

Sir Evan Jenkins and the 1947 Partition of the Punjab

Farah Gul Baqai*

There was a great fire at the basement of Governor House, Lahore, way back in August 1947. Jenkins, the last Governor of the united Punjab, was ordered by Mountbatten to burn all his papers relating to the Punjab partition and leave no marks that may cause embarrassment to the British Government that she lacked impartiality. Sir Evan Meredith Jenkins was the last Governor of the Punjab from April 1946 to August 1947. He succeeded Glancy as Governor of the Punjab, a crucial position in 1946. Wavell had been working for the division of India since the end of the Second World War and he knew that India's division was inevitable. Division of the Punjab and Bengal became inevitable following the breakout of the communal riots there. In 1947 it became a war of succession, that whosoever ousted the other communal group would get hold of its land and property. It was a most horrifying story as far as the Punjab was concerned. Jenkins tried to bring some discipline in this massacre of humans, but he failed utterly as everyone was frenzied to possess and finish the other party. Thus, Muslims and Sikhs both suffered at the hands of each other.

Jenkins' forte was his knowledge of the Punjab. He knew the Punjabis both for their virtues and vices. Sir Jenkins made no secret of the fact that he did not believe in the partition of India, and particularly that of the Punjab. He repeatedly pointed out to the politicians of the province including the Muslims, Hindus and the

* Research Fellow, National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, Centre of Excellence, Quaid-i-Azam, Islamabad.

Sikhs alike that division of their land would end its importance for India.¹

The importance of the Punjab could not be overemphasized because it was not only the granary of India, but also provided best soldiers, who were ready to serve in any part of the world. This factor cannot be overlooked by historians, keeping in mind the usual Hindu mentality, as they considered it a sin to leave their land. Mosley mentions in his book, *The Last Days of British Raj* that sixty-five percent of the soldiers in Indian Army were Muslims. Those who fought in North Africa, Italy, Malaya and Burma they were all Muslims — which means that there were thirteen Muslims to every seven Hindus in the fighting forces, though there were only nine Muslims to every twenty-four Hindus in India. So most British officials, especially after 1942, were pro-Muslims.² However, they were not in favour of supporting minority, when majority mattered. Jenkins was born on 2nd February 1896. Son of the late Sir John Lewis Jenkins KCSI, he received education from Rugby Balliol College, Oxford and served European War from 1914-1919.³ He stood first in the ICS examination in 1920. Evan Jenkins came to India just after 1st World War and was appointed as the district officer of the Punjab. A Welshman, Jenkins had given himself to the Punjab with a passion comparable only to Caroe's for the Frontier. He was intensely involved with the Punjab and was teased by his friends that he was married to the Punjab to the point that he forget that the rest of India existed.⁴ He pointed out that "I joined the Indian Civil Service (ICS) in 1920 and my immediate superiors were frequently Indians, both officials and politicians. In fact, the feeling within the ICS was excellent. The idea that anyone of us would object if our boss was Indian was ridiculous, or that we would refuse to obey his orders."⁵

1 Leonard Mosley, *The Last Days of the British Raj* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London, 1962), p.204.

2 *Ibid.*, p.6.

3 *Who's Who 1946, An Annual Biographical Dictionary*, Ninety eight year of Issue (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1946), p.1438.

4 Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre, *Freedom at Midnight* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975), p.127.

5 www.tribuneIndia.com/2003/20030408/edit.htm.

Jenkins had worked as Deputy Commissioner of Lyallpur (Faisalabad) (1928-1932), Rawalpindi (1932-1937) and Commissioner of Delhi (1937-1941), before taking over as Principal Private Secretary to the Governor-General and Viceroy of India, Marquess of Linlithgow (18th April, 1936-1943) and later to Viceroy Earl Wavell (1943-1946). Jenkins became the Governor of the Punjab on April 8, 1946 and held this position until 15th August 1947.⁶

The Punjab in 1947

The position of the Punjab in 1947 cannot be fathomed without going into the background of the Punjab politics. From 1920 to 1942, the Punjab was ruled by Sir Sikander Hayat Khan, the leader of Unionist Party representing Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. After the death of Sir Sikander, the Muslim wing of the Unionist Party disintegrated and the Muslim League — with its demand for Pakistan — began to gain an increasing hold over the masses. The failure of the League to form a ministry after general elections in 1946 was mainly due to its purely communal outlook and its lack of laxity to accommodate Hindus and Sikhs. The Sikhs felt that Muslim League was not making any promises for their safe and secure future, although it had desires for the United Punjab. They also felt that Muslims considered them inferior, so how could they align with them. Muslim League was unhappy for having failed to form its government. Henceforth they concentrated all their energies upon overthrowing the coalition government headed by Khizr Hayat Khan. The Muslim League agitation created great apprehensions in the minds of the Sikhs and Hindus. Master Tara Singh, a Sikh leader, asked his followers to get prepared to rebuff Muslims as the Muslim League had designs to gain domination in the Punjab. Now both Hindus and Sikhs seemed determined that their safety lay in separate province for themselves.

