should be autonomous in every sense of the word without a vestige of the old restrictions.

'As for the argument that H.M.G. have a moral obligation to safeguard British lives until such time as those who have to leave have been able to make arrangements to do so, it looks as though the numbers are likely to be relatively small and that these could be got away in the next month or two. In any case, responsibility for the protection of all nationals including, of course, British nationals in the sub-Continent of India will from 15th August rest with the Governments of India and Pakistan; and unless both of them specifically ask for British forces to remain to help them carry out this duty, insistence on our part would be tantamount to an admission that we did not trust them to carry out their obligations with their own forces. Finally, if things really blew up, the handful of British troops that would remain in the country could do little to safeguard British lives as a whole.

'The Viceroy has asked me to add: (a) that at the meeting of the India-Burma Committee (I.B. 47, 28th meeting, Item 9) held on 28th May, 1947, he said that there would be every advantage in withdrawing the British forces from India as soon as possible after the enactment of the legislation providing for the transfer of power. The Committee decided to resume consideration of this question after the views of the Chief of Staff had been obtained; and (b) that at his Press conference he gave the impression without saying so in terms that the British troops would be withdrawn when Dominion status had been granted to the two new Dominions.

'In these circumstances, His Excellency has come to the conclusion that it is essential on political grounds that the withdrawal of British forces should be carried out as rapidly as possible. He further considers that a very early announcement of H.M.G.'s decision to do this would have a most excellent political effect. His Excellency therefore proposes subject to your concurrence (a) to submit the above conclusions to the Secretary of State for India and
ask for their endorsement by H.M.G., and (b) to get authority from H.M.G. to inform the leaders of this policy before it is announced, but to tell them that if both parties were to submit a formal request that British forces should remain in this country for say six months to tide over the initial period of transition he would be prepared to forward their request to H.M.G.* He would of course explain that they could only be kept here with proper safeguards.

'The Viceroy would be grateful to have your comments as soon as possible. If it would be any help my coming round and having a talk, I am at your disposal. Yours ever, Ismay.'†

Ismay got a pained reply and the Viceroy a flea in his ear.

'My dear Ismay,' Auchinleck wrote on 20 June, 'Thank you for your letter of June 18 about the withdrawal of British forces from India.

'2. My Paper COS (44) 29B was submitted to the Viceroy in response to a request from him for my views on this subject. The Paper represents my opinion as the Viceroy's adviser on all military matters and was naturally written from the general military point of view. As Commander-in-Chief in India, one of my responsibilities is the maintenance of law and order when so required by the civil authorities.

'3. I adhere to the advice I gave in the Paper under reference but I realize of course that the Viceroy has every right to disregard it for over-riding political considerations. That is solely his responsibility and it is not my business to comment on his decision. It is my duty to accept it and I do accept it.

'4. I am afraid that I can not agree with your opinion that "the handful of British troops" that might remain in the country could do very little to safeguard British lives as a whole. My considered opinion, in which my advisers

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* My italics—L. M.
† Government of India Records.
support me, is that even small forces of British troops at, say, Calcutta, Bombay, Delhi and Karachi, might make all the difference should the tide of feeling in the country take an anti-British or an anti-European turn. I agree that they could do little to protect individual Europeans in country districts, but the bulk of Europeans are concentrated in the larger seaports and towns. I request that this opinion may be recorded and conveyed to H.M.G. in the representations that the Viceroy is going to make on the subject, as I feel that it would give H.M.G. a wrong impression if we were to say that they could do very little. It all depends on the circumstances prevailing at the time, of course, but the above is my opinion given as military adviser to the Viceroy.

