

THE PARTITION OF THE PUNJAB AND OF BENGAL

O. H. K. SPATE

Afternoon Meeting of the Society, 8 December 1947

BEFORE I EMBARK on the subject of this paper, I have some disclaimers to make. Much of the paper will be political in the strict sense. The term "political geography," which we all allow, must include the influence of politics on geography as well as the converse; and in this case, indeed, political considerations largely conditioned new geographical arrangements. What is a mere exercise in applied geography to us sitting in this hall was not only a matter of political life and death to the parties involved but literally of life and death to thousands of men, women, and even children. However dreadful in its working, the political factor is fundamental.

The fact that I favour the Muslim case in the Punjab has nothing to do with the merits or demerits of Pakistan itself, and in Bengal my leaning is towards the other side. Criticism thus has reference to these two particular cases only, and my general judgments on Indian affairs over the last ten years are by no means biased toward the Muslim League interpretation. Both communally and economically it may well be that Pakistan raises more issues than it solves, and while I think that there was no feasible alternative I am sorry that this should be so. I am neither concerned nor competent to apportion the complex responsibilities involved, and indeed I doubt whether any final detached historical judgment will be possible, so intangible and ever-shifting are the issues of morality and expedience, the attitudes and motives of parties and personalities.

I was employed as a technical advisor by a Muslim group, the Ahmadiyya community of Qadian in Gurdaspur District; to them I owe an invaluable professional experience and much personal kindness. It is a sign of their efficiency and intelligence that, of those connected with the affair, they alone showed any appreciation of the fact that a geographer might have something of value to say. I found myself acting in effect as an unofficial advisor to the Muslim League, and considered myself—perhaps on inadequate grounds—as an expert witness. While strictly adhering to the facts, in matters of doubt I was bound to support the interpretation more favourable to the side on which I was engaged. But in fact I did not need to exercise any licence; once given Pakistan (an important qualification), the Muslim case seemed to me entirely legitimate. There was thus never the slightest conflict between my duty to my employers and my sense of professional fitness. It is arguable, as I suggested in a paper in the *Journal*¹ in 1943, that from a technical point of view the true division of the Punjab lies to the east of the actual Muslim claim; and, in this view, I can thus claim to be unbiased by my position in the case. But while I have been at pains to be impartial in the sense

¹ "Geographical aspects of the Pakistan scheme," *Geogr. J.* 102 (1943) 125–36.

of resolute adherence to fact, and have striven to avoid bias in interpretation so far as I can, I do not pretend to a completely academic detachment. I was not above the battle but in the thick of it, and being a political animal I thoroughly enjoyed it.

A general view of the Punjab (Fig. 1), neglecting the mountainous areas (which were not in dispute), suggests a tripartite division: the arid country along the Indus; the central land of the five rivers; and the "Delhi doab" between the Sutlej and the Jumna, transitional to the Gangetic plains. On the whole the western wing seems more closely integrated culturally and historically with the central block than does the eastern, though too much should not

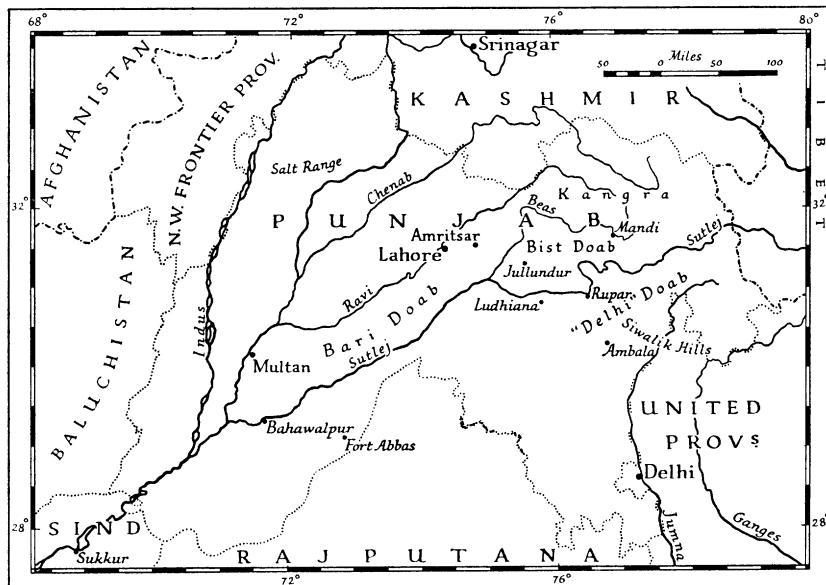


Figure 1

be made of this. But the central Punjab, where lies most of the canal development, is such a unit that any division of it cannot fail to inflict serious economic damage; and, if the Punjab is to be divided, broad geographical factors would suggest a division on or east of the Beas-Sutlej line. In fact, however, the disputed area extended from the Chenab to east of the Sutlej and included nearly half the population of the Province. From the start, therefore, what would seem to be geographically a rational division was ruled out by political considerations.

Two factors of some importance call for preliminary discussion: the suitability of the Punjab rivers as boundaries, and the local administrative units. Each side, of course, claimed that the boundary it proposed was the "natural" one; the Muslims possibly showed more sophistication by avoiding river lines, though this may have been accidental. It will, I think, be fairly generally agreed that the only type of river really satisfactory as a boundary is one

flowing through a deep rock-walled canyon, or possibly through extensive marshes, with a fairly constant volume of water, without shifts of course, with few crossing-places, and useless for navigation or rafting, irrigation or hydro-electric power. Few rivers have all these negative virtues, and those of the Punjab are decidedly not among them.

To some extent their advantages and disadvantages as boundaries cancel out. As advantages we may note: (i) the rivers are countersunk in broad braided beds, steep bluffs often marking the edge of the flood-plain; they thus form a definite belt of negative country in continuously settled plains; (ii) major crossings (railways and main roads) are very few; (iii) in a general way—not in detail—it is easy for anyone to know and to see where the boundary is; (iv) there is little or no navigation.

On the other hand: (i) however the precise boundary is defined, it is obviously difficult to determine its true alignment in braided streams liable to changes not only from year to year but also at different seasons of the same year, owing to an irregular régime; (ii) although major crossings are few, ferries and fords at low water (*i.e.* half the year) are numerous, and from the point of view of border control such points are perhaps more important than the major and easily watched crossings; (iii) not only definition but also demarcation would be difficult owing to frequent and sometimes large changes of course; (iv) the rivers are used for irrigation and timber-rafting.

On balance, disadvantages seem to outweigh advantages, but not so greatly as to rule out a river as a boundary if it should approximate to a line desirable on other grounds. But to ascribe a determining rôle to the Punjab rivers as "natural boundaries" is obviously a vulgar error.

