worst of the 1857 rebels. Today that seems barbaric and yet, had anyone so dealt with the worst of the leaders in the Punjab in 1947, much horror would have been spared to India and her position today would not have become so precarious. We know well what a furore would be created here in England, among those who know nothing

of Indian peoples, if such severe means were used now as in 1858 in order to stop the attempt to substitute widespread violence for law.

A democratic people cannot for long rule other nations. It must at no late time hand these people over to their own rulers, for good or ill and whether they intend to rule each other democratically—a most unlikely intention—or despotically—a most probable result.

It is odd to think that we who at any rate pay lip service to internationalism, should seek to promote in other peoples the now admittedly disastrous sentiment of nationalism. They have only to declare some movement or other to be 'nationalist' for us at once to become sympathetic and to respond by promoting that movement. We seldom pause to think what the result will be. Among a xenophobe people it must in the end place them in a ring of enemies, a position from which we may have once saved them and since protected them.

Nor do we pause to think what they mean by their nationalism. For instance, what was the Congress Party's claim to represent the Indian 'nation'? What was the Indian 'nation'? Since that claim was conceded by us we have seen the Indian 'nation' cleft in two. Of what is left north-west of the inter-Dominion border, we have seen Pathans trying to shear off their bit of the Muslim nation. Of what there is south of that border we have seen the Sikhs quite definitely trying to slice off their territory and perhaps to expand it into Rohtak, Hissar, Gurgaon, Delhi and the United Provinces. There was talk in Madras of the economic advantage to that province of seceding from the Indian Union. Perhaps it was only talk but perhaps it was more than that. Partly by persuasion, partly by seeing behind Sirdar Patel's back the business end of a big stick, most of the Indian States have acceded to the Indian Union. The Nagas are restless bedfellows of India's. Sikkim only acceded after much hesitation and heart-searching. Are the Mahrattas yet brother-nationals of the Hindu Bengalis; are the Adibassis, shouting for their Jharkhand, brothers of even the Bihari Hindu who almost co-habits with them and whom they deeply suspect? Where is the Indian nation and nationhood to which we democratically pay our homage and bow our assent? Any student of Indian history will tell us that India was never more of a nation than in the last fifty years when road, rail, telegraph, telephone and finally aircraft have brought India's different nations together. Nevertheless, fifty years have proved too short a time in which to weld them into one. Fervently one hopes that time may join again the two great dissidents.

Democracy has conceded the right to nationhood, no matter what the historical and social facts may have been. It could not, without denying itself, deny this right. Having conceded it, it could not stay long, for every disciplinary or retarding action it took was construed as a blow against nationhood and a betrayal of its promise.



Democratic ideas and too firm a clinging to the principle that all should be free to mould their own destinies, have led us into crazy and perhaps wicked acts of omission. It is far more in what we have not done in India, than in what we have done that we are to be held blameworthy. 'The road to hell is paved with good intentions.'

In the Queen's Proclamation of the 1st November 1858, there occurs this passage:

Firmly relying ourselves on the truth of Christianity, and acknowledging with gratitude the solace of religion, we disclaim alike the right and the desire to impose our convictions on any of our subjects. We declare it to be our royal will and pleasure that none be in any wise favoured, none molested or disquieted by reason of their religious faith or observances, but that all shall alike enjoy the equal and impartial protection of the law; and we do strictly charge and enjoin all those who may be in authority under us that they abstain from all interference with the religious belief or worship of any of our subjects on pain of our highest displeasure.

That was quite unimpeachable in sentiment and most liberal. It was in the interpretation of it that the crime lay.

Vincent Smith in his *History of India*, dealing with the year 1829, says,

The decision of Lord William Bentinck affirmed the important principle that a civilised legislature might lawfully and rightly forbid acts which violate the universal rules of morality and the ordinary feelings of humanity, even when such acts have, as *suttee* had, the sanction of immemorial custom, Brahminical tradition, and, to a certain extent, of ancient Scriptures deemed sacred.

Bentinck's Government then stamped out two vile practices, that of *suttee* or voluntary self-immolation of widows, and that of *thuggee*, or ritual murder by strangulation.<sup>90</sup> Both were ancient religious practices and I do not doubt that both can be defended in Scripture by their devotees. It is questionable whether, obeying the later proclamation of Queen Victoria, Lord William Bentinck would have been empowered to wipe out these villainous customs. Certainly we have made no direct attempt to efface from India the unwholesome caste organisation, in particular that part of it which has outcast from Hindu society and from partaking in religion some fifty millions of our fellow creatures, the Scheduled Castes of India, Chamars, Mahars, Chudras, Chodras, and scores of others. These, with barely the social rights of human beings, most surely represent an act, or a thousand acts, 'which violate the universal rules of morality and the ordinary feelings of humanity'. I have in Appendix I spoken of Hinduism. The hindrance which

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<sup>90</sup> The Sotha, decoy, offered his company to the traveller; the Lughu dug the grave before the foul deed; the Shumshea distracted the victim's attention and the Bhuttote slipped on the noose and strangled him. They then divided his belongings.

is placed against economic advancement by the caste system is fatal. If a man who presses the oil seed is not allowed by religious prejudice to undertake the sale thereof, or some other such strange prohibition exists, then inevitably there will be two or three men doing the work of one. That is as it is today.

This system holds Hindustan in thrall.<sup>91</sup> Few escape from it, yet there can be little progress in culture, art, social improvement, or even in technical, industrial and scientific developments, until the system is shattered to bits. It will be shattered, for we have sown the seeds of liberal education and free speech which will, in time, shatter it. But had we more sincerely encouraged the Christian ethic in India we should today have ready a far larger leaven to raise the whole mass. I know full well that the converts of at least one Christian creed carry caste into their new religion for a generation or two, but the fact remains that it does in time die away among them. By that amount is good done. As it is, we have neglected to do all we should have done for the betterment of these people because we feared to stir up the religious storm that would at once have followed the breaking of Queen Victoria's promise. Yet, we could not conscientiously have stayed any longer with this tragic social injustice beneath us, crying for the amelioration that we were in honour bound to deny it and yet in honour bound to give.

Caste is not the only obstacle to progress.<sup>92</sup> In Hindu law, sanctified by religion, the property of a man, everywhere except in Bengal, is divided among his sons. One has only to fly over India to see the ruin this has caused to Indian agriculture, where the land is in tiny plots and where a man seldom owns a farm as we know it, but more often a number of these small plots scattered in among those of his neighbours and often separated by considerable distances. In the last ten years certain alterations have been made to the law whereby granddaughters and widows do in some circumstances inherit property. But the fact remains that by religious sanction land is being split into smaller and smaller and less and less workable plots.

These diminutive holdings make impossible the use of mechanised tools to cultivate, reap and carry in a country where great expanses of plainland demand the most modern methods of working.

There are other serious deficiencies in Indian agriculture. Owing to the sanctity of the cow, Hindus will not slaughter cattle, no matter how badly injured, how starved, or how ancient and unproductive. The cow population increases; as it increases far beyond the means of sustenance, it becomes less and less useful and productive as the years roll

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<sup>91</sup> It must not be thought that I oppose the existence of social classes within a nation as we know them in Britain. I regard the existence of these classes as inevitable until we all acquire sainthood. Their existence is a useful spur to achievement among our people. "Equality" is a drab and purposeless condition.

<sup>92</sup> In Appendix I is an account of the Hindu Caste system, the Iron Curtain beyond which few foreign people have ever penetrated and through which Hindus have seldom emerged or progressed.

by. We know that in India, in addition to its milk, the cow is valuable for providing the dung which, when dried, is used as fuel for cooking. Each cake of this fuel that is cooked is that much less of fertility for the fields. The fields lack fertilisers and their crops are wretchedly poor compared with those of Western Europe or even of the Nepal valley where manure is preserved and used. Pressure of population in the plains of India has meant that nearly every scrap of burnable wood has been and is being burnt, until trees are far too few for shade and water conservation. What cattle do not eat, the all-destroying herds of goats are cleaning off year by year.

Before Independence Day there were pious men who persisted in further increasing the population of runty cattle, and more practical men who opposed them.

*Amrita Bazar Patrika, July 1947*

### **COW SLAUGHTER**

In his post-prayer speech Mahatma Gandhi said that Rajendra Babu had told him that he had received about 50,000 post cards, 30,000 letters and thousands of telegrams asking for prohibiting of cow slaughter in the Union of India. A telegram was received today saying that a pandit had undertaken a fast in Cawnpore on that issue. Hindu religion prohibited cow slaughter for Hindus not for the world. Religious prohibition came from within. Any imposition from without meant compulsion. Such compulsion was repugnant to religion. India is the land not only of Hindus but also of Muslims, Sikhs, Parsis, Christians, Jews and all who claimed to be of India and were loyal to the Union. If they could prohibit cow slaughter in India on religious grounds, why could not Pakistan Government prohibit say idol worship in Pakistan on similar grounds?

He was not a temple-goer, but if he was prohibited from going to a temple in Pakistan he would make it a point to go there even at the risk of losing his head. Just as Shariat could not be imposed on non-Muslims, Hindu Law could not be imposed on non-Hindus. He told the audience that many Hindus were guilty of cow slaughter by slow torture. It was Hindus who exported cows outside India well knowing that they were to be slaughtered for beef extract which came to India and which the children of orthodox Hindus ate without compunction under medical advice. Were they not co-partners in cow slaughter?

*The Statesman:*

### **PREVENTION OF COW SLAUGHTER SETH DALMIA'S PLANS TO FURTHER HIS CRUSADE** *From our Special Representative*

New Delhi, Aug. 8. —Seated in a large room whose walls were crowded with drawings of Krishna, the legendary cowherd, Seth Ramkrishna Dalmia gave to assembled Press

correspondents a curious mixture of Hindu revivalism, rural economy and 'our dumb friends' sentiment to support his movement for the prevention of cow slaughter.

He said that he had bought No. 10 Aurangzeb Road from Mr. Jinnah and proposed to make it the H.Q. of the Anti-Cow Slaughter League. The flag of the cow would be flown from the building, 'a historic one which may become more so when another movement, which is not political but economic, social and religious, is also crowned with success'.

Seth Dalmia said that the division of the country into two States meant that Hindustan became a Hindu nation. However, even the Muslim League in 1921 had, he said, passed a resolution advocating the abolition of cow slaughter.

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Sirdar Patel was in his frankest and most practical mood when he spoke on the current agitation for cow protection in the Indian Union. The demand, he suggested, must be both factious and factitious, as it had not been similarly raised before; and with salty candour he emphasised that in countries where cows enjoy no legal protection they are better looked after and yield more milk than here. This was also observed long ago by Swami Vivekananda during his extensive travels. in the West, and he too publicly expressed analogous views. Since then the condition of Indian cattle has further worsened, and although the last war reduced their numbers, the loss was largely confined to the healthier ones. The survivors continue to impose an uneconomic burden on fodder, and there is great need for creating circumstances favourable to the improvement of stock. That will certainly not be achieved by a semi-political agitation on the present indiscriminating lines.

*Eastern Express*, August 10th 1947:

COUNTRYWIDE AGITATION AGAINST COW SLAUGHTER.

*The Statesman*:

CATTLE WEALTH

Sir,

Much is being said against cow-slaughter, but few of those who air their views have any idea of the conditions in which these animals are kept. In many parts of the country they must scrape up what food they can get in barren fields; they produce a degenerated progeny; epidemics take heavy toll of them. In big towns and cities it is a common sight to see them feeding at dustbins. If this perpetual starvation and misery is cow protection, cow slaughter would be better.

By passing laws it may be possible to stop cow slaughter, but what about starvation? The number of cows killed is insignificant compared with the number which die of starvation and diseases caused by malnutrition. If cow protection is really intended,

then we should learn animal husbandry. At present many of the *gaushalas*<sup>93</sup> and pinjrapoles, which ought to set an example to villagers, are torture houses.

India has about 200 million cattle, nearly one-third of the world's cattle population. The total cropped area in India is about 360 million acres. What percentage of this cropped acreage is under fodder cultivation?

My humble suggestion to Seth Ram Krishna Dalmia is that instead of trying to stop cow slaughter through legislation, the most humanitarian course would be to start real homes for cows—not the kind of home recently started in New Delhi. This will stop the death-march of the emaciated and starved bovine population of the country.—Yours, etc.

R. N. MUKERJI.  
Allahabad, Aug. 23.

Here we have pressure of useless cow population and pressure of human population both using up the products of the soil at far too high a rate for the country. The very early marriages of Hindu India encourage this rapid human increase.

Slaughter of cattle, better cattle breeding, birth control, later marriages, would all help to stave off the inevitable disaster of food insufficiency. So would industrialisation.

We have killed cattle for British troops and civilians. Muslims also keep up the slaughter of cattle. Without interfering with religious customs we could do no more. We have started state farms and a system of stud bulls. We have irrigated vast areas of India. Marriages are governed by religious custom and by astrologers. We have given India the peace in which she could start her industries. I dare say we could have done more to help on agriculture and industry: but not much more where religious prejudice bars the way.

I think we must confess that there was little more that we could have done within our policy of non-interference in religious beliefs.

Probably one of the examples of our failure to deal with primitive and dangerous religious custom which will be remembered longest, is that of the Sikh *kirpan* (sword) spoken of in Chapter XXXVI. There are many customs in India which, if not allowed to blossom into religious beliefs, can be eliminated almost at birth. The *kirpan* is an example. Few of the peculiarly Sikh religious customs can be taken seriously by an intelligent man of the modern world—beard, head-dress, long hair, comb, bangle, *kirpan* and all.

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<sup>93</sup> Homes for cattle supported by charity.

Tied as we were by our promise there was no hope of our forcing the pace of Indian economic development. It was far better that we should go, and no longer know ourselves powerless but yet responsible for the inevitable abject poverty that resulted from centuries-old religious stagnation and civil commotion.

It was painfully obvious to us that so long as we stayed in India, so long would the Indian blame us for the results of his own shortcomings and so long would the world blame us in similar terms. We could not allow Indians to continue longer in this state of immaturity, for if we did they would before long become completely and eternally ineffective. For good or ill we had to leave them to their own designs.

Nor could we afford any longer to let Indians queer our trade, our prestige, our good name in the world by their public abuse of us and their never-ending complaints against our ways of ruling them. The world outside would never understand that, with our guidance only, Indians were ruling themselves. Their great struggle for freedom will make later generations smile, for it was conducted against five hundred or so Britons in the Indian Civil Service. The land that was 'held down by British bayonets' had a population of close on four hundred millions, an area of one and a half million square miles and a peace-time British garrison of some fifty thousand men, a fair number of whom were either on the frontier in tribal territory or in reserve to the Frontier garrison in the North-West Frontier Province and the Punjab. One British soldier was holding down with his bayonet about ten thousand Indians. But facts such as these, which could easily have been obtained, did not reach either England or the United States. So we were dubbed oppressors and imperialists who held India down with British bayonets, and the dubbing did our trade and fair name no good. Why should we stand it any longer than we need?

So long as we stayed in India we needed to keep a British garrison for watch and ward as the ultimate upholder of the law, particularly in the rising tide of communal affrays. Ultimately we found that this garrison commitment was more than the industrial needs of our impoverished country could stand. That was another very strong reason for our leaving India and leaving it quickly.

As we guided India along our ways to democratic self-government we inserted more and more Indians into the civil administration. That was right. It was good and proper. The only trouble was that we seem to have inserted them too hastily, or inserted the wrong type of man in some cases, judging by the general deterioration of India's administration in the past twenty years. As the administration went downhill, its prestige went with it, so that for some years now we had not been getting on an average the same fine type of Briton into our Indian Civil Service that we had been getting in the earlier years of the century. The British could not have administered India much longer with such an unsuitable instrument through which to exercise their rule. Whatever the

consequences we, with the handicaps imposed on us by the consistent Anglophobia of Congress Hindus and by the Hindu religion, were compelled to let someone else govern in our place who at least should be able to break free of these two grave handicaps.

I hope I have shown that, as the situation was developed for us, we could not conscientiously have stayed much longer in India. It is of little use anyone pointing out the great gaps in the wall now appearing as the last of the cement drops out and arguing from that that we should have stayed another fifty years to insert some other binding mixture. Perhaps fifty years would have effected the needed change. I think it would, for the Hindu system is fast crumbling under the flail of modern thought. P. J. Griffiths in *The British in India* quotes the Maharajah of Benares as saying in 1888, 'Democracy is an Occidental idea. A Hindu cannot comprehend it as long as he is a Hindu. It is against his religious belief. So long as Hindus remain in Hindustan, you cannot succeed in extending the democratical idea.' Elsewhere, I have stated my belief that democracy as we British conceive it is unlikely to succeed except in a country predominantly Protestant Christian. It does not follow from this, whatever my personal belief may be, that I claim that our system is the only good one. Others seem happy under other systems which they label democratic. It is certain, however, that our system cannot be saddled upon any race or community which has not our same temperate, liberal and half-humorous outlook and our dislike of 'settling' differences by force. It has grown with us through a thousand almost undisturbed years of liberal education<sup>94</sup> and spreading culture. The essence of a real democracy is that it can evolve as the people evolve and thus remain stable: it is therefore not closely definable and so it is impossible to say at what stage of democratic evolution any peoples have arrived. A system of democratic government springs from the people; it cannot possibly be imposed on a people for no one knows of what sort it should be in order to suit them. It must be born of themselves.

I have often been asked whether the British were unpopular in India. I should say, 'On the whole—no.' Now that this book is nearing its end it may be as well to speak a little of our relations with Indians as they have been these past thirty years.

The Anti-British sentiment as we know it today (or knew it yesterday) is of comparatively recent growth. It came from the Congress Party of India and swelled as that party conceived Indian 'nationhood'.

The experience of most of us is of almost unexceptionably pleasant relations with Indians of all sorts. From all one saw of the old type of British local administrators I should say that their relations, even with their opponents, were pretty cordial. They

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<sup>94</sup> We are now destroying this priceless tradition of culture by over-specialising our education in order to fit our young people to pass the narrowly technical examination tests required of them by our professions.

seemed to know every Indian of any importance and to know all about him. They kept the peace by direct methods, so were at times unpopular with whichever political party sought to create unrest. Their success can be measured by the peace that reigned in their time and the murder and rapine which held the field in 1947. They knew this would come when they went; they said so quite fearlessly and they incurred resentment from Indian nationalists who professed to hold that communal antagonism was of our making, forgetting Aurungzeb's bigotry of yesterday and the existence of the Mahasabha of today.

As a soldier, one found these local British administrators far more jealous of the rights and interests of their subjects 'than were the subjects' themselves. The smallest peccadillo of ours was at once paraded before us.

I do not think I risk disagreement when I say that it was only among some urban Indians, and those only the educated ones, that the dislike of the British was entertained. Even among these I found much personal friendliness and a willingness to discuss the difficulties under which we laboured. True, there was criticism and why should there not have been?

Nevertheless there were many worthy young men who, owing to the authoritarian nature of the Congress system, had closed their minds to all else but hate: to talk with them was like talking to German Nazi prisoners. The answers were from their textbook and came back quite pat each time.

There were some British people who gave plenty of cause for dislike and, of late years, there have come to India some officials who were by nature unfitted to serve with Indians. In many respects the standard of manners of cultured Indians is the same as that of cultured English gentlemen; in other respects difference of personal habits makes for different standards of good manners. But in those respects in which the standards are the same the Indian expects them to be observed. It is his country and he expects to be treated politely in his native land by those from outside. Only too often he has his feelings sadly hurt by the visitor: unfortunately, the one who is hurt is nearly always some man of importance. The cause is not always the boorishness of the visitor: it is sometimes the natural arrogance of the caste Hindu. But the trouble has been made. The sins of the few are then visited on the many for, like their political firebrands, they bracket together all Englishmen in India in their resentment and dislike, and fashion the minds of their brothers to their own mould.

Most itinerant observers have tilted at European clubs in India as the very pattern of our contemptuous attitude to Indians. I do not dispute that some of the members were racially biased but I mean to say a word on these clubs and not on some of those who belonged to them. Only one side of the dispute has ever been heard – that of the Indian unsuccessfully seeking entry. There is something to say on the other side.



We must remember that it is only of recent years that Indians have adopted Western ways: they may yet drop them again when we have gone. Eastern ways, the chewing of betel nut, the hubble-bubble pipe, till recently too the habit of spitting, loud speech in discussion, were different from Western ways. I should conjecture that only after Indians had themselves adopted Western ways did they find it irksome that they were not admitted to these clubs and, moreover, that only those Indians who had adopted those ways felt thus about their exclusion. To them, in increasing numbers, it seemed an effrontery that they were not admitted. The Europeans, used from the beginning and habituated in their native land to their own exclusive club, did not wish to change their ways, nor did they know whom the importunate Indians might then invite from the bazaars to invade their privacy. Rather than take the risk, they clamped down harder than ever on restricting membership to their own kind. This led to many irritating anomalies. An Indian magistrate or doctor might not be allowed into the Club while his European junior civil official or a young doctor would have free entry. An extreme case such as this did not occur in many places but it happened in a few instances.

In England a club limits membership as it sees fit, and for many clubs there is pretty strict examination before a new member is admitted. That is certainly the privilege of a club and always has been. Even the village cricket club is at liberty to refuse membership if it wishes. That attitude was a perfectly correct attitude for a club in India to adopt and, if it had called itself 'The Bangipur European Club', then no one could have felt aggrieved at its exclusiveness. But unfortunately no such change was made and the club usually remained as the Bangipur Club with the natural inference that it was at least open to all members of the services and probably to all respectable members of the community, no matter of what race. But, in fact, it was only open to the European element of the population in the same way as the British Club in a South American city would only be open to Britons as members.

The trouble here was that, in excluding some who might have made small difficulties in their club, the Europeans excluded a whole race without discrimination and usually excluded them even as guests of its own members. Certainly, there is some lack of self-respect and independence of spirit in anyone who complains that he is not admitted to some exclusive social or cultural circle: it would have been more dignified if those who were excluded had joined together to set up their own club. In some places they wisely did so.

Another objection to Indian membership was that their wives were mostly in *purdah* or by custom otherwise debarred from entering the club and taking part in its activities. European members would not have this. In the first place they considered it an insult to themselves that Indians would not allow them even to see their womenfolk, much less to dance with them, and in the second place they did not see why their own women

should associate, much less dance, with men who by implication held such views on both their fellow men and fellow women.

There was the very great danger at any time of an Indian candidate putting his name up for the club and of his being blackballed. Anyone who knows India will know that this last state would have been far worse than the first.

Finally, when all was said and done, the club, like the Empire, had been pioneered by Britons and kept going by British endeavour and money. Surely, then, they were entitled to priority in its benefits.

Apart altogether from this, the Briton has often kept aloof from the educated people of India. In most cases this was not due to any feeling of superiority but to the fact that the Briton is aloof even in England. There are worse vices. He is accused of being arrogant. Brought up in a democracy where he only exists at all by rubbing shoulders with all and sundry, it is hard to see how he can by nature and bearing be arrogant. Arrogant people in England are soon put in their place. If he is indeed arrogant and in a few cases he undoubtedly is, then he has probably learnt it from that most convenient instructor, the caste Hindu. When he applies the manner to the lowly, he is not held at fault; when he applies it to the man of caste then he does the unforgiveable. Power has corrupted him, for no man can have had a better chance of avoiding the failing.

One's own intercourse with both I.C.S. and police officials in India has shown the vast majority of them as men devoted to their work and to the people they served, courteous and considerate, unstinting in their endeavours and leading a lonely life of very hard work in an apology for a climate. Few of the Indians who came to them with the hand of friendship or for just a personal chat had not some request to further their own interests. Officials may be pardoned if they looked twice at the visitor's card before they were said to be 'At Home'. An official's reputation, hot only in India, may suffer from conceding intimacy or privileges to the unworthy.<sup>95</sup>

The British came to India to trade; they did not come to conquer. They found a country in a bloody chaos. Against the wishes of England's rulers they bit by bit stepped out and embraced the whole country. They have brought peace to the land, albeit the peace of an alien hand. By this means, and while they were there, India became politically and administratively one, and with remarkably few battles to show for unification by this handful of conquerors. The years of peace gave her leaders their opportunity to put Hinduism's house in order. Instead of that they turned their ploughshares into swords

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<sup>95</sup> Speaking of the Administrative Class of the British Civil Service, 'Some degree of "remoteness" is not only unavoidable, it is an essential concomitant of impartiality.'— *The English Middle Classes*, by Roy Lewis and Angus Maude.

and elected to battle against the one authority with whose willing cooperation they could have uprooted all that was rotten and made a fair start for the future.

We had to leave because these very antagonists had made it impossible for us to improve the lot of the people of India.

Were Gokhale rather than Tilak the heart and soul of the Congress Party of India, we would have succeeded.

We did not quit because the common man of India disliked us. He trusted us to the very end. We left because we could do no more against the obstacle of that Hindu faith, the scorn and rancour of those few educated Indians and because the world at large accused us of the sin of 'imperialism' and treated us accordingly.

Perhaps the most important result of our leaving will be that India of the caste Hindu will see itself in the mirror of world opinion and from the reflection there may come a self-realisation that will be of lasting benefit.

## **XL**

### **EPILOGUE**

**FROM an Indian newspaper of November 1947**

**In the immediate presence of**

**Major-General**

**A. C. Chatterjee**

**Colonel Mehboob**

**NETAJI'S I.N.A.<sup>96</sup>**

**Orchestra & Dramatic Party**

**presents**

**SOLDIER'S DREAM**

**(Sipahi-Ka-Sapna)**

**The Heroic Deeds of the I.N.A. Soldiers**

**in their Heroic Fight for Freedom**

**under NETAJI**

**With**

**The original state band of the**

**Provisional Government of Azad Hind**

**At**

**RUNGMAHAL**

**Friday, i 4th November, 6 p.m.**

**– Plans Open –**

It is not for me to assess the services of the Indian Army throughout the centuries but only to account for that part of it that was in eastern India in the last two years of our stay, its works, its hopes and its fears. Nevertheless, here I can allow myself to speak a little of the Army as a whole.

The value of the work it had done in those long months is easily and incontestably assessed. It had saved India and in saving the country it had enabled the Cabinet at home and the Government of India to work out some sort of solution to the tangled problems of India's future. Without its work this could never have been done. It had set an example of impartiality right up to the fated day of Independence and thereafter had only swerved from its course on rare occasions. It should inspire the armies of both Dominions.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Officers of the I.N.A. were prominent in organising both the Sikh campaign of atrocities and the Pathan 'invasion' of Kashmir. The bread was returning on the waters.

<sup>97</sup> Yet even late in the day, its rivals were being given sympathetic publicity.

Perhaps no other army in history has been so severely tested. May its daughter armies of Pakistan and the Indian Union inherit its greatness.

Many have asked me what the future of India will be. I am no prophet. All I can do is to set out the most important trends of present-day India.

War between two British Dominions is unthinkable but it is, nevertheless, more than probable. The murder of Mahatma Gandhi has roused the Indian Government to the danger within their midst—the Mahasabha. The cleaning out of that stable is salutary and lessens greatly the chances of extremists pushing the Indian Union into war with Pakistan.

It should also do something to decrease the latter's suspicion of India. On the other hand, until Hinduism is far less exclusive in its ordinary social life, there can be no reunion of India. There will always be a gulf between the two Dominions and a gulf that may at any time so widely yawn as to swallow all common sense and balanced judgment.

There is grave danger of war between the two Dominions and this danger will persist until the Hindu can approach the Muslim socially on level ground and can impress upon him in the economic sphere his sympathetic desire to make Pakistan a going concern. At present the Muslim distrusts Hinduism and suspects the Hindu Dominion of desiring or even plotting the economic downfall of Pakistan.

Pakistan will manage to keep her chin above water provided that the Pathan tribes do not break out and overstrain her military resources. Her difficulties in the event of a Pathan invasion or of extensive Pathan raids into the plains would be, she believes, the opportunity for the Hindus to strike at her back as she faces westwards against this serious peril. Between the two dangers she would be overstrained and would collapse. Only with the ready help of Hindustan could Pakistan throw back invasion from the north-west.

The Indian Dominion faces the crumbling of its ancient Hindu system. Its chief scripture—the Bhagavad Gita—was given out on a famous battle-field of olden time; it is useless to contend, as some would, that Hindus are not a violent people.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> An extract from a newspaper of 1947. 'HINDUS TEMPERAMENTALLY NON-VIOLENT'

New Delhi, Nov. 2.—Hindus were temperamentally non-violent and the acts of violence committed by some of them were merely a transient phase brought about by circumstances beyond their control, said Dr. Gokul Chand Narang, a member of the Working Committee of the All-India Hindu Mahasabha, presiding over a reception held by the Mahasabha in honour of the Indo-British Goodwill and Cultural Mission.

As this religious system breaks up, so must something more in tune with modern times take its place. I can see only one solid philosophy available to a groping and undeveloped people who have given up an authoritative religious doctrine – Communism. Communism provides them with what must seem to simple people a refuge in set forms and beliefs of a more modern, material and easily understandable kind than those with which they have broken. I have already shown that the greatest single motive of the Punjab horrors was 'greed'. Here about them Communism offers great material prizes with which to feed that desire. No Indian progressive yet offers to Hindus any attractive alternative to the faith he takes from them. Therein he is purely destructive and blind to the lessons of recent history. As the population increases so does it press upon the soil whence it feeds and so do more and more men, finding it hard to gain a living, cast envious eyes on men of property. It is only with a temperate people that progress comes by easy stages. Indians are not equable and the Congress Party, pressed by Socialists, is committed to a policy much akin to Socialism. Once embarked upon, it is likely to proceed a great deal faster than its authors would desire, and in the process to be impelled sooner or later by extremists. Thus Congress intellectuals, believing as they do in the equality of men and themselves perplexed in religion, hack at the head of the Hindu system, while the Socialists hew away its feet, jeered into action by Communists. With head and feet so belaboured, the body must collapse. Pandit Nehru may well be playing the role of Kerensky.

The people of Hindustan will be false to themselves if they are not alive to the prodigious task that lies before them. The task is no less than that of retracing their steps to what must have been the ancient purity of their religion, and from there advancing into the modern world equipped with a newfound ethic to point a fresh way of life suited to day-to-day facts; one in which they can mingle freely with other peoples. Their Land of Dreams has gone. All of us who have made so many friendships among them wish them well but cannot run the risk of blinding ourselves to the impassable and almost unscaleable obstacle that has so suddenly reared itself up in their way.

Christianity in India might have metamorphosed the weakening body into something stronger but that aid is not at hand. We have not encouraged it to help. Hindus, even enlightened intellectuals, disapprove of the conversion of their members to Christianity or any other religion.

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The Hindu religion, Dr. Narang said, was a religion without sectarianism and with room for all shades of thought and divergent beliefs. Intolerance and fanaticism had always been alien to it. If at present certain sections of Hindus had resorted to violence, it was so because their culture and lives were threatened, he added.

Mr. Ashutosh Lahiri, General Secretary, Hindu Mahasabha, said that the message contained in the Hindu scriptures and religion could bring peace to the entire world and solve the problems that were facing the people all over.

Swami Avyaktananda, leader of the Mission, said that Hinduism must strive for the elevation of society to a higher level. Toleration was necessary for promoting friendship with the various peoples of the world, he said.—A.P.I.

The breaking up of the Hindu system will, of course, bring Hindus into closer contact with the atmosphere of the world outside as the holes begin to appear and the breeze to blow through. That will be to the good for a time, unless the iron curtain is mended with Communist sheets and presents a fabric still less permeable by outside influences. The countries about India will soon cease to be sympathetic towards her. Africa for the Africans: Burma for the Burmans: Malaya for—whom? For Chinese Communism?—There will soon be catcalls raised against Indian penetration in her endeavour to find an outlet for an immense and rapidly increasing population daily becoming more discontented with their lot in their native land. There is no reason why the indigenous inhabitants of surrounding countries, or those who have developed and pioneered those lands, should accept benighted immigrants who bring with them all the Hindu taboos and totems and exclusiveness. After what these peoples have seen of doings in India, it is excusable that they may not wish to see kinsmen of the perpetrators settling on their shores. Hinduism has more to live down than it is aware of.

Now that Hindustan has little part in northern India and its problems, it will naturally turn south-eastwards towards its old empire, its kindred of Malaya and Indonesia. Athwart this route to the Southern Seas lies the now waning power of the Dutch: turning the road into a blind alley lie Australia and New Zealand: three stops to the spread of both Communism and Hinduism. Empires are, we are told, dead things of yesterday. Perhaps this may be true of the old imperial systems, for the empire of today is an ideological union of states, of countries, of what you will. Our Commonwealth is the free pattern of such an empire. Those who differ from us, leave us. Any who wish to adhere to other groups may do so. There is no coercion, it seems, so far as the British are concerned. There is, where some others are concerned—Russia, for instance. It is not beyond human imagining that still others may one day have somewhat the same outlook in this respect as Russia. Much can be achieved in the shelter of the United Nations.

Other Member Nations of the Commonwealth must be giving to all this a very serious and careful consideration for there are many dangers in becoming morally or physically committed in future lamentable happenings in this part of the world. They will have heavy responsibilities in guiding their policy in a manner to prevent or avoid them.