‘6. I must in justice to myself and in pursuance of my duty as military adviser to the Viceroy point out that on the withdrawal of British troops, the only instrument which the civil authorities will be able to rely upon for the protection of British and European lives against mob violence will be the Indian Army. That Army will soon be involved in reconstitution during which the majority of its units will not be capable of rendering armed assistance to the civil power even if the Indian officers and men composing them were willing to carry out these duties for the protection of Europeans, which I cannot in any way guarantee.* In order to carry out the reconstitution of the Army in an orderly and logical way, the very large number of units now distributed in small detachments all over Northern India on internal security duties will have to be recalled to undergo reconstitution. Also, for the next six months and more, there will be a continual movement and cross-transfer of units between Pakistan and India which will virtually immobilise the units involved for the time being.

‘7. Moreover, I cannot state with any certainty that during this period of reconstitution the Army will retain its cohesion or remain a reliable instrument for the use of the
civil power in the event of widespread disturbances.* I have dwelt on this aspect of the situation at some length as I wish to make it clear to the Viceroy and through him to H.M.G. that if I am to remain, as I understand is proposed, in central control of the Armed Forces during the process of their reconstitution, I can no longer be responsible in grave emergency for the protection of British lives and property should these be threatened, once the British forces have been withdrawn. I hope that no such need will arise, but it may, and should this happen it is essential that the position in respect of the Indian Armed Forces as it affects myself and my subordinate commanders should be clearly understood by H.M.G. I should very much like to discuss the whole question with you before the Viceroy returns to Delhi. Yours sincerely, Claude Auchinleck. P.S. We talked of this last night but should you wish to discuss the matter further I am at your disposal—as always.’†

One is forced to ask again whether Auchinleck really seriously believed that the British would be put to the sword the moment British troops disappeared from India. Or was this one more way of making his position clear—that he was against the division of the Indian Army, but if the Viceroy and the Indian politicians insisted that it should be done, only the retention of British troops could save the land from grave disturbances.

Whatever his motivations, he certainly could look for no support for them from the Viceroy. Mountbatten was too anxious to keep political peace with the Indian leaders (particularly Congress) to be prepared to risk disturbing it with an argument about the British Army. Both countries were insistent that they should have their own national armies by 15 August, and they did not care what chaos or confusion was caused in the process of getting them, nor whether the Indian Army as an instrument of war was

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* My italics—L. M.
† Government of India Records.
ruined in the process. For them the Indian Army did not have the same mystique as it had for many British officers. They had always looked with a certain distaste upon it as a mercenary organization which had all too often been used against the Indian people to suppress their legitimate political aims. They (the politicians) would certainly not be sorry to see it disbanded and truly national armies (Muslim and Hindu) born in its place.

On the question of the retention of British troops, the Muslim League and Congress differed. Shortly after partition of India was accepted by both parties, Liaquat Ali Khan informally approached Lord Ismay on behalf of Mr Jinnah and asked whether British troops could remain in Pakistan after the transfer of power. He consulted the Viceroy, who said he felt strongly that a unilateral application from one government should be refused. He cabled the Secretary of State for India and formally requested permission, 'that I now be empowered formally to ask the representatives of both future Dominions whether they want the British forces to stay after August 15, (b) that unless both reply in the affirmative, the process of withdrawal should start on August 15 and be completed as quickly as possible, and (c) that if both reply in the affirmative, the provisional date for the withdrawal should be fixed for 1 April, 1948, and be reviewed on 1 January, 1948.'

In the same cable, he mentioned that if the representatives of both new Dominions failed to ask the British to stay, Auchinleck had recommended that HMG should insist that British forces should remain until 1 January 1948, 'to fulfil HMG's moral obligation to safeguard British lives'.

He added: 'I am unable to agree with Auchinleck's recommendation... for the following reasons: (a) Presumably, if British forces were retained against the wishes of the two new Governments, H.M.G. would demand safeguards. These would be most unpalatable to the two new Governments and would defeat our primary job of in-
Introducing complete autonomy from the date of transfer of power. As I have always emphasised, it is by the introduction of this complete autonomy with no reservations that we are going to stand the best chance of India indefinitely retaining Dominion status. . . .”