The largest sub-units of the Punjab are the five Divisions, of which only the easternmost, Ambala, enters into our argument by name. Below them are the Districts, roughly equivalent to an English county, having in the Punjab on average an area of some 3250 square miles and 1,000,000 people. I shall seldom have occasion to refer to those Districts claimed by Congress and Sikhs west of the Ravi, but between the Ravi and the Beas is a very important tier. Kangra, a thinly populated mountainous area in the north, is only 4·8 per cent. Muslim¹ and was undisputed. In the Bari Doab the Districts of Gurdaspur, Amritsar, Lahore, and Montgomery were all in dispute, and this is probably the richest part of the Punjab. Except for Amritsar, which was 46·5 per cent. Muslim, all these Districts had Muslim majorities, though Gurdaspur's was very narrow, with only 51·1 per cent. (Figs. 2 and 5). The only other unit which need be mentioned is the tahsil, of which there are generally three to five in a District. West of the Beas-Sutlej only three tahsils had non-Muslim majorities (Fig. 5): Pathankot in the extreme north of Gurdaspur; Amritsar; and Tarn Taran in Amritsar District, the westernmost tahsil of Amritsar, Ajnala, being Muslim. On the other hand there were four Muslim-majority tahsils immediately east of the Beas-Sutlej, and two where Muslims outnumbered Hindus and Sikhs together, apart from two unclaimed tahsils far away in the extreme south-east of the Province. In my opinion, the legitimate area of dispute lay in the

¹ Throughout this paper population figures and percentages are those of the 1941 Census. The Punjab States were not directly concerned and are excluded from Provincial totals.

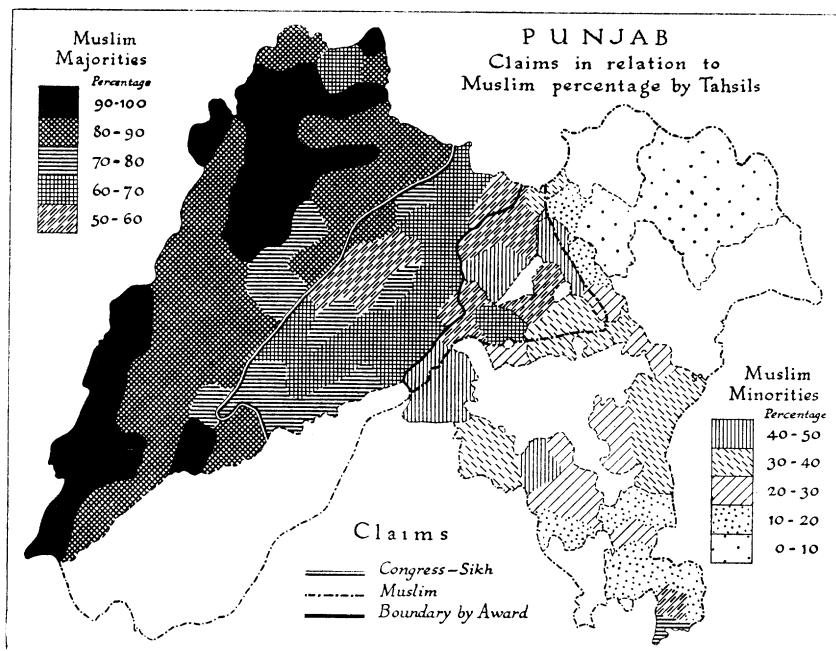


Figure 2

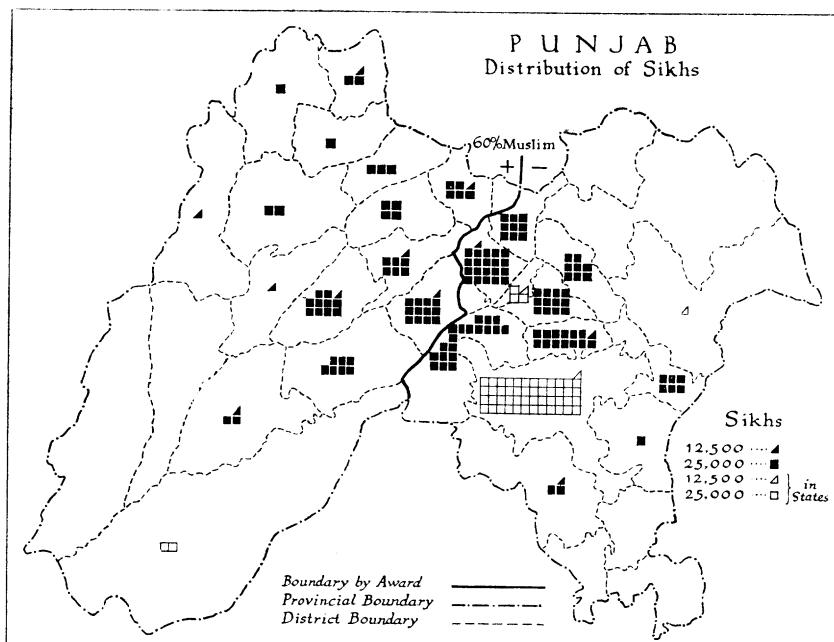


Figure 3

Bist Doab between the Beas and the Sutlej and in the strip east of the Sutlej, where communities are very mixed, rather than in the Bari Doab where in fact the battle was fiercest. The Sikhs, unfortunately, had such a scattered distribution (Fig. 3) that justice could not be done to their aspirations save at the price of much greater injustice to the Muslims. In one District only, Ludhiana, were they the largest single community, and while they formed over 10 per cent. of the population in eight Districts west of the Beas-Sutlej, six of these were over 60 per cent. Muslim.

By July 1947 the work of distributing assets and official personnel, both nationally and provincially, was well in hand, even the more lucid inmates of the mental asylum petitioning for partition—

And shew'd by one satyric Touch,
No Nation wanted it so much.

The exchange of officials was on so sweeping a scale as to leave the minorities on both sides naked to their enemies. Governments were set up for the East and the West Punjab, their territories being separated provisionally by the "notional division" based on simple District majorities. In both the Punjab and Bengal, Boundary Commissions were appointed, each consisting of two Muslim and two non-Muslim judges with Sir Cyril Radcliffe as a common chairman—a double burden which I feel was too much for one man, despite the advantage of uniformity. The terms of reference were hopelessly vague: "To demarcate the boundaries of the two parts of the Punjab, on the basis of ascertaining the contiguous majority areas of Muslims and non-Muslims. In doing so, it will also take into account other factors." The inaccurate use of the word "demarcate" is symptomatic of the general vagueness; no one seriously envisaged the learned judges running round the Punjab with theodolites and concrete markers; but as the term was accepted on all hands I could only suffer in silence each time it was used, which was very often.

