AUTHOR'S PREFACE

In his recently published book, The British in India, the distinguished Indian scholar, R. P. Masani, writes:

'The histories of [the] last phase of British rule in India which have been published leave several questions unanswered. What efforts were made by Lord Wavell, one of the most conscientious and liberal-minded viceroys of India, to bring together the two warring political parties? What were the circumstances which impelled Attlee as Prime Minister of Britain to change horses midstream and send out Lord Mountbatten to expedite the withdrawal? What endeavours were made to evolve a friendly policy between the Dominions of India and Pakistan? Why did they prove abortive? Why were adequate precautions not taken to avoid the holocaust? The reasons remain to be told dispassionately.'

This book is an attempt to give the reasons, without passion and without partiality.

It is the fruit of three years' research in India, Pakistan and Britain, during which a wealth of material which has not previously been available to the historian was put at my disposal. I have endeavoured, to the best of my ability, to make use of it with no other idea in mind than to fill the gaps in a moving and fantastic story which has, until now, been full of gaping holes. Official documents dealing with the transfer of power in India will not be officially released until 1999, but in the interim period between that date and the present moment, I hope this book will shed some light upon events which have hitherto been obscured.

In addition to the privilege of studying original documents and letters, I have also been fortunate enough to be able to talk to most of those who played a prominent part in the relinquishing of British power in India and
the achievement of Indian and Pakistan independence. Those who were kind enough to talk to me and answer my questions include:

Pandit Nehru, Prime Minister of India; President Ayub Khan of Pakistan; Admiral of the Fleet Earl Mountbatten of Burma; Lord Ismay; Sir Conrad Corfield; Sir George Abell; Sir Evan Jenkins; Mr Chaudri Mohhamed Ali; Shri V. P. Menon; Lord Radcliffe; Begum Liaquat Ali Khan; Shri K. M. Munshi; General K. S. Thimayya; Lieut-Gen. Sir Francis Tuker; Master Tara Singh; Mr Alan Campbell-Johnson; Admiral (S) Ronald Brockman; Rajagopalachari; Mr D. F. Karaka; Mr S. C. Sutton, the Librarian at the India Office Library and many others, Indians and Britons, civilians and soldiers.

I hasten to emphasize that unless they are specifically quoted, none of the opinions expressed in this book is to be attributed to them. But I am most grateful for their help.