IN-DEPTH

Partition of India

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A few comments are given below on the article, titled 'Freedom with partition,' by Muhammad Nurul Huda in The Daily Star on August 3, 2013.

Genesis of Partition

Under the 1935 Act in the elections held in October 1936, Congress emerged as the majority party in five provinces and the largest single party in two others. Muslim League's showing was extremely poor, getting only 105 seats out of 498 reserved for Muslims. For various factors the Federation envisaged in the 1935 Act never took off. One of the factors which helped to kill the Federation was the hostility of the Muslim League towards it as the League failed to form a government in any of the provinces.

The Lahore Resolution

There was nothing absolutely inevitable about the partition of India. Prior to 1939 the demand for partition of the country on a communal basis had never been seriously considered. The outbreak of war in September 1939 and the subsequent resignation of the Congress ministries, replaced by Viceroy's rule, introduced a new element in Indian politics; the Congress lost its bargaining power.

With the absence of the Congress from the management of the provinces there was a political vacuum. Viceroy Linlithgow set about strengthening the League so that it would be on equal footing with the Congress. The Viceroy implicitly accepted the League's claim to speak for all the Muslims of India while the Congress was dubbed a Hindu body. The viceroy conveniently ignored the fact that in the elections of 1936 the League had won only 105 out of 489 Muslim seats and did not control a single government in any of the Muslim majority areas. Jinnah was not slow to recognise the changed situation. He remarked: "After the war

Congress started agitating against the British government for taking India into the war without consultation with the Indian leaders. To meet the exigencies of the war, Viceroy Linlithgow set about strengthening the League so that it would be on an equal footing with the Congress.

began . . . I was treated on the same basis as Mr. Gandhi. I was

wonderstruck why all of a sudden I was promoted and given a

place side by side with Mr. Gandhi."

The British government via Linlithgow began to urge Muslim League to put forward "concrete proposals" to counteract Congress's demand for independence. Linlithgow spoke to Jinnah on several occasions, telling him that unless he took some positive actions the League's case would go by It was to counter this situation that the Muslim League

passed the Lahore Resolution on March 23, 1940, which became known as the Pakistan Resolution. Very shrewdly, Jinnah refused to spell out the details of the Lahore Resolution, for which his followers were left free to picture it according to their own imagination. In retrospect, one may term Linlithgow as the "real author" of the Pakistan Resolution.

Cripps' Mission 1942

Why was Cripps chosen for the Indian Mission? The fact is, in March 1942, Cripps had emerged as Churchill's most serious rival. Talk of him as the next prime minister was common. It was the common perception that if Cripps pulled off his mission to India he would certainly have replaced Churchill. With Cripps' known pro-Nehru and pro-Congress bias Churchill must have had a smile on his face as Cripps' mission with the promise of independence after the war was really a Mission Impossible. To cut a long story short, it was Gandhi who was responsible for the failure of the mission. The Cripps Mission 1942 had been dismissed for posterity by the infamous uttering of Gandhi: "A post-dated cheque on a failing bank." Even Muslim League rejected the offer because the creation of 'Pakistan' was conceded by implication only. Needless to say, Cripps' failure was fully engineered by Churchill, after which Cripps was removed as the leader of the House of Commons, as member of the War Cabinet and as Lord Privy Seal. He was relegated to the ministry of aircraft production and had no role to play till the landslide victory of the Labour Party in July 1945, which made him the most powerful minister in the Labour government.

Quit India Movement

After the failure of the Cripps Mission the Congress, at the initiative of Gandhi, launched the Quit India Movement. As this movement stood for disrupting the defence of India against the Japanese invasion, on August 9, 1942 all the Congress leaders were arrested.

After the arrest of the Congress leaders the field was wide open for Jinnah to develop the Muslim League. Very strangely, the provinces where the Muslims were in severe minority became the strongest supporters of Jinnah. When M.C. Chagla, Jinnah's junior in his legal chamber, once asked him what would happen to the Muslims who would be left behind in India, Jinnah looked at Chagla for a while and said: "They will look after themselves, I am not interested in their

Provincial Election, March 1946

ACROSS

8 Swim-

12 Session

14 Emana-

15 Tornado.

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19 Glorifies

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57 Infamous

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58 Feedbag

59 Forsaken

Solution time: 21 mins.