As a result of this quasi-judicial procedure, the claims of each side were presented in a legalistic manner by counsel with a great gift for subtle analysis of the terms of reference but with no liberty to bargain. The judges also had no mandate to compromise and so on all material points they divided two and two, leaving Sir Cyril Radcliffe the invidious task of making the actual decisions. It would certainly seem that the procedure itself was a mistake and that the matter could have been better settled by direct negotiation on the highest level, followed by fiat from Delhi. The position of the Sikhs as a militant and vitally interested third party probably ruled this out, but it was overwhelmingly clear that there would be serious trouble in any case, and it might have been better to take the bolder course.

The claims may now be considered. Those of Congress and of the Sikhs were essentially one, differing only in that the Sikhs were a little more explicit. The line proposed followed District or tahsil boundaries throughout, beginning with a slight projection across the Chenab in the north and following that river for the first 100 miles or so of the total length (neglecting minor twists) of 300 miles. In the sandy and rather empty country north of Shorkot it was in itself a quite reasonable line, but farther south it crossed and re-crossed the Khanewal-Wazirabad railway six times in 35 miles, and for 10 miles ran down

the middle of the single-track line (Fig. 4). The railway was to be split into two separate systems. This in itself condemned the haphazard drafting by simply taking local boundaries with no reference to their suitability as inter-state lines. In the extreme south the boundary jutted in a great salient across the important Lodhran-Khanewal chord line and reached to within about 20 miles of Multan, still the strategic key to the middle Indus. After this it

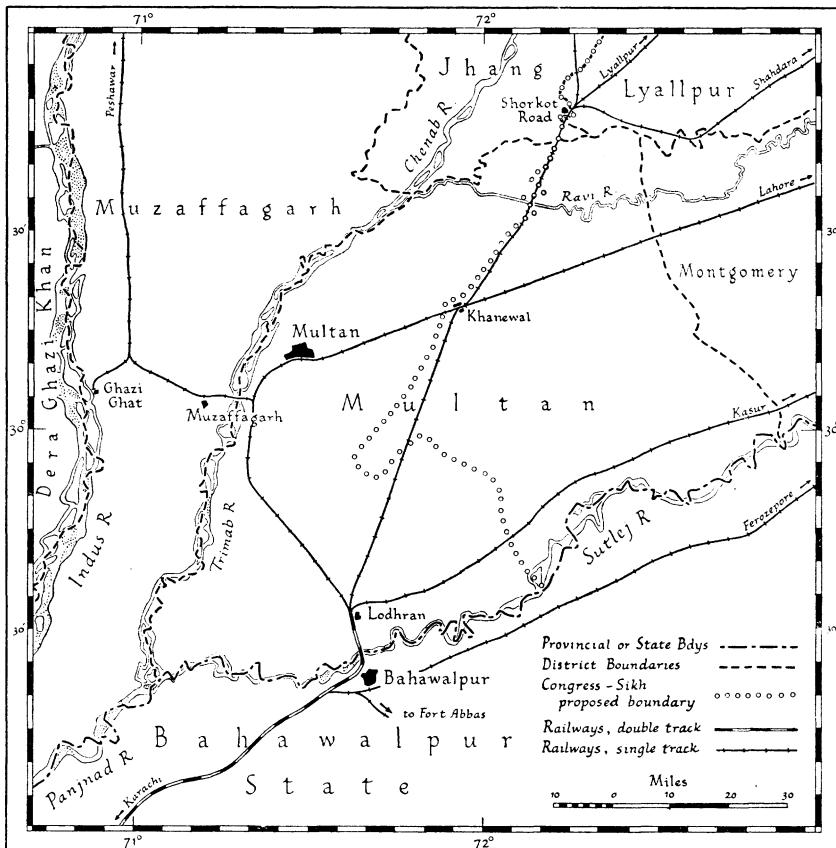


Fig. 4. Congress-Sikh boundary claim in relation to railways in Multan area

seemed a little pointless when the Congress spokesman criticized the Muslim line for being crossed by railways at six places.

The boundary itself was defended as being a "natural" one (presumably because about a third of it was on the Chenab) and strategically fair to both sides. A glance at a railway map shows that this is quite absurd. With no heavy industry, Pakistan would be dependent on supplies coming up the railway from Karachi. This is double-track as far as Lodhran, a distance of rather over 500 miles; beyond that there are only two single-track lines to the north, one by the Indus, the other the Khanewal-Wazirabad line already mentioned as being cut by the proposed boundary. Even if adjustments had

given the track to Pakistan, any possible fronts to east or west would lie "front to flank" and the problem of supplying sectors in the north across the lines of communication of those to the south would be a logistic nightmare. On any hypothesis the strategic layout of Western Pakistan—a long hour-glass with its waist south of Multan—is very vulnerable; there is no depth to the defence, and the main supply line is open to air attack on a few important river crossings, for example, at Hyderabad and south and west of Multan. On

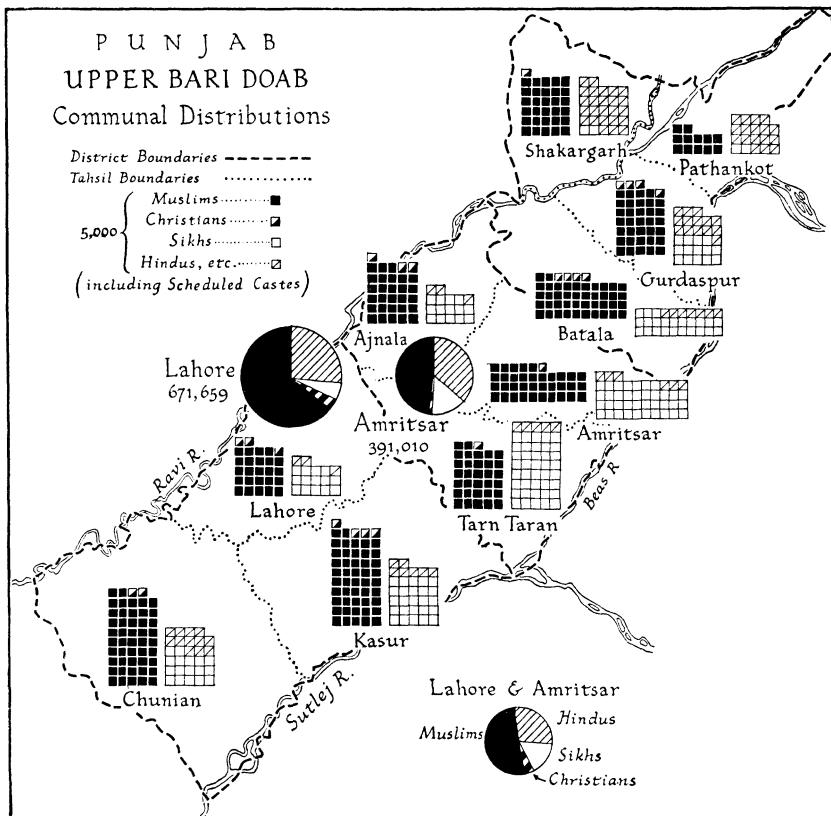


Figure 5

the Congress-Sikh line Pakistan's position would have been hopeless from the start; even on the Muslim line the rail pattern in East Punjab would have been much more favourable to India's defence, not to mention the immense depth behind it.