In pondering these grave matters we must not forget that far from breeding internationalism, Communism breeds nationalism, even though in some, but not in all cases, the nationalism may overflow existing national borders as we today mark them on the map. It would indeed be terrible to witness a struggle between Russian and Chinese Communism<sup>99</sup> (the latter by then fully installed in Malaya if not in actual

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<sup>99</sup> The reader will notice the unenviable position in which we have left Nepal, Bhutan and particularly Tibet and Sikkim on the Communist route to India.

possession) for the possession of a Hindustan saturated by their creed and already peacefully expanding into the rich lands of south-east Asia and the South Seas.

The day before I left Ranchi for good, Inayat Khan, one of my staff-car drivers, came to me to say goodbye as he was going off to Pakistan. His home was in Jullundur in the Indian Union. It had been destroyed with all his property. His father had died some years before. His grandfather tried to get his mother and sister away to Pakistan but the old man was waylaid by Sikhs and disappeared. His mother escaped and wrote to say that his fifteen-year old sister had been taken as a concubine by a Sikh. To leave the Indian Army with this as the last sight of my own soldiers and friends was deeply painful.

My farewell message is in Appendix XV.

\* \* \* \* \*

23rd November 1947, 8 p.m.

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The lights of Bombay are dropping below the horizon.

We warped out from No. 6 quay. The feeling of at last going was enjoyable, for with it was the knowledge that I at that moment shed all possible obligation to deal with the thousands of problems that had beset me for the past eight years, day in and day out: that no telephone bell, no signal, no letter top-secret and personal, and no broken trunk line, would disturb me ever again unless I freely willed to plunge into some other activity: that I had at last shed heavy responsibility which I could only fulfil of late months by what was left of my own personal influence, deprived of the proper instruments of action. These thoughts were a refreshment to the soul.

Now I found myself pondering what the best of our British officers had achieved in India which would outlast their going.

They had striven for the good things—to try to live as an example to other men, to try to teach loyalty, courage, justice and moral stamina. They succeeded, but their success will not outlast five years of their going. Jealousy, nepotism and the indifference of a few will wipe out this work so that, apart from its value while they were there, it need never have been done at all.

They had inspired men to high things, reinforced as they were by a great love for their fellow men, and thus, by a knowledge of their cares and joys, of their weakness and



their strength. The inspiration may last but I fear that nearly always it fades with the waning of enthusiasm. An effervescence.

They had won battles, a fair number of them, but now it seemed that the lessons they had thus taught were to be used by Indians to destroy Indians. Their record had been truly noble—implicit the trust of myriads of men of every class, tribe and creed of India. The thought overcharged me with a humble gratitude.

An army is a great human organism which has its merit in what it is at any time. What it may have done is only written on paper and told by word of mouth: it leaves no monument on the ground or record durable in print to be witnessed by future generations, such as may be the product of civil administration or of so many other professions. What it has done is past and gone. Thus, the armies of both Dominions are to be judged by what they are today and they cannot for long show any residue of what they were yesterday. They are changed and are no longer the Indian Army. There is no Indian Army. It is time the chronicles were written of the old Army that has gone for ever.

A friend asked me if I was rent by the thought of the turmoil, inefficiency, and horror from which I was parting. No, I was not. For one thing I knew that we British in the Army had seen Hindustan through the worst stages of her internal communal strife and held her together while she was in its throes. It must improve from now onwards so long as she does not openly fight Pakistan, or war against Pakistan's friends.

The existing state of affairs was not of our making in any way at all. The blood of all those thousands was on the heads of others. We were clear of guilt: in fact, it was we who had stayed the day of slaughter through the burdensome days and months, with inadequate means, upholding law and order over a vast expanse of India. The responsibility had been squarely on our shoulders and we had not eased it off on to the back of any other man. By mid-November we had succeeded in restoring some confidence to the civil power and to the police. Through it all, we officers had somehow kept happy in the Command a garrison running at one time to over 300,000 men. They had remained staunch and loyal, war-weary and sorely tested though they were.

Between us and our forefathers who had come and gone before us, there was this difference in the going. They looked back at a life's work: we looked forward to a life's work yet to be done among a people whose blood was our own—to a chapter which, given the opportunity, we could yet write in words that would endure. We were eager to start the new life.

Behind me I had left Bombay's transit camp with many of my friends jettisoned there, kicking their heels, waiting for a boat, firmly convinced that no one cared a tinker's curse for them and their families now that they had served their turn in India and done

their last duty for India and Britain. And, judging by the meagreness of recognition given them on the passing at their hands of a great Empire, their conviction was justified. There are many still begging for employment in their own land.

As I walked about Bombay I had at last felt that half my heart was being chopped out. The quiet houses looked sadly down on me, for we were giving up, receiving no word of thanks, all this that our fathers had made from muddy little villages. It had been theirs: in all conscience it must still be ours!

Bombay stood as a cardboard silhouette against the clear blue-green and rose: then against yellow with windblown streaks of cirrus cloud: then fire and grey. Smoke vapours fingered across the hardening green: grey and deep indigo, stars and warm black sea. Twinkling lights astern far into the night. It was good of India so to blazon our way from her.

Below me were hundreds of Muslim soldiers all on their way to Pakistan, leaving the now alien Hindustan behind them. I spoke to them all and was astonished at the large number of them who had lost their families and the still larger number who had for months heard not one word from those they loved. Their officers were sure that there must be war between the Dominions and that the Hindus of the Indian Union would slaughter the Muslims who dwelt among them.

The sun had set, tremendous in its portent, as I turned my face to the West again, bound for a narrower life but at least for a home at last.

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At Karachi the Qaid-e-Azam's house was more heavily guarded by police than had been any house of any British governor I had ever seen in thirty-three years in India.

On the morning of the 29th November I stood on the airfield at Karachi and looked eastwards into India. My kinsmen had looked back satisfied that they had written a verse in stone that would last. I gazed at my own chapter written in sand, and as I gazed my mind's eye saw the winds blowing the grains into the letters, covering them up for ever. None the less, I knew that I had written in the only medium that was there to my hand.

The York thrust upwards into the air. Circling, I saw India for the last time.

The great plane shot away westwards for the land I had left nearly thirty-four years ago, breastful of hope. My one happiness now was a deep affection and admiration for the soldiers of Nepal and India; my greatest sorrow the belief that we had exposed to Asiatic Communism our staunch mountain friends of Bhutan, Sikkim and Nepal.

## APPENDIX I

### THE IRON CURTAIN

THE iron curtain of which I speak is the Hindu religion as we know it.

This curtain clanks down between Hinduism and all other systems and religions: it excludes all new influences: it shuts off its people from other people and from each other. It is the history of India from thousands of years before Christ. Caste Hinduism, more than any other influence, has brought India to its present pass today, riven her in twain, set man at man. It has isolated her people spiritually from the whole world and made them a people apart, self-pitying, uncertain.

Mahatma Gandhi was a child of Hinduism to whom many who were not Hindus were *xenoi*. Even the saintly Vivekananda in his book, *My Master*, shows some signs of the same attitude.

I find it necessary to give some explanation of the religion, the Hindu system.

It is all-important to know something about it in order to understand the real significance of the happenings of the two years of which I tell in this book.

The system is woven about the caste order, and that is a unique thing for it is sanctioned by religion. In the *Bhagavad Gita* (The Lord's Song) one hears the Lord Krishna say,

'The four castes emanated from me, by the different distribution of qualities and action; know me to be the author of them, though the actionless and inexhaustible.'

'The abode of the man whose family customs are extinguished, O Janardana, is everlastingly in hell. Thus have we heard.'

'One's own *dharma* [caste rules], though defective, is better than another's duty well performed.'

From this and other sources the system derives its religious sanction, and from that sanction it has grown into solitary and little admirable maturity. It has become so elaborate that it would indeed be a wonder if in the whole world there were any other similar socio-religious order. In the whole world there is not a single one.

In certain respects there are parallels to be found elsewhere. Hutton<sup>100</sup> quotes Risley for a similarity between the Hindu usage of hypergamy and that of the patrician caste of Madagascar: the custom of hypergamy allowing a man of higher caste to marry a woman of a lower caste but forbidding the higher caste woman from marrying the lower caste man. Even here the custom was due more to racial prejudice than, as in India, to taboo. In Fiji there are classes which are functional, the clansmen of the Chief of the land serving as a police force while the Herald clan dresses their High Chief's head, and so on. In Africa also, in Nigeria,<sup>101</sup> there is a system analogous to the Hindu *varnas*—the division by occupation, priest, soldier, ordinary man and manual worker. Nowhere are there more than one or two features which are parallel to those of the Hindu system: nothing completely organised or similar to the whole edifice.

The caste system of the Hindus is therefore unique. Living in a unique system, so must the people also be unique. It is impossible for us to introduce ourselves into the minds of orthodox Hindus without the greatest and most prolonged endeavour.

No better does the Hindu understand himself. We often hear him uttering in public great words in praise of the power and efficiency of his people, and then in private lamenting to us their hopeless inadequacy. Often I have heard one speak plaintively of this lack of any purpose on which to anchor his character. The odd, wavy texture of Pandit Nehru's autobiography is reminiscent of this want of design in the fabric. It is not unnatural that it should be so for he is a cog of a huge machine which has barely moved for millennia, which has never been oiled, and over which the moss of a tropical, enervating climate has softly crept. When at last the wheels roll, the moss will suddenly be shaken off, the machine will crush the new mechanics, their oil-cans and their grease-guns, and it will tear jolting, banging to its own destruction. Then perhaps on its old foundations will rise something sweeter, more supple, lighter and more graceful.

To my mind the most romantic part of the Hindu system is the *varna*, possibly because the word means colour and I like colours. The *varna* is not a *jat* or caste: it is apparently a social class. As far as we know, the Rigvedic Aryans swarmed into India from the north-west some time about 1500 B.C., bringing with them three firm class distinctions. The three, the highest, were the twice-born—the Brahmans, the Kshatriyas and Vaishyas. That is to say, priests; rulers, nobles and soldiers; the ordinary people, traders, householders and so on. Lastly, after they settled in India, there developed the Sudra caste which performed the servile tasks. Beyond and outside society were the Untouchables or Outcastes, lately called 'the Scheduled Castes' by a British Government solicitous to see the stigma removed. We will speak more of these unfortunates later on;

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<sup>100</sup> *Caste in India*. In this chapter I have borrowed freely from J. H. Hutton's book. If I have anything wrong it is from my own interpretation, not his. It is quite the simplest authoritative work on caste that I have yet read.

<sup>101</sup> My short stay in Nigeria added little to this bare statement.

helpless victims of the Brahman Juggernaut, mercilessly enchained to worse than slavery for thousands of years.

The colours associated with the four *varna* are white for the Brahman, red for the Kshatriya, yellow for the Vaishya, and black for the lowly Sudra. Some suppose that these colours are connected with the old association of colour with the points of the compass: white for the cold north, red for the dawning east, yellow for the golden south, black for the cloudy west, to denote the quarters of the city in which the four castes dwelt. One meets this association of colour and compass among the old Mongol invaders of Jenghiz Khan's time as well as among more ancient people. Jagatai's Golden Horde may have been so called as the southern people of the Mongol Empire. The colour scheme may have had a ritual significance. Others say that these colours were the obvious ones to denote racial differences. In some measure I would tend towards the second explanation. It is noticeable that Hindu paintings have from olden days always depicted as very fair those whom they intended to be respected. This is a piece of racial or colour prejudice. The prejudice may account for the Brahman's white, for it is noticeable that a very high proportion of Brahmans<sup>102</sup> are still today of a fair complexion. The royal or martial red is apt for the soldier, but I cannot see that it conveys his complexion. Yellow for the Vaishya fits into no particular racial or vocational slot. Black for the Sudra. The ancient inhabitants of India were all of markedly dark complexion and this fact gives force to the theory that *varna* represents skin colour –from white to black—because the Rigvedic Aryans did not bring with them into India a Sudra class at all: the class was acquired in India, presumably from among the people whom the Aryans found living there. The Sudra cannot count himself among the three castes as twice-born: he is separated from them though still a Hindu. The gap between him and the Brahman is infinitely greater than between the latter and either of the other two twice-born castes. Let me illustrate this. In Hindu law or custom the killing of a Sudra by a Brahman is no more than the killing of a cat, a lizard or a crow. By the laws of Manu a Sudra who devotes himself to the service of a holy Brahman may in another life attain to the caste of a twice-born. The Brahman may take the property of a Sudra for the purpose of sacrifice, but a Sudra may not himself sacrifice. The Brahman may do almost as he wills for 'the cow (the Brahman) that eats forbidden things is better than the virtuous sow' (the poor black Sudra).

Whatever the reason for these colours, one thing is certain, and it is that racial and colour prejudices have had a lot to do with the institutions of the whole caste system. Perhaps that is why the caste Hindu is so quick to notice these prejudices in others.

The *varna* have now come to represent four groups of castes.

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<sup>102</sup> The Brahman's robe is of saffron. Saffron was the royal colour of early Greek times. It is, however, now widely held that the Aryans found a ready-made caste system already existing among the Dravidians of India.

There is little movement up or down between the four classes but they are not wholly rigid in their exclusiveness. There are cases of the lower castes entering the upper by virtue either of importunity over a long period or of virtuous deeds.

Of all that concerns 'caste' the varna seems to be the easiest to understand. The rest is hopelessly complicated and has drawn out a voluminous literature, mainly compiled by western students, from Strabo's *Geographica* onwards. It is not right, as some will insist, to associate caste entirely with occupation: a caste is rather a social group into which a member is born of parents in that group and outside of which a member is forbidden to marry. Even that is not wholly accurate, for children of a mixed marriage may start a new caste of their own or, after a few generations and very occasionally, individuals, for some exceptional reason of virtuous conduct, will move from one caste to another. There are also restrictions on eating and drinking with members of another caste.

Castes break apart in themselves and sub-castes from time to time amalgamate. Within itself there is in the caste system a slow opening and closing, expansion and contraction, disintegration and integration, occurring the whole time. The system has been wrongly compared with our old guild system of the West. The guild expanded in numbers and in power but remained a single unit: the caste grows by throwing off more and more smaller sub-units each of which to some extent separates itself from the parent. It is one of its weaknesses for in growing it does not extend its strength or its cultural embrace: it only throws out increasingly these exclusive or partially-exclusive particles. With growth it weakens.

Occupation, we know, does play a considerable part in the determining of caste. Hutton quotes the Khatiks, a caste of butchers, which has sub-castes of Bekanwala,<sup>103</sup> pork butcher; Rajgar, mason; Sombatta, ropemaker; Mewafarosh, fruiterer, and so on. As bacon is a recent introduction it is easy to see that other new and humble occupations might easily provide a fresh sub-caste. Again, when the British demand for bacon and pork ceases with the departure of the British so may its sub-castes die out. The status of sub-castes is not rigidly fixed all over India: it varies in different parts, as one would expect in so huge a country with such meagre communications. In the circumstances of India it is strange that there is such an astonishing measure of uniformity in the Hindu edifice all over those thousands and thousands of miles.

With the restrictions on marriage it is not surprising that some small sub-castes find it impossible to discover husbands for their girls: that, in a religion which regards it as a serious disgrace for women not to have children, is no light matter. Polygamy in former times overcame this difficulty.

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<sup>103</sup> Pronounced 'Baconwala.'

Slicing the whole system vertically in some parts of India is the *gotra*, the clan, the class sub-section. In the Brahman class the seven sons of the god Brahma, the seven rishis, founded the seven classes of Brahmans; the descendants of the rishis founded many more *gotras*, and so on, for one reason and another, ever increasing the *gotras*. The *gotra* is less exclusive for it is almost always exogamous.

A further complication is the *mul*, or territorial unit, whose rules of exogamy prevail over those of the *gotra* when the two conflict.

My account is a simplification of the caste organisation, most certainly an oversimplification, and therefore possessing many holes through which the proverbial horse and cab can be driven. But it suffices to show how complex the Hindu system has become and to impress the fact that a human being's whole social life is so strictly ordered by these customs and rules, firmly bound as they are to religious sanction, that initiative and the adventurous spirit are stamped out of his soul.

The strictures imposed by the religion are so numerous that I can only touch on a few, but they will be amazing enough to exasperate a reader of the modern western world. I wonder how many of the electorate of Great Britain and of the United States were aware of even the little that is written in this Appendix when they decided to 'hand India over to the Indians'. I always used to speculate as to who they thought 'the Indians' were—Mahrattas, Hindus, Pathans, Aborigines, Sikhs, Muslims, Nagas? When they wrote of Indian Nationalism it seemed about as accurate a phrase as Malayan Nationalism might be.

The quickest way to impress the strange taboos of Hinduism is simply to enumerate them. Some of them are just as odd as the rules of Pythagoras's new religion. The latter included abstention from eating beans: not picking up anything which has fallen: not stepping over a crossbar: not touching a white cock: not stirring a fire with anything made of iron: never eating a whole loaf: never plucking flowers for a garland: not sitting on a quart measure: not walking on highways: not allowing swallows to build on one's house: rubbing out the ashes so as to obliterate the mark of the pot: to smooth out the impression left by one's body when rising from a bed. Pythagoras enunciated his religious precepts about 530 B.C. Let us see what Hinduism had to offer us in A.D. 1947. A Hindu may keep a lower caste mistress with impunity but he is outcasted if he eats food cooked or served by her or takes it from her hands. Generally speaking, the test of a caste which does not pollute others is whether the lords of creation, the Brahmans, will drink water at its hands. An exception is made in the case of Ganges water, which is held to be so unpollutable that it may be drunk even when given by Untouchables. I speak a little of Untouchables later: they are those who are too defiling for the Hindu even to recognise them as one of his own castes, however lowly. They are to him subhuman and so he has treated them for thousands of years.

No one drinks out of a vessel that has been used by another caste. If he were to do so, and were a Brahman thereafter to drink, the latter would have to purify himself at once: if he were of a lower caste, then the vessel would become useless to the higher caste owner. Therefore, those who distribute water at railway stations are always Brahmans and they pour the water from their own container into the vessel of the drinker.

The shadow of a stranger, or even his glance, falling on a cookpot may be regarded as so polluting the food of a caste Hindu as to make it uneatable. It is thus that you and I are regarded. It is, of course, an insolence to us or to any other human being and sometimes induces foreigners to treat Hindus with contempt. This is then resented by the Hindu and so animosity is bred.

A Kahar may eat the leavings of a superior caste until he himself is married, when he may no longer do so. Some castes will refuse food from their own daughters once they are married, although married to men of their own caste.

The process of cooking and eating is that of a magic ceremony. Consider a Nagar Brahman who must, before cooking his meal, bathe and dress in clean clothes which must first have been washed and dried in a place where nothing can contaminate them.

He must not touch an earthen vessel that has contained water, nor a piece of cotton touched by anyone in a state of ritual impurity unless it has been decontaminated by dipping in *ghi*; nor leather, nor bone, nor paper unless it has Hindi characters on it. He must not touch or be touched by a donkey, pig, dog, or a child old enough to eat solid food .... Before he begins to eat he must not touch a Brahman who is eating or has just eaten. He must not read a printed book while eating, nor a manuscript book unless bound with silk and pasted with paste made of powdered tamarind seed. No doubt this is an extreme case, but it is typical of the sort of restrictions that accompany cooking and eating, for the eating of grain cooked with water is of the nature of a sacrament.<sup>104</sup>

I have often conjectured as to why it was that some Hindus would drink and eat a biscuit with a defiling individual like myself, but would never eat rice with me. I have often asked them and usually they have replied that it is the most important of their foodstuffs and therefore the taboo is strictly applied to it. There is more to it than this. Food, such as rice, cooked with water, is termed *kachcha* (raw) and strictures associated with it are much more severe than those applied to *pakka* (cooked or ripe) food, cooked with ghi, a product of the cow, and thereby automatically sanctified and protected from pollution, just as the water of the Ganges previously mentioned protected itself from the hands of the defiled and from passing on the pollution to the recipient. That I consider to be the true reason for the severe taboo on the eating of rice with a stranger.

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<sup>104</sup> Caste in India (Hutton).



Even a Brahman can buy and eat sweetmeats from a common *halwai's* (sweet seller) shop for these are cooked with *ghi*.

There is another reason, and it is that the life-matter of Man was transmitted through grains of rice which were thereby sanctified and had to be treated with reverence in the cooking and the eating.

In general, smoking is in the same category as taking water, the passing of the hubble-bubble pipe from one smoker to another being regulated as is the partaking of *kachcha* food.

Different sub-castes are debarred from eating different foodstuffs. Best known of all Hindu strictures on food, however, is that which forbids all Hindus to eat the flesh of a cow.

In theory high caste Hindus are polluted by the touch of Out-castes—Scheduled castes—Untouchables—but travelling in bus and in railway coaches has cured most urban Brahmans from taking any notice of this pollution.

There is much more which could be said of Hindu taboos but space does not allow of more while the Outcaste pleads for urgent attention to his wretched condition.

There are no less than fifty million of these Outcastes in India, their lives the most degrading to which any society has condemned its poor and helpless, their unmerited punishment seemingly endless through scores of hundreds of years. The restrictions here recounted are those placed upon them by Hindus.

Until a short time ago they were (perhaps even now they are) denied the use of certain public roads, for their presence within a specified distance is defiling to a Brahman and to the temples of the Hindus. Recently an Outcaste people of 'Unseeables' has been found, of whom the very sight was so polluting to Hindus that these wretches were only allowed out at night, 'scuttling home at the false dawn like the badger, hyaena or aardvark'. The Outcaste may not draw water from wells used by superior castes. In many places the little children of the depressed castes must sit outside the schools and pick up what crumbs of learning they can from that distance, while their superiors sit inside. Attempts have been made, mostly unsuccessful until quite lately, to gain admission for these people to Hindu temples. Usually, if these poor souls gained admission, then the caste Hindus forsook the temple so that the Outcaste's position was not bettered by the privilege.

The Outcastes are in reality Hindus for they worship the Hindu deities, but they are denied the rights of their co-religionists. The sorriest hypocrisy of all this is that Hindus claim them as co-religionists when it suits them to add their considerable numbers to

the Hindu community in order to gain some political advantage; but, when it does not suit them, classify them as a 'minority community', at all times denying them any sort of life within Hindu society. A stranger will ask why these wretched people cling to a religion from which they have had so little comfort. Perhaps it is for purely superstitious reasons because they fear to quit the gods they worship and they fear the power of the almighty, demigod Brahman whom they are taught to revere next to their own deities. The laws of Manu say that a Sudra who is pure and free from pride and always seeks refuge with Brahmans attains in the next life a higher caste. I doubt whether an Untouchable could ever attain to a place within, instead of outside, the caste system but perhaps hope still springs eternal in his humble, swarthy breast.

Hinduism squeezes their lives out of them but yet caresses them into submission. Any other religion would treat them better, give them at least the dignity of human beings, encourage them to look their fellows straight in the face instead of passing with downcast, submissive eyes. The failure of the British is in not encouraging their Christian missionaries to convert these people. Any effort would have been worth this, their salvation at least in this life. Instead of being a disturbing factor in Hindustan's future they would have been an enlightened and stable community ready to help her along on the self-governing path she hopes to tread.

To end this explanation of the caste system, here is an example of oppression furnished by Hutton. In 1930 a group of Outcastes, Chamars, had the effrontery to dress like Rajputs and to mount a bridegroom of theirs upon a horse. To put a stop to this pride the caste Hindus ordained for them eleven prohibitions.

- (1) Not to wear clothes below their knees.
- (2) Men and women not to wear gold jewels.
- (3) Women to carry water only in mud pots, not in copper or brass.
- (4) Children not to read or make themselves literate.
- (5) Children only to tend cattle of Mirasdars.
- (6) Men and women to work as slaves for Mirasdars.
- (7) Not to cultivate land on lease from Mirasdars.
- (8) To sell their own land at very cheap rates to Mirasdars, otherwise no water to be given them for irrigation.

- (9) Men and women to work as coolies for Mirasdars at starvation rates from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- (10) Not to use Indian music at celebrations.
- (11) Not to use a horse in marriage processions but to use their house doors as palanquins for these processions, and no vehicle to be used by them for any purpose.

This is a part of the sickening story of the treatment of the Out-castes by their masters. The mild restrictions imposed on Pandit Nehru by British rule as recounted in his autobiography are pale reflections of these special measures for recalcitrants, or even of the strictures ordinarily and eternally imposed on Untouchables by their forbears and their fellows.

I have given this short account of Hinduism and of the conditions of the Outcastes for it will explain the ways and methods of political India which are given in this book and account for the character of the political leaders of Hindustan. Political Hindustan has been the aggressive force which has slid India along the grooves of destiny during the crucial months of 1945 to 1947. More than anything it is religion that fashions the lives of most of us: precious few of us are without it and those who feign to have none will in their old age invariably clamber into a pew to save their souls at the eleventh hour.

With a religion and a socio-religious system of this sort, the caste Hindu has marked characteristics and his characteristics are usually not those to make him approachable or understood in a democratic world which is essentially a world of tolerance, or with a democratic people who are essentially a people of good mixers as opposed to an emotional people of quick acquaintances and short memories. It would be conceit to deny that numbers of Hindus rise to great heights in religious attainment and of philosophic thought. It is only necessary to know something of the Ramakrishna Mission, of men like its founder, Shri Ramakrishna; of his disciple, Vivekananda; of his friend, Keshab, and of Man Mohan Roy, both of the Bhamo Samaj, or to read Sri Aurobindo's *The Life Divine*, to acknowledge that Hindu philosophy and religion to its true devotees and in its pristine purity is second to none as an inspiration. But to know this is to be filled with a bitter regret that so relatively few can rise from its toils to these serene heights because it is so overlarded with its fatal customs, inhibitions and prohibitions that it holds its people tightly down to their old Mother Earth. Bhakti, the approach to God through a pure love: the worship of the purest of the female quality, maternal love, through the goddess Kali<sup>105</sup> or through the Tantras: all are too often reduced to the sordid, squalid and carnal. Some of the Tantric carvings one sees on the

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<sup>105</sup> In this aspect closely akin to the Sophia of the Russian philosopher Vladimir Solovyov.

temples of India and at Khatmandu in Nepal are just loathsome. How decent pilgrims to these places, especially women, can face them, I cannot think.

But in India, and even here in England, one gets tired of being told about the spirituality of the East and the materialism of the West. There is more of the spiritual in Wilberforce or John Bright or the Whig aristocracy of England who handed their privileges to their people, than there is in the whole Hindu philosophy, judging by its results. It is not helpful to philosophise on action in inaction, inaction in action, the harmonious, the unmanifested, the Highest Path, and all these wondrous discoveries, when fifty million of your fellows have not the ordinary rights of human beings.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in his autobiography speaks of the bigotry of Islam and of the liberal thought of the Hindu, lucky to have a philosophic brake to his fervour. I suppose, though, that it must be because of the unswerving devotion to their creed that Hindus have for so long kept the Sudra and the Outcaste in subjection. This, the bigotry of the Hindu Mahasabha, militant Hinduism, and of Dayanand and the Arya Samaj, another strict Hindu sect, is not to be ignored. The iron curtain has lifted a great deal between the Pandit and the rest of the world, but lifted little between the latter and the amorphous Hindu mass.

Ramakrishna, Saint, Seer, perhaps Incarnation and Messiah, died in Calcutta in 1886; just a lifetime ago, that is all. Keshab preceded him after a painful illness. These two knew the universality of religion and neither poured forth the venom that is so common with the political Hindu of today who can see no good in others and, in general, little good in himself or in his friends. He has developed a habit of antipathy for strangers, for his colleagues and almost for himself. He makes a country of external and internal estrangement. He cannot help it. Fatalistically he seems to be one with Destiny and darkly, as in a German twilight, he moves towards his doom. This is the atmosphere in which Hinduism 'shakes a few, sad, last grey hairs' and from which many are glad to escape. Destiny, apprehension, doubt in the eyes of all those who are in public life. As in a Greek tragedy, they have wandered inexorably, inevitably towards their fate. It seemed like that to us: it still seems like that to us.

It is little avail the caste Hindu clamouring his wares, for they are, as he knows, unsaleable and not for sale and, because they are of this sort, none has yet sought them or him. History tells of the Muslim and then of the Briton making the attempt to traffic with him, to exchange cultures. Whereas Briton and Muslim have been able to come together in a bond of sympathy, to understand each other, to collaborate, the orthodox Hindu has finally repelled the advances of both of them. Muslim and British influence on the Hindu seems to have been slight whereas throughout the centuries the influence of these two on each other has been profound. It was the Muslim who kept the torch of culture and learning alight for Christendom for centuries through the Dark Ages.

It is notable to me at least that very seldom have I been able to go all the way with a caste Hindu: always I have come up against a curtain of silence lowered between us. To that point one can go: no further. Most of us have made a sincere attempt to close the gap and have accepted the position in which high-caste Hindus will not eat with us for fear of pollution and in which they must purify themselves ceremonially after contact with our defiling presence. With the follower of the Prophet who stands not on ceremony, who dips his hand into the same steaming pot of *pillau* (rice stew) into which we too dip, and selects for us the most tasty morsels, we find only one barrier—the *pardah* system.

It is the Hindu and Hinduism which have been the stumbling-block to all our attempts to better the life of the people. Wherever we turned we found ourselves up against the hindering influence of the Brahman.

In the Army, only after years of persuasion have we been able to get our Hindus of all castes to eat together, and Hindus to sit down and eat in the same room, albeit separately, with the Muslims. It is not the Muslim who stands back, it is the Hindu, steeped in his caste duties—*dharma*. It must be well known that the excuse given for the Indian Mutiny of 1857-58 was that the cartridges issued to the Hindu soldiers were greased with cow's fat. It was only an excuse but it served its purpose. Even now, when the Hindu soldier goes back to his village from Army life, he reverts to all the old taboos and caste customs which we officers hoped he had for ever put aside.

The British administration has tried to encourage good farming but always it came up against two things. The first is the Hindu law of inheritance which is derived from the *Sutis*, the *Smritis* and from ancient custom. The *Sutis* were those edicts which were heard from God and they included the four Vedas. The *Smritis* are those which were remembered by the *Rishis*, the sons of Brahma the Creator, of the precepts of God. The principal *Smritis* are the codes of Manu, of Yajnavalkya, and Narada. So it is that even inheritance has religious sanction. These laws enjoin that each male shall be heir to an equal part of the property. In this way comes about the fragmentation of landholdings until they become so minute and so far separated from one another that they are not economically workable. We have tried to regroup these holdings but have only had a measure of success.

The second is the religious prohibition of the killing of cattle. If a Hindu were wilfully to kill a cow he would be cast out of the Hindu religion altogether: if he were to kill one accidentally, then he must undergo *paraschit* (penance). The cow population grows from year to year although there are neither the crops nor the pasture to feed them properly. So it is that one sees fresh herds of these emaciated runts moving over the countryside seeking a blade here and there of the scarce, parched grass. They provide a miserable trickle of thin milk and their flesh, because the Hindu cannot eat it, is wasted. But they take all that is left out of the ground and put little back into it, for their dung is dried

and used almost entirely as fuel, while even the carcase does not enrich the soil as it goes into the hungry bellies of India's scavengers, the kites, the vultures, the pie dogs and the jackals.

Here is a cutting from the *Statesman* of July 1947 which shows how strong a hold the cult of the cow has on Hindu society. Seth Ramakrishna Dalmia is one of India's richest men, a shrewd business man: the Jam Sahib of Nawangar is a Ruling Prince of western India, Ranji's nephew.

Seth Ramakrishna Dalmia, well-known Indian industrialist, announced today that unless within a year of the liberation of India and the framing of her Constitution, cow slaughter is prohibited by law, he would stake his all and would not hesitate even to starve to death.

Seth Dalmia, who was speaking at a party attended by the Maharajas of Patiala, Faridkot, Bikaner, Gwalior and Nabha, members of the Constituent assembly and officials of the Government of India, said: 'The resources of the Dalmia-Jain Charity Trust will be devoted to the agitation for the prohibition of cow slaughter. I shall personally go from village to village and from town to town and shall impress upon the authorities that if they do not prohibit cow slaughter, the Hindu masses will rise in protest. If I am not able to achieve the object even by sacrifice of my life, I am sure my brother, my son-in-law or my wife will follow in my wake and shall continue the struggle.'

Seth Dalmia added that he had formed an association called Govadh Nivirak Sangh for the 'direction of the campaign'.

He appealed to Mr. Jinnah that if out of regard for the sentiments of the Hindus against cow slaughter he would prohibit it in Pakistan, Hindus would pay their homage to him. Criticising the latest statement of Mr. Gandhi on the subject Seth Dalmia hoped that Mr. Gandhi would adhere to his previous writings.

The Jam Sahib of Nawangar, Mr. R. K. Sidhwa and Mr. Ananthasayanam Iyyangar also spoke on the need for protecting the cow.

This is by no means the last that we shall hear of this matter and I have referred to it in Chapter XXXIX, when speaking of the problems that we have left behind us unsolved.

Minute holdings<sup>106</sup> and the depredations of an ever-increasing runt population of starving cattle, both abuses upheld by religious sanction, have prevented any sort of

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<sup>106</sup> This law of inheritance, the Mitakshara system, applies to all Hindu India except Bengal where the Dayabhaga system is in force. The Muslim system is unfortunately the same as the Mitakshara.

agricultural improvement in Hindu India. Incidentally, the sight of such cattle and the fact that those who become crippled by severe injury cannot even then be killed, is no good example to the common people of kindness and proper care for animals.