At this juncture of political happenings, Evan Jenkins tried to create some sense in the predetermined minds of the Muslim League and Sikhs to reconcile and not to break the Punjab. He

6 Dates of the Viceroys' tenures are taken from K.K. Aziz, *The British in India* (Islamabad: NIHCR, 1975), p.450.

repeatedly stressed to League leaders that the Punjab could only go forward as a powerful state if the Muslims took their proper place, that their numerical majority entitled them to leadership, but they had to consider the non-Muslim minorities as partners and not inferiors or subordinates, and that no one party could rule the Punjab by itself. The advice fell on deaf ears; nothing came out of the Governor's attempt at reconciliation. Khizr Hayat could neither oblige the Muslim League nor could offend the Hindus and Sikhs. Ultimately, he felt that he had no alternative but to resign, which he did on 2nd March 1947. The reasons given by him for his resignation were that His Majesty's Government's statement of 20th February made a coalition government, including the Muslim League, essential to the safety of the Punjab; that the League would not negotiate with the minorities until faced with reality, and that the League would not be faced with reality so long as the Muslim Unionists acted as a buffer between themselves and the minorities. Khizr Hayat's resignation came as a surprise, even to his colleagues. The Muslim League was happy on his resignation.

Jenkins now warned the Viceroy that Muslim League would not be able to form a ministry and that during the next sixteen months order could only be maintained in the Punjab, whether in a communal ministry or under Section 93, by the use of the force. Nevertheless, he adopted the constitutional procedure of calling upon the Khan of Mamdot, leader of the provincial Muslim League, to form a ministry. As expected both the Hindus and Sikhs refused to co-operate and the governor was obliged, on 5th March, to take over the administration under Section 93.⁷

Jenkins' Role in the Partition of the Punjab

By the time Lord Mountbatten arrived at New Dehli the situation in the Punjab had taken a turn for the worse. The province was in the grip of violence with Hindus and Sikhs on the one side and Muslims on the other. Penderal Moon who had joined the Indian Civil Service in 1929 and had worked for the transfer of power documents, writes in his book that Mountbatten before he left England for India was instructed to work for a unitary

⁷ V.P. Menon, *The Transfer of Power in India* (New Dehli: Sangam Books, 1979), pp.244-245.

government on the basis of Cabinet Mission's plan and if by October 1st he considered that there was no prospect of reaching a settlement on the basis, he was to report what alternative steps he thought should be taken for handing over power on the due date. Mountbatten after his arrival at New Dehli, soon grasped that unitary form of government won't work out for India. The communal cleavage has taken its roots deep. The frequent violent eruptions killing thousands of Indians on communal basis had destroyed the fabric of Indian unity. The Congress leaders with the exceptions of Gandhi were already reconciled to the fact that a truncated Pakistan offered the only prospect of an agreed settlement. As early as November even M.A. Jinnah told Wavell that the British should give the Muslims their own bit of country, however small it might be. Though he was disdainful of a "truncated Pakistan" and in one of his early interviews with Mountbatten, had said to him, "I do not care how little you give me, so long as you give it to me completely." He appealed not to break Bengal and the Punjab and let him have a Pakistan of six provinces. But he knew that he was not in a position to take these provinces by force.⁸ On 2nd March 1947, in the face of a variety of pressures including intense agitation by the Muslim League (to whom the Governor of the Punjab, Sir Evan Jenkins, assigned the major responsibility),⁹ the elected provincial government of the Punjab headed by Khizr Hayat Khan Tiwana, a coalition ministry of Muslim, Hindu and Sikh interests, collapsed.¹⁰ There seemed no alternative to the Governor's intervention and the imposition of his direct rule, which was duly undertaken by Sir Evan Jenkins. A succession of communal riots then broke out in the cities of Lahore, Amritsar, Multan, Rawalpindi and elsewhere, and it was only by the extensive use of the military that law and order were restored. The episode was brief; the main, violence was virtually all over within a week, time enough, however. So Sir Evan Jenkins believed, some 3,500 persons to have been slaughtered (which

8 Penderal Moon, *The British Conquest and Dominion of India* (Part II: 1858-1947), (New Dehli: India Research Press, 1999), p.1170.

9 Nicholas Mansergh, *Transfer of Power 1942-47*, Vol.X, 160, (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1981) p.281.