But it is the included area rather than the mere frame which is significant. It was claimed to be a contiguous non-Muslim majority area, but this is so only if the undisputed East Punjab is lumped in with the disputed area; and on this principle the entire Punjab was a Muslim majority area. It is true that a map was submitted (at a late stage) showing great belts of non-Muslim territory, with no outliers but mysteriously joining East Punjab in the north.

At first glance this distribution looked highly suspicious, and enquiry elicited the naïve admission that the unit used in its construction was "anything from a District to a village." One can prove anything this way; two examples may suffice to show how it worked. Lahore and Chunian tahsils were shown about equally divided between the parties; analysis of the population revealed that the Muslim majority in their half of Lahore was over 215,000, the non-Muslim in theirs under 7000, while in Chunian the respective figures were 86,906 and exactly 1100! Much play was also made with the assertion (probably true) that the 1941 census figures for Lahore City were grossly inaccurate; but the fluctuating figures of ration-book issues which were offered in lieu were obviously worthless for ascertaining the real composition of the population. By means of age-sex pyramids showing also marital condition for the main communities, it was easy to demonstrate conclusively that on every relevant demographic consideration Muslims were not only in a majority in the city but also formed the majority of the stable non-floating population.

The real core of the Congress-Sikh case however was economic, and here they presented a mass of evidence which demanded serious consideration. Congress naturally stressed the preponderant part played by non-Muslims, mainly Hindus, in the development of trade and industry in the central Punjab. Thus, in Lahore District Muslims owned only 78 of the 186 registered factories; in Lahore City, with a Muslim majority on any showing, the Muslim share in banking and insurance was almost ludicrously small, while non-Muslim traders paid eight times as much sales tax as Muslim traders. The Sikhs' economic case rested largely on their very notable part in the development of the canal colonies, the earlier ones in the Bari Doab having in fact been established to assist in the resettlement of their soldiery after the Sikh Wars. Double-counting in the village revenue returns somewhat inflated the figures they presented to show that a majority of the bigger and more progressive landlords were Sikhs; but there was no doubt that their share of this group was disproportionately large, and there were not a few small tracts even beyond Ravi (*e.g.* in Lyallpur and Sheikhupura Districts) with local Sikh majorities. Their cavalier attitude to the Muslim majorities, made up of small peasants, village artisans, and the like, provoked the apt retort that in the last resort it was the village carpenters and blacksmiths who made the Persian wheels go round.

The real question however was whether these admitted economic facts were to override the general population principle; that is, whether "other factors" were to take precedence over "contiguous majority areas." It might be suggested, I think not unfairly, that the Congress case was impregnable on good old-fashioned imperialist lines, while the Sikh case depended on a feudal confusion between private property in land and territorial sovereignty. On a broader view it was precisely this admitted economic hegemony which gave force and point to the Pakistani contention that the Muslims were in danger of economic exploitation at the hands of Hindu banias and industrialists, secure in their long-established lead in the adoption of Western ways in business and in the numerical preponderance of Hindus in India as a whole. Meanwhile the most serious "other factor"—the desirability or necessity of avoiding so far as possible any disruption of the canal systems on which the prosperity of all

communities depended—was largely lost sight of or at most received formal lip-service. The Congress-Sikh claim would have split the systems, including most of them in East Punjab ; and indeed, if strategically it would have rendered Pakistan a hopeless proposition, the economic prospects of Western Pakistan, shorn of the greater part of the productive area of its major Province, would have been little better. The claim to a line on the Chenab amounted to accepting Pakistan in words but denying it in deeds.

Finally we may note two points on which the Sikhs laid great stress. One was the necessity of including their holy places in East Punjab. According to some leaders there were about 700 of these, scattered all over the Province, and it can hardly be that all were of the sanctity which admittedly attached to Amritsar, in non-Muslim territory, or Nankana Sahib, west of the Ravi in a predominantly Muslim area. The second point was the repeated insistence on the necessity for large-scale population transfers, a matter which in the light of later events perhaps assumes a rather sinister aspect. Their claim included about 85 per cent. of the total Sikh population of the Punjab, and would have left West Punjab with under 8,000,000 people, of whom only about 1,250,000 would have been non-Muslims ; while in East Punjab there would have been over 9,500,000 Muslims—presumably for transfer into the arid west. It is only fair to add that Congress probably regarded their claim as a bargaining maximum.

The Muslim case was in my opinion more reasonable and was much better presented technically, owing largely to the skill and enthusiasm of some members of the Department of Geography, University of the Punjab, who presented a beautiful and very comprehensive series of maps, excellently produced and covering all aspects of the problem ; they even included a map showing the sites of battles from Alexander the Great to the Third Sikh War !

The boundary proposed included the southern half of Pathankot tahsil, in order to retain the Madhupur Headworks of the Upper Bari Doab Canal. For a few miles it ran along the much-braided Beas, and then followed the crest of the Siwaliks for some 80 miles. This was the only reasonable "natural" boundary proposed, and it was not followed in the Award. The crest is quite well defined and coincides with the watershed. Moreover, control of deforestation on the hills is essential to the prosperity of the adjoining plains, where much good arable land has been lost by erosion and sand-spreads as the streams have been choked by rapid denudation in the soft Siwalik rocks, stripped of their vegetation cover. So far the line ran south-east, but near Rupar Headworks on the great bend of the Sutlej it turned west, and as far as the Rajputana boundary ran roughly parallel to the Sutlej along the Ludhiana-Ferozepore railway and the Bikanir Canal, both included within the claim. This could be quite convenient as a working boundary ; but the primary motive was strategic, or rather tactical, and from this point of view it should have been advanced to the Patiala State boundary in order to give some cover to the railway, which even so would have been too near the border for comfort. It should be noted that the boundary did not rely on existing local boundaries. Except for some odd details in the south, it was quite a good line technically —certainly better than one along a river—and it did secure the practical unity of existing canal systems, by the simple expedient of allotting them almost

entirely to Pakistan, which is at least as rational as the Congress-Sikh procedure of insisting that they should be divided more or less on a population basis and then claiming rather more than their share. On the other hand, the line was nearly as long as its rival (some 290 miles) and it formed a great and rather awkward salient between Kangra and the Jumna-Sutlej doab. Access from East Punjab to Kangra however would not have presented any very serious difficulty, and in fact the necessary roads and railways had been built or projected long before partition was thought of.