Yesterday's answer 7-10

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On June 14, 1945, all the Congress leaders who were in detention from August 1942 were released. Provincial elections were held in March 1946. "One of the League's most striking electoral successes had been in the Punjab, where Khizar Hayat and the Muslim Unionists, who had previously been in great majority, were reduced after a few defections to mere handful of ten while the League held 79 seats. Though the League was the largest single party, it did not command an absolute majority and was unable to arrange an alliance with any of the other parties. Khizar Hayat was, therefore, allowed to take office as the leader of a Unionist-Congress-Akali Sikh coalition and the Muslim League found itself under what was virtually a non-Muslim government in a Muslim majority province. This caused intense resentment. Muslim League ministries could be formed only in Bengal and Sind. Elsewhere, apart from the Punjab, Congress ministries were installed" (Wavell's Diary, March 8, 1946).

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29 Jog

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Cabinet Mission, March 1946

Three British cabinet ministers, Lord Pethick-Lawrence, Sir Stafford Cripps, and Mr. A.V. Alexander, who were members of the Cabinet Mission, arrived in Karachi on March 23, 1946. "We have come with but one purpose in view," explained the secretary of state. "It is, in conjunction with Lord Wavell, to discuss with the leaders of India . . . how best to speed up fulfilment of your aspirations to full control of your own affairs, and thus to enable us to complete the transfer of responsibility."

There was intense discussion with the Indian leaders for nearly two months. It may be mentioned that in the Transfer of Power documents an entire volume of over 1,000 pages was devoted to the proceedings of the Cabinet Mission.

Cabinet Mission's Final Proposal

The trauma of

partition still haunts

the sub-continent as

the wounds have not

Nehru, Gandhi and

the British

government!

healed even after

On May 16, 1946, the Cabinet Mission conceded that "if there is to be internal peace in India it must be secured by measures that will assure to the Muslims a control in all matters vital to their culture, religion, and economic and other interests." But it rejected the League's demand for Pakistan.

The Cabinet Mission solution, therefore, was to propose a union embracing British India and the Princely States, with central powers limited to foreign affairs, defence, communication and the powers necessary to raise the finances required.

All other subjects and residual powers were to be vested in provinces that would be free to form groups, to be called A, B

Bazar Police Headquarters and sat in the Control Room round the clock during the riot. He despatched truck loads of armed constables but they never reached their destination. He was helpless and the city remained unprotected for five days. On request of Mr. Suhrawardy, the government of the Punjab sent to Calcutta a big contingent of armed constables. They brought the situation under control. Mr. Suhrawardy, risking his life, moved round the city in his car by day and by night. Central Calcutta was the centre of the great killing."

Suhrawardy's culpability is by now a well established tradition. But Hindu leaders were also deeply implicated, a fact which is less well known. More Muslims than Hindus died in the fighting. In characteristically chilling style, Patel summed up the hideous affair with the comment: "Hindus had the best of it" (Patel to R.K. Sidhwa, August 27, 1946. In Durga Das ed., Sardar Patel's Correspondence) (Bengal Divided, Joya Chatterji)

The preparedness of the 'bhadralok' in 1946 for this ugly trial of strength is not surprising, if it is recalled that since the late thirties and the early forties Calcutta and the 'mofussil' towns had seen the establishment of many volunteer groups whose professed aim was to unite Hindus and who devoted much of their energy to encouraging physical fitness and military training among the 'bhadralok' youths. Perhaps the largest and the best organised among these was the Bharat

Sevashram Sangha, the volunteer wing of the Hindu

in the Legislative Assembly, demanded from the viceroy that

a neutral committee be formed to investigate the riots.

Viceroy Wavell formed the committee with Chief Justice

William Patrick Spens as the chairman. When Wavell was

transferred from the post of viceroy, Chief Justice Spens

called on him on March 15, 1947. In his diary Wavell has

recorded: "Spens, Chief Justice, came to say goodbye and we

had a long talk. He says that the Calcutta Enquiry will show

that there was Hindu incitement and a sudden and concerted

attack without provocation on the Muslims in the north of

Calcutta; that the ministry will come out of it all right; that

there was delay in bringing in military owing to faulty infor-

mation; and that Bucher and the military were magnificent

in the Calcutta Riots. Mountbatten, who was carrying the

Congress brief, buried this report (Transfer of Power, April

made up his mind to replace Wavell, who was neutral.