All this is bad, but without doubt the social effects are the worst product of the system. They have produced a people inclined to be xenophobe, exclusive and repellant to others. I have said that into the Hindu circle little of cultural value, little indeed of new thought can ever penetrate from without. At the best, if it does penetrate it stays confined within a sub-caste, perhaps with exceptional opportunity seeping through into the caste. In the same way as benefits from without are boxed in in the sub-caste, so are things that are of cultural value which are produced within the caste.

The system has made for a stability in society which is quite phenomenal.

*We are not sure of sorrow,  
And joy was never sure;  
Today will die tomorrow;  
Time stoops to no man's lure;  
And love, grown faint and fretful  
With lips but half regretful  
Sighs, and with eyes forgetful  
Weeps that no loves endure.*

It was as a stabiliser that the Abbe Dubois a long time ago found Hinduism admirable. But the Reverend Abbe himself belonged to a creed which naturally regarded stability, the perpetuator and essence of autocracy, as a most desirable attribute of any social order, particularly of one sanctioned by religion.

Enthoven and Hutton between them produced this modern version of the caste system. I give it as written by Hutton.

A recent case typical of the segregation of a new occupational caste within the community is perhaps to be found in the segregation of a caste of motorcar drivers. Enthoven writes: 'Modern India, having created a caste of chauffeurs from the menials who tend motorcars, is almost ripe for a Rolls Royce caste rejecting food or marriage with the Fords.' He should rather have called it a Rolls Royce subcaste, for at least it would start in that way and, if true to pattern, reject, first the giving of daughters to Fords while not hesitating to take wives from among them, secondly, the eating of food with them, and finally, all connection of any kind, discovering a long-forgotten descent, not shared by Fords, from some Brahman or Kshatriya ancestor who drove the fiery chariot of Surya in the misty dawn of mythology. Whether Enthoven be right or not in stating that a caste of chauffeurs actually existed, he is most certainly right in emphasising 'the quite disproportionate importance attached in India to trifling

differences arising from one reason or another in the conduct of small groups of individuals'. 'Workmen who wear pagris,' says Bougie, 'will have nothing to do with workmen in belts; the caste which mends shoes refrains from making a pair of them.'

It is important to note the last sentence of that quotation, – the tendency always to find some difference, some dividing influence. That tendency has had much to do with India's past history in which each has been his own little politician and his own party; it may effectively influence India's future history.

There is not space to write much more on this interesting subject so let me finish by opening a rather unexpected window in order that we may look into an obscure part of the mind of the Hindu.

At the beginning of this Appendix there are some quotations from the *Bhagavad Gita*. They give holy sanction to the caste system and exhort the members of the system to observe the *dharma* (duties) of their caste. In 1830 General Sleeman finally succeeded in exterminating the horrible practice of Thuggee. The Thugs were a religious order who held that their customs were ordained and sanctioned under the auspices of the goddess Kali and that therefore it was right and in fact incumbent on them to pursue their calling. It is incredible that their calling was that of strangling innocent people, wayfarers on lonely roads. Needless to say, the ritual of the cult included robbery. The pickaxe with which the victims were interred was worshipped by the devotees. Followers of the cult indignantly upheld the righteousness of what they did: they truly believed what they held. The victims were killed by God: the Thugs were but the inspired agents. For more than 500 years the caste of Thugs flourished among Hindus: it took an Englishman, a democrat, to wipe out the pest. Beside the Thugs there have been and are other criminal castes whose attitude towards their practice is the same. Dacoits, for instance, invoke Kali before committing a dacoity. It seems that justification can be sought and found within the creed for nearly anything. The modern terrorists of India, the Jugantar and the Anushilan, justified their assassinations by dedicating their villainous ways to the Goddess Kali.

A brief word on the Brahman who is the pillar of this society.

He has made all he can out of his peculiarly privileged position and hedged himself round with protection and regulations so that, under the law of his religion, he is almost immune from punishment no matter how criminal his ways. This immunity did not hold under British law in India, a fortunate thing for those whom he has in his power, but the Brahman could walk round our law by using superstitious influence to evade inconvenient evidence. Like all priestly castes in history a great deal of his power comes from his ability to read and, as ordained in the Code of Manu, to interpret to others the laws and codes of their religion.



Whereas the Brahman is free to come and go as he pleases, the Sudra may only use the south gate of the town to carry out his dead. (That would be the yellow gate, not the black as one would expect from the *varna*.) The Brahman is the Lord of the whole Hindu creation and is entitled to the usufruct of everything: it is all his. The Laws of Manu lay down that a Brahman, learned or ignorant, is a great deity. A king may not execute a Brahman: he may at most banish him but may not touch his property or harm his body. The Brahman is the measure of all things: all other castes are classified in the system according to the behaviour of the Brahman towards them in the matter of food or drink, whether he takes or rejects them at the hands of the donor. Hutton records the story of two Brahman girls playing at the gates of a city who, seeing some Chandals, must go at once and decontaminate their eyes. There are Hindus who may not approach a Brahman because the latter must purify himself if they come too close.

In return for all this reverence and for all his privileges, the Brahman gives little. He is not bound to give anything despite certain pious precepts of asceticism. He has the best of both worlds. It is hardly surprising that most of those who enjoy such power, those for whom the whole world is made and to whom all must bow in acknowledgement of their sanctity, the Brahmans, are born into arrogance and all too often live out their lives as arrogantly. That others should arrogate to themselves any of their power is a sore thorn in their flesh.

No foreigner who comes into contact with them can fail to be affected by the apparent superiority with which so many of these men behave: pride is innate in them and they cannot help it. Their bearing is the bearing of men who expect immediate acknowledgement of their higher status and attainments above all others. To a democratic foreigner this is so offensive as to be unbearable. Most will admit to having felt more than once a blind rage against such a man, the same wrath as they feel at the conceited effrontery and self-satisfaction of the concupiscent and spoilt Brahmani bull which parades the streets, the fat darling of all and sundry among Hindus.

Therefore, it is not surprising that as soon as India seemed to be a prize worth the grasping—one, at least geographically and administratively united—the Brahman should at once assert his claim to the country. It is not to be wondered at that the Muslim should resist that claim which would have reduced him to serfdom, to a Scheduled Caste outside the pale of Hinduism, the unwilling tool of a Brahman master. Mr. Jinnah sensed the peril in time and set to work to guard his people. He has been accused of obstinacy by all and sundry. Would they have been other than 'obstinate' placed as he was? Islam, Britain, the world, owe him their gratitude for saving what was left of Islamic culture in India. Indeed, perhaps he saved India itself as this book may have shown.

The Brahman, naturally, was the great opponent of British rule, for the Briton had taken to himself the Brahman's personal influence over the people and, worse than that, the

hand of the Briton was kinder, more just and less corrupt than had been the Brahman's: but, worst of all, British rule was spreading the democratic ideas of its own people among Hindus. This is probably the greatest contribution that Britain has made to India, to have sown the seed which will bring crashing to the ground the fortress of caste Hinduism. The Brahman-Hindu Congress Party sought to thrust itself back between the personal British administrator and the people, so as to undermine British influence. To some extent it succeeded and to that extent was progress hindered in the districts. An unwonted energy seized Hinduism; the energy of Brahman desperation to win before all was lost and to win the coveted prize of a united India for Mahasabha rule, for *Ramraj*. 'Brahmans rule Benares still.' The idea that others should usurp their power was naturally abhorrent to them. They set to work to regain control. Today they have that control but with it only about a half of the prize they sought. The control will not last long. There are conspirators within their own ranks and enemies outside.

(Mr. Gandhi was *vaishya*: he was not a Brahman. But he was a staunch Hindu. That he was never a Brahman did not matter: he was *mahatma*, a saint, and he could enter the Brahman fold whenever he desired.)

The Congress revolt against British 'Imperialism' in India was consequently, inevitably, and as anticipated, driven on by Brahman power. Hinduism has guided the history of India: it guided the story of the last eighteen months of our rule.

There is a religious basis for inequality in a society in which perhaps the best feature is that the highest class, caste, of all, the Brahman, need not be the wealthiest by any means. Thus the type usually ascendant among other peoples, the rich, need not necessarily be ascendant among the Hindus. It is religious purity which gives ascendancy, not wealth. But this is too trivial a virtue for the system to be applauded and it is open to doubt whether the ascendancy of wealth, which at least allows society to roll over on itself for generation after generation, is not preferable to this sacerdotal version.

There are today many Brahmans in whose veins the ichor of democracy is running fast. These men are the products of contact with the British administrators of India and in some cases of a long sojourn in England itself.

They are bent on overthrowing the Hindu caste system but they have nothing to put in its place. Over the borders they see China and they think that China will one day be free and stable. I do not know when this day will be and doubt its ever coming within a democratic regime, but I do know that whatever natural poise there may be in China comes from an age-old social system based on the family and the family clan and has a strength within itself which the exclusiveness of the Hindu caste system can never have. Moreover, the philosophies of Confucius and Taoism are the philosophies of men of the world, whereas the philosophies on which the Hindu mind must balance itself are

philosophies of great metaphysicians, but ill-adapted to the ordinary conduct of the lives of peasants. All these millions have been anchored for all these years to a firm and cumbrous society and when the Brahman intellectual starts to cut the hawser there will be nothing left which can prevent the general adoption by Hindus of the first workaday philosophy on which they can lay their hands. The nearest of these philosophies – Russian or Chinese – and the only one now present which does not require centuries of development to bring to perfection is the material philosophy of Communism. Widespread adoption of the Christian ethic or of Islam would have laid these millions of simple people far less open to the invasion of their lives by the most vicious and material philosophy that modern times have seen.

Brahmanism, when broken by the Brahman himself, leaves behind it a wreckage the more complete for the hand that tore it to pieces.

*Note: After this Appendix was written the Government of Hindustan made it unlawful for anyone to be treated as an Outcaste. Though it will take years for this law to be observed throughout the country, it is a matter of great moment to its people and the first result of the impact of world opinion.*

## APPENDIX II

### (CHAPTER IV)

#### SOME NOTES ON 'THE INDIAN NATIONAL ARMY'

##### (1)

HERE is the story of a single Mahratta battalion cheerfully and with little loss putting paid to a whole brigade of the I.N.A., the Gandhi Brigade:

In June 1944, the Japanese commenced a determined thrust up the Tamu road and brought strong pressure to bear on the defensive position at Shenam, which was occupied by the 37th Brigade of the 23rd Division. In order to relieve this pressure, it was decided that the 1st Brigade should make an encircling movement to the north of the road and cut the enemy communications at the Lokchow bridges.

To draw enemy attention away from the operations by the 1st Brigade, the 49th Brigade were to attack a position held by the Gandhi Brigade of the I.N.A., which was to the south of the road.

Circumstances prevented the use of the whole of the 49th Brigade, however, and the task of carrying out the attack was given to the 4th Mahrattas with one section of mountain artillery under its command, and support on call from field artillery on the Shenam position.

On the evening of 1st July, the Commander of the 4th Mahrattas received his final orders from General Roberts and was told he was to make his attack felt at first light on 3rd July.

His column set out at dawn on 2nd July and after the usual trying march through mud and jungle arrived at the Kuki village of Mitlong at about 3 p.m. The position held by the forward elements of the Gandhi Brigade could be seen from the village. Between the two ran the Chapki Turel in a deep valley, the steep wooded sides of which were some 1,500 feet on the village side and 2,000 feet on that of the enemy position. Patrol reports indicated that the I.N.A. were holding the ridge but had neglected to secure a hill known as The Knob on the left flank.

It was decided to move at 2 a.m. on 3rd July and occupy The Knob at daybreak with B Company; D Company to be prepared to put in a flank attack from the right.

Little opposition was expected and mainly because of this it was decided not to use the artillery. *It was feared that the shelling would make the enemy run away* before the infantry could get into them and give them a thorough hammering.

Accordingly, the Battalion marched at 2 a.m. on 3rd July, descending the north bank of the Chapki Turel, fording the river and ascending the south bank without incident. The Knob was occupied by B Company just before daybreak.

When it became light enough to see, it was observed that the enemy position was about two hundred yards away. At the same time they opened fire with light automatics. The Mahrattas, however, being seasoned troops by this time, made no reply. This appeared to fox the I.N.A. who apparently came to the conclusion that there was only a small patrol in front of them. A small party of Sikhs came down the hill until they were within shouting distance and from there they started calling out invitations to the Mahrattas to come over to them and join the I.N.A. The continued silence seemed to unnerve the Sikhs, who let go a volley and then withdrew. Unfortunately they happened to fire in the right direction. One of them fired a grenade which exploded with an unusually loud bang as it hit one of the Mahrattas in the face and made a nasty mess of him.

In the meantime D Company had been moved into position to put in an attack from the right. It went in according to plan and there followed much noise of firing. Nothing could be seen of the attack owing to the jungle. Eventually a message was received that D Company had come under heavy automatic, rifle and grenade fire and any future advance would be slow.

The Colonel of the Mahrattas, probably a little irritated at the unexpected amount of opposition and bearing in mind his orders to make his attack really felt, laid on an attack well round the right by A Company, to be preceded by a short but sharp artillery concentration. This was duly put into effect, and with the termination of the concentration A Company charged through the enemy position in full cry. Those of the enemy who failed to escape by running away were killed, including the Sikh Company Commander and his Company Officer. Only about five prisoners were taken and they had already surrendered before the final assault.

The position was then consolidated and B Company passed through to gain contact again. This was expected to be about the village of Mitlong Kanaou where the Gandhi Brigade Headquarters were known to be. The Auster aircraft was also called up to look for the enemy.

Owing to the jungle, the air O.P. was not able to observe anything except for one man standing by 'a tent'.

At this time a heavy rainstorm broke.

B Company reported the Gandhi Brigade Headquarters position clear and the main force moved up. One or two casualties were found and it was learnt that some overs from the 25-pounders on the Shenam, during the concentration on the first company position, had fallen on the Brigade Headquarters and caused casualties. The Headquarters and several companies with it had thereupon hurriedly withdrawn.

Arms, ammunition and valuable documents were found and evacuated. There was also a large dump of flour such as the Mahrattas had not seen for some considerable time. This they were unable to move and before their return the following day the Nagas and Kukis had moved it for them, but not in the right direction.

The enemy was followed up with all possible speed and at about 5 p.m. B Company met opposition. The enemy were on a feature known as Tooth. This feature consisted of a chain of hills so disposed as to be mutually supporting and the whole presented a very strong position indeed.

Trees and scrub made a visual reconnaissance impossible and it was therefore decided that the only method by which the enemy could be located and pinpointed was by large-scale patrolling.

Accordingly the 4th Mahrattas took up a defensive position for the night. The mountain guns at Mitlong registered on defensive fire tasks and undoubtedly shook the enemy somewhat in doing so. A large number of patrols was sent out with the object of getting sufficient information for an attack in the morning.

At dawn the patrols reported in and it transpired that the enemy had withdrawn in the early morning. One patrol had actually heard the enemy saying, 'It is time for us to go now'.

Within a short space of time the Mahrattas were on Tooth and at the same time a message was received ordering them to go no further as they were in danger of bumping a very strong Japanese force.

It was impossible to understand why the I.N.A. had abandoned the Tooth position as it was so naturally strong and so well organised in its earthworks and foxholes as to be a veritable fortress. A British or Gurkha or Indian battalion could have held it for weeks.

The Mahrattas suffered only some 20 casualties. Two men died under the ordeal of the twenty-mile carry back to the Field Hospital. A small casualty list for defeating a brigade.

## (2)

P.K. Sahgal, Baluch Regiment, gave himself up to the 4/2nd Gurkha Rifles near Magyagan in Burma on 28th April 1945. At the end of the year he was convicted of 'waging war against the King' and sentenced by the court martial to be cashiered and to transportation for life. The sentence was commuted at our Army Headquarters in Delhi to cashiering and forfeiture of all pay. So much from the newspaper reports of the trial. This is a brief account of the capture of Sahgal:

The 4/2nd Gurkha Rifles marched at 8 a.m. with Yahand as its objective. Whilst passing Alegan a seemingly reliable local report was received to the effect that there were boo I.N.A. in Magyagan, a mile to the south. Accordingly C Company, the advanced guard, were halted 500 yards north of the village, whilst D Company were sent round the left flank to secure the sausage feature to the south before C Company started its drive from the north. When D Company arrived in position the I.N.A. sent out a surrender party of three men with a white flag and a written request calling on our men to surrender. This was taken as meaning that the I.N.A. wished to surrender, until the Company Commander and his Company were grounded by a hail of bullets from the village. Thereupon C Company's advance was set in motion and simultaneously the I.N.A. came out of the village to surrender. However, the battle once started was difficult to stop and firing went on for fifteen minutes before the situation was under control and it was realised that a regimental headquarters under P.K. Sahgal (late Acting Captain 2/I oth Baluch Regiment) and a complete battalion of the I.N.A. had surrendered. During the fighting two of the I.N.A. had been killed and a total of fifty wounded, of whom about forty were wounded by one of their own grenades which accidentally went off when a party of I.N.A. were throwing down their arms and equipment in front of a platoon of D Company which was accepting their surrender.

The final check-up showed the capture of five hundred I.N.A. (including forty-five officers) of 2nd Battalion and 2nd Regiment's Headquarters, plus 9 M.M.Gs., 10 Lewis guns, 2 Heavy Mortars (81 mm.), 10 Bren guns and nearly 300 rifles. The booty also included many useful documents including their war diary.

This account is the bare outline only, but it sounds, and was, a rather peculiar battle; the fact remains however that the I.N.A. battalion had quite a considerable armament and if they had tried to stage a proper battle they would not have been an easy nut to crack. It was subsequently found that Sahgal knew we were fairly close behind him, troops of loth Divison having the previous day reached Allnmyo, thus cutting off his retreat to the south, and Sahgal had intended therefore to cross the Irrawaddy by country boats

from east to west about Magyagan. However, there were no boats available at Magyagan and either that morning or some time during the night before, they had had a council of war whether to surrender or not. The result of the conference was that they decided to surrender but it was not a unanimous decision and this undoubtedly accounts for the incidents on the morning of the 28th when some of the undisciplined, or perhaps the more nervous elements, started shooting. This might quite easily have involved their side in a massacre and undoubtedly cost them a number of unnecessary casualties.

The task of rounding up and disarming the I.N.A. prisoners was no easy one, but in this we were ably assisted by Sahgal himself, though very lame at the time. He proved himself to be very cooperative and showed concern for the welfare of his own sick and wounded of whom there was a considerable number.

That evening the Colonel sent for Sahgal, took him a little apart from everyone else and questioned him. Sahgal told him all that his battalion had been doing during recent weeks, how he hated the Japs, how the Japs had let him down and how he had completely lost touch with the remaining two battalions of his regiment. We asked him why he had joined the I.N.A. and he said he would rather not talk about it; he added however that he had fought for what he considered was right and that now he had lost he was prepared to take the consequences.

The Colonel really did not know what Sahgal thought would happen to him, but he himself certainly thought that he would be shot or strung up and so avoided a subject which the prisoner did not mention either.

From this account it is apparent that even when led by one of their least timid officers the I.N.A. had little stomach for a fight. Sahgal himself comes out of the affair both well and badly.

Well, because he did not, like so many of the others, cringe and find excuses for his conduct. He said he disliked British 'Imperialism' in India; but he does not seem to have disliked it enough to fight it, only enough to pass over and watch the Japanese fight it. Or perhaps, in giving himself up to the Imperialist troops, he rather expected the mercy that no other nation would have accorded to him.

Badly, because he packed up far too easily for a man who has the courage of his convictions and intends to fight for them. He should have fought to the last or drowned if he could not cross the river. He chose the easiest way, voluntary surrender without a fight, and desertion of his cause. It was not the way that great rebels take: it was not heroic and he will not make history. He was no leader, as the poor showing of his men in battle has proved.



### (3)

Mahomed Zaman Kiani, 1/14th Punjab Regiment, was commissioned in 1934 from the Indian Military Academy where he gained a belt of honour. He was Adjutant of the Battalion where he was associated with Shah Nawaz, Dhillon, Mahommed Akram and Mohan Singh, all of the I.N.A., the last being more or less the founder of the I.N.A. Mahomed Zaman came to iith Division Headquarters as G.S.O.(3) Operations in 1941 and later became G.S.O.(3) Intelligence. Almost as soon as he was taken prisoner he went over to the Japanese and became a Major-General.

Dhillon, 1/14th Punjab Regiment, was commissioned in 1939 from the Indian Military Academy. Shah Nawaz in his book *I.N.A. and its Netaji* gives a list of thirteen distinguished leaders of the Independence Movement. Dhillon is not among them. The Glory that is I.N.A. by Roy is very non-committal. It says 'no reliable account of his activities is available .... from 5th February 1942 to 17th August 1945 when he was captured by British forces on the Pegu front and lodged in the Pegu jail'.

In February 1945 he commanded the Nehru Brigade which was defending the Irrawaddy river crossings. His brigade was defeated and driven off in confusion.

Shah Nawaz, 1/14th Punjab Regiment, we have spoken about. Shah Nawaz was convicted of 'Waging War against the King' and abetment to murder. He was sentenced by the court martial to transportation for life and to be cashiered. The Army commuted the sentence to one of cashiering only.

Mohan Singh, 1/14th Punjab Regiment commissioned in 1934, may be said to be the founder of the I.N.A. It was he who harangued those who were brought from the cages, to join the first I.N.A. It was he who set to work as soon as he was captured to organise this army of abjects. His subsequent career is pretty well known. He organised the Fujiwara Kikan, calling it after Major Fujiwara of the Japanese Intelligence staff, a tribute to the Major. Shah Nawaz describes Mohan Singh as 'an efficient but very average officer' having known him well for ten years. In March 1942 Mohan Singh was one of the Indian delegates sent from Malaya to Tokyo as a goodwill mission. In December 1942 he quarrelled with the Japanese over their arrogant and presumptuous manner in dealing with his I.N.A. and then refused to allow his senior officers to visit Rash Behari Bose, the head of the Indian Independence Movement in East Asia. Bose asked the Japanese to arrest Mohan Singh. They arrested him and he was thereafter kept in custody until released by British forces in Sumatra.

Mohan Singh was not brought to trial.

Bhosle, of the 'Indianised' Battalion of the Mahratta Regiment, was commissioned in 1938 from Sandhurst. In Eritrea, under General Heath, he was a staff officer and well thought of by the G.O.C. 5th Indian Division. He followed his G.O.C. to Malaya, where he became G.S.O.(2) at Corps Headquarters, General Heath being the Corps Commander. In the final stages of the battle on Singapore Island, he was given command of a composite battalion over the heads of more senior British officers who loyally served him. A cutting from a Japanese newspaper about the end of 1942 shows Bhosle as Commander-in-Chief of the I.N.A. at Bangkok. He was preparing to take the field against an army which included his old Division, the 5th. It looks as though Bhosle had been treated as a favourite and that the treatment, as so often in the East where one reads of favourite sons as parricides, had turned his head. The Bhosle are said to derive from Sajan Singh, a prince of Udaipur, who fled before the Muslim invasion and became a soldier of fortune. They became mercenaries in the Mahratta country, hiring their swords to one or other Muslim prince.

I will take two more cases only, lest I am charged with being tedious:

Subadar Singhara Singh and Jemadar Fateh Khan, this time of 5/14th Punjab Regiment. The former was convicted of the usual 'Waging War', murder on three counts, and of causing hurt on two counts: the latter of 'waging war', murder on three counts, causing hurt on two counts. The court martial sentenced them both to death. This was commuted by our Army to fourteen years R.I. and dismissal.

#### (4)

Here is the text of a letter published in the *Statesman* on the 15/16th May 1946. It is a pity that more letters and in a lighter vein were not published earlier than May 1946.

#### WAR SERVICES

Sir,

Mr. Sehgal and his friends have succeeded in convincing their credulous fellow-countrymen that all who joined the I.N.A. did so with the purest and most patriotic motives.

They are now trying to make the public believe that these would-be heroes were heroes in fact and performed prodigies of valour on the battlefield. Indeed, it is frequently suggested that they were more than a match for Regular Indian and British Troops.

Recovered P.O.W.'s know that the first legend is a lie. There were genuine patriots amongst the I.N.A. but there were also plenty of time-servers. Mr. Sehgal could doubtless name some of them.

The second can be disproved by facts and figures. Mr. Sehgal says that 'more than 5,000 I.N.A. officers and men laid down their lives either in battle or owing to disease and starvation.'

Let us deal with officers first. Will Mr. Sehgal name any officers who were killed in battle other than Capt. Ranga Chari, I.M.S., and Capt. L. S. Misra, 5/17th Dogra Regiment? (I do not include Capt. Mohd Akram, who was killed in an air crash or the officer who was accidentally killed by a Japanese sentry.)

Will he name any officer of his acquaintance above the rank of Captain who was even wounded?

That he himself fought with determination with the men of the 2nd Infantry Regiment is admitted. But no one knows better than he that the story of the I.N.A. 1945 campaign in Burma is one of half-hearted resistance and constant surrenders. Misled by their own leaders, double-crossed and deserted by the Japanese, many I.N.A. men died miserably during their retreat. But the figure did not approach 5,000.

Let me supply Mr. Sehgal with some more accurate statistics. Of about 15,000 I.N.A. who served in Burma in 1944 and 1945

150 were killed in action  
1,500 died of disease or starvation  
5,000 surrendered or deserted  
7,000 were captured  
2,000 escaped to Bangkok

Does Mr. Sehgal challenge these figures?

If he admits them to be even approximately correct, they tell a very different tale to that which he is trying to put over. Troops who are well led and have their heart in fighting do not fight without officer casualties.

As for the 'alleged' atrocities and the torture of Indian P.O.W.s Mr. Sehgal is doubtless wise to seek to avoid entering into controversy about them. But he cannot be allowed to dismiss them as 'a matter between the British Govt and the Japanese'. If he were to meet the returned P.O.W.s who suffered at the hands of the I.N.A. or at the hands of the Japanese at their instigation, he would find that they take a very different view of it.

Finally, if he is equally concerned for the ex-Serviceman of the Indian Army, he might use his influence with ex-members of the I.N.A. and the public to put a stop to the persistent disparagement of men who shared the view of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru that

'an army led into India by Subhas Bose on the plea of liberating India .... had to be resisted in India and outside'.

Yours, etc.  
INDIAN ARMY.

(5)

## EASTERN COMMAND TALKING POINTS – No. 4

### THE I.N.A. TRIALS

The Indian Army is a voluntary one – grown during the war to be the largest voluntary army in the world. Every officer and man, on joining the Indian Army, takes of his own free will an oath of allegiance to the King Emperor. To be untrue to one's salt is probably the most universally detested act which all those who joined the I.N.A. have committed. That many did so only owing to torture, ill-treatment, starvation and threats is recognised, and a man whose moral sense breaks in such conditions is perhaps more a weakling than a knave. On this assumption the Government of India has decided to be lenient in the vast majority of cases.

Those who have been brought to trial are men who joined the movement at the outset, and who gave their energies to inducing others to follow suit. They at least were aware of, and connived at, the methods which were used to recruit volunteers for the I.N.A. even if they did not themselves commit atrocities against their own fellow-countrymen. To abstain from bringing such men to trial would be to fail in upholding the authority of the Government.

No democracy can thrive where means to achieve an object include cruelties and murders and the breaking of an oath. When you think of it, is it not astounding that men who a short time ago would have been horrified at the idea of breaking a solemn oath, have allowed themselves to be so misled that they are prepared to argue that political considerations justified their actions? If that is so, is any oath binding? Is this the way of progress to independence? If so, what sort of a 'civilised' society shall we live in?

The I.N.A. leaders were prepared to bring war and all its miseries within the borders of their own country. However patriotic their intention may have been, surely they were doing their country the greatest disservice of which it is possible to conceive. Political development, to be lasting, must come by constitutional means and by the will of the people. It cannot be imposed by force from outside.

Read again the following extract from the Viceroy's speech in Calcutta. It is enlightening.

'A great deal of political heat and feeling has been engendered by the way in which the I.N.A. trials have been represented to the public. I will say nothing of the trials themselves or of the men under trial; it would be quite improper for me to do so. But I do propose to say something for the men who were prisoners of war but did not join the I.N.A., who under pressure and punishment, under hardships and want, stood firm to their ideals of a soldier's duty, a soldier's faith. They represented some 70 percent of the total men of the Indian Army who became prisoners of war in Malaya and Hong Kong. Whatever your political views, if you cannot acclaim the man who prefers his honour to his ease, who remains steadfast in adversity to his pledged faith, then you have a poor notion of the character which is required to build up a nation. I say to you that amongst all the exploits of the last five or six years for which the world rightly extols the Indian soldier, the endurance of those men in captivity and hardship stands as high as any. As a proof of what they endured as the price of their loyalty to their ideals of a soldier's duty, I will tell you this. The 45,000 Indian prisoners of war who stood firm are estimated to have lost about 11,000 or one quarter of their numbers, from disease, starvation and murder; the 20,000 who went over to our enemy's side lost only 1,500, or 7½ percent.'

It is easy for the characterless man to be swayed by slogans and slop. The sensible man will not let his judgment be impaired by a one-sided emphasis on the I.N.A. In certain circles the worst that is said of the Indian soldiers who joined the I.N.A. is that they are 'misguided patriots'—but in those circles the emphasis is always on the so-called 'patriotism' and nothing is said about the 'misguidedness'.

Consider too what would have happened to India if the Axis powers had won the war! That they failed was largely due to the loyalty and fighting qualities of the Indian Army, the vast majority of whom remained loyal to their oath of allegiance to the King Emperor, and by their valour in battle and steadfastness in adversity displayed those qualities which have served India well in the past and will do so in the future.

## (6)

From an eye-witness in Malaya in 1942.

Immediately after the capitulation at Singapore all British and Australian prisoners of war were separated from the Indians. The Indians were lodged in various prisoner camps in Singapore and elsewhere: the British and Australians were confined to Changi, which is on the eastern end of the island.

There were about 52,000 British and Australian officers and men and we were split up into six areas, to each of which a lieutenant-colonel was allotted as commander.

Towards the end of August 1942, we were required by the Japs to sign a written undertaking not to escape. We refused to sign. This decision was made by our own representatives in the camp. As a result, on the 1st or 2nd September (I do not remember the exact date) the Japs ordered all their prisoners, then about 17,000, to leave our various barracks and all except those in the hospital area to concentrate in Selarang barracks. These barracks were capable of holding only one battalion. This was done as a punishment for our not signing the undertaking.

Just before 10 a.m. on 2nd September, I received a message from my Staff Officer that I was to report to the local British commander at a level crossing at the south-west corner of the camp. I did not then know what was the reason for this. I immediately obeyed these instructions, and when I arrived at the level crossing I found this senior officer and all the area commanders and also two chaplains of the British Forces (C. of E.) and another whom I believed to be an R.C.

I then learnt from the Senior Officer that we had been assembled by the Japs to be present at the execution of four B.O.R.s who had attempted to escape some time previously from the Changi prisoner camp.

As we were waiting there a lorry drove past us and in it were two B.O.R.s and some Indians. The lorry went straight past us and we did not speak to the B.O.R.s. Later, about 11.30 a.m., a lorry appeared, driven by an Indian, and he took us along a side road towards the beach. On alighting from the lorry I saw a group of about 30 Japs, the majority of whom were officers, assembled to our left front on the beach. There was no conversation between the Japs and ourselves. Later, three or four other lorries appeared on the scene, containing Indian troops of whom the large majority appeared to be Sikhs. There seemed to be about thirty of them. Some of them were armed with rifles and others had picks and shovels.

The next thing I remember is that four B.O.R.s (one in a pyjama jacket) were seen to appear from behind us and they were taken by some of the Indians to a position on the beach about 50 yards from the water's edge and 70 yards directly in front of us and they stood in a group together. The two chaplains then went forward to the B.O.R.s and prayed with them.

While this was happening one of the Jap officers came up to our group and said, 'We will now show you what we do to men who escape.' He was an interpreter and spoke English.

The chaplains then returned to us and a Jap then made the four B.O.R.s stand in a line about four or five paces from each other facing us. Private Brabington, one of the four, asked the senior chaplain if his death alone would not satisfy the Japanese. Colonel Tawney, in my hearing, asked our Senior Officer if he could go to the Japs and volunteer to be shot in place of the four men.

The Jap then offered the condemned men a handkerchief for blindfolding purposes but they refused it. I then saw an Indian dressed in the uniform of an officer in the Indian Army and wearing a lieutenant's or captain's badges of rank. He took four Sikhs from the Indians who had come out of the lorries and placed them each about 50 yards in front of each B.O.R. All four Sikhs were armed with rifles. I did not then know the Indian officer, but later learnt for certain his name and his unit.

The Indian officer then took the rifle away from one of the Sikhs in the firing party – the one on the extreme left – and this Sikh fell out. The four members of the firing party then adopted the kneeling position and brought the rifles to their shoulders and took aim. I did not hear any fire order or see any signal, but four shots rang out from the firing party and all four B.O.R.s dropped to the ground. They were not killed outright as there was movement from all the bodies on the ground, and one B.O.R. shouted, 'For Christ's sake finish me off!' All the members of the firing party then, from the same position, fired two or three shots each at the bodies on the ground.

There appeared to be no further movement from the bodies.