The Muslim case rested essentially on population. Except in the east of the Bist Doab, and of course unavoidably in Amritsar District, their claim did not go much beyond the limits of contiguous Muslim majority areas, since in addition to the Muslim tahsils east of the Beas-Sutlej there is a practically continuous riverine strip along the Sutlej which is mainly Muslim, and Ludhiana town had a Muslim majority. It is pertinent to remark here that calculations, with one or two local exceptions, were made simply on a basis of Muslims versus The Rest. This implies that all Indian Christians and Scheduled Castes—numbering 486,000 and 1,247,000 respectively in the Province—were opposed to Pakistan, which is very far indeed from being the case. Conversely there is, of course, no way of knowing how many Muslims would have preferred to live in a united India, but I do not think that the number is likely to have been large in the summer of 1947.

The claim amounts to detaching from the Punjab its easternmost Division, Ambala, with Kangra District and other non-Muslim areas of Jullundur Division. Geographically this would be quite reasonable, since Ambala Division is culturally and economically rather distinct from the rest of the Punjab; there would be little economic dislocation, and the integrity of the main canal systems would be preserved. However the Sikhs were not attracted by the prospect of being a large minority—some 15 per cent.—in the key Province of Pakistan, although in view of their traditional toughness such a minority could hardly have been treated with too high a hand, and to an outsider they would seem to have better prospects as such a sizeable minority in Pakistan than as a drop in the ocean of India. But prior political events, for which Sikh leadership must take a considerable share of the responsibility, ruled out such a solution. To say that the Muslim claim was legitimate on general geographical grounds does not, of course, mean that it was necessarily the claim which should have been adopted in the given political situation. But the Muslim leaders left themselves no room for manoeuvre. Compromise between the two claims was inevitable, although any such solution could not but be radically false from a geographical point of view.

All these points, and many others, were debated for ten days in the sweltering heat of Lahore, gasping for the much delayed rains. The final discussions between the judges and Sir Cyril Radcliffe (who did not attend the sittings of the Commission) took place at Simla, in an atmosphere climatically cooler but politically rife with intrigue and rumour. Although the actual Award was not announced until after August 15, Independence Day, a fairly accurate forecast was abroad about ten days earlier and cast some gloom over the rather modest rejoicings at Karachi. Sir Cyril Radcliffe obviously had great difficulty in balancing the simple Muslim claim on a population basis against the un-

undeniably cogent economic and social arguments advanced by the other side, complicated as they were by the explosive political situation. But I cannot avoid thinking that his Award in the Punjab—by contrast with Bengal—leans rather heavily against the Muslims and represents an attempt to appease the Sikhs, an attempt the success of which may be judged by the event. Three important Muslim tahsils west of the Beas-Sutlej were allotted to East Punjab, which has all the upper half of the Upper Bari Doab Canal system. This includes the

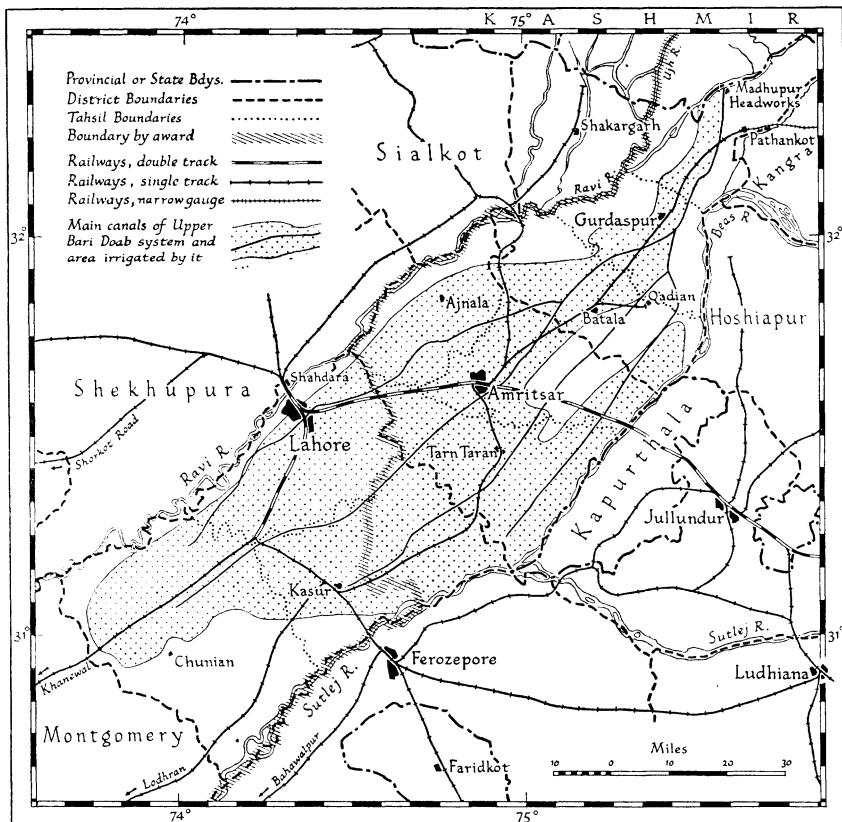


Fig. 6. Punjab boundary Award in relation to railways and canals in Upper Bari Doab

greater part of Gurdaspur, perhaps the one District of the central Punjab where Muslims took precedence in education, general cultural activities, and industrial development, largely owing to the energy of the Ahmadiyya movement, whose headquarters at Qadian has been in a virtual state of siege since the decision. If East Punjab had to extend west of the Beas-Sutlej, a salient in Amritsar District with communications through Jullundur, or even an enclave around Amritsar City, should not have been unworkable. Enclaves are bad things, but a glance at the political map shows that they are well understood in India and I believe that the Muslims would have been quite willing to

concede some such device. Incidentally Sikhs were only a small minority, 15 per cent., of the population of the city.

The actual Award boundary (Figs. 2 and 6) runs along the Ujh and Ravi (or rather, along existing local boundaries originally defined by these rivers) to a point about 14 miles north-east of Lahore. Thence it crosses the Bari Doab between Lahore and Amritsar to the Sutlej north-east of Ferozepore, then follows down that river with a very small extension east of it in the extreme south, to include within Pakistan the Sulemanke Headworks on which the irrigation of Bahawalpur State depends. In addition to splitting the Upper Bari Doab Canal system, it splits the area supplied by the Mandi hydro-electric site, the most important source of industrial power in the Punjab. As Mandi lies in the mountains beyond Kangra this was inevitable on any line—on the Muslim claim the site and the area it serves would have been separated—and cannot be held against the Award. The boundary has the merits of being a short line and of leaving comparable minorities of 3,500,000 to 4,000,000 on each side, though the 1,000,000 Muslims in the Punjab States (excluding Bahawalpur) are left out of the reckoning and have probably to be added to the victims of forced transfer. So far as can be estimated, the Award gives West Punjab an area of 62,000 square miles and a 1941 population of about 15,800,000, of whom about 11,850,000 were Muslim. Corresponding figures for East Punjab are 37,000 square miles and 12,600,000 people, some 4,375,000 of them Muslims. But the transfers consequent on the undeclared civil war which ensued make these figures utterly unrealistic. It seems that West Punjab, with refugees from Delhi and parts of the United Provinces, will have a surplus of at least 2,000,000 immigrants, most of them utterly destitute, whose rehabilitation may well be a crushing burden on the Province and consequently on Pakistan, of which it would normally be the soundest component economically and fiscally.