10 Ian Talbot, *Khizr Tiwana* (London: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp.211-14.

seemed terrible at the time but was as nothing when compared to the great massacres in the Punjab which started in August 1947).¹¹

Khan of Mamdot had failed to produce proposals for a ministry which would command a stable majority in the legislature, and so the Governor was obliged to take over the administration under Section 93 of the 1935 Act which provided measures in the case of breakdown of the constitution in the province.

The province was still too close to civil war for there to be any question of restoring ministerial government. The statement of February 20th gave the impression of the British Governor, who was driven to employ measures in restraint of civil liberties far more drastic than those which had formed the pretext of the League's original civil disobedience campaign. There seemed no alternatives to a continuance of this state of affairs until it was decided how transfer of power in the province was to be carried out. This was evidently the view of the administration. Jenkins, however, sent an urgent telegram to the British Government seeking guidance on their long-term policy for the Punjab.

There was at this time a widespread impression, which was shared by non-partisan observers and even by sympathizers with the League that a truncated Pakistan would be neither viable economically nor capable of self-defence, and that so unworkable a proposition would not attract the support of even the most ardent of Muslims.

In the year 1947, the Punjab had to suffer irreparably from March onwards; the culprits of the surgery of the Punjab maintaining secrecy to the utmost level. The person who was to conduct surgery on India was British barrister, Cyril Radcliffe who was reputed for his sincerity and unbiased judgement. He was preferred as he knew nothing about India, so it was thought that he would be all the more impartial as he was ignorant about India. The belief that the barrister during his six weeks' stay in India from July 1947 was closeted in hot purdah, isolated entirely from any social contact and far removed from political machinations of

11 Alastair Lamb, *Incomplete Partition: The Genesis of the Kashmir Dispute 1947-1948* (Lahore: Services Book Club, 1999), p.30.

the closing days of the British rule, is also untrue. During his brief stay he dined with Auchinleck, Mountbatten, the Chief Justice Sir Patrick Spens, his old friend Sir Walter Monckton, the Governor of the Punjab, Sir Evan Jenkins and several other figures of influence within the British Indian society. While in Lahore he even attempted to stay with Jenkins at Government House, and had to be dissuaded on the grounds that such a move might be “misinterpreted”.¹² Evan Jenkins, the governor of the Punjab, had repeatedly warned Lord Mountbatten of the lurking danger if proper precaution was not taken prior to partition. The administration was fully aware that rushing to transfer for power would definitely result into massacre and genocide. However, Mountbatten paid no heed to these warnings and premonitions. He was a man who believed in self-aggrandizement.

Jenkins was in love with the Punjab and he desired that there should be minimum bloodshed and destruction if possible. He repeatedly asked Mountbatten that the Punjab should be given preliminary notes on the Punjab boundary awards, so that security arrangements could be secured in the troubled areas at least a week before 15th August 1947, so that he could try to ensure that the Transfer of Power was orderly in Punjab. It appears from a reading of the Transfer of Power documents that at first Mountbatten had agreed on an early publication and announcement of the Boundary Award.

Jenkins sent about forty seven telegrams and letters to Mountbatten between March 22 and August 15, 1947, informing him in detail about the Punjab situation¹³ and even made one telephone call also to Mountbatten informing him of the imminent communal riots and urging for more beefing up of security personnel. The volatile situation was obvious from the statements of the Sikh leadership. Tara Singh who was the volatile seventy-two-year-old Sikh leader, was not even a Sikh; he was a former Hindu, well-versed in Sikhs’ religious book *Granth Saheb*. He threatened to travel to Britain and “highlight the Sikh case before

12 Patrick French, *Liberty or Death: India’s Journey to Independence and Division* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1997), p.322.

13 For the details of the letter, see Nicholas Mansergh, *Transfer of Power 1942-47*, Vol., X, XI, XII.

British public, apparently in the belief that he would attract great support. His fiery speeches had led to his becoming a dominant figure in the Sikh politics, and he was given the honorific title of "Master" which referred rather feebly, not to his martial vigour but to the fact that he had at one time been a schoolmaster in Lyallpur (now Faisalabad). Jenkins's opinion about Tara Singh was that it was "lamentable" that at this juncture of history, the Punjab politics was in the hands of such an old eccentric man.¹⁴ It is hard to believe that Mountbatten had no idea of the magnitude of the unrest that would result in the partition of the Punjab. Alan Campbell-Johnson's published diary reports some of the warnings Jenkins had been giving to him.¹⁵ From the Governors' Conference of 15th April, when Jenkins felt bound to draw the attention to the seriousness of the situation in the Punjab, to his statement twelve days later that 'there was a real peril we would be handing over to chaos... there is grave danger of civil war', he had been busy pointing out what would shortly happen. Serious, informed warnings from responsible officials had been received by Dehli for months. Even before Mountbatten arrived in India, the Chief Secretary to the Punjab Government had reported that 'large scale rioting is everywhere taken for granted in the near future', and in May 1946 there was 'a growing tendency for all three communities to organize and equip for what is openly and challengingly called civil war.'¹⁶