The four members of the firing party then rose and advanced up to the bodies, when each man, including the Indian officer, fired one more round directly into his respective victim's body. The four members of the firing party then withdrew somewhere behind us and the Indians with picks and shovels were summoned forward by the Japs. We got back into our lorry and returned to the crossing.

In the whole of this episode neither I nor any other member of our party had any conversation with the Indian officer, with the other Indians or with the Japs or the B.O.R.s, except in the case of the chaplains.

Although I did not know it at the time, I later learnt that this Indian officer was in command of a guard composed of Indians who were on duty for the Japanese over the British and Australian prisoners.

## APPENDIX III

### (CHAPTER I)

#### COMMAND TALKING POINTS AND NEWSPAPER REPORTS

*From the Statesman,*  
1947: Second City

#### FIRST DEPRESSIONS

Not in every city (praise be!) does the newcomer receive first impressions so vivid, so lasting, as in Calcutta. It would be a soulless wretch who, grown old, cannot yet entrance the children at his knee with the magic story of his coming to the Fairy City.

The casual visitor who arrives by train at Howrah is amazed to discover that it has barely come to a stop when screaming fiends invade his compartment and clear it with violent efficiency. His trunks and suitcases are snatched from under the bunks and thrown unceremoniously on to the platform. There, hovering weight-lifters swing them aloft with a two-handed jerk before dashing madly off the platform. The distracted visitor, anxious for their safety, gives chase but only by clever footwork and much weaving can he even contrive to keep them in sight among the milling crowd. By the time he has surrendered his ticket at the gate they have vanished.

Bewildered by the jostling multitude, he succeeds, if the Fates are kind, at length in locating his baggage at three different entrances to the station, each lot jealously guarded by a gang of bucolic weight-lifters. His attempts to collect his baggage at one spot are hampered by the fact that each set of weight-lifters has fortuitously engaged a vehicle to take him on his way. After declining the services of a capricious victoria and a faded gharry drawn by an ill-assorted pair, he diffidently enters an ornate and high-powered taxi after his baggage has been stowed safely, despite determined efforts by the strong men to keep souvenirs. The taxi driver, who has been a bored spectator till now, enquires after his destination. It is given and the turbaned head is shaken slowly to indicate that for him to venture into such a locality is unthinkable. But the eye brightens when extra inducement is mentioned, and a bargain is struck when a suitable sum is specified.

The switch is turned on, self-starter pressed and gears engaged, and the casual visitor is off on one of the most thrilling rides of his life. Trams are overtaken on the wrong side, crowded corners are rounded with the foot pressed hard down on the accelerator, the



imperturbable driver using only one hand for the wheel, for the other is constantly engaged in playing barbaric fanfares on the horn. The C.V. vows that only dire necessity will induce him to venture forth in a taxi again.

Soon after his arrival at his destination, he finds he has to pay a call, so he elects to go by tram. No seat being vacant, he gropes for a strap and has no difficulty in finding one because no one else is using them. He soon learns that it is the custom of the hospitable brotherhood of a crowded tram to give and take—you lean upon me for the left-hand turns and I'll lean upon you for the right-hand turns and we'll all take a chance if the tram pulls up suddenly. Swaying with the pressing crowd he is unable to see where the tram is taking him and, feeling faint with the exotic perfumes of assorted hair oils, fumes from rank cigars and hot, moist bodies, he decides to get off and walk.

With due deference to the heavy traffic on the road he studiously keeps to the pavement but finds that at every hundred yards or so he is forced to get on the road in order to give a refuse can and its shameless accessories a wide berth.

Ask anyone who has been to Calcutta what he remembers most vividly about this city and he will tell you without hesitation it is its refuse cans. Here a refuse can is not so much a receptacle for garbage as the X which marks the spot for the dumping of offal. Never is used the orthodox method of disposing of garbage, which, according to the leading practitioners, is to grip the offending article between thumb and forefinger and approach the can with arm outstretched and head averted till the article is over the can when it is released so as to drop or flutter into its appointed place.

The drill in Calcutta is to wait till a good deal of assorted garbage accumulates in a tin, which is held firmly in both hands while a short run is made, after the fashion of a javelin-thrower, which culminates in the contents being hurled at, about or near the target. It matters little if elevation and range are hopelessly out. Occasionally the target is straddled. The Black Maria makes its round and the half empty can is up-ended into its festering maw. The near and wide misses which ornament the pavement make a job for another department. But generally they lie there, lending a piquant tang to the city's bracing air.

VERITAS.

## APPENDIX III

### (CHAPTER II)

#### (I)

### EASTERN COMMAND TALKING POINTS – No. 9

*March 1946.*

#### LIES

Everything that you read in a newspaper is not necessarily the truth. Many newspapers are dishonest, and twist news so as to suit their purposes and to make 'facts' prove their own doctrines. This is a very foolish policy as, once a paper gets a reputation for being inaccurate and dishonest, it falls into disrepute with all except the ignorant and those who wilfully deceive themselves.

A dishonest Press does a great disservice to its country, as foreigners judge the standard of honesty of a country by the tone and integrity of its Press.

Do not be led astray by lies published in a newspaper, and, if you detect a particular newspaper in spreading a lie, make up your mind not to read that paper any more and stick to your resolution. Try another instead.

There are many lies put out by various papers in recent months. Examples are:

(a) The British organised the Bengal famine.

The official report (which can be trusted) clearly shows that the main causes were:

- (i) The loss of the rice crop from Burma.
- (ii) Hoarding by 'Black Market' dealers against a rise in prices.
- (iii) Difficulties of transportation owing to war conditions.

The Provincial Government cannot claim that its arrangements were perfect. Local authorities were perhaps slow and badly organised for the institution of relief measures, which only became really effective when the Army was called in, but to charge the British with deliberately organising the famine is grotesque and wicked.

(b) The British are not sincere in their statements regarding the grant of self-government to India.

They are perfectly sincere. The fact is that good will, common sense and patience have not always been shown by some Indian communities, thus making it impossible to produce any 'reasonable settlement'. It is certainly not for want of trying by H.M.G. India has been made into one country by the efforts of the British administration, and it is not 'reasonable' to allow it to fall into separate, discordant pieces without an effort to find a solution which will enable it to retain its identity as a whole. That is the difficulty that we are faced with now.

(c) The parliamentary delegation has been sent to delay self-government for India.

The tasks of the delegation are, in the words of the Secretary of State for India, to go out as representatives of Parliament, to make personal contact, to ascertain individual views and to convey to leading Indians the broad general attitude of the chief political parties in this country (Britain).

It is not for the delegation to make an official enquiry or present a formal report. It is therefore not within its power to delay matters, even if it wished to, which it certainly does not.

A lie is a beastly thing. It is sometimes difficult to know what is a lie and what is the truth but—whilst admitting that there may be mistakes and misunderstandings—the Indian has, in fact, no valid reason for disbelieving the categorical and plain statements made by the British authority. The trouble is that some people *prefer not to believe* the truth.

## (2)

First, the editorial comment of the *Hindustan Standard* of the 3rd April:

### THING IS APPALLING

Even though the war is ended, in India its casualties still continue. On the streets of Calcutta, men, women and children are still perishing almost daily—not by the swords of a cruel enemy nor by the bullets of an implacable foe, but under the wheels of fast-moving military lorries and trucks....

Look at the series of fatal accidents in which military lorries were involved during the last ten days. As many as ten persons have been run over and killed by military vehicles in ten days. They count among their victims old men, young women and little children.

It is a shocking story—an appalling tragedy. Yet, it goes on apparently unchecked. There is little evidence that men who count have taken any effective measures to stop this wanton loss of human lives....

One thing however is clear. Whatever steps the authorities may have taken they have proved wholly inadequate. They have failed to check the guilty men. Nine more accidents have occurred since the Government communique was issued. That demonstrates unmistakably that more stringent measures are called for....

It is difficult to understand why deterrent measures have not been adopted so long. Would any democratic government have survived a day if such things had occurred in their territories?...

These irresponsible men must be made to abandon their crazy disregard for other people's lives. Either they must be compelled to mend their ways or the city must be made out of bounds for all vehicles of the military type. These hideous deaths on the Calcutta streets must forthwith end.

Mr. Herbert E. Courtland of Calcutta on the 1st April, writing to the *Statesman*, not alone, somewhat appreciated the position during the war'.

### RECKLESS DRIVING

Sir,

It was reported this morning that another military truck which had run over and killed a boy at a Calcutta road crossing, was set on fire by the crowd.

Apart from this accident, there have been numerous others which your paper has, over many months, brought to notice. That a patient and tolerant [*italics mine*] populace have at last had enough of this reckless driving is evident and the sooner the military authorities realise it the better.

We could somewhat appreciate the position during the war, but as hostilities have now ceased, what is all this hurry and scurry about, especially when most of these lorries move about empty?

Last Sunday night when I was trying to negotiate a water-logged patch of the road after a heavy downpour a large military lorry charged in without warning at such speed that it splattered the buildings on both sides of the street. The street was dark and the lorry had no lights. It was fortunate that the street was deserted or else there would have been disaster.

What have the military authorities to say about this? We do not want sympathy and assurances for the future. We want this reckless driving to cease immediately.

Yours etc.,  
HERBERT E. COURTLAND.

Calcutta,  
April I.

### (CHAPTER III)

#### (I)

Here is a report on one such Press conference (see page 47) in early 1946. As far as I remember it is from a Muslim paper.

#### A MAGNIFICENT WEAPON *General Toker's Tribute to Indian Army*

We are going to hand over to you a magnificent weapon—a weapon of the finest tempered steel, a blade that will never turn in your hand, said Lieut.-General Sir Francis Toker, G.O.C.-in-Chief, Eastern Command, to a gathering of Press representatives in Calcutta last night, referring to the Indian Army.

I have often wondered whether the people of India as a whole realise what the Indian Army has meant to them. I have had 32 years' service in the Indian Army. The Indian Army, the Indian soldiers, are the best ambassadors India has ever sent. They are a magnificent example of the Indian nation. If India is worthy of that Army then she is worthy of everything, declared General Toker, adding, After the last war we felt that India was bound to step out. We tried to produce an army which would be able to meet any first-class power in the world.

'I could mention at least five Indian divisions which would rank high among the fighting forces of the world and at least one which would rank among the best. It was not solely due to intensive training but to the quality of the men—the virtue of courage, the *virtue of loyalty* and the virtue of endurance.'

And here is a leader from the same newspaper:

#### THE INDIAN ARMY

It was most apposite of General Sir Francis Toker to tell India now of the worth of the Indian Army, its achievements and how much not only India but the whole world

owed to it. We have always held our Army in the highest esteem and still hope that its traducers will change their opinion and accord to it the glorious credit to which it is entitled. There is no doubt that the Indian Army was mainly responsible for saving India from a fate and ordeal that were the lot of Malaya, Burma and the East Indies. Those countries passed through horrible experiences that have to be gone through to be believed. Sometimes, when one hears the detractors of the Indian Army belittling its worth and contributions one wishes that the eastern part of India had fallen to the Japanese for a short while. It is a very cruel thought but it might have taught those detractors a salutary lesson. However, thank God, through the Indian and British Armies not an inch of Indian territory had to suffer Japanese vandalism and savageries. We earnestly hope that the Indian Army will maintain that high standard of efficiency and reliability of which General Taker has been so proud. One thing must be made clear: the Army should not allow politics to interfere with its work. It is an excellent principle that soldiers should have no politics. Their job is to be always ready to defend the country against aggressors, and not to side with one party or the other.

## (2)

This literary review will divert the reader, I do not doubt. It exemplifies, however, the depths to which religious feeling had permeated. It is a Muslim newspaper reviewing a Hindu author's work.

*I impeach Beverley Nichols* by Jag Parvesh Chander, published by Indian Printing Works, Kacheri Road, Lahore, Rs. 6/12.

This book may quite possibly be the product of long hours of sitting in a 'library' like that Mr. Gandhi has very recently described as the ideal place for meditation and thought. Mr. Parvesh Chander is described in the notice appearing on the cover as the author of many books and a prolific writer. If the rest of the books he has written are of this type, one inevitably gets the impression that he is suffering from chronic diarrhoea which enforces upon him perpetual stay in the Gandhian 'library'.

Many books have been written in vain to distort the painful facts Mr. Nichols used as basis for his *Verdict*, but of all, Mr. Chander's is the clumsiest attempt.

## (CHAPTER X)

### (1)

It may entertain the reader to learn how, as soon as the Cabinet Mission got into the saddle in April, we explained it to our Indian soldiers.

## EASTERN COMMAND TALKING POINTS – No. 17.

## THE CABINET MISSION

You will all have heard that a Cabinet Mission consisting of Lord Pethwick Lawrence, the Secretary of State for India, Sir Stafford Cripps and Mr. A. V. Alexander, is now in Delhi, but you may not be quite clear in your own minds as to what the purpose of their visit is.

Their aim is to give effect to the often reiterated policy of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom in regard to the future of India as a self-governing country, and they naturally hope, as the result of the discussions now going on with the leaders of the main political parties in India, to be able to submit an agreed solution to the Cabinet. Only in the event of these political leaders being unable to agree on the major issues, will it fall to the Cabinet Mission to put forward a suggested solution of its own. If this does become necessary, you may be certain that their proposals will be based on meeting, as far as is humanly possible, the legitimate and just demands of all parties in India. It therefore follows that their solution should satisfy the great majority of the moderate and reasonable members of these parties and therefore all the moderate and reasonable men of India. There is an extremist element in all parties which would only be satisfied by an award which met all their most extravagant demands, to the detriment of opposing parties. To give way to the demands of such would be to follow the ways of Hitler and Mussolini, against whose doctrines we have all fought, and to forsake the path of democracy and wise compromise for the good of the greatest numbers.

To show you that the members of the Mission have the future well-being and contentment of India as a whole at heart, it may help you to know something of the history of its members.

Lord Pethwick Lawrence is an elder statesman who although not previously brought into direct contact with Indian affairs, had long studied the many problems connected with India's advance to nationhood before he became Secretary of State for India. The very fact that he accepted this office in the present Government is proof of his desire to further the aim of full self-government by all means in his power.

Sir Stafford Cripps, of whom you have probably heard in connection with the efforts which he made in 1942 to find a solution to the constitutional deadlock which then existed in India, is a man who has always been the champion of the weak and poor. He would never associate himself with any policy which did not ensure the well-being of the masses and their protection against oppression and exploitation.

Mr. A. V. Alexander, who was in the Cabinet during the war as the political head of the Admiralty, a post which he still holds, started life as one of the great masses of working men and has reached his present position by his integrity, straightforwardness and

downright sincerity. His aim is always to work for the good of the people, whether they be British or Indian, and he is the last man to agree to a solution which would deprive anyone of his essential freedoms.

So you will see that if this Mission has to suggest a solution it will be one which, as far as is humanly possible, will ensure that there is justice and security for all.

(2)

## EASTERN COMMAND TALKING POINTS---No. 22

### THE NEXT STEP

You all now know the broad outline of the Cabinet Mission's proposals for setting India on the road to freedom. It is yet too early to tell what the reactions of the principal political parties will be to these proposals, or whether they will be accepted as a basis for further constitutional changes.

Meanwhile, the intention is to proceed with the next step as soon as possible. This is to form an Interim Government of India in which all members of the Viceroy's Executive Council will be wellknown Indian political leaders, representative of all parties and interests. Hitherto, the Members of the Council have been either officials or non-officials nominated by H.E. the Viceroy, and the Commander-in-Chief has always been the War Member. In the Interim Government, every department of the Government of India, including the War Department, will be controlled by a non-official Indian. H.E. the Viceroy hopes that each political party will name some of its best known and most reliable leaders to carry out these heavy responsibilities in the Interim Government. It still remains to be seen whether all parties will rally to the call and take their proper share in shaping India's own destinies. It was to make this possible that all the present Members of Council recently submitted their resignations to H.E. the Viceroy. Indians can thus have complete control of all the power residing in the Government of India as soon as they wish. It is physically impossible to transfer power more completely than this.

If it is found possible to persuade Indian Leaders to form this Interim Government at once, then, as H.E. the C.-in-C. has told you in his broadcast, there will be an Indian War Minister to whom he will be responsible, so that control of the armed forces will be vested in Indian hands. You will then know that the policy governing the employment of the armed forces has been approved individually, by your own War Minister, and collectively by the Executive Council—all Indians—as a whole. You can therefore be fully assured that you will be used to further the interests of free India, and if you are taunted, as you sometimes now are by agitators and other evil persons whose real aim



is the disruption of the country, with being the slaves of reaction, you can proudly point to yourselves as being the most important servants of the first truly Indian Government.

(3)

#### **EASTERN COMMAND TALKING POINTS – No. 14**

##### **THE WARTIME SOLDIER**

A large number of you joined the Army during the war and have no intention of making it your permanent career – in fact, but for the war, you would probably never have become soldiers at all. Your motive in joining was to have a knock at the German or the Jap, and you helped to build up the largest voluntary army which took part in the war. You have carried out your purpose in a manner which will go down to history, and you now perhaps feel that your job is over, that it is time you began to look at things from a civilian view-point, and that you are justified in questioning the why and the wherefore of what you are called upon to do whilst waiting for your demobilisation. This is quite a wrong attitude. You all know that the reason why you were able to beat the enemy was because you had discipline and confidence in your leaders. Without these two things an army is worse than useless: it is a liability and a danger to its own country. Some of the wartime soldiers have now five and six or more years service. Although non-regulars, they have become the veterans of their unit and on them depends the tone of the whole unit. Young soldiers, now joining on regular engagements, see things through the eyes of you wartime soldiers and look to you for guidance and example.

The wartime soldier who is still serving thus has it in his power to make a fine contribution to the new peace-time army which is coming into being. This army of ours is the finest thing which has been created in India's advance to full nationhood. Without a good army, well disciplined and trained, and, above all, loyal to its leaders and to the government of the day, whatever that government may be, India can never count for much in the comity of nations.

It is up to every wartime soldier, until he is demobilised, to go on giving of his best, to accept the orders of his superiors without question, and to set an example in self-discipline, loyalty to the Army, and all soldierly qualities to those who will follow on. Only in this way can he be true to himself and to his country.

#### **APPENDIX III**

(4)

#### **EASTERN COMMAND TALKING POINTS--No. 18**

## INDIA AND THE WAR-SOME FACTS

If India's name stands far higher today in the world than it did in 1939, as I know it does, the credit is due to the simple people, soldiers, sailors and airmen, the workers in the fields and the factories, who through these dangerous years have done their best; and, above all, to the men of the fighting services, who, in all their campaigns have proved themselves steadfast and courageous, and have won the respect and admiration of the United Nations.

This is a quotation from a speech by H.E. the Viceroy in October 1945, and here are some of the facts which bear out his word as far as the Army is concerned.

The Indian Army, entirely from voluntary recruitment, expanded from 189,000 in 1939 to 2,500,000 in 1945.

During 1939-41, India's enemies lay to the west. By 7th December 1941, the date of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, India had sent a quarter of a million troops to the Middle East.

With the Japanese entry into the war, India came between two fires. She was faced with a new enemy and a new task—to provide a great army to fight in the East. India provided that army. In fact she raised, trained and equipped an army of, in all, 2,500,000 as already stated, and that without the need of conscription.

India had to prepare herself as an assault base. It became necessary to maintain in India great forces not only from the Commonwealth but from China and the U.S.A. For this purpose accommodation was built for 1,320,000 men; 42,000,000 sq. ft. of covered storage was erected, and 70 new training establishments, to take 470,000 men at a time, were set up. Over 200 fully equipped operational airfields were constructed, and 130 new hospitals built and equipped.

The Indian Army took part in the campaigns in:

North Africa	Malaya
East Africa	Burma
Syria	Greece
Tunisia	Sicily
Italy	

It suffered the following casualties up to August 1945

Killed	24,338
Wounded	64,354

Missing	11,754
P of W	79,489
TOTAL	179,935

It won 31 Victoria Crosses, and out of a total of 27 Victoria Crosses awarded for the Burma Campaigns, 20 were won by members of the Indian Army. The total awards for gallantry in the Indian Army were 4,028.

The Fourteenth Army in Burma was the largest single army in the world. Its battle front of 700 miles was approximately as long as the Russian front against Germany. Of the total of 1,000,000 men in S.E.A.C., 700,000 were Indian troops.

The Indian Army is thus the finest example of India at her best, and by its exploits it has enhanced the good name and fame of India in the eyes of the whole world.

(5)

## EASTERN COMMAND TALKING POINTS – No. 19

### INDIA AND THE WAR-MORE FACTS

You have already heard the facts regarding the wonderful contribution which the Indian Army made towards winning the war. Splendid as were the achievements of that Army, they could never have been possible without the support of many millions more Indians, who, by their work in factories, ordnance depots, docks etc., saw to it that the steel, munitions, clothing, supplies and all the many needs of a modern army were met promptly and in adequate quantity. The various war industries absorbed 5,000,000 Indians whilst auxiliary work in connection with the maintenance of the armed forces employed 8,000,000 more.

Then again, it was no use manufacturing large quantities of war material if it could not be sent where needed. The railways of India, despite the fact that in 1940–I, before the Japanese war began, they had denuded themselves of rolling stock, locomotives and even track (of which 1,200 miles were picked up, in order to help the North African campaign and to develop communications in Iraq and Persia for the sending of supplies to Russia then hard-pressed in the Caucasus), met every demand placed on them for the prosecution of the war. They employed 1,000,000 additional staff and carried 1,162,000 tons of military stores and 550,000 military passengers a month. The capacity of the B. & A. Railway was quadrupled and 30 special trains a day were run to keep clear the ports of Calcutta, Bombay, Madras and Karachi. One of these trains regularly made the trip of 2,760 miles from Karachi right across India to Ledo in Assam.

All this tremendous effort in many different spheres of activity could only have been achieved by a united endeavour on the part of the great masses of India. Could but the same united effort towards an ordered government be achieved in peace, there is no limit to what India might do.

## (CHAPTER XI)

### EASTERN COMMAND TALKING POINTS – No. 21

*June 1946.*

#### READING THE NEWSPAPERS

You have already been warned in a previous talk that you should not believe everything that you read in the newspapers. People are inclined to believe that because they have seen something in print it must be true. This is a most mistaken idea.

Another point which has been stressed in talks is that whilst the Army is the servant of the Government of the day, whatever form that Government may take, it is also representative of the nation as a whole, and a soldier still remains a citizen and has certain duties and obligations as such. In India it has recently been the apparent policy of certain newspapers to drive a wedge between the general mass of citizens and the Army, and to this end they have indulged in a campaign of vilification of the Army. Whatever the object of this may be, it is bound to be disruptive and, in pursuit of it, newspapers have printed allegations which are quite untrue, without making any effort to verify their facts, although the authorities would gladly have given them any information they required.

Now, you have been told that there is no restriction on your reading the newspaper you fancy, and there is no intention of trying to stop you reading the particular newspaper to which reference is now made.

The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* in its leading article on 4th May 1946 made an attack on the Army, accusing it of being responsible for various outrages against the civil population. Here, very briefly, are the facts:-

#### *Newspaper Statement*

(a) An Indian soldier was accused of having insulted and attempted to abduct from her husband an Indian lady, on the Calcutta Maidan.

#### *The Truth*

The newspaper itself admitted on 6th May that the husband had lied in all his statements, that the woman was not his wife and that the assailant was a Bengali *Hindu* and not a Punjabi soldier.

*Newspaper Statement*

(b) Indian soldiers in a 'military type' vehicle were stated to have abducted an Indian lady in Ballygunge.

*The Truth*

The 'Indian lady' was a well-known prostitute who was actually soliciting at the time. Her sister had just been collected by the police also for soliciting. The incident happened at night and there is no real evidence that the 'military type' vehicle was in fact an army one occupied by military personnel. The woman, although she spent the night with the men, could produce no evidence to assist in identification. There is nothing to justify the accusation that Indian soldiers were involved in the incident.

*Newspaper Statement*

(c) Military personnel were stated to have been responsible for the assault on an Anglo-Indian nurse near Howrah last December.

*The Truth*

The real assailants were arrested following a dacoity a few days later, and have been tried in a civil court. All were Bengali civilians, and the vehicle they used was an army truck stolen during the disturbances last year.

*Newspaper Statement*

(d) The Kaharpara village incident where men of a Provincial Civil Labour Unit were involved in a fracas, was attributed to the Army, and the Army authorities were accused of impeding the course of justice.

*The Truth*

The civil authorities had a free hand in the enquiry and the military authorities gave all possible help, even holding the suspects for them. The unit involved was NOT part of the Army nor were the accused soldiers in any sense of the word. That there were difficulties as regards identifications was the inevitable result of a confused situation, but this did not justify our holding men who were clearly known to have been absent, on leave, etc., at the time of the occurrence, even though a villager claimed to have recognised them! A number of the accused were convicted.

### APPENDIX III

### (CHAPTER XIX)

## EASTERN COMMAND TALKING POINTS--No. 37

### BEHAVIOUR OF BRITISH TROOPS IN INDIA AND THE RESPONSIBILITIES WHICH DEVOLVE ON THEM

#### *For British Units Only*

The conduct and bearing of the British Serviceman in India during recent months, when there have been many calls made on him in connection with communal disturbances and Internal Defence generally, have been admirable, and have brought forth unstinted praise from all quarters—some of them quite unexpected.

You all know the decision which has now been reached by H.M.G. in connection with the transfer of power to Indians by June '48. For the honour and good name of the British Empire, it is up to all of us to see that this transfer is made in as orderly and dignified a manner as possible, and a very heavy responsibility falls on every British soldier in India in helping to bring this about. There will, without doubt, be the usual attempts to fasten blame on the British, particularly if, as is possible, no agreement is reached between the major communities in India. Every action of the British soldier and officer will be watched by certain ill-disposed people with the object of making political capital out of any slip or misdemeanour. It therefore behoves us all to watch our step very carefully and to do nothing which will give those who will seek to malign us the slightest opportunity.

In spite of the tribute with which this talk began, there have been certain unfortunate incidents recently which detract from the good name of the British Army. You have probably all heard of the trouble which occurred in Jhansi last Christmas.<sup>107</sup> The case is still under investigation and it is not desired now to assess the blame or fix responsibility. The moral is that it is the soldier's reputation which suffers from such incidents, and his detractors always sling enough mud to make sure that some sticks, whoever may be at fault. Again, in Calcutta, there has been a series of assaults on taxi-drivers and other individuals, which have, with some reason, been attributed to British soldiers.

More recently, again in Calcutta, there has been a large number of thefts of M.T., particularly jeeps. Rightly or wrongly, suspicion has fallen on the British soldier, and it is being said that there is a gang of B.O.R.s organising and carrying out these thefts.

Now, there is seldom smoke without fire, and however good the British Army in India may be, in an organisation as large as it is, there must, inevitably, be some bad hats. It is up to all those right-thinking soldiers who set some store by the good name of the

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<sup>107</sup> A fracas with Anglo-Indian railway subordinates at their club. The few British soldiers concerned were the object of many unfounded accusations in the Press.

British Army to eliminate from their midst those who soil its reputation. It is not a question of splitting on a pal', which no one likes to be asked to do, but of preventing a few misguided individuals from doing incalculable harm to the British in India at a critical time.

## (CHAPTER XXVI)

### EASTERN COMMAND TALKING POINTS – No. 38

#### THE PLAN FOR INDIA

(1) On 3 June, H.E. the Viceroy announced the proposals of H.M.G. in the U.K. for the transfer of power to Indian hands in fulfilment of the pledge given on 20 Feb. this year. Following the announcement, Pandit Nehru and Sardar Baldev Singh broad-cast statements in which they accepted the proposals on behalf of their parties and communities. Mr. Jinnah also spoke, and whilst commending the plan, reserved acceptance for the consideration of the Muslim League Working Committee, as required by the rules of that body.

(2) The Muslim League Working Committee met in Delhi on 9-10 June and accepted the proposals. The Plan is thus an agreed one, which all parties are pledged to implement.

(3) The official announcement is a somewhat complicated document, which is not easily understandable by the ordinary nonpolitically-minded individual. It is essential, however, that you as soldiers of the Indian Army, and as citizens, should grasp the main essentials, and be in a position to follow the course of developments which will now take place very rapidly. The following therefore sets out the broad outline of the Plan as simply as possible.

(4) The ideal solution would have been to ensure the continued unity of India as one political entity, such as has existed for nearly 100 years under British rule. This was the essence of the Cabinet Mission scheme of May 1946, but, unfortunately, general acceptance of this could not be obtained. The new Plan is therefore based on partition of India. Mr. Jinnah has always claimed that Muslim-majority provinces should not be subordinated to a centre which must, necessarily, always have a non-Muslim majority, but should be allowed to set up a separate Government of their own. Congress, quite justifiably, claimed that if this principle was conceded, then non-Muslim majority areas within Muslim majority provinces should be given the option to secede. The Plan meets both requirements by including in Pakistan the following:

West Punjab  
East Bengal

Sindh  
Baluchistan  
and by permitting the people of:  
East Punjab  
West Bengal

to decide whether or not they should adhere to their own province or separate and be included in Hindustan. The Sylhet district of Assam (a Muslim majority area in a Hindu majority province) is similarly to be allowed to decide for itself whether to join in East Bengal or remain in Assam.

The case of the N.W.F.P. is peculiar: it is a Muslim majority province, but as a result of the last elections, the Congress party under Dr. Khan Sahib and Khan Abdul Ghafur Khan was returned to power. The people of the N.W.F.P. are therefore to decide by a referendum whether their province should join Hindustan or Pakistan.

(5) Initially, both the new states of Pakistan and Hindustan are to be granted Dominion status within the British Commonwealth of Nations. Subsequently, it will be for the Governments of both to decide whether to remain in the Commonwealth or not. This is a choice which all members of the British Commonwealth enjoy. It is not the time now to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of staying in or leaving the Commonwealth, but it would be well to remember that membership, in addition to conferring many advantages, also carries certain obligations.

(6) As regards the machinery of government for the two new States—the existing Constituent Assembly which was elected last year in which the representatives of Muslim majority areas have refused to take part, provides the nucleus for the Hindustan Government. To frame the constitution for Pakistan, it will now be necessary to form a second constituent assembly, elected on the basis of one representative per million of population, for all those areas which decide to enter Pakistan.

(7) It is the intention to set up the two Dominions of Hindustan and Pakistan as soon as the necessary legislation can be passed by the British Parliament—probably by about 15 August. There is thus a great deal to be done in a very short time in the way of organisation, and if this is to be done properly it is essential that there should be peace and tranquillity in the country. This is where the Armed Forces can play a predominant part. You, as soldiers, have all learnt to be, first and foremost, Indians, and to put the loyalties due to your common motherland before party or faction. Consequently, you have the confidence of all classes and creeds who know that you are entirely impartial. Your first task is therefore to hold the ring and ensure that the transition takes place in an orderly manner.



(8) You are all naturally asking yourselves how the coming changes will affect the Indian Army. At present it is impossible to say with any certainty what the arrangements will be between the two Dominions as regards such matters as defence, communications, customs, finance, etc. You have only to look at a map of India to see that there must be mutual adjustments between Hindustan and Pakistan to enable daily life to go on at all. Trains must still run without interruption between, for example, Bombay and Lahore. Letters will still have to pass freely from Madras to Peshawar. It will be for the good sense of the leaders of the two States to work out plans in cooperation. The fact that both are initially members of the Commonwealth will make all this give and take easier. Within the next month or so, the shape of the Defence Services should be clearer. Meanwhile, you may rest assured that your senior officers, from H.E. the C.-in-C. down, will devote their whole energies to doing all that is possible towards ensuring the future of the men with whom they have so long been associated. You will be kept fully informed of all decisions as soon as they are known at Eastern Command H.Q.

### (CHAPTER XXVIII)

*From the Statesman, 1947*

### SPLENDOUR SMASHED

Three weeks before the June 3 announcement, in a short vehement article 'Into Armed Chaos' which caused some stir, we set forth objections to any hasty splitting of India's magnificent Armed Forces. We stressed not only its tragic waste, but its great practical dangers, internal and external. Internally, by disrupting discipline and tradition, it could plunge this country into renewed strife of an even more horrible sort than hitherto, what we termed armed chaos. Externally, it would inevitably have far-reaching repercussions in international power-politics, tilting the global strategic balance, creating a military vacuum on a part of the map where hitherto there has been strength. Smashing that splendid entity the Indian Army would, in our view, be the most catastrophic of Pakistan's many dismal disintegrative consequences.

But it is to happen—and within a frighteningly short time. According to last Tuesday's statement in New Delhi, sub-division of the Forces is to be so hustled as to enable Central administration to vanish by April 1948. Merely to have nationalised them, under the former plan, so soon as June of next year would have meant much loss of efficiency, owing to the admittedly serious present shortage of senior Indian officers. We are convinced that, to pull them to bits on communal lines and then recombine them in fair shape within the time now specified cannot be done. Within nine months, therefore, unless plans have meanwhile to be altered under pressure of events, the best Army in Asia (with the possible exception of that which Russia keeps in Siberia) will, we reckon, be reduced to about a sixth of its present military value—perhaps less.

So that Pakistan shall have its own Armed Services by August 15, the date when the new Dominions are to be born, formations, either Muslim or predominantly Muslim, are to be assembled forthwith in its territories on a rough-and-ready basis. That will be the first stage. As, however, there are few even among combatant units—infantry, artillery or armoured—which have large Muslim majorities and as in ancillary formations the communities are thoroughly mixed, the next stage, namely 'combing out', will involve wretched dismemberment of famed units whose officers and men, with overriding loyalty to the Indian Army, have often an even deeper attachment to a tradition and a name than to their own home districts.