I had no personal contact with the work of the Bengal Commission, and what follows is based on reports, not always very clear or complete, in the Bengali press. There are probably inaccuracies in detail but I think a substantially fair picture is given, and the new boundary itself has been carefully checked on the largest scale maps available at India House. For the most difficult section these were 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch maps surveyed in 1845–70, with railways added to 1915, but fortunately the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of Calcutta came to my aid here with maps of the divided Districts. It is clear that in Bengal there was a curious reversal of rôle; Hindu claims were quite moderate, but if the Muslims were inexplicably modest in the Punjab, in Bengal they were really extravagant. Naturally this is reflected in Sir Cyril Radcliffe's compromise; which strongly suggests the inadequacy of the old proverb about honesty being the best policy.

The south-west of Bengal is Hindu, overwhelmingly so west of the Hooghly-Bhagirathi. In the extreme north the Districts of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri are respectively 97·6 and 77 per cent. non-Muslim, but they were claimed for Pakistan on the grounds of non-contiguity with the Hindu south-west, though in fact they adjoin Hindu Bihar. Calcutta is a crux; whether the city itself or the whole Hooghly-side conurbation is considered, there are at least three

Hindus to one Muslim. With the important exception of jute, its resources of raw materials come from the Indian side, as does coal from the Damodar valley, but it is dependent on the delta to the east for much of its food. Its hinterland is mainly in the Ganges basin. Clearly therefore the inclusion of

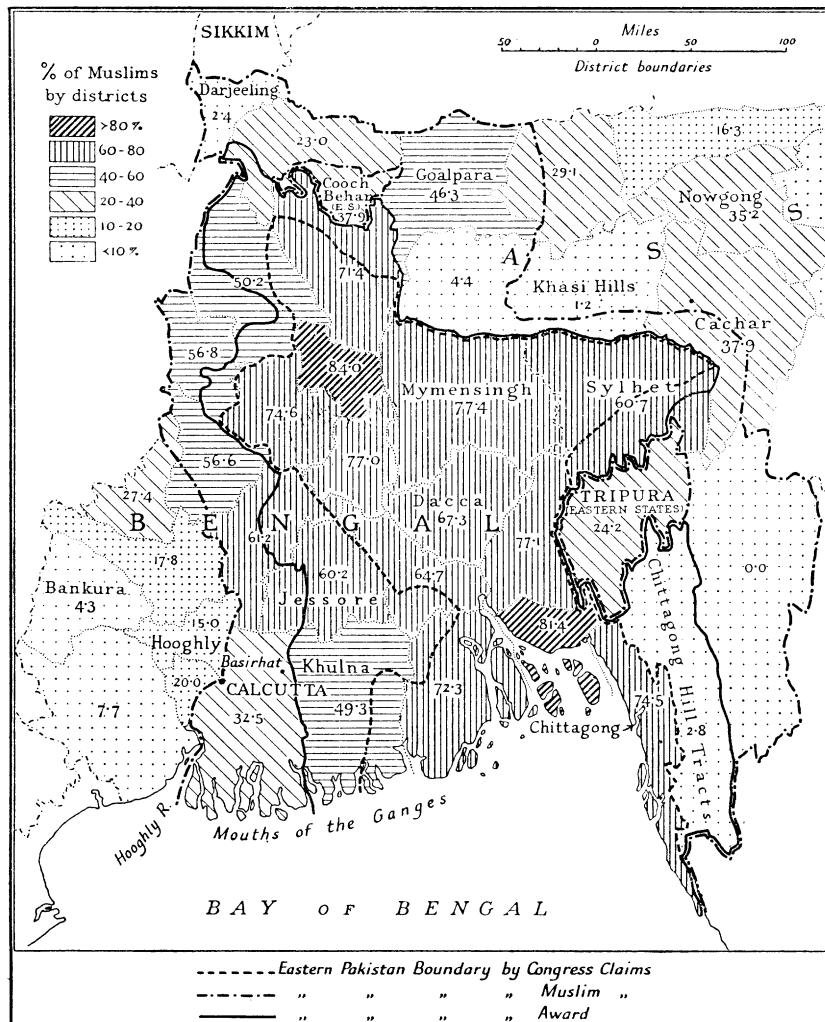


Fig. 7. Bengal boundary claims and Award in relation to Muslim percentages

Calcutta in Eastern Pakistan would endanger its prosperity, even with transit and free port arrangements, unless the best of goodwill were forthcoming on both sides. But from the Muslim point of view its inclusion in India leaves Eastern Pakistan a grossly overcrowded agrarian State. Bengal has probably nearly a third of all-India's really large industry, but this is concentrated on Hooghlyside, and there is virtually no industry in Muslim Bengal and no

significant resources for industrial development except raw jute. Calcutta was first claimed outright by the Muslims, but later the interesting though not very practicable suggestion was made that it should be under joint Indo-Pakistan control.

The problem of Assam was exceptionally important owing to its large reserves of potentially productive and relatively easily exploitable agricultural land—unique in India. Indeed, in the last three decades Assam has formed a valuable outlet for the population of the practically saturated eastern delta, where Dacca Division, twice the size of Wales, has a rural population of over