Had the Punjab boundary been announced as soon as Radcliffe had it ready on 9th August the movement of populations there could have been undertaken under British authority, with British troops and officials enjoying full power to act. The Punjabi inhabitants who after independence were terrified of being caught in the wrong country, might have been far calmer. It was an atmosphere of anarchy and terror which led to so much of bloodshed, and which might well have been avoided. On 9th August 1947, at the Viceroy's staff meeting, 'it was stated that Sir

14 Patrick French, *op.cit.*, p.331.

15 Alan Campbell-Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten* (London: Robert Hale Limited, 1951), pp.54-65, 73, 79, 126, 151, 309.

16 Andrew Roberts, *Eminent Churchillians* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson), pp.112-113.

Cyril Radcliffe would be ready that evening to announce the Award of the Punjab Boundary Commission. With exceptional frankness, the Viceroy had then said: "it was now for consideration whether it would in fact be desirable to publish it straight away." Without question the earlier it was published, the more the British would have to bear the responsibility for the disturbances which would undoubtedly result. He then 'emphasised the necessity for maintaining secrecy, not only on the terms of the Award, but also on the fact that it would be ready that day.' He did not want his Viceroyalty to end in tidal wave of blood, preferring instead that his Governor-Generalship should open with his being called upon to deal with a problem apparently not of his making. Making the excuses that 'the printers were going on holiday, and we were leaving for Karachi', the Awards were not circulated as soon as they were received from Radcliffe, but put in the safe at Viceroy's house until power had safely been transferred out of Mountbatten's hands. 'It could not be on the day itself,' Mountbatten told Lapierre and Collins, 'it might have been a day or two earlier. If it had been five days earlier or a week earlier it might have helped. A day or two couldn't make any difference.' Yet as Mountbatten well knew, the Punjab part of the Awards was ready exactly five days earlier.¹⁷

Mountbatten was piqued when the Quaid, on July 2, was nominated by the Muslim League as Pakistan's first Governor-General,¹⁸ which was in fact a refusal to have the King's cousin as the joint Governor-General of Pakistan and India. According to Andrew Robert's account, Beaumont, in response to a query from Sir Evans Jenkins, Governor of the Punjab, through George Abell, the Viceroy's Private Secretary, told them where the boundary line had been drawn by Radcliffe for the Punjab's partition. On August 8, 1947, Abell sent Jenkins a sketch map. The map showed that the Punjab Tehsils (sub-districts) of Ferozapore and Zira had been allotted to Pakistan (because both had a Muslim majority). These were contiguous areas with what was to be Pakistan Punjab, lying in a salient east of the Sutlej river. On August 11, Jenkins received

17 Andrew Robert, *op.cit.*, pp.110-111.

18 Muhammad Ali Chiragh, *Tarikh-i-Pakistan* (Urdu) (Lahore: Sang-i-Meel Publication, 1987), p.489.

a telegram from Abell which read: **Eliminate Salients**. This meant that the Sulej salient, in which Zira and Ferozpur were located, had been allotted to India and not to Pakistan as was earlier indicated owing to the Muslims majority there. Sir Francis Mudie, who later on became Governor of the West Punjab, was with Jenkins at Lahore when Abell's telegram reached him. Mudie commented in an unpublished memoir,¹⁹ quoted by Andrew Roberts, that Ferozpur, which was given to India, had a big army arsenal and its bestowal on India deprived the Pakistan Army of most of its weapons. Mudie believed that this change was done under pressure put on Radcliffe by Mountbatten. Roberts wrote: "The loss of Ferozpur arsenal was a crippling blow to Pakistan which suffered badly in the subsequent division of stores and military equipment when the Indian army was divided." Andrew Roberts further reports that V.P. Menon visited Radcliffe's bungalow in New Delhi at midnight on August 11 to see him but Beaumont did not let him come in although he said Mountbatten had sent him. Beaumont disclosed in his paper that the next day Radcliffe was invited to lunch by Lord Ismay at his residence and was told not to bring Beaumont with him. That very evening, the Punjab Partition line was changed with Ferozpur and Zira going to India. Andrew Roberts' conclusion is that the Punjab Boundary was secretly altered to the detriment of Pakistan although Mountbatten all the time professed neutrality and impartiality in the Partition plan.