So strong is this devotion, so necessary therefore some means for purposes of hasty subdivision to override it, that a clause has been inserted in the communique embodying an illiberal new principle of far-reaching implications—in the civilian as well as the military field. A Muslim whose home lies in prospective Pakistan territory cannot opt for remaining in the residual Indian Army; he automatically becomes a Pakistani. This, we suppose, was from insistence by the Muslim League which, belatedly confronting the practical implications of creating a new State—one likely to be much weaker than Hindustan—feels unable to leave the constitution of its army at the sway of any ultra-territorial personal affections. Similarly it is ordained that a non-Muslim soldier, sailor or airman whose home lies in residual India cannot join the Pakistan Forces. Thus, under a novel, ruthless principle, many bewildered unwilling men are to be wrenched from their happy associations, from old comradeships and bonds born in battle.

For the nine-months' transitional period a cumbrous system of control has been instituted whereby the Commander-in-Chief, divested of much power, nevertheless becomes elevated to the rank of Supreme Commander. It is ironic, indeed it must be personally excruciating for a man of Field-Marshal Auchinleck's special quality, that the Jangi Lat's main task now is to disintegrate what he has solicitously, single-mindedly nurtured throughout his career, has proven in war, and held up, amid India's sundering communal dissensions, for all the world to behold as a shining example of how effectively Indians—and Britons—can unite.

'It is essential,' said Tuesday's communique, that the Union of India and Pakistan should have within their own territories forces which are, with effect from August 15, under their own operational control, and which are on August 15 predominantly composed of non-Muslims and Muslims respectively. We venture to differ. We think it overridingly essential that—since under the June 3 agreement the tragedy of splitting the Armed Forces must occur—it should be done decently, effectively, gradually, without undue risk to the men themselves, or the public whom they serve. That in our view cannot be so under the highspeed scheme announced. It is amazing that, for political reasons doubtless, some militarily sound arrangement of the standstill or at least the go-slow type could not have been devised. The tasks for the Armed Forces in

this country today—whether in the prospective territories of residual India or of Pakistan—are mainly of continued unpleasant policing against lawlessness. It would indeed be a calamity if, through rash, unseemly haste in subdividing them that lawlessness should be swollen by elements from the Forces themselves.

(CHAPTER XXX)

WAYS OF PEACE

From the *Statesman*, 1947

Sir,—

Thousands of refugees, who left this district a couple of months ago, have begun to trek back home. There is no place on earth like home.

These broken men, widows and orphans are returning to parched country, to be in time to improvise thatched huts and shelters before the monsoon breaks. Old landmarks are gone. Their animals are not with them.

What is it to them if Jinnah governs or Mountbatten? What they want is peace and security and fair dealing. So far they firmly believe that they have been the biggest losers in the removal of Pax Britannica.

At one time it appeared that this deluge of communal fury would wash away all vestiges of civilisation. But one thing which stopped this Niagara of hate was the Indian Army. Centuries of discipline and traditions challenged the rot. Its British and Indian officers showed both by example and precept what a healthy influence they were. The *jawans* [young men] vied with each other in impressing upon the combatants the value of unity. They brought peace to about 200 villages in the upper mountain region of the district. The *jawans* are continuing their good work and meeting with deserved success. However, another dangerous factor is emerging. It is the demand of a certain party for division of the district. Whatever the merits or demerits of the case, nobody wants public discussion of these political wrangles. The need of the moment is social service and relief work.

Yours, etc.,  
TARA CHAND.

Gurgaon, July 15.  
From the *Statesman*, 1947:

OURS NO LONGER

*(With apologies to Rudyard Kipling)*  
*Lay down the White man's burden:*  
*An Empire great as Rome*  
*Sends back its tired servants*  
*And calls the Legions home.*  
*Four hundred puzzled millions*  
*With bated breath await*  
*The dawn of India's freedom,*  
*The last and fateful date.*

*Thus we lay down our burden,*  
*We've done with all our files,*  
*No more the simple peasant*  
*Will bask in alien smiles.*  
*The misty hills of Simla*  
*Will hear our voice no more*  
*It's Indians now for India*  
*To formulate the Law.*

*No longer ours the burden,*  
*The savage wars of peace –*  
*To shut the mouth of famine*  
*To bid the sickness cease.*  
*Now when the goal approaches,*  
*New Rulers of the Land*  
*Will strive with sloth and folly*  
*And – maybe understand!*

*Take now from us the burden,*  
*The mantle and the power;*  
*And, toiling for you? Brethren,*  
*Be humble at this hour.*  
*Yours now the task to govern*  
*Places ye may not tread,*  
*Your youth upon your Frontiers*  
*Will join the English dead.*

*This now shall be your burden*  
*And yours be the reward.*  
*The blame of those ye govern,*  
*Whether by writ or sword.*  
*List to the cries of millions*  
*Whose betterment ye seek,*  
*Give, if you can, the justice*

*We've given to the weak.  
Take then from us this burden,  
Ye cannot well refuse –  
Shouldering it as we did,  
Expecting but abuse.  
Take heed there's but one answer,  
The good ye strive to do,  
And all your silent Peoples*

*Shall weigh your Gods and you.  
Now it's the Indian Burden,  
Have done with childish things;  
Gird up your new found Manhood  
And quit yourselves like kings.  
Look to your northern Marches.  
Guard well your " Hadrian's" Wall,  
For the Legions of Great Britain  
Are no more at your call.*

G. K.

*Udaipur, Rajputana, July 15.*

### **APPENDIX III**

#### **(CHAPTER XXXV)**

#### **EASTERN COMMAND TALKING POINTS – No. 35**

#### **THE SLOWING UP OF THE RELEASE PROGRAMME**

*(For British units and officers of Indian units)*

The recently published Release Programme for the period Jan. to June '47, which involves a slowing-up in the number of groups to be released, compared with the tempo of the past few months, has caused some uneasiness among those primarily affected.

The facts given below may help you to appreciate the position. It is hoped that the Home Govt. will issue an authoritative statement in the near future, but meanwhile the information given in this Talking Point is based on data provided by the War Office.

You will all realise that the world situation is, as yet, by no means stable, and that Great Britain has certain definite military commitments in various parts of the world which cannot be reduced until the final Treaties with ex-enemy Powers have been settled. Progress in this direction, involving as it does so many varied interests, cannot be expected to be very rapid. Meanwhile, our Armies of Occupation must be kept up to strength, and this is a heavy drain on manpower. Again, the situation in the Middle East, with Palestine in a state of grave unrest, and with the Treaty with Egypt still hanging fire, gives rise to further obligations. The position in regard to India needs no further elaboration to you.

It should be realised that the Release Programme now announced covers a full six-months period, and therefore gives longer notice than has been the practice hitherto. The size of the various groups varies very considerably, and the rate of release must be calculated from the point of view of numbers. Even with the comparatively few groups to go out during Jan. to June '47, the average monthly rate of release will be 17,000 in the first three months, and 25,000 in the last three.

These figures, representing a total of 128,400, are no mean achievement when viewed in the light of the commitments mentioned above and having regard to the very poor response there has as yet been to the call for volunteers for regular engagement. There is no question of revoking the undertaking that, by the end of 1947, all men with over 3 years' service on Jan. 1, '47, will have been released. The rate for the period Apr. to June is actually based on the achievement of this target.

The available manpower in Great Britain is very much less than that at the disposal of other Great Powers, whose obligations are perhaps less than ours are. None of us wishes to see our country sink to the status of a second-rate power, nor is there any danger of this so long as each and every one of us accepts loyally and cheerfully the calls which are made on us.

### (CHAPTER XXXVI)

#### EASTERN COMMAND TALKING POINTS—No. 39

All our Indian Officers and soldiers of all communities are now going through the most difficult time in all their lives.

There have been reports and rumours of cruelties inflicted by all communities on other communities in the Punjab. How many of these reports are true none of us yet knows. It would be foolish not to understand that these reports are having an effect on you all, tending to make you feel as the civilian feels and to wish to inflict the troubles on others which you think have been inflicted on your own kindred.

It is no use to you yourselves, or to your Dominion, to allow such feelings to get the better of you. The only result would be to make you very unhappy and it would do your Army and yourselves no good whatsoever.

Often in these Talking Points we have stressed the fine spirit of our Indian Army, its tolerance towards everyone, its kindness towards all, and the friendship which permeates the whole Army. Now that the two Armies are being divided you must all see that you part from each other in the same old spirit of friendship and that in these last few months you do nothing whatsoever to mar that friendship or to provoke any other community, either in the Army or among the civil population. In fact, you must make a greater effort than ever to keep the trust of all others. In this way, you will establish the same tradition of prestige and respect for your new Army as we all established for the old. By following this advice you will make your Army a body admired by the whole world, as was our old Army. If you take any other course and allow passionate feelings to get the better of you, then your new Army will lose its self-respect and will be regarded by the world as second-class and not to be trusted.

As you have borne yourselves with honour in the old Army, so conduct yourselves as to bring honour to the new one and to the name of the Dominion you serve.

#### **No. 40**

You all know that the movement to Pakistan of our Muslim soldiers, Muslim civilian employees, Muslim contractors and servants, both of officers and of institutes, canteens etc., is slowed up. These men have done us so very well up to date that we owe a great deal to them and are grateful to them. It must be the personal pride of us all, officers and men, that during the rest of their stay in this Dominion and during their passage from here to Pakistan, we do our very best to help them in every way and to make their lives and those of their families happy, secure and pleasant until they cross the border to their own land. The old friendly feeling between us all must conquer any other smaller and less generous impulses. In this way they will leave us with nothing but gratitude and friendship in their hearts and we in our turn will feel that we have repaid a part of the debt that we owe to them.

**APPENDIX IV**

**(CHAPTER XXIV)**

**SOME ORDERS ISSUED IN EASTERN COMMAND**

**(1)**

No. 113/4/A-2  
HQ Calcutta Sub Area,  
Fort William P.O., Calcutta 21 .

Comd.  
2 Kumaon Regt.

23 May 47.

**COMPLIMENTARY**

During the last two months the Commissioner of Police, CALCUTTA, has, on at least three occasions, specially commended to me, the work carried out by your battalion in the course of its I.D. duties.

(2) I wish to congratulate all ranks on this well-earned commendation, which I can confirm as being thoroughly deserved, from my own observation. I have at all times been impressed by the work of the battalion.

(3) The Army Commander and Area Commander have both directed me to add their appreciation of the work done, and their congratulations.

Will you please bring this to the notice of all ranks.

W. G. S. THOMPSON,

Brig. Comd.  
Copy to:

G.O.C.-in-C. Eastern Command.  
G.O.C. Bengal & Assam Area.

**(2)**

**(NO CHANGE FROM VERBAL INSTRUCTION ISSUED AT 11:00 HRS 23 MAY)**

Copy No. 7



## EASTERN COMMAND OPERATION INSTRUCTION

No ..... of 1947  
To:—Comd 5 Inf Div.

### INFORMATION

I. In view of possible future events it may become necessary to increase the I.D. garrison of BENGAL and ASSAM AREA in order to prevent or stamp out at the outset any serious disorders which may threaten. The crucial date is likely to be 2 June and the days immediately following. In the event of information being received radically altering the situation before moves have started, further orders will be issued. Unless such orders are received this instruction will be implemented in full.

### INTENTION

2. 5 Inf Div will provide reinforcements for BENGAL and ASSAM AREA.

### METHOD

3. *Strength* One bde  
One bn  
One G.T. Coy  
Det Sigs, IEME, Med as necessary.
4. *Command* On arrival at destination fmn/units will come under comd of Comd BENGAL and ASSAM AREA for all purposes.
5. *Locations*  
HQ  
COMILLA  
one bn  
one bn PARBATIPUR  
one bn CALCUTTA  
one bn MIDNAPUR/PANAGARH  
one GT Coy CALCUTTA

### ADMINISTRATION

6. Equipment and Supplies  
All units will move at maximum strengths with:—
- (a) Unit MT.
  - (b) Full WET arms.
  - (c) 1st line scale SAA
  - (d) 100% Unit tentage (NOT required for units to CALCUTTA).

- (e) 7 days sups in addition to rd/rail rations.
- (f) 14 days clothing (incl boots)
- (g) Medical supplies.

7. Moves

Entraining strengths and maundages will be submitted forthwith to this HQ. Movement and other adm orders will issue separately.

### INTERCOMMUNICATION

8. Liaison

Bde Comd with Bde Sigs Of and a Q Staff Offr will report to Cmd BENGAL and ASSAM AREA forthwith for detailed instructions.

9. Sufficient sigs personnel and eqpt to link out-stations and CALCUTTA will be provided. Details of frequencies and code signs will be issued by BENGAL and ASSAM AREA.

Brigadier,  
General Staff, Eastern Command.

Distribution: – etc. etc.

### (CHAPTER XXV)

#### **PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM LIEUT.-GENERAL SIR FRANCIS TUKER, G.O.C.- in-C. TO ALL OFFICERS & MEN OF THE INDIAN ARMY IN EASTERN COMMAND**

*28 May 1947.*

During the last war we of the Indian Army earned for ourselves a great reputation all over the world.

Ever since early 1946 the Indian Army has been employed extensively in upholding law and order all over India. It has had to do this in probably the most difficult circumstances in which any Army has yet been called upon for this exacting duty.

I want you all to know that its behaviour throughout has been of the highest possible standard and that the Indian Army has today not only the admiration of India and of Indians of all classes and creeds but has once more acquired the respect and admiration of other nations by its truly magnificent work and behaviour in maintaining law and order. It has succeeded to this high position because of the impartiality, the

determination to keep the peace, the cool judgement and the good humour of each one of its officers and men who have been engaged in these arduous tasks.

There are difficult days ahead for all of us and implicit trust is placed in us by millions of good, honest people of all sorts in India.

Continue as you have started: maintain the high reputation you have once again built up in the past year: keep the trust of all in India by your impartial behaviour and your soldierly application to your duty. And thus keep high the reputation of the Indian Army to which we are all of us so proud to belong.

F. S. TUKER,  
*Lieut.-General.*

## APPENDIX V

### (CHAPTER XII)

#### PERSONAL REPORTS ON THE GREAT CALCUTTA KILLING

*Extracts from the Diary of Major L. A. Livermore*

ONE of the most astonishing experiences of the Calcutta riots, for me, was the morning of the 16th August 1946. No doubt it will be said that it is so easy to be wise after the event, but I can honestly say that, if ever I felt tension in the city (that well-known communal barometer reading of this second city), it was then. As I stood on the roof of Dalhousie block in Fort William conning the city with binoculars, there was a curious stillness in the air. The maidan was deserted and that artery of Calcutta, the famous Chowringhee, was as a street of the dead: not a vehicle or person in sight until about noon when a few people gathered in the vicinity of the Ochterlony Memorial. There was to be a mass meeting of Muslims at the Memorial, and if custom followed its usual course, crowds would have been converging on the meeting place throughout the morning. At approximately the same time I switched my gaze to the Howrah Bridge and saw that it was black with the crowds coming over the river, yet still there was quiet and although I felt then that the silence was that of the air before the storm and that the crack of thunder would reverberate through the city at any moment, I among the other million watchers did not dream of the ghastly events that were to take place before nightfall. Looking back on that day I still think that although many of us were certain there would be trouble, no human being could have foretold the magnitude of the impending disaster. In a way it was fitting that such a storm should have been preceded by such impressive silence.

I saw nothing of the actual breaking of the storm, though within a few hours I was to view the results at close quarters, a viewing which continued for several months. Looking back on those far-off days of stark tragedy it is difficult to pick out isolated incidents which contain more human interest than others. Calcutta was the battlefield: the battle was mob rule versus civilisation and decency; the casualties of that stricken field were for the most part the poor, the low-caste illiterates and those too weak to defend their property from the looter, the vulture of the mob. As the Battalion drove along Upper Circular Road on the afternoon of the 16th August 1946, en route to the concentration area at Sealdah, panic-stricken crowds were hurrying south to escape the lust of the monster that was abroad. We saw little of actual damage in that ride and it was not until after midnight that I was ordered to start patrolling in support of the police. I went out into the centre of the city almost immediately. My first impression was that an armoured division had swept through on the tail of a heavy bombardment.

The scene calls for greater descriptive powers than I possess. Every street I visited had fires burning and because the hydrant cocks had been opened by the fire-raisers, the fire-fighters were practically helpless. Shops and private houses had been looted in every road.

\* \* \* \* \*

On the 19th August, one of my platoons removed one hundred and fifty bodies from the Gray Street-Chitpur Crossing with the help of the local residents who provided some sweepers. The stench in this area had become appalling and one citizen was so grateful for the removal of at least part of the cause that he pressed two bottles of champagne on the platoon responsible. I found the platoon commander a little later, eyeing the empty bottles regretfully. It was excellent while it lasted, he said. But with twenty-four men it just didn't last. Out of those grim days with so little to laugh at, that picture will always remain.

As I have already said, the stench was becoming unbearable and at about 9 p.m. that night we received orders that the main streets at least must be clear of bodies by the time the curfew lifted at 4 a.m. next morning. Stench masks and gas capes would be sent to aid us in lifting the decomposing corpses; the location of Muslim burial grounds and Hindu burning ghats would reach us as soon as possible; otherwise, it was just improvise as far as we could see. I well remember the awful 'ush' that fell upon the 'O' Group as the C.O. passed on the order. We looked at each other in silence for a moment, then realising that the sooner we started the better, everyone began to talk at once. It was felt that men should not be detailed for this task unless the officers and the volunteer O.R.s were insufficient. The prospect of spending the night picking up the ghastly objects which we had seen enough of during the day was not pleasant and the assembly were looking a bit wry until a plaintive voice from somewhere in the room chirped up with, How the hell do I tell a Muslim from a Hindu when they've all been dead three days? Admittedly the subject was not in the least humorous but that remark, shrewd though it was, caused a burst of laughter and we were back on form again. It was at this moment that our senior police liaison officer, who up to now had ruminated silently in a corner, began to prove his worth. The Corporation Engineer, he said, lived in the district and would provide transport in the shape of refuse lorries to reinforce the few trucks we could spare. There was also a caste of Hindu called Doms, who would handle dead bodies. Eight of these were attached to the police station in which we sat and more could be obtained from the Carmichael Hospital. This would ease the task considerably, and, we hoped, get it done sooner. The Doms were found and placed in 'protective custody' as it were; the City Engineer departed to fetch trucks. The drivers would not take part in the exercise it seemed, so officers and volunteers were concentrated at Battalion H.Q. to take over the vehicles as and when they arrived there.

At last we were started. With one other officer, a British police sergeant and four Doms, I drove my truck to our first place. All went well for the first fifteen minutes; the sweepers got three bodies completely in the truck then stopped work and chattered wildly. I could not understand them and at last discovered through the police sergeant that they thought the smell too bad to work in and would not continue unless they were provided with stench masks like the military. I thought this a fair request and issued them with one each. They tied them round their heads with the pad on their foreheads and quite happily went back to work. In spite of the fact that they could see our pads over mouth and nostrils they continued in this way for the next two days. Their faith must have been tremendous!

Luckily we found that the sweepers could distinguish between Hindu and Muslim bodies. I was loading Muslims and in the early hours of the morning made my way to a nominated cemetery on the eastern outskirts of the city. Arrived at the gate I was told that a truck had stuck between two trees on the track inside (it was half a mile from the gate to the actual graves, which had been bulldozed in the waterlogged ground), and that there were already many vehicles queued up and unable to turn about. I was advised to wait outside. It needed no persuasion as the noisome atmosphere was overpowering even at that distance. Upon enquiring I found that there were, in open graves and trucks, about seven hundred bodies in the vicinity of the cemetery. I draw a veil over the next hour or so: suffice to say that at 3.30 a.m. we had had enough, so leaving one officer to look after the convoy until relief arrived, we returned to continue the clearing of the streets. The other Company areas were almost clear of bodies but it took two more days and nights to finish my own area—a total of five hundred and seven corpses in the one Company sector, most of which came from a locality less than four hundred yards square. Apart from the dead the streets were in a frightful condition. Refuse was piled high and already there was a threat of a cholera epidemic. The environments of my Company H.Q. were particularly bad, so a talk was given to several of the local leading citizens along with a demonstration by the troops in one of the lanes. As part of the demonstration we used lime. This appeared to be a new idea for the locals, because after sweeping and shovelling with unabated vigour until the roads were clear, they descended upon my C.Q.M.S. with containers of all shapes, sizes and descriptions demanding lime, which they used liberally on the surrounding district, including the animals. This relieved us of our entire stock for the time being, but the difference in the streets and atmosphere was well worth it. This was not, however, the end of the matter for, bright and early the next morning, another and larger queue was fighting for places to get more lime. It transpired that they thought that daily treatment was the order of the day; they took much convincing that they were perhaps a little over-enthusiastic.

Another big task in this third week of August was to get the shops open and working; particularly the food shops and markets. Many were on the verge of collapse through lack of food, so we toured the area with local officials and prominent citizens trying to

restore the morale and confidence of both the shopkeepers and the public. It was unfortunate that one of the first men who responded to our appeal was shot by hooligans as he went to open his store. This meant redoubling our efforts. Strangely enough the next person to be almost shot was myself, and that by troops into the bargain. Early one morning I was outside the Shambazar fruit and vegetable market arguing with the superintendent and some of the stall-holders, trying to persuade them to resume trade as soon as possible. After a few minutes there quite a crowd foregathered. The Indian participants, as Indians will, became excited in the argument and there was a great deal of arm waving, general shouting and gesticulating, which must have looked like the makings of a frenzied mob to the patrol leader. I was engrossed, and it was a police officer with me who pointed out a military patrol down the Cornwallis Road. I noticed that one of the troops was waving his hands and shouting something, but beyond waving back to reassure him I took no notice, not realising that I was hidden by the crowd. He must have thought that his first impressions were correct and as the crowd made no attempt to disperse he took action. The next thing I realised, very forcibly, was the crack and thump of a rifle bullet. The thump sent splinters flying from the wall a few feet away. The Indians disappeared as if by magic and disclosed me in a most undignified attitude on the pavement. My Indian friends had a good laugh at my expense, but it was some time before my sense of humour got the better of my indignation.

The next two weeks and a bit were mostly occupied with routine patrolling and curfew enforcement, monotonous work with nothing to tell, and on the 7th September my battalion was relieved and departed to Fort William for a rest.

### **THE STORY OF MAJOR DOBNEY OF THE CALCUTTA FORTRESS STAFF**

(I give this gruesome tale as it was given to me, and I give it because I wish the reader to know how the British soldier served India in his last days out there. These men were of the Green Howards, the York and Lancaster and the Worcestershire Regiments.)

On the night of the 19/20th August 1946 it was obvious that something was afoot, and the Fortress Commander informed the G.II that the C.O's in question had been told by him that their areas would be clear of corpses by the morning. The Bengal Government would pay five rupees for each body collected.

Only those who had seen the hundreds of bodies in their stinking decomposed state could realise the full unpleasantness of this order; and none had seen more of them and realised this better than the Fortress Commander himself.

All hopes of that longed-for sleep were gone. A night of grim and intense activity was in store for the troops. It was obvious that, despite the opinion of the Government

officials to the contrary, the brunt of the dirty work in what came to be called 'Operation Grisly' would be borne by the military, and in the main by the British troops. Every possible assistance was to be given to the battalions committed to this task. All available police equipment was hastily inspected to see what could be of use. What was chiefly wanted was protective clothing.

The only suitable equipment was anti-gas clothing. The G.II was informed by the Fortress Commander that any kit thought to be of assistance in the Ordnance Depot would be put at the disposal of the battalions. But to obtain gas kit from an Ordnance Depot at midnight at immediate notice is something requiring more than the Great Calcutta Killing. In fact, it was not even considered. The nearest possible supply was the York & Lancaster's Quartermaster Store in Fort William. A phone call to their Adjutant in Fort William found him still in his office, despite the hour. There were apparently insufficient spare stores in the Q.M. Stores but the Adjutant despatched his only clerk to collect all he could from the men's beds in the barrack rooms. Within forty-five minutes a truck laden with gas kit was at the police station awaiting delivery to the battalions.

The Q.M., again of the York & Lancasters, was instructed to receive an unknown number of men who would need to strip completely, have disinfectant baths and be re-issued with a complete kit. It was of no consequence how much kit was issued and the Q.M. would have free access to the Ordnance Depot for replacements. It is of interest to digress here to state that the Q.M. was repaid for his efforts that night, for later, when this promise was kept, he invaded the Ordnance Depot in person and collected stores and kit that he had been informed were 'unavailable' for the past six months!

It is also of interest to mention here that the efforts of the Q.M. that night were beyond thanks from many a sickened officer and troop, and in particular from the Green Howards; sick, weary and disgruntled they were sent to the Fort to be greeted in the small hours by the Q.M. in person, to leave a pile of stinking clothes they never wished to see again (and never did, as they were all burnt) outside the barrack, to have piping hot showers at 3 o'clock in the morning and be issued with a complete new outfit on departure. It made them feel new men again.

The gas kit and all available supplies of stench masks (the supply of which ran out that night due to the increased demand on them) were then despatched to the needy from Lallbazar Police Station. An immediate number were sent to the near-by Green Howard area and the remainder were taken on tour to the other two battalion areas by the G.II.

The D.A.Q.M.G. was organising the digging of graves in a hastily acquired plot of land some distance to the east of the canal. It is of no shame to the D.A.Q.M.G. that before the operation was finished there were insufficient graves and not enough space in which to dig them. There is a limit to the speed at which men can dig, and whoever allotted the ground had obviously never toured the streets, as he had no conception as



to the number of bodies. Of course, each body now needed about twice as much room as it should normally have needed three days previously....

The G.II proceeded to the Worcesters' area where, every time he encountered a masked gang of workers, he would stop and hand out a pile of gas clothing. A brief muffled conversation would follow—everyone had at least three stench masks on his face and looked like a new sect of the Ku Klux Klan—and the little party with the officer in charge would disappear into a street that was littered and stacked with corpses. The G.II would move off in his truck, steering an erratic course up the road as his driver swerved and jolted to avoid the dozens of bodies and piled and rotten refuse. Conversation was at a minimum as that meant opening one's mouth and one felt one would never taste fresh air again. More kit was delivered in the York & Lancaster area where transport was already lining up outside the various Company H.Qs. Actually, it was doubtful if much of this kit was worn, as the night was warm, and gas kit, if worn for long periods, can be very hot.

Except for the occasional band of British troops the city was literally a City of the Dead. Apart from the narrow back streets, all the streets were well lit, showing the rotting piles of humanity and rubbish. Handcarts were piled high with bodies and had been left abandoned at the kerb-side, the arms and legs sticking out grotesquely like a load of large, broken dolls. On doorways and shop fronts bodies had been dumped from the houses themselves. Once it was known that the mad Englishmen were collecting the dead, more bodies appeared from the labyrinth of houses and hovels that comprised the area. Many an exasperated N.C.O. found that out to his cost that night when, having reported his section of road clear, he walked back down it with his officer only to find that as his back was turned six more bodies had arrived for his collection and were lying in innocent neglect in six doorways.

The trucks for this job were provided by the Civil Departments, but once the drivers had delivered the trucks they disappeared. The drivers were, therefore, gathered from volunteers from the Indian Transport Companies attached to the battalions. In some cases unit trucks were actually used.

All night the horrible task went on. Most of the bodies were foully mutilated and nearly all were in an advanced state of decomposition and were impossible to lift up on to the trucks without bursting into a sickening pile at the feet of their collectors, so that often officers and B.O.R.s would turn away and be quietly sick before returning to their task. The activities of the Doms who, amongst other things, asked permission of the officer if they could have the dead man's *dhoti* before he was disposed of, will be recounted in men's canteens and officers' messes as long as these men are together!

Before morning officers from the York & Lancasters had taken over the driving of the trucks and continued to do this for the next two days. Although areas were officially

reported clear by morning, bodies kept coming to light, and in the northern area—the York & Lancasters'—the task was tremendous. The officers in question drove their trucks till they were almost in a stupor; they stank so much that even their own men recoiled from them; they gave up wearing stench masks as these proved useless and breathed the foul air freely; they did not eat for two days but lived on cigarettes and neat gin. When they had finished the stench was in their hair, their skins, and the taste of death in their mouths for days to come. It was a long time before many of these men could eat meat again.

There was little religious discrimination of bodies; they were collected in their dozens and dumped in graves, on burning ghats, in the river, and in the canal. The vultures helped by picking the bones clean and human skeletons lay in the streets of the Second City of the Empire.

By first light on the morning of the 10th August streets were reported clear but certain loads of bodies were still awaiting disposal at the cemetery. As stated previously the cemetery ran short of graves and, due to a badly driven truck which jammed in the narrow approach, a line of trucks could neither move in nor out for some hours.

First thing in the morning the G.II proceeded round the area to make payments to the battalions for their work. The Green Howards had had the least number of bodies in their areas and an exact number was reported on as being collected. The sum was paid in exact proportion to each of the little band of volunteers by the O.C.

The Worcesters had had a larger number and here a certain amount was due to sweepers who had assisted. It may be grimly amusing to relate that the time limit for the five rupee payments was 0800 hours! But for some hours after this the Worcesters would report that another small collection had been made in their area by sweepers and Doms who had now seen the worth of the scheme and were searching high and low for bodies! Rather than discourage their good work they were paid for this overtime. In the north, the York & Lancasters, having a thickly littered area, had collected them in their hundreds and could only estimate a lump sum. Of this amount some was paid to the Doms for their assistance and the remainder went to the P.R.I. If ever the cash eventually bought new sports kit for the Battalion then never was sports kit more ably earned.

Each battalion paid its Indian drivers for their excellent efforts and at a later date a further amount was given to the O.C., G.P.T. Companies for a *bara khana* for some of his drivers for their contribution that night.

The streets, having assumed improved conditions, now showed signs of returning life during the morning, although the citizens of Calcutta were still obliged to walk around with their *dhotis* over their noses. Considering the atmosphere of that area on normal

living days which apparently is of no consequence to the local inhabitants, this gives some idea of the odour!

The B.O.R.s in the area were magnificent. They still had to live in and patrol these same streets. Sometimes a visit to a Company or Battalion H.Q. would be interrupted by frantic applications of handkerchiefs to noses as the wind changed round and brought with it the now over-familiar smell of rotten corpse. One would be casually informed that that was a body they had been looking for for some days and that it must have fallen between two walls or somewhere and was hard to find. It was getting richer every day and every time the wind blew they seriously considered changing their H.Q.! There were still large piles of bodies which came to light during the succeeding days as the troops gradually worked more and more into the midst of the houses and bazaars. Although the official sum paid for the collection of bodies was just less than Rs. 3,000/- about 600 bodies – this was only for the first night's work. The collection continued and the total when finished must have been nearly double this number.

By the evening of the 10th August everyone had had their fill of bodies and everything they stood for. Visitors to the Green Howards Battalion H.Q.-cum-officers' mess-cum-bar were greeted by a large sign which read 'Anyone mentioning Bodies, Bods, Corpses, etc., will stand drinks all round'.

Somewhere in the files of the Bengal Government are three receipts signed by the Adjutants of three famous British regiments which contain the terse sentence 'Received the sum of Rs. for corpse collecting on night 19/20 Aug. 1946'.

They will no doubt lie unheeded on the dusty shelves through years to come but they will remain a permanent record of a night when the British soldier, that jack-of-all-trades, saved Calcutta from pestilence, widespread disease and untold misery.

## APPENDIX VI

### (CHAPTER XIV)

#### PERSONAL REPORTS FROM EAST BENGAL

CAPTAIN Wimbush who was commanding 'A' Company of the 4/2nd Gurkhas tells his story:

A few hours after arriving in Calcutta from Dinapore on the 28th September 1946, Colonel Kitson and I were summoned to see the Area Commander in Fort William.

He told us that the situation in East Bengal was rather bad and that we were to send a company about 120 strong to Comilla on the following day.

He warned me that Comilla was the 'last place God made' and painted a not too happy picture. He said that I would find no other shape or form of military there and that I should have to use a good deal of initiative. The nearest military base was at Chittagong where the 1/3rd Gurkhas had their headquarters. The Area Commander told me that I was to cooperate and liaise with the civil as far as possible but that I was not to split up my company into penny packets all over the countryside. He wished me good luck and we left.

The following evening we left Sealdah station and arrived at the steamer ghat at Goalanda early the next morning. The river Megna was in high flood and in places must have been well over a mile wide.

The paddle steamer pulled into Chandpur just as it was getting dark and we unloaded all our kit, rations, ammunition on to the railway station. The most efficient and helpful R.T.O. that I have yet come across came to meet us and told me that he had a hot meal ready waiting for the troops. His arrangements left nothing to be desired.

