

League–Congress rapprochement. Little was gained in these talks, or at the Simla meetings held after the war. Gandhi called the Pakistan proposal a plan to “vivisection” India, and thought that Muslims, in the end, would oppose it. In the spring of 1946, the new Labour government of Clement Attlee, pledged to independence for India, sent the Cabinet Mission to India to try to see if it could try to find a new formulation for constitutional advance, in consultation with the major parties. The mission put forward a scheme for an independent India, including a grouping of provinces, with the proviso that groups might secede from the larger structure. This federal structure had a weak center and strong stipulations for regional powers. It seemed that the Congress and League agreed to this plan, but then Jawaharlal Nehru, apparently speaking for the Congress, said that the Congress would not necessarily be bound by the groupings specified in the plan, and that once a constituent assembly met, it could decide anything it wanted. This was completely unacceptable to the Muslim League, which then backed away from the scheme and refused to join the interim government which Lord Wavell had decided to form.

Instead, the League, for the first time in its history, called for a Direct Action Day, August 16, 1946. Disaster ensued. In the Great Calcutta Killing, thousands died, and riots followed in other areas of East Bengal and the Gangetic plain. These riots contributed mightily to the belief by many Hindus and Muslims that they would be better off in separate nations, if these could be constructed out of the British Raj.

In September 1946, after the Calcutta riots, the Muslim League decided to join the interim government, a cabinet and ministries headed by Indians under the supervision of the viceroy. To meet a stipulation by Viceroy Wavell that at least one important position in the interim cabinet go to the League, Liaquat Ali Khan was sworn in as finance minister. Every activity needed funding, and the new finance minister held up every Congress proposal for severe scrutiny or blockage. This made Interim Prime Minister Nehru and Interim Home Minister Vallabhbhai Patel (1875–1950)<sup>11</sup> dubious about future work with the League within one united and independent India.

With the Congress and League at loggerheads in the interim government and a deteriorating law and order situation around them, Wavell packed off the leaders of the Congress and League to London for a conference at the end of 1946. This also failed to produce the necessary signs of cooperation. Facing what looked like a dead end and committed to independence for India, British Prime Minister Attlee decided in January 1947 to strike out on new ground. Wavell was terminated as viceroy and the new and last viceroy, Lord Louis Mountbatten (1900–1979), was chosen. Mountbatten’s charge was to transfer power no later than August 1948 to one or more new states. He arrived in March, and set about his task with his usual energy and organization. After meeting all the principals, listening to their views, and getting a sense of their personalities, Mountbatten decided that the gap between the Congress and the

League was too deep to bridge. Although he maintained that he had always wanted to transfer power to one India, within a few weeks he committed himself and his government to dividing India. Mountbatten blamed Jinnah's rigidity for the need to do so.

Not only did Mountbatten have to persuade all the parties to accept a particular plan for division, but he also had to set a calendar for the steps forward. First, he worked on Congress leaders Patel and Nehru and got them to agree to Partition, but only after specifying that independent India was the main legatee of the Raj, and Pakistan was the seceder. Then he had to try to pacify some Hindu and Muslim Bengalis who did not want Bengal divided. And he had to try to calm the Sikhs, who saw that they would have a majority nowhere and realized, correctly, that they would be devastated by the division. Mountbatten never satisfied the Bengalis, the Sikhs, or the Muslims, including Congress leader Maulana Azad and Pathan followers of Abdul Ghaffar Khan in the North-west Frontier Province. According to Azad, Patel was the first to come around to accepting Partition, and he pressed Nehru and then Gandhi to do likewise. The latter two were more opposed than Patel to the division of India on the basis of religion, but both were pragmatic enough to see, eventually, that many were coming to accept it. It could only be opposed, Gandhi said, if public opinion was against it. As he explained to Sarat Bose, this public opposition was not there. He could do nothing. On Partition day Sarat Bose and Gandhi sat in silence.

Jinnah certainly was unhappy with the "maimed, mutilated and motheaten" Pakistan—lacking East Punjab, West Bengal, and Calcutta—that Mountbatten offered him in May 1947, and one can get a feel for how these events looked from the Muslim League perspective from the autobiography, *From Purdah to Parliament*, penned by Jinnah's friend Begum Ikramullah. Mountbatten was following the logic of the Rajaji (C. Rajagopalachari) formula: you must divide India so that the maximum number of Hindus (and others) who want to remain in India are on one side, and the maximum of Muslims who want to leave are on the other. This led down the path of the division of the two large and important provinces of the Punjab and Bengal. Jinnah, very unwillingly, accepted the deal, as did the Congress.