Jinnah was unhappy with the Radcliffe Award and the injustice done to Pakistan in the partition of the Punjab under it, but the statesman and man of honour that he was, he said:

The division of India is now finally and irrevocably effected. No doubt we feel that the carving out of this great independent Muslim State has suffered injustices. We have been squeezed as much as it was possible and the latest blow that we have received was the Award of the Boundary Commission. It is an unjust, incomprehensible and even perverse award. It may be wrong, unjust and perverse; but we have agreed to abide by it and it is binding upon us. As honourable people we must abide by it. It may be

19 Andrew Roberts, *op.cit.*, pp.93-94.

our misfortune but we must bear up this one more blow with fortitude, courage and hope.²⁰

From March 1947 onwards, the united Punjab was in pangs and pains of bifurcation. Jenkins who was devoted to the Punjab, understood her problem and was aware of communal madness that was rife in her populous. He tried to lessen her pain as he was convinced that he could not avert it.

Muslims Position in Political Scenario of India 1947

Muslims were a minority in India, 90,000,000 against some 250,000,000 Hindus. The British had given them a separate electoral roll.²¹ In 1946, 90% of Muslims in India supported Muslim League. The President of Congress was also a Muslim, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. However, he could not wane M.A. Jinnah's personality who was rapidly bringing most of the hesitant Muslims under his banner.²² Nehru drew attention to the fact that Jinnah himself was only a second-generation Muslim whose grandfather had been a Hindu.²³

Wavell was aware of the mounting communal violence, he believed that British should withdraw from India gradually, handing over power to Indians bloc by bloc, province by province. India should take the responsibility of settling their future and making their peace. With the help of his Chief Advisor he draw up a plan which was called "Operation Ebb and Tide". It was a scheme to withdraw British Administration and troops from India in stages. Jenkins was against it as he thought it would not work.²⁴

"The frequent riots in Bihar and Bengal between Hindus and Muslims," writes Leonard Mosley, helped Jinnah. He could now say 'Even Hindus need Pakistan, if only to save their people from continued slaughter and destruction.'"²⁵

20 Qutbuddin Aziz, *Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah and the Battle for Pakistan* (Karachi: The Islamic Media Corporation, 1997), p.129.

21 Leonard Mosley, *The Last Days of British Raj* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1962), p.13.

22 *Ibid.*, p.14.

23 *Ibid.*

24 *Ibid.*, p.50.

25 *Ibid.*

British retreat would never be precipitate. No province would be left until conditions of reasonable safety and security had been gained. The operation made it clear to Indian leaders particularly, that the British were on their way out and they must make a supreme effort to learn to live together before they were left to their own devices. Wavell dispatched "Operation Ebb and Tide" to Mr. Attlee for the consideration of the cabinet early in 1947. In view of the decision which was taken later they steered away from it like frightened rabbits. Their difficulty was Wavell placed it in their hands and they were reluctant in acceptance of withdrawal policy.²⁶

In December 1944 the question began to be asked in British Indian ruling circles as to what exactly, in terms of territory, did "Pakistan" mean? During the course of 1945 a number of officials endeavoured to supply an answer. As Sir Evan Jenkins, the Viceroy's Private Secretary and Personal Secretary (and soon to be the Governor of the Punjab), observed in July 1945, there was indeed a problem in that the only current definition of Pakistan was that provided in the Muslim League's Lahore Resolution of 1940 which, Jenkins, thought, was not without its ambiguities.²⁷ Meeting in Lahore in 1940, the Muslim League passed the following Resolution, so Evan Jenkins reported to Wavell on 23 July 1945, that it was considered view of the session of AIML that no constitution or plan would be workable in this country or acceptable to Muslims until it was designed on the following basic principles, viz., that geographical contiguous units were demarcated into regions which should be so constituted, with such territorial readjustments as might be necessary, that the areas in which the Muslims were in a majority as in the North West and Eastern Zones of India should be grouped to constitute independent states in which the constituent units should be autonomous and sovereign.

British constitutional experts, notably Sir Reginald Coupland, were quick to point out the implied conflict between the expressions "autonomous" and "sovereign", but they probably

26 *Ibid.*, p.51.

27 *Ibid.*, p.32.

missed the point in this use by Jinnah of typical redundancy in legal language. The Lahore Resolution (in this version at least) made it quite clear where the Muslim-majority areas were located, but it left open the question whether there would be one Muslim state or two.