It was here that Mountbatten revealed one of his great ambitions, now that a settlement had been achieved with the Indian leaders. Having enticed Nehru and his comrades into the Commonwealth with the carrot of immediate independence (Jinnah did not need to be enticed; he came willingly) the Viceroy was determined to keep them there, and prepared to pay a high price in order to do so. Certainly, he was not going to allow Auchinleck to stand in his way.

The Secretary of State for India replied to his cable agreeing with his suggestions (and therefore repudiating Auchinleck) and also conveying permission for Mountbatten to make the requests to the representatives of the two new Dominions about the retention of British forces.

Liaquat Ali Khan answered that Pakistan would be favourably inclined. Nehru replied:

‘I would sooner have every village in India put to the flames than keep the British Army here after August 15.’

Those words were to haunt him later in the year.

But, for the moment, though the pot was simmering it was not yet boiling over. There was rioting and massacre still in the Punjab and in Bihar and Bengal, but compared with what was to come these were mere bush fires, and could either be quenched or contained. Cables went back and forth between London and the Viceroy’s House correcting and amending the Draft Bill. In London there was still a certain lack of understanding of the way the minds of the Congress leaders worked, to judge by some of the clauses in the Draft Bill. One clause specifically retained for Britain the right to maintain a military base in India

* Government of India Records.
after the transfer of power. V. P. Menon rushed in at once with a note to Mieville to say: 'I do not know what decision H.E. has reached on this. With this clause in the Bill, it will not stand circulation among the political leaders. As I mentioned to H. E., this clause will never pass through Congress.'

It was struck out.

A telegram arrived from the India Office saying:

'Problem arises how to describe new personages in the Royal Warrants when they take office. Usual practice is to put Esquire after names, but this hardly seems suitable in present circumstances. Assuming that Patel and Baldev Singh are described as Sardar, Zaheer as Syad, Prasad and Matthai as Doctor, and Nehru as Pandit, and Rajagopalachari as Sri, Bose and Asaf Ali are what?'

Abell replied: 'Prefixes for Patel, Baldev Singh, Prasad, Matthai and Nehru are correct. Bose and Asaf Ali should be Esquire. Rajagopalachari should be Shri not Sri.'

Jinnah heard that both Pakistan and India were referred to in the Draft Bill as 'the Indian Dominions' and sent a tart note of protest. They were thereafter referred to simply as 'the Dominions'.

Sir John Colville, Governor of Bombay, let it be known that he would refuse to stay in his post as Governor after the transfer of power unless he were allowed to fly a Union Jack or some sort of flag with a Union Jack.*

In the case of the flags for the new Dominions, the Viceroy had not been inactive. Among his hobbies, along with the compilation of his family tree, was heraldry and design. He himself sketched and prepared the design for the flags of both Pakistan and India. One was based on the flag of Congress—with Gandhi’s spinning wheel—and the other on the Muslim League’s crescent. To each he added a small Union Jack, one ninth in area, sewn into the upper canton. He sent them to Jinnah and Nehru for their approval, as 'helpful suggestions'.

* Sir John did stay on after Independence and stoutly flew the Union Jack on all British occasions.
Jinnah coldly replied that in no circumstances could the design be accepted as it would be repugnant to the religious feelings of the Muslims to have a Christian Cross alongside the Crescent. Nehru rejected the design on the grounds that, although Gandhi and Sardar Patel and others had originally expressed their willingness to accept it, he had now come to the conclusion that the prevailing feeling among Congress extremists was that the leaders were pandering to the British. This had reached a point where it was inadvisable to press the design upon them. Nehru sent the Viceroy a design prepared by Congress which showed the Dominion flag as closely resembling the Congress flag, but with the wheel of the Sarnath Asoka replacing the spinning wheel. And, of course, no Union Jack.