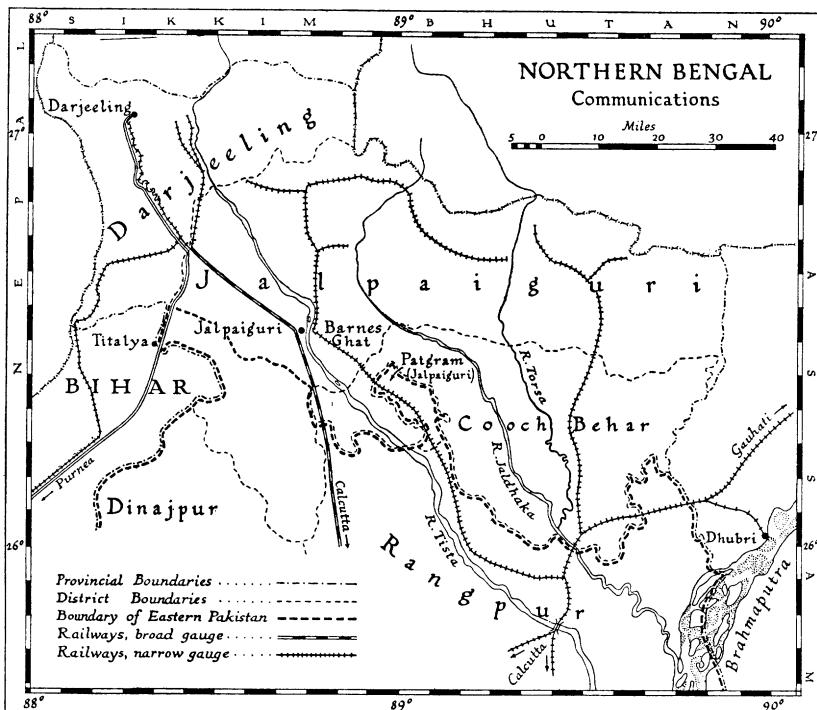


Figure 8

1000 to the square mile despite the existence of the poor and thinly populated Madhupur jungle and of the Sundarbans forests. Most of the migrants were Muslim family squatters, and the value of this potential *lebensraum* is shown by its general inclusion in preliminary Pakistan propaganda. A broad fringe of Assam was included in the Muslim claim (Fig. 7). This was defended in part on geographical grounds, the Surma valley being treated as an indivisible natural unit. This may well be true, but then if geographers were kings there would have been no partition of Bengal at all. The motive for the Muslim claims is understandable—desire for a share of the industry and taxable capacity of Hooghlyside and of the *lebensraum* of Assam—but it is clear that (conversely to their attitude in the Punjab) they gave precedence to “other factors” as against population.

Hindu claims overlapped their majority areas, but hardly more than is usual in such disputes. Their most questionable demand was for the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Admittedly Muslims are only 2·8 per cent. of the population here, but then Hindus are only 2 per cent. and the remainder are aborigines whose sentiments, if articulate, would probably be unflattering to Congress and League alike. Geographically, Sir Cyril's decision that the Hill Tracts should go with Chittagong District can hardly be contested, although it was much criticized in India.

As already suggested, the Award seems unduly favourable to the Muslim side, and it pays very little attention to the communications, which for physical reasons were difficult enough before partition. The allocation of the whole of Khulna District (only 49·3 per cent. Muslim) to Pakistan seems inexplicable, especially as the predominantly Hindu west of the District has, by exception, good connections with Calcutta *via* Basirhat. But it is in the north that the boundary is most curious and least in accord with geographical facts (Fig. 8). The cutting of the road from Purnea to Darjeeling could have been avoided by allotting to India a strip of territory some 10 miles by 2, and I cannot think of any reasonable grounds for failure to do this. There is apparently no through rail or road connection between Assam and the rest of India, though a boundary near the Tista would have given a rail link, subject of course to existing breaks of gauge and the physical break of the Tista ferry at Barnes Ghat. In Assam, the allocation of most of the disputed area to India was inevitable on the terms of reference of the Commission, and indeed there was little justification for the Muslim claims except in Sylhet. Obviously there is now very little prospect of relief for the congestion of East Bengal; but this was not within the province of the Commission.

A Congress estimate, closer than my own for the Punjab, gives West Bengal an area of 28,000 square miles and a population of 21,200,000, some 5,300,000 of whom were Muslims; and East Bengal an area of 49,400 square miles and 39,100,000 people, 27,700,000 of them Muslims. In addition, Eastern Pakistan received the major part of Sylhet District in Assam, with 4621 square miles and 2,730,000 people, 1,700,000 of them Muslims.

It remains for us to glance, very briefly, at the general situation created by the partition of these provinces and of India. The new Dominion of Pakistan is by far the greatest Muslim state in the world, with a total area of some 360,000 square miles and a 1941 population of 70,000,000. Of these some 50,000,000 were Muslims by 1941 figures, leaving some 42,000,000 Muslims beyond the borders; but the tremendous exchanges have probably reduced this total to 35,000,000. India is left with an area of over 1,000,000 square miles and 300,000,000 people, excluding the States of Hyderabad and Kashmir.

The actual layout of Pakistan in two great blocks separated by nearly 1000 miles is, I think, unique in the history of state structures. There is a very serious disequilibrium between the two parts, Eastern Pakistan having about one-seventh of the whole area but four-sevenths of the population, a density of 775 to the square mile against 92 for Western Pakistan. Strategically it is to all intents an enclave in India, with negligible military resources of its own. The west certainly has a military tradition, but, as already noted, it is strategically

very vulnerable, the more so if Kashmir should become part of the Indian Union. Already there has been denudation of the North West Frontier garrisons, defence being largely left to the tribes. The agitation for Pathan self-determination in August 1947 was factitious and short-lived, for it was swamped by the wave of Muslim solidarity following on events in the Punjab. But Afghanistan has been very cool towards the new Islamic state, and very solicitous for the Pathans, and the present attitude of Kabul is one of watchful waiting.

Culturally, Western Pakistan has at least as much in common with the other Islamic lands of south-west Asia as it has with India; but this is hardly true of Eastern Pakistan. It is noteworthy that all the initiative has come from the west, and the machinery and energy of government seem mainly concentrated there. Perhaps the most fundamental of the factors underlying the Pakistan demand is the feeling of the rising Muslim bourgeoisie that their Hindu counterparts were entrenched with an altogether disproportionate share of wealth and power. Not unconnected with this is the differentiation of economic interests: both Western and Eastern Pakistan are essentially primary producers with markets beyond their borders or even overseas. Western Pakistan is normally the only large area of the sub-continent with a sizeable food surplus for, in addition to the wheat of the Punjab canal colonies, there is a useful production of irrigated rice in Sind, sometimes overlooked in the text-books. The cattle population does not bear so heavily on the land as in India, and the greater *per capita* consumption of milk and meat is reflected in the physique of the population. As for Eastern Pakistan, it is said to be self-supporting in foodstuffs, but this can only be on a low standard and is probably precarious. It may be necessary to choose between the conflicting claims of paddy and jute in making use of the available land. Pakistan is also in a strong position as regards the staple fibres. The east has about 80 per cent. of jute acreage and output; the west has 20 per cent. of the cotton acreage but 33 per cent. of the output, and this largely of the longer-stapled American varieties. In addition it has a large share, perhaps half or more, of the wool production.