Between April and July 1944, the idea of Pakistan was examined by a leading Congress figure, C. Rajagopalachari (who was to follow Mountbatten as Governor General of India in 1948). Rajagopalachari came up with the following observations:

After the termination of the war a Commission shall be appointed for demarcating contiguous districts in the North-West and East of India wherein the Muslim population is in an absolute majority. In the areas thus demarcated a plebiscite of all the inhabitants held on the basis of adult suffrage or other practicable franchise shall ultimately decide the issue of separation from Hindustan. If the majority decide in favour of forming a sovereign State separate from Hindustan such decision shall be given effect without prejudice of the right of districts on the border to choose to join either State.²⁸

M.A. Jinnah, in discussion with Mahatma Gandhi in September 1944, rejected any version or variant of the Rajagopalachari formula, while Gandhi failed to see the need for Pakistan at all. In July 1945, so indicate the Jenkins minuted, there remained a number of mysteries as to how exactly Jinnah saw the ultimate shape of Pakistan. Would it embrace both North-West and Eastern Zones? Would it include Calcutta? Would if there were some kind of popular reference, non-Muslims be permitted to vote in Muslim-majority areas?

Jenkins own summary of the British position as on July 1945 was this:

It seems to me that the nearest we can get to Pakistan is something along the lines of the Cripps offer (of 1942), namely, an Indian Federation or Union with the rights granted to individual Provinces to contract in or out as they please. The Rajagopalachari formula was an attempt to bring Jinnah out into the open. It failed, and I do not think that any other attempt is likely to succeed at present.²⁹

28 As quoted by Alastair Lamb, *op.cit.*, p.42.

29 *Ibid.*

In others words, the British would have to work out for themselves exactly what Pakistan might look like without any specific guidance from M.A. Jinnah.

Mountbatten was following the pattern which Lord Wavell had explored in late 1945 and early 1946, and no doubt, the Mountbatten Administration was acting much on the basis of this precedent. Difficulties inherent in the process of delimitation and demarcation in the Punjab so evident in 1947, were perceived clearly enough in 1945-46 by Wavell and his advisers, among whom were George Abell (Wavell's Private Secretary and now occupying the same position under Mountbatten). V.P. Menon (still very much in harness in the summer of 1947) and Sir Evan Jenkins (now governor of the Punjab).³⁰

On March 2, the Khizr Ministry resigned. The Sikhs were instigated to forestall the formation of the League cabinet. Master Tara Singh brandished his *kirpan* (sword) on the stairs of the Punjab Legislative Assembly and vowed to fight out against any such move. Governor Jenkins obliged him but the bloodshed started in various parts of the province. The "civil war" begun by Tara Singh was used by the Viceroy and the Governor to the disadvantage of the League; though it had a clear majority in the Punjab Assembly by the end of April. The League was denied its constitutional right of forming the Government on the plea that it would aggravate the communal strife (which, in any case, continued to spread due to the complacency of the administration). The turmoil created by Tara Singh was also used to promote the idea of dividing the Punjab: Nehru maintained that "it is not possible to coerce the non-Muslim minority in the Province, just as it is not possible or desirable to coerce the others."³¹

Four days later the Premier Malik Sir Khizr Hayat Khan Ministry resigned. The Premier explained that it was only fair that all political parties in the province should now have a chance of evolving between them an administration to which sovereign power could be transferred, should this become necessary; and he

30 *Ibid.*, pp.43-44.

31 S.M. Burke and Salim al-Din Qurashi, *The British Raj in India* (Karachi: OUP, 1995), pp.478-79.

wished to leave the field clear for the League which as representing the majority of Muslims in the Province, was responsible for dealing with the problem on their behalf. The Governor Jenkins invited the Khan of Mamdot, the leader of the provincial League party, to form a Ministry. The Khan disclaimed any intention of imposing Muslim League domination in the province and invited the co-operation of the Hindus and Sikhs; but these were bitterly opposed to a Ministry whose entry into office would, they knew, be a decisive step towards the establishing of Pakistan. It was now their turn to hold demonstrations, their objective being to show their apprehension at the prospect of the Punjab being handed over for the first time to a purely communal Ministry. So, Master Tara Singh, the Sikh leader, as mentioned above, brandishing his sword on the steps of the Punjab Assembly Chamber, exhorted his followers to “overthrow the Muslims”. Meanwhile the Khan of Mamdot had failed to produce proposals for a ministry which would command a stable majority in the Legislature, and so the Governor was obliged to take over the administration under Section 93 of the 1935 Act which provided for the breakdown of the constitution in a province.

This was done on March 5th; it was all the more necessary because on that day savage street fighting had broken out in Lahore between Muslims determined to capture the Punjab for Pakistan and Hindus determined to resist it at all costs.