It was the ubiquitous V. P. Menon who also noticed in the Draft Bill that 'the India Office appear to be assuming that His Excellency would be asked by both parties (Pakistan and India) to become Governor General of the two new Dominions. It appears that the India Office were expecting both Mr Jinnah and Pandit Nehru to write letters asking the Viceroy to accept this post, and that it would be possible to quote these letters in Parliament.'*

Menon gave it as his opinion that someone had better hurry and get the letter from Jinnah immediately, because he anticipated trouble.

He was quite right. The question of who was to be Governor General of Pakistan was to cause Mountbatten one of his worst embarrassments in the whole business of the transfer of power.

It had all begun on 17 May 1947, the day before the Viceroy left for London with the new Menon-drafted Plan for the transfer of power. Nehru had, of course, seen this Plan, and, in accepting it in principle, he wrote to Mountbatten:

'We [Congress] agree to the proposal that during this interim period [of Dominion status] the Governor General

* Government of India Records.
of the two Dominions should be common to both States. . . . For our part we should be happy if you would continue in this office and help us with your advice and experience."

The idea appealed to Mountbatten tremendously. He got a good deal of pleasure out of contemplating the history books of the future in which he would be named, not only as the man who discovered how to give India independence, but also as the one who taught the two infant Dominions how to walk and talk. From a practical point of view, too, there were obvious advantages. The task, the awesomely complicated task, of dividing India’s assets between the two countries had already begun, and so had the quarrels. Two Indians of great talent—one, a Muslim, Chaudri Mohammed Ali, the other a Hindu, H. M. Patel, but both close friends—were in charge of the operation and they worked together in harmony and with understanding of each other’s problems. But they were under constant fire from the politicians—Mohammed Ali for not getting enough, H. M. Patel for giving away too much. A joint Governor General could obviously do much to smooth the operation by impartial judgement and arbitration.

Mountbatten indicated to Nehru and Patel that he would accept their offer with great happiness, but he pointed out that it would be difficult for him to remain as Governor General of one Dominion only. He hoped to receive a similar invitation from the Muslim League.

That same day, he called Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan in to see him. He told them that he was taking the Plan to London the following day, and that he intended to recommend that His Majesty’s Government should grant both Pakistan and India their independence as soon as possible, preferably 1 October. (This was 17 May, remember. Mountbatten had not yet decided to rush independence forward even more quickly.) The question which would require clarification was whether Mr Jinnah

* Government of India Records.
would prefer Pakistan to have its own Governor General or share a common Governor General with India. He asked for Mr Jinnah’s personal view.

The moment Jinnah considered that he was being rushed, he became immediately suspicious; his instinct was to retire to his cave and roll a stone in front of the opening. He reacted in such a fashion now. He said he could not possibly commit himself on this subject straight away. Jogged by the Viceroy, he then admitted that he had given the matter some thought and that he felt it would be better to have two Governors General. He also felt that there should be a Representative of the Crown who would be responsible for the division of the assets between the two States. Jinnah indicated that he was very keen that Mountbatten should fill this post, for, he went on, with a certainunction, ‘I have complete faith in the impartiality of Your Excellency and all your awards would be binding. Moreover, I am extremely anxious that you should remain in India, for we have need of you.’

The Viceroy replied that he was honoured by Mr Jinnah’s remarks. However, he had not considered taking on such a post nor could he think of anyone else who would wish to do so. In any case, he pointed out, it would be an untenable position if a so-called ‘Arbitrator’ was junior in rank to the Governors General, who would be the King’s representatives.

Jinnah promised that he would send the Viceroy a letter by the following Monday (19 May) with a full description of his proposal for a Supreme Arbitrator and two Governors General. ‘But let it be clear’ said the Viceroy, ‘that I reserve my personal position until you, Mr Jinnah, clearly state in your letter that if your scheme is found by H.M.G. to be impracticable, you will accept as a less desirable alternative and as an interim measure the appointment of one Governor General between the two States.’