We arrived at Comilla in the dark the following evening. To my amazement and pleasant surprise I saw four Army officers on the platform, or rather on the three-inch high brickwork that serves as a platform. Three of the officers were of Lands and Hirings and the fourth was of the Graves Commission. They were wonderfully helpful and rallied round with all the transport they had, which consisted of two jeeps, two 15-cwts. and a station wagon. Making endless trips, they conveyed the whole company and its entire equipment and rations to our accommodation on the airfield about three miles out of Comilla. The accommodation consisted of three *bashas* without windows or doors that leaked like sieves when it rained and from which we had to coax a herd of

cattle whose habitation it had been for the past six months. I expect they found better accommodation elsewhere. Of course there was no electricity and we had no hurricane lamps, so I went to the bazaar and bought a dozen bundles of candles. After cleaning the muck out of the *bashas* the cooks produced a meal of sorts and some tea which was most welcome, and at about 2 a.m. we went to bed and slept the sleep of the just.

It was inconvenient not having our own M.T., which was coming round by Santahar by fast goods. It took ten days to arrive.

My first job the next day was to borrow a 15-cwt. and go and pay my respects to the Superintendent of Police, Mr. Price, and the District Magistrate, Mr. Devlali. They both showed genuine surprise at my company coming to Comilla, neither having had any previous warning of our coming. When they asked 'Why has your company been sent to Comilla?' I replied, 'I was ordered to come here on Internal Security duties as the communal situation is pretty grave.'

They both were more surprised than ever and said, 'What communal situation? Everything is perfectly peaceful here and always has been and we are expecting no trouble. They thought there must have been some mistake. I assured them that Comilla was the name of the place to which I had been sent and where, pending further orders, I would remain. Two days later the Commissioner from Chittagong came to Comilla. He had heard nothing and was equally surprised. By this time I thought the whole thing was pretty phoney. The Governor of Bengal had asked for these troops to be sent to Comilla.'<sup>108</sup>

At 3 p.m. on the 14th October the Superintendent of Police told me that very serious communal trouble had broken out in the Noakhali district and also in the area about thirty miles southwest of Comilla. He had received reports that bands of goondas were looting and burning villages and that it looked as if the situation was getting out of hand.

The area was very large and his police force was inadequate.

I immediately went with him in a jeep on a reconnaissance to the village of Sorsak about twenty miles from Comilla. The road was extremely bad and narrow for about seventeen miles and then it abruptly stopped and we had to do the remaining three miles by country boats as the whole area was flooded. The country boats were very slow and it was dark before we reached Sorsak. There we met the most pathetic scenes. A group of Hindus all huddled together and petrified with fright practically fell on our necks and wept with joy to see us. They showed us the remains of their house, still

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<sup>108</sup> The local civil officials, for reasons best known to themselves, did not want the troops there and asked for them to be returned. Captain Wimbush's tale shows why the Governor required troops in the area.

smouldering, that had the previous day been looted and burned by bands of Muslims. The *goondas* had gone away but threatened to come back and kill them all unless they became converts to Islam. We left a small armed police party at the village to try and raise their morale, which was at rock bottom, and we returned by country boat and jeep to Comilla, arriving back about midnight. At the written request of the District Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police I left with two platoons by M.T. for Sorsak, leaving one platoon and our heavy baggage at Comilla. We procured a convoy of country boats and wended our slow way towards Sorsak. The whole scene was absolutely flat, flooded paddy fields interspersed with jungle and small villages. We saw a large number of fires burning and in some cases the smoke was so dense and widespread that it looked as if a whole village was being burned, and that we later discovered to be the case. We were at Sorsak for only twenty-four hours when my company writer appeared from Comilla with a most urgent message to go at once to Chandpur with the two platoons I had at Sorsak.

We packed all our kit and men into country craft and departed from Sorsak followed by the whole village, who refused point blank to remain behind. At each village we passed it was the same story. The remaining Hindus all crowded on to every available boat and followed us. My Medical Officer, a Bengali, tried his best to persuade them to stay, but it was quite useless; so the convoy resembled a general Hebrew exodus. Clutching babies in arms and what precious household possessions they could carry, their one aim and object was to flee from the wrath of the *goondas*. It was indeed a heart-rending scene.

We found our M.T. waiting at Meharkalibari, the place where the road ended. We packed into our M.T. and left for Chandpur, a distance of about eighteen miles on an extremely bad, narrow road with literally hundreds of bridges so small that at each bridge I had to get out of my jeep and personally guide each vehicle across. The whole journey being done in the dark considerably aggravated the difficulties. We eventually got into Chandpur at 9 p.m.

We met the District Magistrate and Sub-Divisional Officer who showed us our accommodation, *kuchha bashas*. The next morning, the 17th, the District Magistrate asked me if I would accompany him with a platoon by launch to the village of Haimchor. I agreed to go. After about two hours on the launch and a five mile march across flooded country we arrived at the remains of what was Haimchor. Not a house was left standing. The whole bazaar was a mass of burning timbers and twisted blackened corrugated iron. Empty boxes, the loot having been removed, furniture, cooking utensils, were all lying in the burning chaos. One poor old woman practically collapsed as she pathetically pointed to her old husband lying dead with his throat cut. He was too old to run away into the jungle and had been butchered on the spot. Another blackened body was lying in the ruins of a house.

The villagers who had hidden in the jungle and paddy all flocked round us and fell at our feet telling us the most harrowing details of what had occurred. I had never realised what a terrible hate existed between the Hindus and Muslims. It was a grim sight. On the launch we had brought a good quantity of rice and cloth which we gave to the village headman to distribute. We went back to Chandpur feeling very sorry for the poor wretches who had lost their all.

We had been back in our lines in Chandpur for about fifteen minutes when the District Magistrate called in and said he wanted a platoon to go to the bazaar on the south side of the river, which the Muslims had threatened to burn down that night. Our presence must have dissuaded them, as nothing came of it and apart from wild rumours from outlying villages the night was more or less quiet. In the middle of the night the platoon that was guarding the bazaar was ordered to move about a mile to guard an important bridge into the town over which it was thought the *goondas* might attack. It poured with rain and nothing happened and we were thoroughly fed up and exhausted.

On the morning of the 18th October, the District Magistrate again called and said he wanted a platoon to accompany him to an affected area to the south of the river. The platoon were out the whole day and arrived back at midnight, absolutely dead beat.

From Faridganj we sent out piquets to neighbouring villages to restore confidence and morale. A large number of villages had suffered badly from arson and every day I used to receive petitions from villagers sometimes with over a hundred signatures, imploring me to send troops to this or that village as they were living in perpetual danger. The police did not inspire us; they were mostly Muslim and tended to be communally minded. On certain occasions when we were going to make a raid on a village to arrest well-known *goondas* we had proof that the police had given information of our intended move and we found that the men concerned had bolted. What was even more discouraging was the fact that when we occasionally did catch red-hot *goondas* and send them to Chandpur for the case to be tried, nine times out of ten the local Sub-Divisional Officer would release them on bail. It made us very angry as we felt we were wasting our time. Reports were sent in on numerous occasions protesting against this stupidity. Like it or not, the whole civil administration from top to bottom was communally minded.

During our stay in Faridganj we had piquets for long or short stays in about fifteen different villages. As well as this we constantly patrolled. Minor incidents in isolated villages occurred from time to time but nothing serious. One incident stands out and is worth recalling. On the evening of the 3rd November we were having dinner on the lawn outside the dak bungalow at Faridganj when a terrific shouting of *Alla o Akbar* broke out from the whole surrounding countryside. Drums were beating and the shouting became deafening. It seemed as if we were in for a full-scale attack. Faridganj was choc-a-bloc with refugees, numbering many thousands, a large proportion being

women and children, and I visualised complete panic and pandemonium if the *goondas'* attack broke through. I had two platoons out in villages about five miles away and so only had one platoon and company headquarters in Faridganj. I rushed to the lines and split the platoon into two. Half the platoon I sent at the double with Subedar Lalbahadur Gurung in command to block the road from the south and with orders to stop the mob penetrating Faridganj at all costs. I meanwhile took the other half of the platoon by Dukw up the river to the north, playing the searchlight on the river banks and on the local boats on the river. After about twenty minutes I told the Dukw driver to stop the engine while we listened to find out if the shouting had ceased. It had. We turned about and went back to Faridganj. I found a runner from Subedar Lalbahadur awaiting me to say that he had had to open fire on a crowd of *goondas* who had now dispersed, and would I go there. I took a small party in a couple of jeeps down the road for about half a mile, where we met Subedar Lalbahadur. He told me that crowds of *goondas* about sixty strong armed with *lathis* and spears and shouting wildly had attempted to advance up the road. He shone his torch at them and shouted to them to halt or he would open fire. They refused to halt so he ordered a couple of riflemen to fire. Five rounds were fired, killing two and wounding three. It had the required effect and the *goondas* ran away faster than they had come. In their haste they flung down their spears and knives which we afterwards recovered and gave to the police. The *goondas* learnt their lesson and there was no more trouble.

A case of cholera broke out at Faridganj and we moved our camp to a pleasant school building at Rupsa, about six miles to the east along a tolerably good road. We even managed with a considerable amount of difficulty to get our Dukws along it. On one occasion a Dukw fell into a nullah and it took a platoon all day to extricate it undamaged. One day two Dukws broke two bridges on a narrow road and were left suspended across a twenty-foot wide, eighteen-foot deep nullah. They were a big headache and it took five days continual work to get them out. We did it eventually and got them out undamaged, which was no mean feat. The morale-raiser for the troops was free rum most nights and that made up for a lot of discomforts. We had a large number of visitors, official and otherwise, some of whom were helpful, others not. Some of the voluntary organisations were quite well organised and did good work but others came empty-handed and were not welcomed by us or the local inhabitants.

It was a good experience and it had its lighter moments. I still maintain that it was better than patrolling the sordid streets of Calcutta.

We arrived back in Calcutta for Christmas.

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Here are the 4/7th Rajputs.



The Battalion returned from Calcutta to Ranchi on 30th September 1946 after six weeks of Internal Defence duties. After settling down, it resumed its interrupted training. The programme had hardly got under way when it was once again called out in aid of the civil power and left Ranchi for Noakhali (East Bengal) on 20th October.

Murder, arson and looting had taken place mainly in that portion of the District lying west of Chaumahani, the focal point of the District. In the days following the arrival of the Battalion, patrolling and movement were greatly hampered by the natural flooding of the roads and general lack of road communications. As the water fell, roads became drier and bridges and culverts accessible to the platoon of No. 20 Indian Field Company, R.I.E., for repair. Our patrolling then became progressively more vigorous and the morale of the minority community slowly rose. The police were enabled by our patrols to make searches and to effect arrests. These patrols, when not otherwise employed, enabled relief workers to visit distressed persons in outlying villages and to bring these persons into Refugee Centres.

We were relieved, after a two months' stay in Noakhali on the 15th December. The Battalion had, with one company of the 1/3rd Gurkhas under command, and with the assistance of the sappers and the police, restored law and order in a district of approximately 4,000 square miles. The morale of the Battalion had been excellent throughout and had once again been proved in the severe test of a communal upheaval. The claim to have restored law and order in so large an area is an inadvertent exaggeration, for the strongly infected area (that lying to the west of Chaumahani and north of the Chaumahani-Lakshmipur road) constituted a mere 300 square miles. There had however been isolated incidents throughout the district and it is certain that any sign of weakness would have had serious results. Only by the most active and distant patrolling could a delusion of strength be imparted. Congress visitors and relief workers were quick to appreciate our lack of men and urged an increase both locally and in the Hindu-owned Press. For them the steady flow of Hindu refugees from the district must be stopped at all costs and any high-level plans for Pakistan must be countered. These relief workers included several ladies whose visits to isolated and distressed dwellings and the intelligence they were believed to have so gleaned, caused extreme annoyance to the local Muslim League who constantly pressed for their removal under one pretext or another. The League argument that they used military escorts to cloak the stirring up of trouble or the fabrication of reports, and that harm might consequently befall them, deterred these ladies not in the least. 'Let them take my head,' angrily declared Mrs. Kirpalani, the wife of the Congress Vice-President, 'they will find it an expensive one.'

Fortunately no such important heads were added to those already fallen in the hyacinth-encumbered waterways or tall coconut groves of Noakhali, nor, to the undoubted relief of Mr. McInerney, the District Magistrate, did Gandhi carry out his threat to 'leave his bones therein'. These two appeared to be on excellent terms, Gandhi

later giving his moral support, after a long conference, to a 'Peace Committee' scheme evolved by McInerny. It was Gandhi's custom to establish his H.Q. at the house of some murdered Hindu, if such a house had survived the flames which usually followed: if no such house remained, then some dwelling abandoned by its terror-stricken occupants must suffice. It was in such a house, chosen to recall the atmosphere of the terrible happenings of mid-October 1946, that this conference was held. Nearby gaped charred ruins amongst stricken palms where once had dwelt seven members of the Chaudhari family. Of this family, as of their houses and their property, grim relics yet remained. Skeletons, disinterred and torn by dogs and jackals; skulls, twisted safes, scorched title-deeds and the bits and pieces of family utensils lay strewn among the plinths of burned houses. In a thousand years', whispered one survivor, this will not be forgotten. Of what use, wailed another, are prayers to the Gods who have deserted us? It was in this atmosphere that the Peace Committee discussion was held. Cross-legged on a country bed sits the Mahatma with Babu Satesh on his right. The District Magistrate (known to the troops as the Mullah-Major) on account of his Maulvi-like bearded features topped off with a jungle-hat, the local Military Commander and the Superintendent of Police face him. To his left sit Mr. Niazullah and Mr. Hamid, secretaries to the Bengal Government, and the leading local Mullah. The conversation is quadrangular between Gandhi, the District Magistrate, the Ministers and the Mullah. Gandhi, tentatively plucking at his toes, reminds them that occasional arrests of the good with the bad are, in India, no new thing—indeed, no 'NEW thing'. After a humorous exchange with McInerny on the subject of the Mohammedan appearance created by his beard, Gandhi listens attentively to the propounding of the Peace Committee Scheme whereby, in brief, one respectable member of each community is to be asked to come forward from each village to swear that he will rather lay down his own life than allow harm to come to a member of the other community. Miss Abdus Salam, fresh from her heart-rending work at a nearby refugee camp, looks sceptical and, later on, when the secretaries have departed, voices an opinion that non-violent measures—yes, even Peace Committees—are of little avail against the demons responsible for outrages such as have been perpetrated here in Noakhali. The leading Mullah only halfheartedly agrees to sponsor the Peace Committee Scheme at Gandhi's Prayer Meeting, now imminent. If he refuses to give a lead to his community, the scheme must fail. The Conference adjourns until after the Prayer Meeting. There are vacant spaces at the dais on either side of the Mahatma. The Military Commander hangs back, hoping to escape, but is pushed forward by the District Magistrate to accept an invitation by the Mahatma to sit on the left of his dais. The Superintendent of Police sits on the right. All is well organised, well stage-managed. Loud-speakers are in order, the Press have their seats, cameras click (the local Military Commander tries to pretend he is not there) and the Prayer Meeting begins. In due course the Mahatma addresses the congregation, amongst whom are a fair sprinkling of Muslims. He draws attention unexpectedly to the forces of Law and Order personified by the Superintendent of Police and the local Military Commander. He calls for religious tolerance whatever his listeners (be they Mohammedan, Hindu or Christian) conception of God might be. He recommends all to listen to the proposals

about to be made at the recommendation of the District Magistrate by the Leading Mullah. The speech is translated into Bengali. All listen anxiously to the words of the Mullah. He speaks well and fluently of many matters but not of the proposed Peace Committees. He has failed, having, it is evident, been approached or threatened on a higher level.

The Mullah was but a cog in the wheels of communalism.

To quote the words of 'an impartial observer' recorded in *The Times* during the previous month:

It is clear that communalism is responsible not only for the recent Calcutta riots and the persistent tension in many other towns in Bengal but also for poisoning the life-stream of the province. Like the 'purple devil' or water hyacinth which grows rank and luxuriant in waterways and ponds throughout Bengal hindering irrigation and navigation, communalism clogs the free movement of democratic forces. Its vitiating influence contributes to the general malaise affecting Bengal. It is the chief of many causes of provincial decline, others being economic, administrative, historical, or inherent in the Bengali temperament.

Here is a note by Major Ramplin, a Company Commander of the same Regiment:

The Battalion arrived in Chaumahani on the 23rd October and no sooner was it known that our H.Q. was to be established there than Chaumahani also became the H.Q. of all the visiting Hindu and Muslim leaders who had come to East Bengal to investigate stories of atrocities reputed to have been committed by local Muslims.

On the second day of our arrival, half way through lunch, the District Magistrate and two local Muslim personalities paid us a visit. They were invited into the mess, which had previously been the Circle Officer's office, while the officers continued with their meal.

News of the District Magistrate's visit along with two Muslims must have soon reached the Hindus for, within ten minutes, we were honoured with the presence of several Hindu leaders, including a former member of the Viceroy's Executive Council.

The discussion naturally turned to the local situation, so before long a battle royal was going on in our mess between the two communities. Each side sent for witnesses to back or refute charges until very shortly there must have been at least thirty or thirty-five civilians in the mess and only one remaining officer – myself.

Both sides continued to argue and each appealed to the District Magistrate for support, but he parried skilfully and did not allow himself to be drawn into their arguments.

At 3 p.m., with a nod to the District Magistrate, I left the mess and it was not until another half hour had passed that the District Magistrate could dissolve the meeting.

From about the 26th October until the end of November I was stationed with my company in a small village called Chatkhil. From the moment I arrived there I was besieged by local Hindus asking for protection against Muslims. Muslims on the other hand also lodged numerous complaints against Hindus.

One day the president of the local Union Board brought two Muslims to me who stated that they had been robbed of their boats (loaded with paddy) and, badly beaten by four or five Hindus and they named the Hindus concerned. Also, a member of their crew had been murdered. All this had occurred on the previous day.

I immediately took out a patrol and visited the scene of the incident and sure enough I found the dead body of a man. I had the body carried back to my camp and also brought back the two Muslims.

On reaching camp I suddenly recalled that I had heard the names of the accused Hindus recently. I sent for the man in charge of the Marwari Refugee Camp, which adjoined mine, and, as I expected, the four accused Hindus were in his camp. I had sent out a patrol the previous day to bring in four badly wounded Hindus, on information received, and these were the men. One of their number had been killed and on closer examination of the body of the dead man we had found out that he could not have been a Muslim and was, we presumed, the Hindu. He could not be properly identified as he had been decapitated.

Needless to say, on further investigation the loaded paddy boats were found safely at the homes of the Muslims who could not explain how the boats had returned – on their own, presumably.

The two Muslims were arrested and despatched to the police station.

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The Adjutant of the 1/3rd Gurkhas also had a contribution to make to our experiences of the disturbances in East Bengal: 'B' Company were the first to move out. They left Chittagong for Fenny on the 9th October. Real trouble started on the 14th October and Captain Rose and one platoon spent a hectic three days trying to stem the tide of murder, looting and arson which broke out simultaneously in all parts of Ramganj thana and on its borders. Had more troops been available in Ramganj at the time, the trouble might never have arisen, but though Captain Rose and his platoon covered incredible distances by truck, foot and country boat and broke up at least three riotous mobs, it was too much for him to cope with. Battalion H.Q. and D Company left for

Fenny on the 17th October. From there H.Q. proceeded to Chandpur, D Company to Lakshmipur and B Company to Faridganj. A company of the 4/2nd Gurkhas came under command in Chandpur and was held in reserve.

Whereas in Calcutta damage to property was small compared with the massacre of humans, in Noakhali few were killed but the damage to property was immense. The riots rose to their climax on the 17th and 18th October. From the overhead footbridge at Chandpur station I could see the smoke of burning villages everywhere to the southward. From Ramganj to Joyag in the east and Haimchor in the west, no Hindu village escaped. The Hindus, outnumbered everywhere by three to one, gathered their worldly goods together and made off by boat to the north and to the safety of the railway line on which all refugees could reach Comilla, Dacca, Chandpur or, further west, Calcutta.

Scenes in Chandpur were incredible. The population of the town trebled itself between the 14th and 18th October. The railway station was crowded day and night by immense crowds of weary, terrified Hindus anxious only to get away from East Bengal. Women and children predominated and the feeding of these people was taken on by numerous relief organisations. When the steamers came in at 8 p.m. each night our battalion had to provide a platoon to hold back the mob, who would otherwise have rushed the ships and probably sunk them.

In this operation D Company again brought off the biggest coup by arresting the leader of the Muslim rioters, Ghulam Sarwar, in his house in Saharpur. All other companies had a hard time patrolling the waterlogged countryside by foot and boat, but now that the military were on the scene the riots petered out and by the 10th October all was over. The Army however remained in Noakhali district for another ten months to ensure peace and quiet during rehabilitation. Gandhi came and went, Hindus in Bihar took revenge on the Muslim minority there and still the flame of communal enmity burned on, now brightly, now merely smouldering, in Calcutta itself.

The Battalion returned wearily to Chittagong on the 18th December 1946.

The visit of Mahatma Gandhi to Ramganj, East Bengal, in November caused great excitement among the locals but little interest was shown by the men of the 1/3rd Gurkhas who had a company detachment in the local school house. Life was pretty grim on the whole, due to the flooded condition of the country and the constant patrolling, sometimes up to one's knees in mud. Still, we did have the inevitable basket-ball ground, which was on a big maidan in front of the school. This, incidentally, was perhaps the only reasonably dry piece of land in the vicinity of Ramganj. When Gandhi eventually turned up all the locals thronged towards the Gurkha basket-ball ground. Some of the men were playing there and others were watching, including the Company Commander, a red-headed Irishman from Dublin. Seeing that there might be some

difficulty in the situation, Gandhi approached the officer and entered into conversation with him, while the Muslims and Gurkhas stood around watching.

'Could we use your playing field for a short time as we wish to offer up our prayers?' asked the Mahatma diplomatically. The officer thought over the request carefully and with as much sternness as two pips could muster, answered, 'Thik hai, but you'd better not be long as 10 platoon is playing company headquarters in twenty minutes.'

After the prayer meeting was over, Gandhi and the officer again had a few words with each other. There wasn't very much to talk about except the dreadful weather and the trouble which had been going on in Noakhali since October.

'Do you think we are going to have some more trouble in Noakhali?' asked the lieutenant.

I think not, answered the Mahatma. The good God will arrange to take care of everything in good time. 'Well I wish the good God would hurry up and arrange to change 'D' Company in Ramganj,' said the officer, before rushing off to write out the evening situation report.

As far as the Army was concerned the noteworthy feature of this uprising was the behaviour of the Muslim leaders. Their chief, perhaps sole, preoccupation was to get the troops out of the disturbed areas. Our officers concluded that there must be some secret scheme to set up prematurely a Pakistan in East Bengal and that the quicker the troops could be got out of the country the better for the scheme. They also formed the opinion that the coming storm had been well advertised to even Muslim officials in East Bengal but that all chose to turn a blind eye to it.

As soon as our battalion arrived from outside the inhabitants were keen to ascertain the religion of the various companies. Behind the troops flowed in ever increasing volume a stream of Hindu relief workers belonging to societies and political organisations. Some rendered good service, others undoubtedly came in to get the chance to investigate and to obtain material for propaganda against the Muslim League. The troops helped all who were genuine relief workers and in doing so undoubtedly gathered much information about acts of oppression by the majority community on the Hindus which the former were ill-pleased to have exposed. Moreover, this influx certainly retarded any high-level plans of widespread rebellion that might have been contemplated. So, it was expected that the Muslim side would counter with some sort of publicity campaign. It came, as was expected, in the form of accusations against the troops of oppressive behaviour, of partiality and of criminal acts. All these accusations were carefully examined and not one was found to have any foundation.

Directly after the visits of touring parties of the district Muslim League to any place whatsoever, there flowed in from it a string of charges by Muslims against the soldiers. Yet one battalion in its patient and often exasperating work spread over two months in one of the worst areas, inflicted only five casualties on the Muslim aggressors.

The campaign of vilification of the Army derived some impetus from visits of peripatetic Muslim Ministers of the Bengal Government who spent far more time conducting enquiries into the conduct of military and police than in trying to persuade their co-religionists to refrain from acts of violence. This patent sympathy with evil-doers raised the latter's spirits after they had begun to flag.

Officers had the impression that from Mr. Suhrawardy, the Chief Minister, downwards, the bias was in favour of Muslims and against their victims, and that the Ministers showed resentment, rather than gratitude, to the soldiers for all they had done to stop the disturbances. Policemen too who had acted against Muslims were not appreciated. The Chief Minister most unfortunately ordered the release on bail of *goondas* who had been arrested. These at once hastened home to take dire vengeance on those who had informed against them.

Some held, as so often they do hold, that the rioters were men who had come in from outside. That is not so; they were local inhabitants who were worked up to a pitch of frenzy by such agitators as Ghulam Sarwar, a disgruntled and defeated Congress candidate. He and his like thought the opportunity ripe to avenge the Muslim dead of Calcutta, expecting the Muslim Ministry of Bengal to turn a blind eye.

The Brigadier in command of the troops was Brigadier Thapar, a Hindu. He discharged his duties in these peculiarly difficult conditions with absolute impartiality, a deep sense of responsibility and competence, setting an example to all other Indian officers who were later to be employed all over eastern and northern India in these days of insensate cruelty and violence.

Judged later by the Calcutta holocaust and by the Bihar and Garhnilukteswar terrors, Eastern Bengal's three hundred Hindu dead was to be thought a trivial affair.

## APPENDIX VII

### (CHAPTER XV)

#### PERSONAL REPORTS FROM BIHAR

HERE, in short, are the experiences of the 4/10th Gurkhas.

For some weeks before troops were called out in aid of the civil power the Battalion had been engaged on reconnaissance of all roads in those areas where the Sub-Area Commander thought it would be likely to have to operate. Besides this it had done a number of flag-marches on foot and in its vehicles out from Dinapore to Arrah and Sasaram and Bihar Shari. At the last place, as there was tension between the communities, a company stayed for a few days, ostensibly training.

On the 1st November at 4.45 p.m. Brigadier Goadby called Colonel Murray to the telephone and warned him to be ready to move into Patna city the next day in support of the police to clear certain main routes through the city and the neighbourhood and to provide a ready reinforcement for the civil authorities.

A conference was arranged with the Senior Superintendent of Police for 6 a.m. the next morning, but Colonel Murray found him still in bed so went off with a reconnaissance party all through the city. During the night one of his companies had been on constant patrol in M.T. throughout the town and the following morning the Commissioner accused the Battalion of not having patrolled the city. Perhaps he too had not been ware and waking.

There was the usual insistence on the part of the civil power that troops should plant static posts all over the city and there was the usual refusal by the Commander to do anything of the kind and his continuing to send mobile patrols out from central company areas. All that day and all other days and all night, calls for military assistance poured in from police, civil officials and plain citizens; all were investigated and all except one proved to be wholly unnecessary. But it did mean that the patrols had to be hurried out to investigate each call. The peak was reached when the Commissioner on the evening of the 3rd November rushed into Colonel Murray's headquarters in the city and expressed himself as certain that Patna was to be heavily attacked that night. It was quite like old days in the Second World War. The report proved to be just as false as any other of these premonitions. There was no great flare-up in the city.



On the 2nd November the Battalion sent a platoon hotfoot to Hilsa where the situation was found to be bad, many murders having been committed and villages burnt. A small escort followed the platoon to bring in refugees but unfortunately the refugees took a cross-country route in order to save time and to be more inconspicuous from their enemies. These unfortunates were caught and attacked by some Hindus and many were killed, including the Muslim Sub-Inspector of Police who was escorting them.

The platoon was heavily attacked by a hostile Hindu mob near Hilsa and had to open fire, knocking out four of its assailants before it drove them off.

Major Rawlins with his Gurkhas and a squadron of armoured cars, passing through Jhetuli, came upon a panic-stricken stream of villagers who implored his protection against an impending Hindu attack on their village. So he dropped a Jemadar and a couple of sections to defend the village. Sure enough, within a short time a yelling, ferocious mob launched itself upon the village, whereupon the Gurkha officer brought his men into action and killed four of the enemy, finally driving them off and saving the village.

Those were the only excitements that the Battalion saw and for the rest of the time it was in control of Patna city and protecting a long strip of railway.

Major G. Leech of the I.A.O.C. was the senior officer and therefore commanding the stations of Monghyr and Jamalpur with a company of 4/3rd Gurkhas and 215 Garrison Company, about one hundred of his Ordnance men and another hundred military Watch and Ward enlisted men. He too had been flag-marching his little command through these towns and the country all about.

Perhaps it is because the Indian Army officer had always to be ready to throw himself into odd jobs and odd situations and odd problems that he was usually undismayed by anything and was something of a Jack-of-all-trades.

Anyway here was Major Leech of the Ordnance and this is what he had to do.

On the 31st October he redoubled his flag-marching endeavours. On the 2nd November he sent a platoon of his Garrison Company to escort rations to the troops at Bhagalpur, ordering it to look in at Tarapur on the way back to see how things were. The platoon swung off into Tarapur and lit upon the first scene of destruction, followed it up finding many killed and five or six villages afire. It drove for Monghyr and reported to the District Magistrate and Major Leech. The latter at once sent a platoon of his Gurkhas to operate vigorously in the Tarapur area and two platoons of his Garrison Company to work through Jamalpur and Monghyr and out into the suburbs.

The Gurkhas set to work to rescue refugees from the roof of a mosque and operated offensively, breaking up threatened assaults and rounding up refugees, sending them back to their camp at Tarapur.

Major Leech then concentrated his little Garrison Company to keep the peace at Monghyr, sending out from there a platoon to open up refugee camps and escort them, particularly the wounded, to Monghyr.

On the 3rd November a small patrol of Gurkhas spotted a mob of several hundreds moving in to assault a village, drove at them and dispersed them. Another patrol moving further afield brought in large numbers of refugees. Villages and isolated houses were burning all over a wide area.

A platoon of Gurkhas was rushed out to Tarapur as reinforcements.

Early on the 4th November Major Leech heard that the morning coolie train had been stopped in the country, many of the passengers slaughtered and a few carriages set on fire. The engine-driver, discretion prevailing over valour, detached the engine and hastened to Jamalpur under full steam. A platoon of the Garrison Company was sent at once to the scene of the disaster where it dealt with scattered bands of miscreants and restored confidence in the neighbourhood. It then drove on to Kharagpur whence it had rumours of more trouble.

The last reserve, the Ordnance sepoy, were stood by for action and the men of the Watch and Ward were issued with arms, while Garhwali civilian chowkidars, mostly ex-service men, were enrolled as special constables and issued with weapons. The A.F.I., The Bengal Light Horse, was embodied for action.

A Gurkha patrol moving out into the country beyond Tarapur to Rampur, found many dead and rescued a child with a cut skull, thereafter evacuating large numbers of refugees. Another patrol went to Jallalabad and Makwa, seized an armoury of spears from a hut in an orchard, then marched on to Mirzapur where it attacked a mob of Hindus who surprisingly enough, though about to destroy the village, apologised and fled!

Major Leech's last reserve, his Ordnance sepoy, went into action in Jamalpur city.

That night a few men of the Garrison Company were sent with medical stores, doctors and orderlies to the Tarapur area for firstaid treatment of the large number of wounded Muslims. Just after midnight a platoon of the same company was rushed off to an outlying village where an attack was expected, to be gratified to find that for once the Hindu villagers were protecting their Muslim neighbours from Hindu attack from outside.

All sorts of demands for troops were coming in from every point of the compass and for protection of rain ay workshops and so on.

A patrol recovered seven dead apprentices from inside the Indian Institute at Jamalpur. More and more vigorous action was being demanded by the civil power on the part of this minute garrison, few of whom had had any sleep for days.

The Gurkhas moved out from Tarapur to Bishampur and surprised a hostile mob of Hindus who had surrounded a village.

They opened fire, drove the mob off, went in to find many dead and many houses burning. Hastening on again they convoyed in many refugees from other villages, large numbers of them badly injured.

To some extent the Jamalpur countryside was kept quiet by the constant firing of Verey lights from the Ordnance Depot which seemed to scare prospective assailants away. Murders, however, were going on in secluded places all over the town and the military patrols were kept hard at it without a stop. But all the time effort was still being wasted in sending out parties to investigate false reports.

At last on the 6th November a reinforcement of the 1st Dogras came in from outside and permeated the whole of the Tarapur area, releasing the widely scattered platoons of Gurkhas. Thereupon greater efforts were made to bring in refugees and troops and police started to effect arrests of malefactors from all over the countryside.

As an illustration of what one single platoon had to do, one may quote a platoon of 215 Garrison Company which at short notice on the 7th November at 9 p.m. drove out of Monghyr, collected 2,000 refugees, opened up on its own two refugee camps, then sent out patrols at dawn all over its area to maintain peace.

By the 9th November, with the reinforcements at his command, Major Leech had the whole of this vast area once more under control and the police were functioning at their proper duties.

## APPENDIX VIII

### THE GURKHA BRIGADE

BEFORE plunging into the story of this business it is best to survey very shortly the hundred and thirty-odd years of the British-Gurkha alliance.

Let us be quite clear of one thing at the very start – that Nepal, land of the Gurkhas, is a sovereign state and that in law we British and the Government of Nepal deal directly with each other. Legally, there is no intermediary. The tale to be told here is that of Britain permitting herself to be wriggled into the position of having to accept the services of an intermediary who finally arrogated to himself a commanding position of authority. In that position we left him when we quitted India, having also tacitly acquiesced in his being arbiter of the fate of our ally, Nepal. Nepal was ill advised by us, if indeed we advised her at all.