The leaders of all communities joined in forming a Peace Committee, but it was owing to the vigorous measures of the Governor and his officers that the outbreak was quelled. Meanwhile, however, the frenzy had spread, first to other towns, especially Multan, Amritsar and Rawalpindi, where fierce battles suddenly broke out and where whole streets were gutted by fire-raisers; and then to the countryside, especially the north-west where there was a large majority of Muslims. By March 23rd, when it was subsiding, over 18,000 Indian and 2,000 British troops had been used to help the civil authorities to bring peace to the disturbed districts of the Province. In the towns they had largely succeeded, but among the scattered villagers acts of hideous brutality were then too committed. Over 2,000 lives — perhaps

many more — had been lost. The struggle for power had laid across the Punjab the ugly stain of massacre.³²

The province was still too close to civil war for there to be any question of restoring Ministerial government. The statement of Governor on February 20th gave the impression of the British Governor, who was driven to employ measures in restraint of civil liberties far more drastic than those which had formed the pretext of the League's original civil disobedience campaign. There seemed no alternatives to a continuance of this state of affairs until it was decided how transfer of power in the province was to be carried out. This was evidently the view of the administration. He sent an urgent telegram to the British Government seeking guidance on their long-term policy for the Punjab. Long before February 20th the fundamental question in Indian politics had not been when the British would hand over, but to whom; and as much as the statement had given no clear answer to this later question, it had missed its mark.

It was during the first reaction of horror to the slaughter and destruction in Lahore, Amritsar and Multan that the Congress Working Committee met to consider the statement. Their main resolution, it will be recalled, included the assertion that if any part of a province accepted the constitution to be framed by the Constituent Assembly and desired to join the Union, it could not be prevented from doing so. By way of giving practical application to this principle the Committee recommended in a further resolution the division of the Punjab into two provinces so that the predominantly Muslim part might be separated from the non-Muslim part. Few weeks earlier a strong movement had arisen among Hindus and Sikhs of the eastern Punjab to urge that eastern districts of their province where they were in majority be separated from the Muslim majority western districts. These proposals in themselves did not apply to whole of India then. On the other hand, if India was to be divided into two sovereign states, the partition of the two provinces would mean that the East Punjab and West Bengal would throw in their lot with Hindu India and not with "Pakistan". Jinnah was still inflexible in his demand for the six

32 E.W.R. Lumby, *The Transfer of Power, 1945-47* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1945), pp.148-49.

Pakistan provinces in their entirety, but his opponents clearly hoped that if he were faced with certainty of getting only part of the Punjab and part of Bengal he would back down and induce the League to renew its acceptance of the Cabinet Missions plan, for there was at this time a widespread impression, which was shared by non-partisan observers and even by sympathizers with the League that a truncated Pakistan would be neither viable economically nor capable of self-defence, and that so unworkable a proposition would not attract even the most ardent Muslims. This impression was heightened by the uncertainty whether the North-West Frontier Province and Assam could be won for Pakistan.³³

Preliminaries Concerning the Punjab

The revised Mountbatten plan was announced in India on 3rd June 1947, and at a press conference on the following day the Viceroy publicly made it clear that the whole exercise would terminate on 15 August 1947 (rather than in June 1948), by which date the British Raj would be over for good. The magnitude and quantity of problems which had either had to be solved or ignored by that date, of which the partition of the Punjab was but one, defied the imagination.

It was clear from the outset that the Punjab boundary would have to run somewhere through a stretch of territory about 250 miles in length between Bahawalpur State in the south and the state of Jammu and Kashmir in the north, neither of the Princely States being within the proposed Commission's brief. In one way, by running a line between contiguous Muslim majority Districts and Districts without such majority a technically correct boundary could be derived through no more labour than the consulting of the appropriate administrative map. Unfortunately, the matter was not so easy in the real world.³⁴

33 *Ibid.*, pp.150-51.

34 Alastair Lamb, *op.cit.*, p.43.

The Story of Map: Role of Jenkins, Radcliffe and Mudie in it

Radcliffe arrived in New Dehli on 8th July 1947.³⁵ A preliminary version of his Punjab award was ready on 8th August, with the individual reports by the four commissioners already completed and submitted to his office a couple of days or so earlier, and the definite version for both the Punjab and Bengal (with, perhaps, one relative small item still to come) was placed on Viceroy's desk in the afternoon or evening of 12 August. The two awards, communicated to the leaders of India and Pakistan on 16 August (after the process of the Transfer of Power had been completed), were made public in both countries the following day. By then Sir Cyril Radcliffe, who had been warned that his life would be at stake if he remained in India, had left that country by air, and for good.³⁶ Before his departure to England he destroyed all papers in his possession relating to the Punjab and Bengal Boundary Commissions. He died in 1977 without ever throwing much public light on what he had actually done in India in 1947.³⁷