Jinnah bridled immediately. He refused to suggest any such thing. But Mountbatten was determined that he

* Government of India Records.
should not go away without some concession having been extracted, and he kept the discussion going until Jinnah finally decided first to think it over and, second, to deliver his letter on 19 May to Sir Eric Mieville, who would cable it to Mountbatten in London.

During the next week, Mieville visited Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan repeatedly and asked for the letter. He never obtained it. The Muslim League leader would never say that he was not going to write it, but he never wrote it either. In the end, the Jinnah idea of a Supreme Arbitrator was put verbally to representatives of the India Office by Mountbatten for an opinion, and, of course, they agreed with him that such a post would be unconstitutional and unworkable.

He came back from London to Delhi more determined than ever to persuade the Muslim League leader that he (the Viceroy) should become joint Governor General. It should surely have been obvious to him by this time that Jinnah, selfish, proud, jealous, was going to allow no such thing, but Mountbatten persisted. It had become for him a matter of pride, too; and it was also rapidly becoming a matter of wills.

The Viceroy at one point thought of calling in Sir Walter (now Lord) Monckton, who was in India as legal adviser to the Nizam of Hyderabad, and having him concoct a convincing case for the Viceroy’s assumption of the twin positions. Ismay hurriedly replied that there was no need to call in an outsider. In a memorandum he wrote (on 8 June):

‘We have considered the advantages of Hindustan and Pakistan having the same man as Governor General. We suggest that they are broadly as follows: I. You personally have earned the confidence and trust of both parties. This is by far the most important factor. II. There will be an immediate number of standstill orders and although both dominions will become autonomous it will be essential for certain matters to be run on a unified basis until they can be separated. A good example of this is the Army. In all these matters your personal assistance to-
wards enabling an agreement to be reached would be of the utmost benefit. III. If there were separate Governors General, one for each Dominion, they and their Governments would look at all problems purely from their own point of view. There would be nobody whatsoever in India as a whole capable of taking a completely impartial viewpoint. Incidentally, two Governors General would be more expensive than one. IV. Pakistan would stand to gain even more from your continued presence than would Hindustan, because they are the weaker party and because Hindustan at present has nine points of the law. . . .”*

He ended by suggesting that: ‘a number of your Staff should see Mr Jinnah, that he should find out which way the wind was blowing, and that he should point out the immense advantages which Pakistan would gain from having the same man as Governor General.’

It was not, however, quite so easy to see Mr Jinnah. The old man was brooding in his cave. In desperation, Ismay and Sir Eric Mieville went to see Liaquat Ali Khan on 20 June.

‘I told Mr Liaquat Ali Khan,’ Ismay reported later, ‘that we had already received certain propositions for the Draft Bill and that the Bill might reach us on Monday or Tuesday next. Meanwhile, H.M.G. had asked us to consult the Indian leaders on the following points: (a) Was there to be a common Governor General to start with, and (b) What was to be the procedure for appointing Governors? As regards (a) I reminded him of a conversation which I and Sir Eric Mieville had had with him some days ago. He said that he had not yet had the opportunity of talking it over with Mr Jinnah. I pressed upon him the urgency of this matter and emphasized how impossible it would be to get any sort of continuity or any sort of orderly partition if each Dominion had a separate Governor General. He said he would consult Mr Jinnah at the earliest possible moment.*

* Government of India Records.
But of course, Liaquat Ali Khan knew that this was a subject upon which his chief preferred to keep his own counsel, and he was far too terrified of him to insist. Jinnah rarely took his subordinates into his confidence, and certainly did not allow them to influence his decisions.

The hours ticked away until 23 June. On that day, the Viceroy sent for Jinnah. Mountbatten said that he was not raising it on personal grounds, but he must really ask him to give his earnest and earliest consideration as to whom he would wish to be the first Governor General of Pakistan. The Viceroy pointed out that, while he did stress the advantages of having, during the partition period, a common Governor General for both Dominions, he must make it abundantly clear that he was not asking for the appointment for himself, and that it was an entirely free choice of the two Dominions concerned.