In 1815, after a protracted campaign, a threat of the Company's forces near Bimfedi on the Raxaul – Khatmandu road induced the rather timid court of Nepal to come to terms with the British. The treaty of Segauli in the same year first established satisfactory relations between the British and Nepal. The war had been occasioned by continued raids and marauding expeditions conducted by Gurkhas into the Indian foothills and beyond out to the plains. Since then there has been firm friendship between the British and the kingdom of Nepal. The treaty established perpetual peace between Nepal and the East India Company, Nepal ceding those hill territories which extended as far west as Simla, also ceding the low jungle country of the Terai and engaging never to interfere with Sikkim. Representatives of each country were to reside at the capital of the other and the Nepalese Government undertook never to accept into its service any British, European or American state subject without the consent of the British Government. Thus the Gurkhas are allies of Britain and are in no sense Indian subjects, although today from the manner in which the Indian Government has intervened in the negotiations over Gurkha regiments, it would appear that it regards Nepal as a subject country.

Ever since the treaty of Segauli the eight hundred long miles of the Indo-Nepalese frontier have remained peaceful, never subjected to the raiding and lawlessness that have characterised the North-West Frontier of India. So accustomed have we grown to this happy state of affairs that it seems strange now to contemplate the possibility of a Nepal frustrated by India, deserted by the British and left with her meagre resources to find a living as best she can. Such a state of affairs would bring to that frontier and to Sikkim and Bhutan greater trouble and bloodshed from this compact and warlike race

than the abortive hostilities of the Pathan tribesmen have ever visited upon their frontier with India.

It is apparent that India, the British in India if you like, owed to Nepal one hundred and thirty-odd years of tranquillity on their north-eastern border. During these long years there have been from time to time dire troubles in India; the Indian Mutiny for one, for another the abortive but dangerous attempt in 1942 to wreck our Indian force in Burma by cutting to pieces its lines of communications along the Ganges valley. Nepal could have taken advantage of both of these and of many other troubles in eastern India had she had a mind to do so. She could have passed arms and ammunition into India then and at all times, of which the enemies of the Government of India could have made effective use. Far from that, our difficulties in India were always her opportunity to help us. For all this unimpeachable loyalty we owe her much.

For the same service, even the negative one of not giving trouble on the border, the new India should be ready to concede to Nepal the few demands that the latter need make. These amount in the main to a free passage through India from port to boundary and back, of Nepal's imports and exports and of her men. For her active cooperation in keeping down dacoity and in the apprehension of absconders Nepal could demand other concessions. She does not need much. Her position *vis-à-vis* any Government of India was not a weak one and *vis-à-vis* the present Government her position is appreciably stronger. Not that I would claim that the present regime in Nepal itself is by any means secure. But at least we can be sure that the prospective Government of Hindustan would for the past two years have been ready to treat Nepal with some show of generosity in order to avoid adding that frontier to the complexity of the problem which they must have been sure would press increasingly upon themselves, and which they knew they must yet solve.

Britain's debt to Nepal has grown as the years have passed since 1815, and as she has raised more and more Gurkha regiments and as they have fought for the British in their world wars. We also owe to Nepal the ready help that she has given with her own Nepalese contingents during the Mutiny and during the two world wars.

For all that she has done we at least have owed it to her that if we, in our own interests, to promote our material advantage, or to satisfy the call of our own conscience, should decide to withdraw our power and authority from India, then she, perhaps first of all as most dependent on us, should be provided for. Yet we made no provision for her when the time came to go. This lapse must be set fair and square on the shoulders of our Government of the time, for the Opposition constantly and unfailingly, through speakers such as Brigadier Low and Colonel Gomme Duncan, reminded the Government of its obligation. Nevertheless, the Government, though fully aware of the position of Nepal, never lifted a finger to help her or spoke to her a wise word of advice or of comfort.

From the very beginning it was apparent that the fate of the Gurkha Brigade was not only a matter of the fate of the Gurkha ranks of that Brigade but of Nepal itself and even of that whole strip of the Himalayan frontier of India. This will become apparent as I proceed with my tale.

We British have to some extent repaid Nepal through the employment given to her men and the money that they have taken back to their country, by restoring to her the Terai as a reward for her help in the Mutiny, and by giving her after the First World War an annual present of ten lakhs instead of ceding any more territory to her. Since then, seeing that India was to gain her independence (Nepal, for one, at least trusted our promises to India enough to take a bet on this), she has wished to insure herself by persuading us to capitalise the annual payment of ten lakhs. Recently we conceded this request.

In 1923 we signed a treaty with Nepal confirming our former treaty, finally fully recognising the independence of Nepal, permitting her free passage of goods from and through British India and granting her freedom from port customs.

The Gurkhas have always been most suspicious of any attempt on the part of India to infiltrate into their country.

Virtually all hillmen on the borders of India have the high-lander's usual aversion to the men of the plains: this aversion is accentuated where the hill blood is mainly Mongol or Pathan. Nepal, bordering on the least masculine of India's people in Bihar and Bengal, shares the feeling and, certainly in respect of our soldiers from the high mountains, adds to it a certain haughtiness. The idea of military service under Indians had been unacceptable to these men and they would only undertake it if compelled to it economically. They went to the Indian States Forces for service, partly because such service did not put their loyalty to the test of war and partly because there have been British Military Advisers in the Indian States Forces. In the same way they served in armed provincial police where there had also been British officers. Economic pressure will also bring them to serve in the new Indian Army, but the service may not be as willingly given as one would hope unless the status of Nepal is assured. For the British, with their debt to Nepal to be paid, the decision they had to make was whether it was justifiable for us to allow economic pressure to be brought firstly on Nepal, thus to induce her men to serve, and secondly on the Gurkha battalions of the Gurkha brigade which bore our battle honours to impel them to serve with the Indian Army.

There were certain British officials in those days who held the opinion that the vigorous and determined hillmen of Nepal were bred to be assimilated by India or at least to become subservient satellites. The likelihood of such a position being quietly assumed by such a people was small: if it were assumed then the likelihood of their not seeking

the earliest opportunity to cast off the yoke was negligible. But for us to encourage the situation to come about in which they might be so coerced and so resist must show us to be without foresight. The Government of India should, as new figures appear, tend to be less rather than more considerate as the years go by. Coercion would in the end lead to Nepal's taking advantage of India's later difficulties, and that would result in chaos. Hindustan would, of course, naturally take the opportunity of employing large numbers of Gurkha soldiers in her army for by so doing she would not only hold a considerable body of Nepalese in pledge for their country's good behaviour but would also increase her Hindu fighting strength in the event of there being trouble with the Muslims, either internal or external. In any case she would inevitably involve the kingdom of Nepal irrevocably on the Hindu side against the Muslims, particularly if she could take over the officially recognised existing Gurkha battalions. There was only one disadvantage and it was that the existence of a large body of armed Gurkhas in India brought certain risks for that country itself. There were dangers therefore both for Nepal and Hindustan in the attitude that Nepal must be assimilated by India.

It must be remembered that the ruling class of Nepal is one large family of Rajput extraction, the Rana family. It is they who fill all the higher appointments and all the higher administrative posts of the Government. Babies are born as Major-Generals of the Nepalese native army. It is a family affair: a closed shop.

Many of the Ranas are very wealthy, for the family has huge investments in India, notably in Calcutta. But the only cart roads of Nepal are the small metalled strips in and about Khatmandu and Amlekhganj, while her mountaineers starve for education and medical care.

The British public, whose interest in its Gurkhas was considerable, would not of course have been informed of the distressing circumstances in which they found themselves. Mr. Bellenger for long was most uncommunicative about their future: in fact, until the Government had handed them to India for what was regarded as political expedience, the nation knew very little at all of what was happening to its comrades of many a bloody field.

What has happened is that there were twenty regular Gurkha battalions who had served us for up to one hundred and thirty years, seventy-five percent of whom would have been only too ready to continue under the British. The British have been unable, despite their grave shortage of manpower, to take more than two-fifths of them, that is, eight battalions. The rest, twelve battalions, have been compelled by us to serve India.

It may, of course, be said that we could not take them because India would resist our doing so. I will answer that objection later.

Beyond the settling of a debt of honour, and that was to any simple soldier the prime concern, there were very clear advantages to be gained by the British from taking on all twenty battalions. The Gurkha is a soldier of high battle skill, a world-famed fighting man and respected in every country whose men fought alongside us in the last war. He is cheap to maintain compared with the British soldier for he is frugal, hardy and well accustomed to the conditions of eastern countries, and thus does not need a big administrative train. Whereas the British soldier finds overseas service irksome, particularly in the East, the Gurkha does not mind serving overseas or anywhere at all in the East, provided that he sees his home at reasonable intervals and can take his family about with him. British manpower is wholly inadequate to man our Asiatic garrisons and Nepal could easily and willingly have made up the deficit in our overseas contingents. In this last war we used Gurkha soldiers as signallers, tank gunners, tank drivers, mechanics, 25-pounder gun teams, light A.A. and anti-tank gunners, etc., and found no difficulty in giving them the technical knowledge needed for these roles, so it would not be hard to man, train and organise complete formations with a modicum of help from the British Army.

That preface opens up the case and now I will show how the matter turned out.

Directly the war was over we fully realised that India would soon be granted at least Dominion status and that her army would, to as great an extent as was feasible, be Indianised. That change would place the Gurkha Brigade in a peculiar position, for its whole outlook was British and it was at that time bound to the British Crown rather than to any Indian Government of the past, present or future. Its latest service to the Crown in the Second World War had been remarkable for, out of twenty-six Victoria Crosses won by 'Other Ranks' of the Indian Army, this small contingent of about thirty battalions had earned no less than ten.

Nepal is landlocked, and with the unbending policy towards the States of Hindustan's leaders it was likely that whatever economic pressure was necessary would be exerted to keep her compliant.

Putting these considerations together it seemed to us that one of the terms of contract between ourselves and a free India must of necessity be that the latter should, guarantee to Nepal the same rights as we guaranteed her, that is, firstly, unrestricted access across India for men and goods to and from the ports. Only thus could we fulfil the dictates of our conscience and of the gratitude we felt to the Gurkhas whose trust in their British officers and in the British Government was implicit. With this guarantee Nepal would be able to enlist her men in the British Army just as she pleased.

In early 1946 came the Parliamentary Delegation. Its members were easily interested in the Gurkha problem and most sympathetic towards it, for most had recently been soldiers themselves. Their only misapprehension was to believe that those concerned



were really going to take risks to help solve it in favour of the expressed desires of the men of the Gurkha Brigade. This natural belief kept individuals from intervening very early on in negotiations to ensure that the Gurkha case was to have a proper hearing from the very beginning. They undoubtedly imagined that the British representatives in India would themselves state the case.

The next event was the most outstanding of recent times in India, the arrival of the Cabinet Mission. It was thought that here now was the opportunity to put forward a plea that the peculiar situation of Nepal should be recognised and that she should be safeguarded from pressure on the part of her large neighbour. There is reason to believe that the Mission was apprised of the problem but no more was heard of it. Possibly it was thought that to ask for such firm conditions in handing over India to Indians might lead them to fight shy of taking charge. That seems a little far-fetched if it was the reason. The boon of independence was not to be refused because of a clause in favour of Nepal, little irksome to India. It seems more likely that the affairs of Nepal were regarded as extraneous to the main problem and, if admitted to consideration, possibly such as to take the Mission's eye 'off the ball'. Another reason may have been that it was regarded as inevitable that this mountain State should become a part of India—be absorbed by India. This may have been the attitude, for certainly at our own Headquarters in Delhi there was little sympathy for the pauper condition of Nepal and its consequences on the future of our Gurkha soldiers. The view was taken that Nepal and her Gurkha people must be a part of India—inevitably be swallowed by Colossus, forcibly or with some persuasion. That may also have been the view of those who counselled the Maharajah of Nepal. It was a prospect that was at that time little to the liking of Gurkhas in our Army.

Whatever the reason, the anxieties of the trusting Gurkhas seem to have had little attention while the demands of a suspicious India held the field throughout.

It is difficult for one who is not a politician nor accustomed to the ways of politics to understand why a debt of honour of this sort is not paid and paid as promptly as can be. At that time little was done to ensure free access to the sea of the sovereign State of Nepal, a claim which in Europe would have gained immediate attention if not immediate acceptance. It was at this time that our last debt to Nepal could have been paid. Later it became increasingly difficult to pay it and, after the Indian Government took the reins in India, it was only through that Government that we could obtain any concession for Nepal. In fact, Nepal was thereafter treated practically as though she were a part of India, a State which the latter had every right to order as she pleased.

At this stage in the story we can examine the reasons as they then presented themselves in April 1946 against the inclusion of the existing Gurkha regiments in the new Indian Army. They may be summarised in two categories, those that affected Nepal as a nation and those which only affected the Gurkha Brigade and the British. The former were

probably realised by only a few and those not in a position to influence affairs. It must be remembered, as I have shown elsewhere, that we observers were pretty certain of two things, namely, that India would be divided into Hindustan and Pakistan and that these two would, for a time at least, be Dominions of the British Commonwealth. It needed little prevision to forecast this if one had lived in India as long as most of us and knew the sentiments of Hindu for Muslim.

Thus has British influence been seriously diminished in Nepal. Yet it is the only influence that the Government will happily accept and they will need British advice very urgently and very soon in the face of the Chinese threat. There is more on the matter in Appendix IX.

It was unfortunately more than likely, if each had its own army, that when British control was withdrawn from India the two new States would come to blows. If we handed over existing regiments to one or other Dominion—and it would presumably be that of India—then we would at once be officially including our Gurkha Contingent in the Indian Army and that Contingent would be then regarded as hostile to Pakistan, as a part of India, and with the Contingent would be bracketed Nepal. So that by handing these regiments over, we would be setting Nepal up as a country hostile to Pakistan. We would have involved Nepal. This was a risk to which we had no right to expose our ally.

In any case, if India alone were allotted any of our Gurkha battalions as battalions, it would be a gesture on our part which would lead Pakistan at once to regard the Gurkha as of the other party. As Nepal's existence depends on her being friendly to the rulers of the Indian Sub-Continent, it behoves her to be friendly to both Pakistan and India and to side with neither. Moreover, many of her countrymen found employment in or by passing through Pakistan.

We hoped that either the War Office would take all Gurkha battalions, or else that it would take some and let the rest be disbanded, or else that some form of impartial central army including our Gurkha Brigade would evolve to keep peace between the armies of the two Dominions. If India still wanted Gurkhas for her army then she could take them from Gurkhas domiciled in India or else recruit Gurkhas coming down independently from Nepal. In this way Nepal could wash her hands of anything in which her independent adventurers might get themselves involved and would still be regarded by Pakistan as a healthy neutral.

Those reasons which concerned only the British and their Gurkha regiments were simpler. They rested on British honour on the one side and on Gurkha trust on the other.

Ever since we had first raised the Nasiri Battalion and the Sirmoor and Kumaon Battalions in 1815, it had been agreed, perhaps unwisely, that Gurkha regiments in our service would never be officered by Indians. For one hundred and thirty-odd years that rule had been carefully kept and Gurkhas had come in to enlist for service under British officers. Thus the Gurkha connection, though it has been through the Indian Army, has been with Britain! Extract, printed in a Gurkha Regimental News of October, 1949, from a 1948 report in the *Statesman* of a speech by the Indian Defence Minister ... Today the Gurkhas in Jammu and Kashmir are fighting the enemy in their traditional martial spirit .... and always with the British rather than with India. It may be that because of this the men regarded themselves as belonging to a force apart from the Indian Army: that would be a natural attitude for they were, to begin with, foreigners and never aspired to be Indians. In fact they came to look upon themselves as being in India rather as British troops were in India, as mercenaries to see that Indians did not molest each other. Always they were treated in the same class as British troops for the maintenance of law and order, being called out for all sorts of communal troubles because of their complete impartiality as to whether they dealt forcibly with a Muslim Indian or a Hindu Indian. The British Gurkha regiments had close affiliations with British regiments and the year round telegrams of greeting sped back and forth between Gurkhas and British. Thus, wherever progressive steps to Indianise the Indian Army were taken by increasing the number of Indian officers in units, the Gurkha Brigade was specifically excluded from the scheme and remained intact with their British officers. No written promise was ever made to the Gurkhas except perhaps by Lord Linlithgow to the Maharajah of Nepal, but the rule was well known throughout the Indian Army that Indians would not be posted as officers to Gurkha battalions. It is little realised that Gurkhas, who seem to be so readily amenable to discipline and such keen soldiers, are not, in fact, so very easy to command. It was a pity that the Gurkha Regiments had to be cast into the political pool.

It was therefore theoretically wrong of us to hand them over to India: it was probably also inexpedient in the long run.

Time dragged by and nothing was decided about the Gurkha Brigade. Officers and men were kept in the dark about what was to happen to them. Hints were dropping about that affairs were, for some cryptic reason, in such a state of delicacy that the smallest word in the wrong place here or there might ruin everything. Having a plain view of the business and resenting so long a delay, the officers and then the men began to suspect ulterior designs. Their faith in the British, not too refulgent after the I.N.A. business, dimmed down to the merest nightlight. It never rose again; in August 1947 it was for the time being extinguished. It was never apparent to them what India had to do with the future of the Gurkha Brigade then being arranged between two sovereign countries, Britain and Nepal. Admittedly, it had been paid by British-India, but then so had the British troops upon whom India had no hold at all and in whose disposal she had no say.

Of one thing all British and Gurkhas were certain and it was that the Gurkha soldier, if his battalions were turned over to India under Indian officers, would feel that the British had let him down. The officers feared that they would be forced to face their men with this decision, and they shrank from the idea.

Certain aggressive Conservative members of Parliament kept up a string of tough questions to which they got nothing but evasive answers. Colonel Gomme Duncan early suspected the treatment and hauled up the specialists for examination. He soon had Brigadier Low and Sir Arthur Salter with him in the consulting room and Lord Winterton, Mr. Vane and Mr. Anthony Eden dropped in near the finish to pop a suggestion or two.

It seemed to us in India that physician Henderson, in whose care was the pining infant, found consultants Duncan and Low a distinct embarrassment. This physician, while promising a complete cure, appeared to be more eager to hear that the baby had passed to another world. This appendix was, therefore, almost its autopsy.

Late in April of 1947, before the decision to divide India was made, I paid a visit to the capital of Nepal, Khatmandu. It was purely a private visit and, indeed, while I was there I learnt that an official Mission, British and Indian, was on its way to Khatmandu to negotiate about our Gurkhas. Twice I was bidden to interviews with H.H. the Maharajah Padma Shamsher Jung Bahadur Rana. He spoke in Gurkhali. His enquiries were directed more towards finding out if India would remain tranquil and within the Commonwealth than to anything that directly affected the regiments of which he was the Colonel-in-Chief. He remarked that his country had always striven to remain at peace with any power that ruled India and instanced Moghuls and British. I replied that I thought that a wise policy. He then said that if any of his Gurkhas wished to serve in the new Indian Army he would allow them to do so. To that I answered that it would be impossible to stop them if they really wanted to serve. That was the only contribution that I made to the controversy. I had no authority even to discuss it with the Maharajah, so let it rest there. I apprehended that we British would have counselled him fully as to the disposal of our Gurkha regiments and as to his personal responsibility towards them as Colonel-in-Chief and that it would be presumptuous and interfering for me to raise the subject.

Since the Mission was due to arrive shortly at Khatmandu I left there the day before its arrival in order not to be thought to be in the way during its discussions.

I have dwelt on this visit a little because it was erroneously believed by some that I had gone to Khatmandu to negotiate with the Government.

After the Mission returned to Delhi some scraps of news began to filter out. The trouble was that they appeared in advance of any official information and caused consternation among all Gurkha units. As everything concerning their future had been kept completely dark, the paragraph in the *Statesman*, which I have copied out here, taking it for granted that, after our frequent promises, Gurkhas would at once accept Indians as officers, staggered our Gurkha officers and men. Many of the men had signed on for a term of service believing that they would be continuing under their own British officers. They were now to be forced to accept service under Indians for the term of their contract. It was probably more the manner in which the decision was made public which upset them, than the nature of the decision itself.

New Delhi, June 13. It is understood that a start will be made soon in posting Indian officers to Gurkha battalions of the Indian Army.

The 20 Gurkha battalions which form part of the Indian Army are entirely officered in peacetime by Britons. The departure from tradition is a sequel to the recent negotiations between the Government of India and the Nepal Government. The latter have expressed their willingness to continue to lend Gurkhas for employment in the Indian Army.

The exact strength has not been decided: nor is it certain that Gurkhas will be employed in the British Army for the garrisoning of Britain's overseas possessions. Major-General Lyne, who recently visited New Delhi and Khatmandu and discussed the matter on behalf of the War Office, has taken with him the replies of the Governments of India and Nepal.

Indian officers of sufficient seniority will be posted to certain battalions initially.

This appeared before any intimation of such a proceeding had come from official quarters. It was not the fault of G.H.Q., Delhi, I dare say, for leakages of information from all Headquarters were now only too frequent. In any case the G.H.Q. letter, when it did come, was confidential, and it was for the poor C.O. of the Training Centre to explain it away to his men as best he could.

'Morale' reports soon came in giving the reactions of Gurkha soldiers to this paragraph. They were not favourable.

Here we were at June 1947 with nothing settled and with a strong idea that nothing could be settled now until the two Dominions were in the saddle, for the initiative had been handed to the Indian Government, His Majesty's Government having, as it appeared to us, played its cards timidly and with no confidence in the value either of its own cards or those of Nepal. Yet both held enough to win had they chosen to play them.

Some at Delhi were against giving whatever battalions might be directed to serve under the Indian Government any other choice than 'India or go', without compensation. They knew that this was manifestly unjust but did not mind.

From then onwards our Gurkhas were becoming more and more bitter and for the first time in over a century were coming to distrust the British, whose old school tie was now mouldering in the dustbin. They cast about fruitlessly for escape from their position, bound by their own signed contract and with poverty for themselves and their families staring them in the face if they packed up their grips and deserted. Their sorry position was unenviable and well known in Delhi: to it Delhi and the Cabinet at home had knowingly consigned our good friends because their country was weak and their Government willing to submit its men to any conditions that suited India. Our unnecessary haste in releasing our authority in India was to blame for this unsatisfactory state of affairs.

It was thought that India might refuse us, a sovereign State, the right to recruit men from Nepal, another sovereign State, if we did not come to heel by handing over most of our Gurkha regiments.

A reason for India's refusal which was much spoken of at the time was that the British would use Gurkhas to oppress Asiatic peoples.

This reason was bandied about at a time when provincial governments of India were manifestly preparing for one-party government. In all this the British officers of Gurkha regiments maintained before their men an exemplary attitude of neutrality, their minds filled to exclusion with an anxious foreboding that the British Government at home would break its word and dishonour them before their men. Their forebodings were well founded.

So, to our other troublesome preoccupations in the midst of the deluge of communal strife was added a serious possibility that the Gurkha regiments would sour and down tools or even mutiny.

It is due to the level-headedness of the Gurkha officers and men and to the loyal behaviour of their officers, intolerably worried on behalf of their men, that, with minor exceptions, the Gurkha battalions remained steadfast. One need not hesitate to assert that in similar circumstances under other officers they would have collapsed.

Hopes were buoyed by certain statements in the House of Commons. In March, answering Sir Arthur Salter, Mr. Henderson had said that he would certainly see that, as far as the British Government could, they would seek to secure fair and just treatment for these gallant soldiers. The names of Mr. Skinnard, Sir Arthur Salter,

Colonel Duncan, Captain Gammans and Mr. Edward Keeling who had asked the questions which led to this promise were noted with gratitude.

On 10th and 14th July, Colonel Duncan and Brigadier Low returned to the Gurkha question. Mr. Attlee assured them that 'it is important that we should still have the use of Gurkha troops as in the past'. We were not certain whether 'as in the past' meant exactly 'as in the past', i.e. twenty battalions, ten regiments, or even the equivalent in numbers but of different arms, but it was hoped that the British Government would put in a big demand, particularly, as Colonel Duncan pointed out, in view of the shortage of man-power at home. Mr. Wyatt suggested that if Gurkhas did not wish to serve in the Indian Army then perhaps, at some future date, we could 'embody them in the British Army'.

The only discordant note he struck was in the inference that strong and wealthy India would be right in dictating in this matter to weak and poor Nepal. We always held that India had no such moral right and that to attempt to exert it would be the act of a bully. Mr. Attlee also observed that 'there is no attempt to put Gurkhas under anyone whom they do not wish to serve'.

Colonel Duncan read out the paragraph from the *Statesman* which I have quoted above and said, Right or wrong, that statement is the only one which the Gurkha knows anything about and that has gone right through the twenty or thirty battalions and has set those gallant little men on edge. . . . Rightly or wrongly that is all they have had and no statement has come from the Government to say whether or not that is what is to be done. I think it is grossly unfair to these loyal men that they should not be told the truth. That was a just appreciation of the situation. He went on to insist that our pledge not to officer any of the existing units with Indians should be honoured.

But the insistence of these two devoted Members did not succeed in preventing the handing over of six Gurkha regiments out of ten, just as they stood, to the Dominion of India with the future disadvantages that may arise from this act.

Always, those who had the interests of the whole brigade at heart hoped that England would take the first battalion of all its regiments, thus preserving the identity of them all and the identity and traditions of the brigade, and that the second battalions would be telescoped 'into the first. During July a Gallup' poll was taken in one Gurkha battalion resulting in 98 percent of the men electing for service under the British Government with British officers, 2 percent electing to take their discharge and nil electing for service under the Indian Dominion. This was proof of the men's desires if neither propaganda nor compulsion were applied. This battalion was one of those later allotted to India.

On the 4th August these two Members again brought the question up and were joined by Earl Winterton, Mr. Anthony Eden and Mr. Vane, Mr. Eden stressing that Nepal was an independent Government and one with whom we had relations through the Foreign Office.

It was the Conservative Party which sponsored the cause of our Gurkha soldiers: the silence of the Labour Party was marked.<sup>109</sup> This was not in itself a party cause; it was a national matter of simply honouring our word to tried and gallant friends who had done much to serve us in our most anxious hours of need and whose dead lay with ours, sown across the battlefields of a hundred and thirty years. On the 8th August a signal was sent from G.H.Q., Delhi, giving its decision, which was presumably the result of agreement between H.M.G., Nepal and the Government of the Dominion of India. Thus the Gurkha Brigade, with all its traditions, ceased to exist.

The Gurkha Brigade of ten regiments was to be split in two. Four regiments (eight battalions) were to go to service under the War Office and six (twelve battalions) under the Dominion of India.

It can be imagined with what consternation this news was received. A depressing feature was that if any Gurkha refused to serve on in the contingents he was to be given no compensation for loss of career, no mustering out terms. In other words pressure was being brought to bear on him to compel him to serve under the Indian Dominion, despite Mr. Attlee's assurance to the contrary. If the same treatment had been offered to a contingent of British Regular troops in India in 1947 to induce them to serve on in India, it would have raised a storm of protest. It has already been shown that the circumstances of the old Gurkha Brigade were very much the same as those of British soldiers.

One Gurkha regiment protested and said that it feared trouble if the men got no mustering out concessions.

The outcome was that only the men of the regiments selected to serve under the British were permitted to choose between serving Britain and India, while no men of either contingent were permitted to choose to be released from the service rather than serve under a regime that they did not wish to serve. So much for the Prime Minister's promise previously recorded.

The regiments selected to continue to serve under the Crown were the 2nd, 6th, 7th and 10th Gurkha Rifles. As the 7th and 10th are the only two regiments which are recruited from eastern Nepal, and as the 6th was a junior regiment of the Brigade, we at once

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<sup>109</sup> In its desertion of Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and other lesser peoples, this party abandoned its role as champion of the under-dog.



looked up the present locations of the six regular battalions of these regiments. We found that all three regiments had one battalion in Burma and that they had been selected solely as a matter of minor administrative convenience because, otherwise, G.H.Q. would have had to bring back these three battalions to India and to replace them in Burma with battalions from India.

The result of this carefree policy was that only one of the senior regiments (the 2nd) of the ten regiments of the Gurkha Brigade has been offered to the War Office. Thus those who had served Britain longest were discarded and three of the newest regiments put in their places. Among the discarded regiments were the 1st K.G.O., raised in 1815; the 3rd Q.A.O. raised at the same time; the 4th P.W.O. and the 5th Royal with its four V.C.s of this last war. Only one of those which G.H.Q. selected for the War Office bore a royal title, the 2nd.

As any officer of the Brigade well knows I do not put this forward in order to decry the 6th, 7th or Loth Gurkhas, for they know as I know that there is little to choose in quality between any of the battalions. Those famous regiments allotted to India will one day have their numbers changed, later be deprived of their titles and will have then lost their identity.

It is not too much to ask the Government of Great Britain to reform all six regiments in any fighting arm of the service whatsoever, when it sees fit to expand its Gurkha contingent.

Learning of the decision on the 12th August, the two Members closely questioned Mr. Attlee to find out why, if he thought it right to hand over Gurkha battalions to India, Parliament had not been immediately informed and how anyone could transfer whole units on a voluntary basis and why six Gurkha regiments with four royal titles had been handed to India. Earl Winterton then planted the responsibility for this decision fairly on the Government. Mr. Attlee, in his reply, said that 'the outcome of the negotiations is such as to meet our present essential requirements'. The Members, like the Brigade itself, had to remain unsatisfied that we had done honestly by our Gurkha friends. The Gurkha soldiers said that we had betrayed their trust in us.

On the 10th August 1947, I went to visit a Gurkha battalion whose colonel I had known for a long time. He told me that the men now elected 80 percent to go altogether, 12 percent to go to service under H.M.G. and 8 percent to go to service under the Indian Dominion. I sent for the Subedar Major and another senior subedar and asked why this was. They told me that the men were sick of the whole business, considered that they had been sold by the British and were hurt and angry at the splitting up of the Gurkha Brigade as they simply did not understand it. The Subedar Major told me that had the Gurkha Brigade, or all the 1st Battalions been selected to serve under the British, practically speaking every single man would have

elected to serve under the British Government. This looked much like the end of the Gurkha Brigade altogether.

By now our men had lost faith in the British.

The outcome of all this was that in November and early December 1947 there were mutinies in two famous Gurkha battalions selected to continue in the service of the British Crown—mutinies against the British, a thing wholly unheard of and never to be expected. The men were sick at heart for, after waiting and expecting for nearly two years, they had not yet been told under what terms they were to be required to serve the British. They had watched nearly all the best officers whom they knew and trusted, and with whom they had fought in this last war, reft from them by the War Office to be turned into gunners, R.A.S.C., Ordnance and anything else but officers of the Gurkha Brigade. They were subjected to intense propaganda by Indian organisations and political bigwigs, and coaxing and insinuations against Britain and their British officers by Indian officers. Not until 1948 was any officer selected to command the British contingent of Gurkhas. Until then, they had been more than once told that they were to have a general from the British Army to command them. The ignorance at home of the outlook and character of its Gurkhas was abysmal.

India, on the other hand, had long before offered precise terms of service and had held out the carrot of proper commissions—a carrot which few Gurkhas, owing to Nepal's lack of schools, had the necessary education to reach, a fact that was not realised at the time by the V.C.O.s in Gurkha regiments.

When the time came for our Gurkhas to elect to serve India or Britain, the response to serve us from three of the four regiments was dismal. It was our own British fault. We had hopelessly mishandled the whole business. It remains now for the War Office to teach these men to trust it as they trusted the old British regime in India. The War Office has some way yet to go. It has offered opportunities to young Gurkhas to be educated for King's Commissions.

The story is a dismal one, but perhaps the most regrettable part of it is that the very Britons in India who did least to help our Gurkhas along in these rough times were the ones who seemed most gratified with the poor results of the final referendum. They have much to answer for, since it is they who brought these results about. That ends the sorry tale of the breaking up of the Gurkha Brigade.

Though the British broke their word to their Gurkhas, it makes no difference to our hope that her Gurkha regiments will serve India as loyally as they served us.

## APPENDIX IX

### INDIA'S MONGOLIAN FRONTIER

IT must be expected that, with the departure of the British from India, the attitude of her neighbours towards India is bound to undergo a certain change. She has an ever-swelling population living at a bare level of subsistence. About her in South-East Asia and in East Africa are territories to which a needy people will turn for relief. As time goes on her attitude towards them, and in consequence theirs towards her, must undergo a change.

But closer to her borders there are small peoples whose independence and integrity the old British-Indian Government was at pains to respect and whose feelings towards the new India must be tinged with suspicion until she proves her good faith to them. None are more affected than Nepal, Tibet, Sikkim, Bhutan, the Mishmi and Abor peoples, the people of the Naga Hills, and less closely the people of the Burma hill tracts.

Geographically the Mongol Himalayan frontier of India is of great strength, stretching from Nepal and Tibet to eastern Bhutan. From there this frontier is little less strong, through the hills from eastern Bhutan, the Abor and Mishmi country, turning south-west through the Patkoi and Naga Hills.

Apart from the Nepalese (but the dialects of the Gurung, Tamang and Sherpa clans are certainly Tibetan), I think it is right to say that the whole area is linguistically related in the Tibeto-Burmese group of languages.

Racially, the Mongolian strain is throughout apparent, even the distant Nagas showing strong racial affinity to the Gurkhas of Nepal. If this frontier were held by a united people backed by the industries of India or even providing its own industries, then it would be an immensely strong frontier.