Cripps wanted someone more pro-Congress. For the sake of

appointing a new viceroy a sham meeting of the Indian

leaders was summoned in London in the first week of

This quotation is irrefutable evidence as to who was guilty

During the Cabinet Mission negotiations Cripps had

With the severe communal unrest going on, Suhrawardy,

Mahasabha, (Bengal Divided, Joya Chatterji.)

when called in.'

1947).

December 1946.

The final nail

It is interesting to note that in December 1946 Mountbatten, not being in the picture at all, had offered to be Nehru's host in London, but Nehru decided it was best for him to stay at the Dorchester, where Edwina kept a suite for herself, overlooking Hyde Park. Perhaps it had already become known to Mountbatten that he was going to replace Wavell as the next viceroy. Nehru had chosen to stay at the Dorchester, and not at Claridge's where Jinnah and Liaquat were billeted.

Wavell's visit to London for this summit would be his last. He still had no intimation, however, that he was on his way out of high office. Wavell, Nehru and Jinnah held fruitless talks with Pethick-Lawrence, Cripps and Attlee in early December 1946. The actual purpose of the visit was to arrange a meeting of Mountbatten and Nehru. Irrefutable evidence has now come to light in the shape of so far undisclosed diaries of Stafford Cripps and his wife Isobel Cripps recorded in The Cripps Version by Peter Clarke. During Nehru's short visit, Cripps arranged a dinner where Cripps, Nehru and Mountbatten met and the partition plan was hatched. Mountbatten was to carry out the Congress blueprint. Soon afterwards, an announcement was made by Prime Minister Attlee appointing Lord Mountbatten as the new viceroy to replace Wavell.

It is to be noted that on March 8, 1947, the Congress Working Committee passed some resolutions with the full support of Nehru and Patel. The message in the long-winded resolution was that Congress was willing to accept the principle of Pakistan provided only a few small pieces in the northwest and the northeast were acceded to Pakistan and the rest of India could then be built up into a strong and consolidated India. This entire message was conveyed to Mountbatten prior to his departure from London to take up the viceroyalty in India.

Krishna Menon gave an elaborate note to Mountbatten along with a detailed blue print of the partition of India as envisaged by the Congress. We do not know what transpired between the two in their secret meetings. The fact that the meetings took place comes to light in the letter which Krishna Menon wrote to Mountbatten on March 13, 1947 (Transfer of Power, Vol-9, p.946).

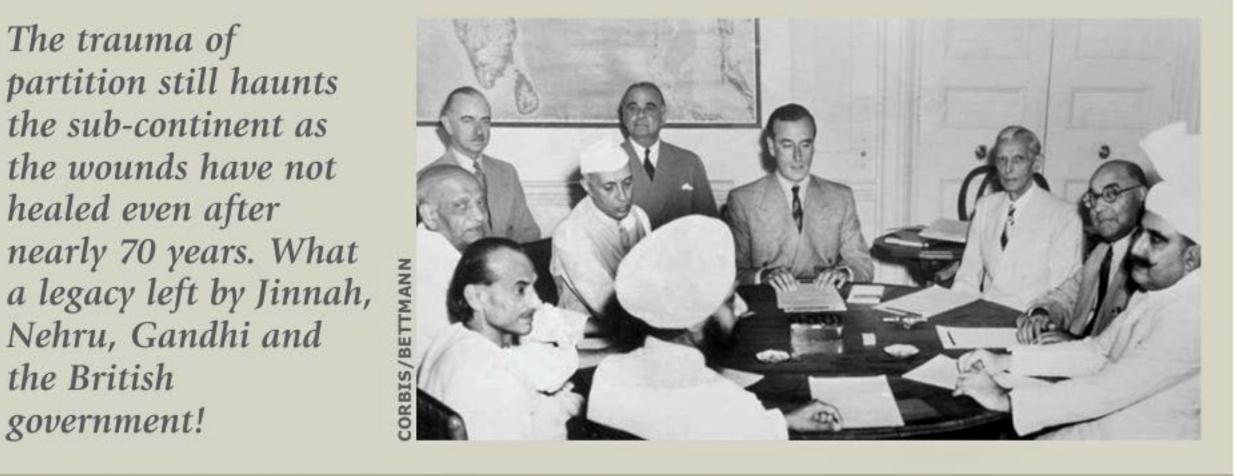
Mountbatten arrived in Delhi on March 22, 1947, and took up the viceroyalty from Wavell on the same day. From day one, Mountbatten got down to business with a great deal of vigour and energy.