He also explained that an early decision was required because it affected a clause in the Bill which was shortly to be laid before Parliament. Jinnah saw a perfect opportunity to change the subject and remarked that he trusted he would be able to see the Bill and be allowed to comment upon it.

The Viceroy told him that he had had a great tussle with His Majesty’s Government, who had taken the line that it was entirely contrary to Parliamentary procedure for anyone outside the Government to see a Bill before its presentation before the House of Commons. He had, however, fought hard and won, and Mr Jinnah would be allowed to see the Bill,* although he could not allow him to take a copy away. As Jinnah was about to comment, the Viceroy brought him smartly back to the point.

‘Reverting to the question of the Governor General,’ he began. Jinnah interrupted him and said:

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* Shortly before the Bill came before Parliament, the Indian leaders met at the Viceroy’s House and were given copies of the Bill. They were then shown into private rooms and, with their legal advisers, allowed to study it for two hours, after which they handed it back.
‘So far as the decision I shall reach is concerned, I hope it will not be interpreted as not wanting Your Excellency, in whom I have implicit trust and confidence. But it is a rule of my life that I must always consider the interests of my people. At various times in my life, I have had to pass over those nearest and dearest to me. But I have my duty to do.’

After this pious statement, he added: ‘I hope to let Your Excellency have my decision in two or three days’ time.’

Mountbatten waited and waited and waited, but still the reply did not come. It was not until 2 July, nine days after their interview, that Jinnah finally conveyed the information that he himself had decided to be the first Governor General of Pakistan. But even that did not convince the Viceroy that he had lost the battle. On the morning of 2 July a Staff meeting was solemnly called at Lord Ismay’s house ‘to consider the consequences of Mr Jinnah’s declared wish to be Governor General of Pakistan.’ The main purpose of the meeting was ‘to devise a formula whereby His Excellency the Viceroy could remain Governor General of both Dominions and, at the same time, satisfy Mr Jinnah’s vanity’.*

That evening, the Viceroy decided to fight one more round before conceding defeat. He sent for the Nawab of Bhopal, whom he knew to be a trusted friend of Jinnah, and asked him to see the Muslim League leader and ask him to reconsider his decision. Bhopal left his capital and came to Delhi at considerable inconvenience, and did as he was bid. But the old man was adamant.

On the morning of 5 July, Liaquat Ali Khan confirmed in a letter to the Viceroy that Jinnah had made up his mind and asked his Excellency formally to recommend to the King the name of Mohammed Ali Jinnah as Governor General of Pakistan. In the same letter, he expressed the

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* Government of India Records.
hope that Mountbatten would stay on as Governor General
of India—and this hope was reinforced by a message from
Nehru and Sardar Patel, both of whom expressed the wish
that he would remain as Governor General of India.

But should he do so?

The Viceroy’s Staff argued and debated the question
for many a long hour. The general consensus of opinion
was that Mountbatten should stay on, on the following
grounds:

‘1. It was felt that Field Marshal Auchinleck would
resign if the Viceroy left, and British officers in the Armed
Forces would refuse to stay on, which would mean that
nationalization of the Indian Army would be taking place
at the same time as its partition, with disastrous results.
[“The one stable element in India, namely the Indian
Army,” said Ismay, “will disintegrate. Riot and appalling
bloodshed would result.”] If, on the other hand, His Ex-
cellency remained, British officers and officials as a whole
would be more likely to volunteer to remain themselves.
This would apply to both new Dominions. The result
would be that partition of the Armed Forces would go
through smoothly;

‘2. Smooth partition and His Excellency’s general in-
formation on other matters would, it was felt, mean that
relations between India and Pakistan would stand a good
chance of being friendly. One of the first objectives of
Indian policy should be the maintenance of good relations
with Pakistan, and vice versa. If the Viceroy were to go,
one of the main reasons for a deterioration in the relations
between the two Dominions would be that Congress would
feel that it was because of Mr Jinnah’s action that His
Excellency had not stayed on and that he [Jinnah] had
again sabotaged their plans.