With the main lines of division set, riots continuing, and the loyalty of Indian police and armed forces in question, Mountbatten fixed a forced march to a British exit on August 15, 1947, a year earlier than originally planned by Attlee. Attaching his countdown calendars on the walls of relevant offices, instructing his staff and political leaders, Mountbatten pushed on for a British withdrawal from their crown jewel, just over two months after the formal agreement to the Partition plan on June 3. Everything had to be divided, and the boundary commission had to set to work. Lord Cyril Radcliffe was appointed to head this latter body, but its findings were not to be announced until after August 15. A procedure for dealing with the five-hundred-odd princely states also had to be laid

out and implemented. Whether Mountbatten rushed too fast, or acted appropriately to fulfill his mission, will be debated forever.

As it gradually dawned on the populace what was taking place, many were stunned: millions of Hindus and Sikhs would end up in a Muslim nation if they did not migrate; millions of Muslims would undoubtedly end up in what the League called Hindustan even if tens of millions moved to Pakistan. Ordinary people had to figure out what to do as August 15 approached, and then after the boundary commission's findings were published. Extraordinary things happened not only for the new nations, but for ordinary men, women, and children trapped in circumstances beyond their control. As Urvashi Butalia and other writers have shown, the consequences for women and children were more dire than for any others. Decades of silence have followed the unspeakable acts done and painful choices made in those days. Decisions were made and remade. Estimates of the dead range from 200,000 to one million; in addition, thousands of families were destroyed or reshaped. The families, politics, economies, and cultures of the new nations were shaped and reshaped by the hostilities of the pre-Partition days and the terrible killings of the months after Partition. These led to lasting antagonisms between the new nations. India and Pakistan are still figuring out how to live together, and hopeful negotiations are frequently followed by disillusionment. Ordinary people who want a satisfactory end to the tensions and wars between India and Pakistan—and now to the threat of nuclear war between nations armed with such weapons—have not yet been able to push their leaders to make a lasting peace.

The crisis of 1969 to 1971 in East Pakistan, the breaking up of East and West Pakistan, and the establishment of Bangladesh as a new nation demonstrated forcefully that choices that had been made in 1947 could be revised, and a new sense of nationality developed (see chapter 10). Within India as well, there were crises that led many of its citizens to question their choices of 1947. Communal riots between Hindus and Muslims have continued, with some of the worst following the destruction of Babri Masjid in Ayodhya in December 1992 and the anti-Muslim pogroms in Gujarat in 2002. The rise to power and rule for some years by the Bharatiya Janata Party-led government—with its ideology of Hindu nationalism (muted or overt)—has made some Muslims feel less than full citizens. But not only the Muslims have been made to feel unsettled: Sikhs and Christians also have had dreadful episodes of havoc wrought upon them since the 1990s.

## THE CONGRESS–MUSLIM LEAGUE SCHEME OF REFORMS, OR LUCKNOW PACT, 1916

For several years during World War I, while many Indians were professing loyalty to the Raj and many thousands of Indian troops were fighting in Europe to defend the empire, the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League had been discussing

an agreement about a plan of constitutional advance. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, a member of both organizations, took a leading role in this rapprochement. The scheme that was agreed to in 1916 provided for separate electorates for Muslims in the elections both for the provincial legislative councils and, indirectly, for the imperial legislative council. The Muslims were also to have one-third of the seats in the imperial council. It laid out percentages of reserved seats for them in the provincial councils, giving them less than their percentage of the population in some areas, more in others. The Punjab and Bengal were most at issue, and the agreement called for 50 percent of the seats in the Punjab Council and 40 percent in Bengal. This latter provision angered Bengali Muslim leaders in subsequent years, since Muslims were about 54 percent of the population. They believed they were shortchanged.

Other provisions of the pact called for political advances for Indians in ruling their own country. These were to be achieved by a much wider franchise (details unspecified); by giving Indians a greater role in provincial councils working with the governors of the provinces and in the governor-general's council; and by limiting the role of nominated members and the Indian Civil Service. It also called for the abolition of the advisory council to the secretary of state for India in London, which Indians believed was populated by retired and reactionary civil servants.

Although the Congress-League pact had no visible or practical effect upon the British, it marked the beginning of about a decade in which there was considerable cooperation between Hindus and Muslims in the Congress and League. There were ups and downs, until the rejection of the Nehru Report recommendations in 1928 by Jinnah. The scheme also encouraged the British to formulate and implement their own reform program, known as the Government of India Act of 1919 or the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms.