On April 15, 1947, Mountbatten met the provincial governors and, as one of his policies, he pointed out that "a quick decision would also give Pakistan a greater chance to fail on its demerits. The great problem was to reveal the limits of Pakistan so that the Muslim League could revert to a unified India with honour. Their excellencies, the governors all agreed that the necessity for an early decision was paramount." We can see that Mountbatten was giving the highest priority to carry out the Congress blueprint involving the entire British administration in India.

As promised, Mountbatten brought the date of Transfer of Power forward from June 30, 1948 to August 15, 1947. This resulted in an estimated twelve million people being dislodged from their homes to cross the borders within a month, with over one million never getting to their destination alive. General Francis Tuker, the GOC of Eastern Command, writes in his book While Memory Serves that 80% of the casualties were Muslims.

The trauma of partition still haunts the sub-continent as the wounds have not healed even after nearly 70 years. What a legacy left by Jinnah, Nehru, Gandhi and the British govern-

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and C. Groups B and C were to embrace Muslim majority areas and Group A was the Hindu majority areas.

It was a remarkable scheme, the last rational hope for a non-violent transfer of power from British to Indian authority. After this declaration the Muslims were jubilant. There was also a clause for the immediate formation of an Indian interim government. The Muslim League accepted the proposal but the Congress accepted it partially, rejecting the grouping system.

At this critical juncture, Azad was replaced by Nehru as Congress president on July 6, 1946. On July 10, 1946, Nehru held a press conference at which he was undiplomatically blunt in insisting that Congress remained "absolutely free and uncommitted" to any details of the plan.

As for the matter of grouping, Nehru suggested there was "a big probability" that there would be "no grouping." The grouping was the most fundamental aspect of the Cabinet

Mission's proposal and its rejection by the Congress resulted in Jinnah withdrawing his approval of the Mission's plan and directed the Muslims for "direct action."

This was one of the darkest periods of the prelude to Pakistan. The horrors of "Direct Action" day on August 16, 1946 in Calcutta are well-known and resulted in complete break-down of Hindu-Muslim relationship India-wide.

Direct Action Day, August 16, 1946

The Indians put the blame for the catastrophe of August 16 squarely on Suhrawardy. For a glimpse of the truth let us look at two reliable sources of the incident. It is to be noted that immediately after Nehru's press conference on July 10, 1946, rejecting the grouping system embodied in a Cabinet Mission Plan, Jinnah convened a meeting of the All-India Muslim League in Bombay on July 19, 1946. The Council adopted a resolution which is known in history as a Direct Action Resolution of the Muslim League. It was resolved to take direct action against the British government for achievement of Pakistan. August 16 was fixed for Direct Action demonstra-

Abul Hashim, General Secretary of Bengal Provincial Muslim League, writes in his book In Retrospect: "The Muslim League had no knowledge, no apprehension and no anticipation as to the unprecedented violence that started in the morning and continued in the afternoon of August 16 when we were all in the midst of the meeting held at the foot of Octerlony Monument. The Muslims were unarmed and unprepared to meet the situation. Men may lie but circumstances never lie. I brought from Burdwan with me my two sons, Badruddin Muhammad Umar, a boy of 15, and Shahabuddin Muhammad Ali, a boy of 8, to show them the great gathering that was expected on the occasion at Calcutta. I took my sons to the Maidan and Lal Miah of Faridpur took his grandson aged six or seven. If we apprehended any danger we would not have taken our sons and grandsons to the Maidan. Mr. Suhrawardy declared August 16 a public holiday. This was a great blunder. Peace-loving Hindus and Muslims had little or nothing to do with the riot. That the riot was organised by agent provocateurs of British Imperialism was fully corroborated by what followed the fateful Direct Action Day. The riot continued in full swing for five days -from August 16 to 20. Mr. Suhrawardy requested the governor of the province to call out the army to help the police restore law and order. The army did not come out. The Calcutta police force was not strong enough to tackle the situation. The commissioner of Calcutta police was an Englishman. Mr. Suhrawardy shifted his headquarters to Lal

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PREFERS USING CURRENT TECHNOLOGY, I

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: K equals T

FINALLY UPGRADED HIM TO A COLLAR ID.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: SINCE MY PET DOG

QUOTABLE Quotes

The problem with the world is that the intelligent people are full of doubts, while the stupid ones are full of confidence?

> Charles Bukowski



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