The substance of the difference between the map that was enclosed with Sir George Abell's letter of 8th August to Mr. Abbott and the award was the transfer to India of the two Tahsils of the Ferozepur district. On or about 11 August, Sir Evan Jenkins received a cypher telegram reading "Eliminate Salient". He correctly understood this to refer to the Ferozepur area. The two tehsils in question were not thought by him to be of any great significance, but they were subsequently regarded as highly important for Pakistan for military and irrigation water reasons.³⁸

Two comments are called for here. What was the basis of the correct understanding of Sir Evan Jenkins that the two words of the cypher telegram, "Eliminate Salient", had reference to the Ferozepur area unless since the receipt of Sir George Abell's letter of 8th August communication had passed between the two with

35 Nicholas Mansergh, *The Transfer of Power, 1942-47*, Vol.XI, (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1970), p.529.

36 Alastair Lamb, *op.cit.*, p.53.

37 *Ibid.*

38 H.V. Hodson, *The Great Divide: Britain-India-Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1969), p.353.

reference to the Ferozepur area in which the area had been designated as the “Salient”? Secondly, it is not possible to accept the suggestion that the two tahsils in question were not thought by him to be of any great significance. The area involved, comprising inter alia the district headquarters in the city of Ferozepur and the sub-district headquarters in the city of Ferozepur and the sub-district headquarters at Zira would alone make it of considerable significance. But when it is remembered that it also included the headworks of one of the major irrigation projects of the Province upon which depended the prosperity of a large sector of West Punjab, the significance is enhanced manifold. Indeed the modification in the boundary line thus carried out was not only of considerable significance, it was crucial, as was demonstrated by the subsequent behaviour of India, made possible by this modification.³⁹

About the time that Sir Evan Jenkins received the cypher telegram reading ‘Eliminate Salients’, Sir Penderal Moon received a telegram from Major Short who was still in Dehli, which read: ‘Your line has it.’ This made Penderal Moon to comprehend where the line would run and gave assurance that Lahore would come to Pakistan.⁴⁰

The meaning of this was obviously that from this laconic telegraphic message received from Major Short, Sir Penderal Moon was able to appreciate that the boundary line marked on the map in Lord Ismay’s room would not be deflected further West so as to include the Lahore and Montgomery districts in India but that the two Tehsils of the Ferozepur district included in Pakistan according to that line had been transferred from Pakistan to India. In other words, the ‘juggling’ with the boundary line which had been mentioned and considered several time between V.P. Menon, Lord Ismay, Major Billy Short, Sir Penderal Moon and others had finally assumed the shape of the transfer of the Ferozepur area from Pakistan to India.⁴¹

39 Muhammad Zafrullah Khan, *The Agony of Pakistan* (London: Kent Publication), p.69.

40 Sir Penderal Moon, *Divide and Quit*, p.96, as quoted in Mohammad Zafrullah Khan, *op.cit.*, p.70.

41 *Ibid.*

Under pressure from the Congress the Sikhs had insisted upon the partition of the Province, though they should have known that this would mean a disruption of their community. Then they began to cast about for means and devices to alleviate the consequence of their own demand. They asked to be allotted some of the richest Muslim majority areas in the newly irrigated districts of West Punjab. This, ridiculous as it was and sounded, was not so considered by Sir Evan Jenkins, who conveyed this view to the Viceroy.⁴²

On 25th June, 1947 there was a “family” dinner party to celebrate Mountbatten’s forty-seventh birthday. Mieville spoke to Alan-Campbell Johnson, the Press Attache to the Viceroy of India Mountbatten, in very strong terms about the delay over the decision on the Governor-General issue and considered it to be, apart from anything else, rank discourtesy, on the part of Jinnah, who continues to play the role of Delphic oracle and deal in riddles.”⁴³

On 2nd July Mountbatten on the question of common Governor General had frankly told Jinnah that if he would not agreed on his appointment of common Governor-General of both India and Pakistan, it would cost him the whole of his assets and much more in future. Having said this he left the room.⁴⁴

In the second week of August the drama was approaching its finale. So far as the Punjab boundary line was concerned everyone in Dehli and Sir Evan Jenkins in Lahore were concerned about the Sikhs. Was some alleviation of their situation possible?

On being apprised of the proposed boundary line Sir Evan Jenkins suggested its modification by eliminating the Ferozepur Salient, thus transferring the Ferozepur and Zira Tehsils from Pakistan to India.

42 *Ibid.*, p.20.

43 Alan Campbell-Johnsons, *Mission With Mountbatten* (London: Robert Hale Ltd., 1951), p.123.

44 H.V. Hodson, *op.cit.*, p.331.