#### I. PROVINCIAL LEGISLATIVE COUNCILS

1. Provincial Legislative Councils shall consist of  $\frac{1}{5}$  elected and of  $\frac{1}{5}$  nominated members.
2. Their strength shall be not less than 125 members in the major provinces, and from 50 to 75 in the minor provinces.
3. The members of Councils should be elected . . . on as broad a franchise as possible.
4. Adequate provision should be made for the representation of important minorities by election, and the Mahomedans should be represented through special electorates on the Provincial Legislative Councils in the following proportions:

Punjab—One-half of the elected Indian Members

United Provinces—30 p.c. " "

Bengal—40 p.c. " "

Bihar—25 p.c. " "

Central Provinces—15 p.c. " "

Madras—15 p.c " "

Bombay—One-third " "

. . . No Mahomedan shall participate in any of the other elections to the Imperial or Provincial Legislative Councils, save and except those by electorates representing special interests.

Provided further that no Bill, nor any clause thereof, nor a resolution introduced by a non-official member affecting one or the other community, which question is to be determined by the members of that community in the Legislative Council concerned, shall be proceeded with, if three-fourths of the members of that community in the particular Council, Imperial or provincial, oppose the Bill or any clause thereof, or the resolution. . . .

7. (a) Except customs, post, telegraph, mint, salt, opium, railways, army and navy, and tributes from Indian States, all other sources of revenue should be provincial.
- (b) There should be no divided heads of revenue. The Government of India should be provided with fixed contributions from the Provincial Governments, such fixed contributions being liable to revision when extraordinary and unforeseen contingencies render such revision necessary.
- (c) The Provincial Council should have full authority to deal with all matters affecting the internal administration of the province including the power to raise loans, to impose and alter taxation, and to vote on the Budget. . . .
- (e) A resolution passed by the Provincial Legislative Council shall be binding on the Executive Government, unless vetoed by the Governor in Council, provided, however, that if the resolution is again passed by the Council after an interval of not less than a year, it must be given effect to.
9. A Bill, other than a Money Bill, may be introduced in Council in accordance with rules made in that behalf by the Council itself, and the consent of the Government should not be required . . .

## II. PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS

1. The head of every Provincial Government shall be a Governor who shall not ordinarily belong to the Indian Civil Service or any of the permanent services.
2. There shall be in every province an Executive Council, which, with the Governor, shall constitute the Executive Government of the Province.
3. Members of the ICS shall not ordinarily be appointed to the Executive Councils.
4. Not less than one-half of the members of the Executive Council shall consist of Indians to be elected by the elected members of the Provincial Legislative Council. . . .

### III. IMPERIAL LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

1. The strength of the Imperial Legislative Council [shall] be 150.
2. Four-fifths of the members shall be elected.
3. The franchise for the Imperial Legislative Council should be widened as far as possible on the lines of the electorates for Mahomedans for the Provincial Legislative Councils, and the elected members of the Provincial Legislative Councils should also form an electorate for the return of members to [the] Imperial Legislative Council.
4. One-third of the Indian elected members should be Mahomedans elected by separate Mahomedan electorates in the several provinces, in the proportion, as may be, in which they are represented on the Provincial Legislative Councils by separate Mahomedan electorates. . . .
16. The Imperial Legislative Council shall have no power to interfere with the Government of India's direction of the military affairs and the foreign and political relations of India, including the declaration of war, the making of peace and the entering into treaties.

### IV. THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

The Governor-General of India will be the head of the Government of India . . . [and] will have an Executive Council, half of whom shall be Indians . . . elected by the elected members of the Imperial Legislative Council. . . .

### V. THE SECRETARY OF STATE IN COUNCIL

1. The Council of the Secretary of State for India should be abolished.
2. The salary of the Secretary of State should be placed on the British Estimates.
3. The Secretary of State should, as far as possible, occupy the same position in relation to the Government of India, as the Secretary of State for the Colonies does in relation to the Governments of the self-Governing Dominions.
4. The Secretary of State for India should be assisted by two permanent Under-Secretaries, one of whom should always be an Indian.

### VI. INDIA AND THE EMPIRE

In any Council or other body which may be constituted or convened for the settlement . . . of Imperial affairs, India shall be adequately represented in like manner with the Dominions and with equal rights. . . . Indians should be placed on a footing of equality in respect of status and rights of citizenship with other subjects of His Majesty the King throughout the Empire.