Of great strategic value, this Mongol frontier, in particular the Himalayan portion, has been for centuries regarded as impregnable. Since the coming of air power its strength has decreased and its importance increased. With the coming of nuclear energy and its application to war, the importance of the area has still further increased.

Briefly, the Tibetan plateaux will in years to come provide important airfields for the outpost defence of India, while parts of Tibet will afford a great central emplacement area for the installing of long range nuclear weapons. The airfields and the bombardment groups look in on the Tom Tiddler's Ground of Sinkiang, Kashgar and

Yarkand, and the Russo-Islamic fringe of China. This mountain area is, moreover, in opposition to the Russian area of the Tien Shan Mountains.

The friendly Mongolian border of Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan forms the approach to these important strategic areas of Tibet, and the support to hold them in place.

Looked at from an enemy's point of view and some years from now, the Tibetan plateaux are the airfield areas from which to cover eastern India; the bombardment group areas of Tibet are the main areas from which the further stepping forward of these groups can be undertaken in order to clear the way for the airborne assault and occupation of the U.P., Bihar and Bengal. Lacking Nepalese airfields except in the valley of Nepal, lacking airfields in Bhutan and Sikkim, the groups will to a great extent have to be stepped forward by land, a difficult but by no means impossible project with the new energies that are coming along for the cutting of roads. The routes as far as we know now will be by the old caravan road from Lhasa, through Sikkim and over the Jalap La down through the Kalimpong area; the Diwangiri route through eastern Bhutan over the high Po-La Pass (14,000 ft.), to Tsona, the trade centre in Tibet, or better still, avoiding Tsona and following up Nyam Jang Chu, to Tsitang and so to Lhasa, a route whose highest pass is only 7,000 ft. and one that can easily be made practicable to jeeps; and from Lhasa by a new road which can be cut to Khatmandu and so to Raxaul. Thus, it is India's interest to prevent the military occupation by China of the Tibetan plateaux. She must always be able to forestall it by her own occupation.

It is also her interest to keep the people in the approaches, and in the areas about these approaches, not only friendly but eminently cooperative. She will need right of air and land passage. If she were ever so foolish as to antagonise any important people of those areas then not only would she find herself denied the advantages of their position, but she would find them offering those advantages to her enemies. The results would be fatal to her for they hold the last obstacle between her enemy and herself and, worse, are dominant over her open plains.

Except that the Burma landscape protects a considerable part of her Patkoi and Naga frontier, and that the hills are less dominating over the outer regions on that side, something the same may be said of that frontier.

Of all the races on the Mongol frontier, it is the Gurkhas who are the most powerful and the most to be reckoned with. Their influence spreads from Nepal to Bhutan. So we will now discuss the situation of each of these races from Nepal to Bhutan.

Before we go further it is as well to state that Sun Yat Sen in San Min Chi I laid claim to Tibet and to Burma and Siam as a part of the Chinese Empire. He also mentions Nepal, which until 1908 sent its quinquennial mission with presents to Peking. Chiang Kai-Shek followed Sun Yat Sen's policy but with a new theory of racial affinity; thus,

Chinese maps today show Chinese territory over all Tibet and nearly down to the Brahmaputra. Sun Yat Sen's subtle and dishonest reading of history tries to make it seem that not through conquest by her Emperors but by their own free offers did these border countries come to include themselves at one time in the Middle Kingdom.

That the Mongol Frontier from Nepal to Bhutan is most tender about any suggestion of absorption by India is borne in on anyone who speaks to intelligent people of those races. They wish to remain independent of India at any cost—some at one time even preferred the idea of Chinese suzerainty to any suggestion of an increase of India's influence in their countries. If India is to work for her own strategic interests among these tribes, she should follow British policy. There may be some advantage in using British intermediaries, though a little may be done through Nepal whose court has some sympathy with Hindu India.

The alternative is for India to absorb these territories by force of arms. To attempt this would, if anything, unite them against India and produce a long war of doubtful issue whose only result would be to bring Chinese military strength into direct contact with India's. An undesirable result.

Tibet has only been opened up to British influence since 1904, the date of Younghusband's expedition. Until then Chinese influence was supreme. Since then China has worked through Tibet to expand her influence in the Mongol frontier. Tibetan infiltrations into Assam, into Sikkim and Bhutan are all encouraged by China. Chinese infiltration goes steadily on, even into the Darjeeling area, as it has gone on in Malaya. From 1946 to 1948, an able minister, Sheng, vastly increased China's influence at Lhasa at the expense of British interests. Pro-British Tibetan personages died unaccountably. Others were bought over by substantial gifts. Corruption was rife. Republican and Communist China is interested in revolution in Tibet and in what she can make for herself out of it. She is 'playing up' her religious bond with Tibet through Buddhism. It is a false claim, for China has no religion, unless it is Christianity (and very little of that).

India, on the other hand, has ancient and very real religious links with Tibet. Communist China will be far more national and greedy than Chiang Kai-Shek's China and will, moreover, make short work of religious oppositions. Relations between Nepal and Tibet are not good. It is doubtful if these two races can ever be really friendly if left to themselves. It is possible that British efforts might one day lead to better understanding. They are the only thing that will do so.

Tibetans permeate Sikkim and Bhutan and their presence is not apparently resented. In fact, it is possible that both these countries would willingly come under Tibetan (later, perhaps, Tibeto-Chinese!) rule, if their independence were threatened.

As a fighting race Tibetans have ceased to count for the past thousand years. The introduction of Buddhism, especially of what we call Lamaism, has enervated them, as it is now affecting the Mongolians. But in eastern Tibet there is still a considerable number of Tibetans who can well be turned into good, brave, hard and efficient soldiers.

There is no doubt that as British influence and power withdraw from India, so will Tibet (and Bhutan) lean or be forcibly drawn more and more towards China. Chinese culture stands in high esteem in Tibet. A Tibetan woman regards it as a privilege to marry the highly civilised Chinese man.

The Tibetan Goodwill Mission of 1946 left Calcutta for China in disgust and with their feelings genuinely hurt by the puerile treatment they had encountered at that place. This will have done some harm.

Sikkim State is now virtually Nepalese in so far as its population goes. It is noteworthy that Rifleman Ganju Lama V.C., of a Gurkha battalion, changed his name in order to be enlisted. His name is Gyamsu Lama, and he is a Sikkimese, not a Gurkha. Gurkha permeation of Sikkim is almost 70 percent complete. It is almost complete too of that part of British India leading out of Sikkim down to the plains, about Darjeeling and Kalimpong. The inhabitants of this particular part have appealed for the past twenty years for separation from India. They claim that their interests are subordinated to Indian interests. The fact is that nowadays this area, Sikkim and Bhutan, are practically one, both ethnically and economically. The Hillmen are quite foreign to the people of Bengal and it seems that to try to make them live with the Bengalis is only to invite serious disturbance and conflict on this important strategic route and perhaps to encourage Chinese influence in these parts. On the other hand, both Sikkim and Bhutan will yet need some impartial agency to influence the Gurkhas not in fact to absorb these parts into Nepal when opportunity offers. Here again it seems that British good offices are needed. It will be an error for Hindustan to impose herself on Sikkim. The complications resulting from such a course are apparent.

Sikkim supplies soldiers, and a fair proportion of very good soldiers, both from its Lepcha and Gurkha populations. They are identical to look at and now talk the same tongue. In fact, Gurk-hali is virtually the lingua franca of these parts.

The Bhutanese are a most unwarlike people. There are, however, some 300,000<sup>110</sup> Gurkhas settled in Bhutan. They occupy the lower belt of the hills up from the Indian plains, from 1,000 ft. to 6,000 ft. The Bhutanese live in the heights. Thus Bhutan is also being absorbed by Gurkhas. As British influence lessens in India, so is Bhutan leaning towards Tibet. This is natural for the Bhutanese are Tibetans in race and language.

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<sup>110</sup> This figure varies between 50,000 and 300,000. I have accepted the higher figure.

Thus, as far as India is concerned, there are explosive possibilities in these hills. Injustice done to Gurkha settlers in the Darjeeling—Kalimpong area or in Sikkim or Bhutan, an appeal to Nepal and that warlike race, whose members cling together, may decide to settle matters in those parts for itself. China would not be loth to expand her influence in the turmoil. This is her chance.

Nepal is the most significant part of Himalayan Mongolia. It has a population reported to be some six million with, it is said, another two million or so outside its borders in the hills, and in Bengal, and right into Assam—a considerable fifth column which keeps to itself in a rather remarkable way wherever it goes.

We have already seen how the Gurkhas have colonised Sikkim and Bhutan.

This race holds some 800 miles of India's frontiers. It could, if it had the equipment, field an army of between a quarter and half a million of good fighting quality. It is expanding fast by colonisation and bids fair to absorb Sikkim and Bhutan. Its colonisation is outpacing that of China-backed Tibet.

It stands astride India's strategical approaches to and from Tibet and is a jumping-off area for attack on India, dominating from its hills the plains of the U.P. and Bihar. An external enemy would gain great assistance from a warlike ally so conveniently placed.

It is landlocked. It is poor. It needs access to the sea and a free passage for its imports through India. It has water power. It will later be ambitious, for the present Rana family is now so situated that it must either get on or get out. Gurkha soldiers have seen better run countries in this war and one who knows the Gurkha soldier well will notice that some of his rulers are no longer in step with the race in sentiment or in outlook. The Gurkha League of the Darjeeling area, corrupt as are some of its leaders, is symptomatic of a coming change of ideas, as symptomatic as the leaning to communism of Gurkhas domiciled in India.

Nepal is suspicious of Indian influence in the hills, more so now than ever because Britain has withdrawn her influence from India.

The ideal is for a progressive Nepal, to be regarded as and equipped as the leading military power in the Himalayas and for her to extend her influence over the hills and into Tibet. Backed by Britain and curbed by Britain, Nepal can be a great power for the protection of India if India will keep her friendship by readily meeting her legitimate needs. Disgruntled, frustrated by India and deserted by Britain, a confused Nepal can produce for India a frontier problem to which in times of peace our Pathan frontier will be mere play, and which in times of war would lead to the collapse of India, and her division between Communist China and Russia. We must remember that it is a Muslim

Bengal which closely abuts on Nepal. Neither by race nor religion is Nepal inclined to respect the sanctity of Muslim Bengal.

I know of no important natural wealth in these Mongol frontier territories. They are seemingly poor.

The military command of this frontier must not be considered separately, but as a part of the whole of the defence system of India. On the face of it it looks as though it can be a single command from Imphal to western Nepal.

In 1924, Sir Charles Bell in his book *Tibet Past and Present*, said:

We want Tibet as a buffer to India on the north. Now there are buffers and buffers, and some of them are of very little use. But Tibet is ideal in this respect. With the large desolate area of the Northern Plains controlled by the Lhasa Government, central and southern Tibet governed by the same authority, and the Himalayan States guided by, or in close alliance with, the British Indian Government, Tibet forms a barrier equal, or superior to anything that the world could show elsewhere.

At that time this was a good assessment. Today, as this Appendix has explained, the ways of war have given a new importance to the whole mountain area, have belittled it and have focussed us on that same large desolate area', as yet too elevated for the use of war planes but tomorrow to be conquered by them. India has a few years to spare but only a few.



## APPENDIX X

### THE RESIDENCY AT LUCKNOW

THE Residency was administered under a Government of India letter which I record in full here so that it may not be forgotten:

Copy of letter No. 15149 D.I., dated 23rd December 1936, from the Deputy Secretary to the Government of India, Defence Department (Army Branch), New Delhi, to the Quartermaster General in India.

Lucknow Residency

I am directed to say that the Government of the United Provinces have transferred free of charge to the Government of India in the Defence Department the land comprising the Residency area at Lucknow. The Schedule of the boundaries and a plan illustrating it are enclosed herewith.

(2) The Archaeological Department of the Government of India have also made over free of charge to the Government of India in the Defence Department the memorials, buildings, gardens, cemeteries, etc., which are at present situated in the Residency area.

(3) The Government of India have decided that, with effect from the date of issue of this letter, the control of the Residency area should be entrusted to a committee of management which will be responsible for the proper maintenance of the land, memorials, buildings, gardens, cemeteries, etc., in the area, and also safeguard against any unauthorised encroachment on the land. The committee of management will be constituted as follows:

- The General Officer Commanding, Lucknow District, President.
- The Commissioner, Lucknow Division.
- The Brigade Commander.
- The Director General of Archaeology, or his nominee.
- A non-official European or Anglo-Indian to be nominated by his Excellency the Governor of the United Provinces.
- A non-official Indian to be nominated by His Excellency the Governor of the United Provinces.
- A Secretary may be appointed at the discretion of the committee.

(4) Up to and including 28th February 1937, all expenditure on structural maintenance and gardens, including wages, salaries, labour, etc., will continue to be met by the Archaeological Department from the existing sources.

(5) With effect from 1st March 1937, the Military Engineer Services will be responsible for the maintenance of the fabric and the expenditure involved will be debitable to Head 8-Military Engineer Services sub-head B-Maintenance Buildings Communications, etc., (a) Military Buildings.

(6) With effect from 1st March 1937, the Horticultural Department of the United Provinces will be responsible to the Government of India in the Defence Department for the maintenance of the gardens on the same terms as those on which they at present work for the Archaeological Department. The expenditure involved will be debitable to Head 8-Military Engineer Services, sub-head B-Maintenance Buildings Communications, etc., (e) Miscellaneous.

## APPENDIX XI

### INDEPENDENCE DAY' CELEBRATIONS IN SHILLONG

#### PROGRAMME

The Union Jack wherever it normally flies will be hauled down as usual at sunset on the 14th August 1947, and will not be hoisted next day. At sunrise on the 15th the NATIONAL FLAG OF INDIA will be hoisted on all public buildings. The hoisting of the National Flag on private buildings is also permitted and the public are hereby requested to participate. It is requested that all concerned will please follow the instructions given above. No other than the National Flag of the Union is to be displayed on or near any public building, or in any public procession or meeting on the 15th, 16th August.

#### *15th August 1947*

##### I. National Flag Hoisting Ceremony at Polo Ground.

9.45 a.m. Hon'ble Ministers, Officials, Non-Officials and the general public are asked to be seated.

9.50 a.m. Hon'ble Prime Minister arrives.

9.55 a.m. Lady Hydari, the Misses Hydari accompanied by Mrs. Blackburn-Kane arrive.

10 a.m. His Excellency the Governor, attended by his Personal Staff, arrives.

His Excellency and Hon'ble Prime Minister go to the Flag Staff.

The Parade Commander gives the command 'Royal Salute – Present Arms'.

The Pipe Band of Assam Police plays the Royal Salute.

The Hon'ble Prime Minister unfurls the Flag of the Indian Union.

His Excellency the Governor, accompanied by the Hon'ble Prime Minister, and attended by the Governor's Personal Staff inspect the Parade. After inspection His Excellency and the Hon'ble Prime Minister return to the Saluting Base.

The Parade Commander then gives the command.

The Parade will fire a *Feu-de-joie*.

The Parade Commander (Brig. G. A. Bain) then orders a March Past. Units and Scouts will march past and disperse to their lines.

His Excellency, accompanied by Lady Hydari and the Misses Hydari, and attended to by the Personal Staff, leave the Parade ground.

The Hon'ble Prime Minister leaves.

The Hon'ble Ministers, the Hon'ble Speaker and the Hon'ble President of the Legislative Council leave.

II. 1 p.m. and 4 p.m.

Free Cinema shows. The Garrison Theatre and Singliania Talkies are reserved for children only. The Kelvin Cinema and Bijou Cinema are open to all.

III. 5.30 p.m. Public Meeting in the open ground in front of All Saints' Church, Shillong. His Excellency the Governor of Assam will preside.

Speakers:

(1) The Hon'ble Prime Minister.

(2) The Hon'ble Rev. J. J. M. Nichols-Roy (who will also lead a Mass Prayer).

(3) Mr. Syed Muhammad Saadulla.

(4) Mr. F. A. Ahmed.

(5) The Hon'ble the Speaker, Assam Legislative Assembly.

IV. 7 p.m. Feeding of the Poor and children at Nongthymmai Mosque.

V. 7 p.m. Onwards. Illuminations. Fireworks at Lakeside.

VI. 9 p.m. Free Cinema shows in all Cinema Houses. Open to all.

### *16th August 1947*

I. 9.30 a.m. Spinning Demonstration at the Assam Club, Laban.

II. 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. Procession and Parade of School Children at the All Saints' Church Maidan. Feeding of School Children, Hospital Patients and Prisoners in their respective premises at a time convenient to each institution.

III. 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.

(1) Sports for Children. Polo Ground

(2) Dances – Khasi dance, Naga and Lushai dances, etc. Polo Ground

(3) Archery. Polo Ground

(4) Other amusements, if any. Polo Ground

IV. 5.15 p.m. Exhibition Football Match. Polo Ground

Khasi-Jaintia versus the Rest.

Mrs. B. Khongmen, Deputy Speaker, Assam Assembly, will present the trophies to winners at the end of the play.

- V. 6 p.m. Free concert in St. Edmund's College. (His Excellency will be present)
- VI. 7.30 p.m. Free Variety Entertainment at Assam Club, Laban.
- VII. 9 p.m.  
Hindi Drama Dhruva staged by Hindustani Prachar Samiti at Assam Club,  
Laban.

All are cordially invited to attend.

E. H. PAKYNTAIN,  
Senior Extra Assistant Commissioner, Shillong.

H. K. GUPTA,  
Joint Secretaries,  
Independence Celebrations, Shillong.

\* \* \* \* \*

Dated SHILLONG:  
The 12th August 1947.

GOVERNMENT HOUSE, BENGAL  
ENGAGEMENTS

August 1947.

A.D.C.s-in-Waiting.	Date & Day.	Hour.	Remarks.
Capt. Coats	14th Thursday.	10.00 a.m.	Mr. N. D. Bagree.
Lieut. Edwards		10.30 a.m.	His Excellency will give presents to the Personal Staff.
		noon	His Excellency Sir Frederick Bourne, K.C.S.I., C.I.E., Governor of C.P., arrives Calcutta by Air – Dum Dum Aerodrome (Risaldar-Major and Hony. Capt. Dost Muhammad Khan will verify ETA, meet at the Aerodrome, and bring him to Government House for Lunch).
		12.30 p.m	His Excellency, attended by the Military Secretary and A.D.C. I, leaves for Dum Dum Aerodrome.
		1 p.m.	Mr. C. Rajagopalachari, Governor-Designate of West Bengal (Prince of Wales' Suite) arrives – from Delhi by Air – Dum Dum Aerodrome.
		2.30 p.m.	His Excellency and Lady Burrows to be briefed by I.N.A. <sup>111</sup> (Upstairs Sitting Room).
			His Excellency Sir Frederick Bourne, K.C.S.I., C.I.E., leaves for Dacca by Air – Dum Dum Aerodrome (Risaldar-Major and Hony. Capt. Dost Muhammad Khan will see him off at the Aerodrome).
		7 p.m	Mr. H. V. Kaltenborn.
		7.30 p.m.	Miss Miller and Capt. A. B. Nihill leave for Delhi – Howrah Station – Delhi Mail.
Lieut. Edwards	15th Friday.	a.m	His Excellency Sir Frederick Burrows, G.C.I.E., and Lady Burrows, attended by Lieut.-Colonel J. M. Hugo, Military Secretary, Mr. W. H. Saumarez Smith, M.B.E., I.C.S., Deputy Secretary, and Captain M. A. Coats, A.D.C., leave by Air.
Capt. Coats			
GOVERNMENT HOUSE, CALCUTTA.	12th August 1947		

A.D.C.s-in-Waiting. Date & Day. Hour. Remarks.

Capt. Coats 14th Thursday. to a.m. Mr. N. D. Bagree.

<sup>111</sup> Indian National Airways.

APPENDIX XII				
CLASS COMPOSITION OF INDIAN INFANTRY				
	Caste Hindus	Mussalmans	Sikhs	Others (Incl. scheduled castes)
1 PUNJAB	1/2	1/2	-	-
2 PUNJAB	1/2	1/3	1/3	-
MADRAS	1/2	1/4	-	1/4
IND GRENADIERS	1/2	1/2	-	-
MAHRATTA L I	1	-	-	-
RAJ RIF	2/3	1/3	-	-
RAJPUT	1/2	1/2	-	-
8 PUNJAB	1/4	1/2	1/4	-
JAT	1/2	1/2	-	-
BALUCH	1/4	3/4	-	-
SIKH	-	1/4	3/4	-
F F R	1/4	1/2	1/4	-
F F RIF	1/4	1/2	1/4	-
14 PUNJAB	1/4	1/2	1/4	-
15 PUNJAB	1/4	1/2	1/4	-
16 PUNJAB	1/3	1/3	1/2	-
DOGRA	1	-	-	-
R GARH RIF	1	-	-	-
KUMAON	1	-	-	-
ASSAM	-	-	-	-
SIKH L I	-	-	1	1
MAHAR	-	-	-	-
BIHAR	-	-	-	1
	9 1/3	6 3/4	3 2/3	1 1/4

## APPENDIX XIV

### GLOSSARY OF URDU WORDS

<i>Alta.</i>	Wholemeal flour.
<i>Basha.</i>	Grass hut.
<i>Beni.</i>	Country-made cigarette.
<i>Bustee.</i>	Lit. a village. In Calcutta denotes a collection of straw and reed hovels.
<i>Chaprassi.</i>	Office messenger.
<i>Chokra.</i>	Small boy. In this case, one who retrieves the tennis balls.
<i>Dak bungalow.</i>	A rest or staging house, mostly for the use of Government officials on tour.
<i>Dao.</i>	A sort of light hatchet used by Nagas for domestic and war purposes.
<i>Darzi.</i>	Tailor.
<i>Dhoti.</i>	A length of cotton cloth wound round the body to form a garment, half skirt, half trouser.
<i>Ganga-ji.</i>	R. Ganga or Ganges. <i>ji</i> is a suffix denoting respect as the river is holy to the Hindus.
<i>Goonda.</i>	Hooligan, common assassin.
<i>Hartal.</i>	Shutting of shops and stoppage of business, usually designed to inconvenience the public.
<i>jai Hind.</i>	Long live Hindustan (Hind, India).
<i>jatha.</i>	Warlike band.
<i>jehad.</i>	Muslim holy war.
<i>Kirpan.</i>	Sikh sword. The short version was much like a cutlass.
<i>Lambardar.</i>	Head man of a village.
<i>Mahasabha.</i>	Bigoted Hindu religio-political party.
<i>Maya.</i>	Cosmic illusion.
<i>Mela.</i>	A fair and, usually, market.
<i>Morcha.</i>	Armed bands for protection or as a demonstration of force.
<i>Netaji.</i>	Spiritual leader.
<i>Pan.</i>	A constituent of savoury vegetables chewed by Indians and spat out as a bright red liquid. Angl.: Betel nut chewing. Panchayat. Council of village elders.
<i>Pie.</i>	One twelfth of an anna (a penny).
<i>Police Thana.</i>	Police Station: the Thana is often also the police sub-district.
<i>Purdah system.</i>	Muslim custom in which women are not exposed to public scrutiny, e.g. they wear a heavy veil when outside their own houses. Many Hindus also would not let their womenfolk associate with other men.
<i>Raj.</i>	Rule, government.



- R.S.S. Sangh.* The militant, armed private force of the Mahasabha. Salyagraha. Passive resistance to the authorities. A favourite method was for a crowd to lie down in the road, obstructing all traffic.
- Shikar.* Hunting or prey.
- Taiwan* A curved sword or scimitar.
- Taziya.* Model of the tombs of Hasan and Husain held high in Muslim religious processions. A common opportunity for communal quarrels would occur when the Taziya became entangled in telephone wires.
- Thela wallas.* Pullers of handcarts, or rickshaws.
- Thugs.* Murderers who practised religious strangulation for theft.

## APPENDIX XV

SPECIAL EASTERN COMMAND ORDERS No. 9-S

By

Lt.-General Sir Francis S. Toker, K.C.I.E., C.B., D.S.O., O.B.E. General Officer  
Commanding-in-Chief

RANCHI

13 Nov. 47

SPECIAL ORDER OF THE DAY – 7 NOV. 47 – FAREWELL MESSAGE FROM LIEUT.-GENERAL SIR FRANCIS TUKER, K.C.I.E., C.B., D.S.O., O.B.E.

On handing over the Eastern Command, I wish to express to you, to every officer and man, my thanks for the loyal and unsparing service you have rendered to your Army and to myself, since I assumed Command in January 1946.

For over 33 years I have served in the Indian Army, in peace and war, in good times and in bad, in success and in failure, and I have grown to admire the soldierly virtues of loyalty, endurance and tolerance for the weak that the Army has shown in all sorts of conditions and all sorts of places.

Its greatest test has been in the last year of my time in the Army. Here, in Eastern Command, the test has been accepted and magnificently passed. Had it not been for your endeavours, and for those of others who have since left us, in the terrible happenings of Calcutta, East Bengal, Bihar and, in 1946 and of late, in the United Provinces, I hesitate to think what would now be the state of the provinces in this Command.

You have done great things in these stricken times; you have been utterly true to your salt, no matter what the cost to yourselves; your fame is high and the trust in you is implicit. Continue in this same fine spirit and earn the undying gratitude of your fellow countrymen as certainly as you have earned mine.

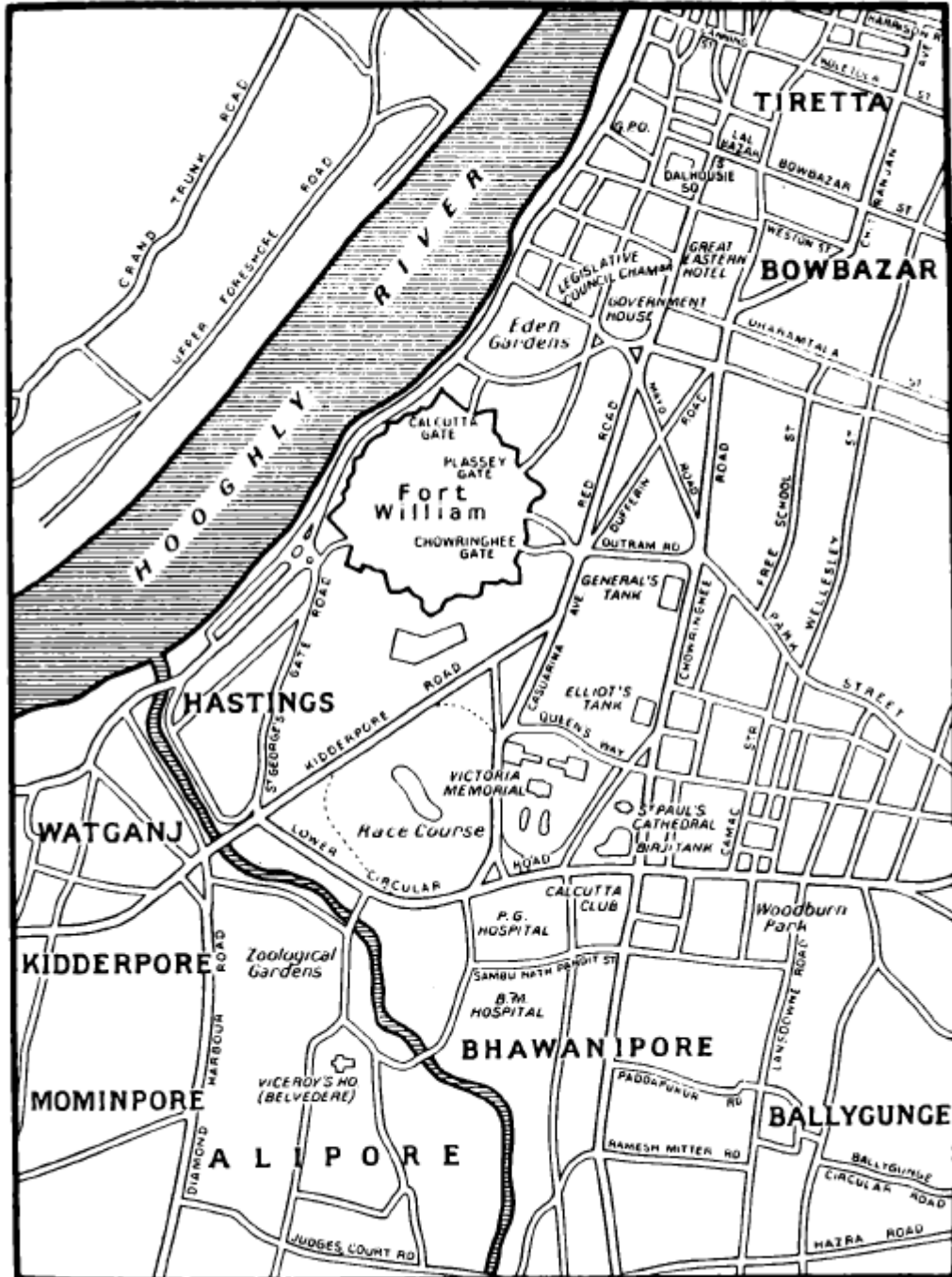
Good-bye to you all and God speed you.

(Sd.) F. S. TUKER,  
Lieut.-General. (7429/19/ A(PS))  
B. S. CHIMNI, Maj.-Gen.,  
i/c Administration.



I. EASTERN COMMAND (INDIA) 1947

# THE GREAT CALCUTTA KILLING



2. PART OF CALCUTTA



1. THE BARRACKS, BANGALORE, INDIA, 1947



1. INDIA AND PAKISTAN

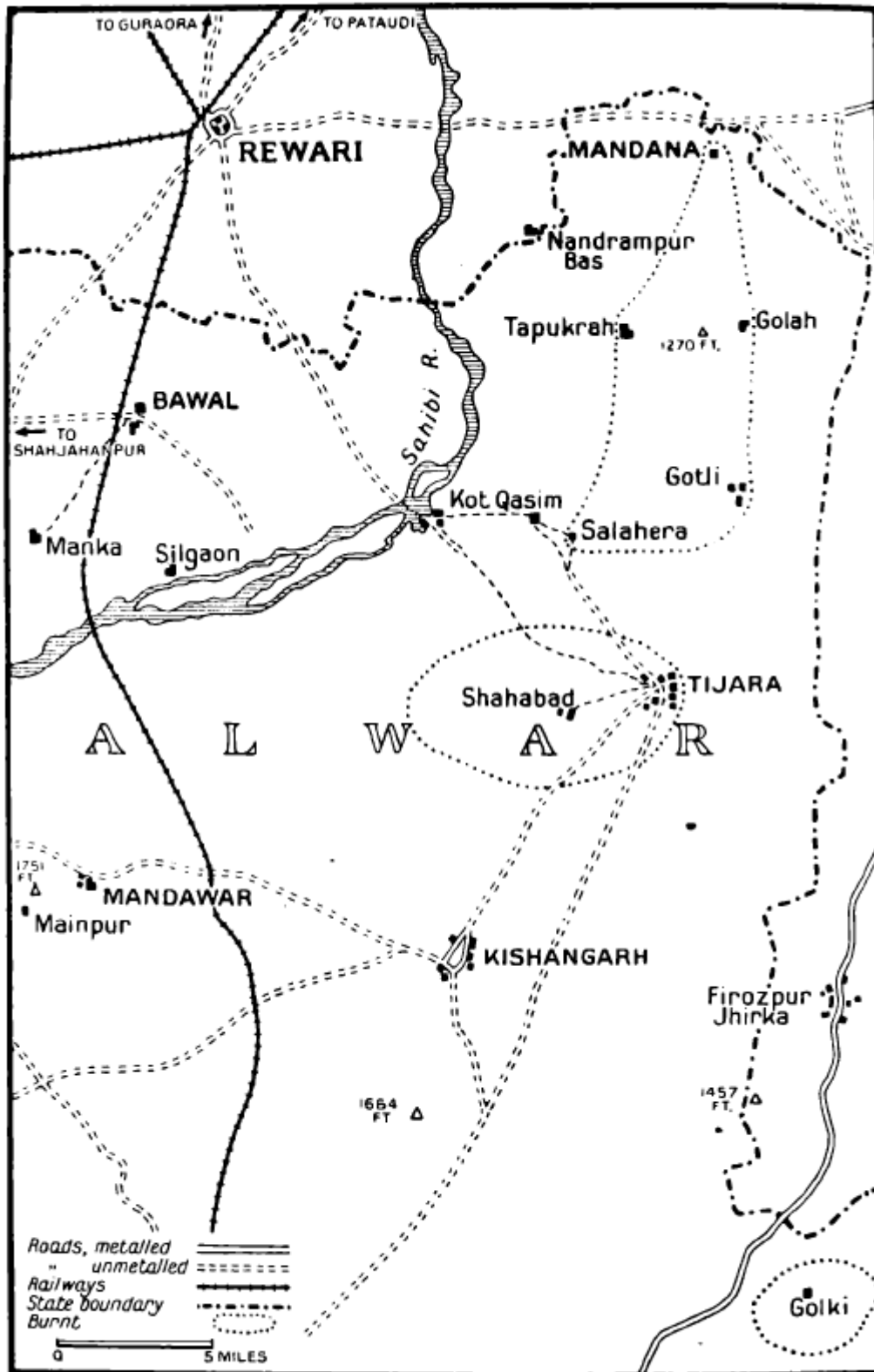


1. THE TOWER OF BABEL



11. THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT





7. BORDER OF ALWAR STATE