Agriculturally then, Pakistan is on the whole in a sounder position than is its great neighbour. The situation is radically different when we turn to industrial prospects. Textile raw materials are in themselves only half the basis even for the lighter industries, and the mineral and power position of Pakistan is weak. There may of course be undiscovered minerals, but this does not seem inherently very likely, except for the possibility of really large-scale oil strikes in Sind, where active prospecting has reached the boring stage. Of known minerals, the production of coal is negligible, about 250,000 tons a year; oil output from Attock in West Punjab is some 15–20,000,000 gallons. There is ample salt from evaporation of sea water in Sind and from the Salt Range mines in the Punjab, and Baluchistan produced about half the all-India output of chromite. Beyond this there is almost none so far as present knowledge goes. Hydro-electricity is the fairy godmother of Indian planners; potentialities in Eastern Pakistan can only be small,¹ and in the west the best

¹ This matter has given rise to some confusion, which can be traced ultimately to a statement in Sir Homi Mody and Dr. J. Matthai, "A memorandum on the economic and

sites appear to lie within the Kashmir border. The actual industrial development of Pakistan is pathetically small compared with that of India: of the 111 jute mills not one is in East Bengal, and Pakistan had 15 of the 872 cotton mills in 1942. Figures for other industries are similar or worse. It is true that there is much talk of industrial planning and so on, but there is singularly little attempt to get down to an accurate evaluation of resources and potentials, though it is well appreciated that there is a desperate shortage of three essentials—trained administrative and technical cadres, power, and capital.

Assuming either that Kashmir power is available or that sites can be developed within Western Pakistan, there might well be a considerable development of light industry based on, or ancillary to, agriculture. Power installations however cost much time and money. The Punjab was to all intents the only really prosperous part of Pakistan fiscally, and its organization and resources have been terribly strained by the unprecedented economic dislocation of the last few months and the burden of millions of destitute refugees. On the other side, Bengal appears dangerously dependent on one cash crop, jute, which is notoriously liable to fluctuation with world prices, and the imposition of an export duty on jute going to India has already led to economic friction. Moreover, if the price is forced up by export duties there is the possibility of a stimulus to the production of substitutes, to jute growing in India or in other tropical deltas, and to increased bulk loading. These are merely possibilities, but they suggest that Eastern Pakistan's economy may prove to be very precariously based. A disproportionate amount of the liquid and taxable wealth of Bengal, never a very sound Province financially, was concentrated on Hooghlyside, and it seems quite possible that Eastern Pakistan may become a standing liability rather than an asset for the new Dominion.

All thus depends on credit, which in turn depends on reasonable internal stability and external security, and so on relations with India. At present Pakistan's trump card—the food surplus—has been largely discounted by loss of stocks, destruction of standing crops, utter dislocation of transport and of the normal channels of trade in the Punjab; and much of the Sind surplus will

financial aspects of Pakistan" (Conciliation Committee Information Series, No. 9, New Delhi, 1945). This states (p. 9) that "the hydro-electric survey of India shows the probable minimum continuous water-power available in Pakistan to be 2877 thousand kilowatts; 1084 thousand in the Eastern zone, and 1793 thousand in the Western zone, while in Hindustan it would be only 1343 thousand kilowatts." It is often difficult to be sure whether the authors are considering Pakistan on a basis of Muslim Provinces (plus Assam) or of Muslim Districts, but the attribution in this paragraph of Bengal coal and Assam oil to Pakistan shows that here the former is intended. Unfortunately the useful pamphlet "Basic facts relating to Hindustan and Pakistan" (*Eastern Economist*, New Delhi, 1947), which gives all other figures on a District basis, simply quotes 1343 and 2877 thousand kilowatts without explanation. Eastern Pakistan is practically all alluvial lowland except for the Chittagong Hill Tracts, while in Western Pakistan the mountainous parts of the Punjab have gone to India, so that the Mody-Matthai figures, though doubtless correct if Assam and all the Punjab were included in Pakistan, are quite irrelevant to Pakistan as it actually exists. Some water-power is doubtless available in the North West Frontier Province (e.g. Malakand), but the discussion on pp. 43-51, and the maps, in G. Kuriyan, "Hydro-electric power in India: a geographical analysis" (Indian Geographical Society, Monograph No. 1, 1945) show quite clearly that the hydro-electric potential of the north-west is mainly in Kashmir and in those parts of the Punjab allotted to India.

probably go to tide the Punjab over until the next harvest. This is not likely to be a good one as the planting of rabi crops must have been greatly interfered with by the vast shifts of population, probably unparalleled in world history, considering that numbers ran into millions and time was reckoned in weeks. Late rains followed by floods have worsened the food position in the sub-continent as a whole, and energetic measures are apparently being taken in both Dominions to repair these natural and man-made disasters. In time, no doubt, the normal balance of Pakistan's food and India's manufactures will be restored. Meanwhile there is not likely to be open war; Pakistan's weakness is too obvious to herself, and India is not likely to precipitate a catastrophe by overrunning the granary of the sub-continent. But, if either India or Pakistan is to prosper, much more is needed than that peace which is mere avoidance of war. The closest cooperation is absolutely essential. This cardinal fact is indeed clear enough to responsible men on both sides, but it is all too easily overborne by the pressure of tumultuous political events; nor are there lacking dark forces on either side. We in Britain, and especially perhaps those who have been trained to recognize the inescapable logic of geographical facts, have still at least this responsibility: to help so far as we can to keep a balance, to direct attention away from recrimination over the bitter past towards the paths of mutual aid.

DISCUSSION

Before the paper the CHAIRMAN (Mr. LEONARD BROOKS) said: It gives me great pleasure to take the chair for Dr. Spate. I have known him for many years and probably many of you know something about him. You will be interested to learn that he was the first scholar in geography at Cambridge University and that he has taught in Burma. He is lecturer in Geography at the London School of Economics, and was invited by one of the Muslim groups to help them with their evidence before the Boundary Commission to the Punjab. He has had experience of life in India, and readers of the *Geographical Journal* will remember an article by him which dealt with the proposed creation of Pakistan about four years ago. When we learned that he had been to India and had been present at the meetings of the Boundary Commission, we invited him to address the Society on the subject.

Dr. Spate then read the paper printed above, and a discussion followed.

Professor L. DUDLEY STAMP: After listening to the masterly exposition by Dr. Spate, I feel anything I can say will not add much to the evening's proceedings. By their applause the audience have already shown their appreciation of a truly balanced geographical approach to one of the great problems of the day. It is a type of paper which I hope we shall hear more often.

There are one or two points which I should like elucidated though they are perhaps peripheral to the main discussion. First, I was hoping the lecturer would elaborate a little more the attitude of the Sikhs relative to the Muslims on the one hand and the Hindus on the other. I believe I am right in saying that there was a time when it seemed likely that the Sikh community would join Pakistan rather than Hindu India. If the lecturer could say how the reverse has actually come about it would help us to see the position of that most interesting community in the whole problem.

Secondly, I wish to refer to the irrigation system. We geographers know that the development of the Punjab has depended very largely on those large-scale



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[Footnotes]

¹Geographical Aspects of the Pakistan Scheme

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The Geographical Journal, Vol. 102, No. 3. (Sep., 1943), pp. 125-136.

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