‘3. It was also thought that if the Viceroy stayed there
would be a greater chance of stability within the Dominion
of India itself. Although there was still communal tension,
the situation had improved out of all measure in the past three months as a result of His Excellency’s presence.

‘4. It was also stressed that His Excellency would probably be the only independent agency capable of resolving the differences which were bound to arise between India and the Princely States, and that his advice to the Indian Government on how to deal with the States and their Rulers would be invaluable.

‘5. It was further pointed out that though the reactions on the “Westminster front” were unpredictable, the (Tory) Opposition would be unlikely to oppose the passage of the Indian Independence Bill if they knew that the Viceroy was going to stay on. Ismay emphasised that if the Opposition turned sour at the prospect of two Governors General of Indian origin in the two new Dominions, they could so delay the passage of the Bill that it would not be possible to transfer power on 15 August.’*

The Viceroy’s Staff, therefore, jointly agreed that Mountbatten should be advised to accept the invitation of Nehru and Patel and stay on as Governor General of India only.

Having convinced themselves, it was up to them to convince the Government and Opposition at home. On 7 July, Ismay flew to London. There he saw the Prime Minister, Mr Attlee, and the leaders of the Opposition. He went down to Chartwell to see Winston Churchill. He went to Buckingham Palace to see King George the Sixth. He argued long and eloquently along the lines which have been set out above.

As a result, all doubts crumpled. Even Churchill urged Mountbatten to stay on because, he said, his role would be valuable in mitigating ‘the communal tension, preserving the interests of the Princes, and strengthening the ties of sentiment between India and the rest of the Common-wealth’.

* Based on a summary in India Government Records.
On 4 July 1947 the Indian Independence Bill was introduced in the House of Commons, and passed into law a fortnight later. It included a clause confirming the appointment of Admiral Lord Mountbatten as the first Governor General of India. There was also a clause confirming the appointment of Mohammed Ali Jinnah as Governor General of Pakistan. Neither man had any doubt who had emerged the victor from the manoeuvres and intrigues of the past few weeks.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE DOWNFALL OF THE PRINCES

Shortly before he left for India to become the last of the Viceroy's, Lord Mountbatten was summoned by the King to Buckingham Palace. During their talk, George the Sixth mentioned that he was particularly worried about the position of the Indian Princes in the coming negotiations, since they enjoyed direct treaty relations with Britain and these would inevitably be broken when independence came for British India. Unless they made preparations to establish some liaison with the new State or States which would emerge from the transfer or power, the Princess might find themselves in a dangerous vacuum. He urged Mountbatten 'as my cousin' to persuade them to accept the inevitable and come to some arrangement with the new regime or regimes beyond their frontiers.

Whether the King meant by this that he wanted the States to 'join up' or merely to establish federal relations with independent India is not clear. Certainly, Mountbatten interpreted his mission as one to get the Princes somehow or other into one Dominion or another. Unlike his cousin, he did not have much time or admiration for
the Indian princes, whom he regarded as semi-enlightened autocrats at their best and squalid degenerates at their worst. He called them 'a bunch of nitwits' for not democratizing their administrations when they saw the power of Congress rising and for not joining the Indian Federation when they had the opportunity in 1935.

The bold front which some of the Princes, particularly the Nawab of Bhopal, had hoped to present to the politicians in British India was already in disarray by the time Congress and the Muslim League had agreed to accept the Plan for Indian independence, and the situation deteriorated rapidly thereafter. As Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes, Bhopal was given a prior look at the general outline of the Independence Bill (even before the Congress and Muslim Leaders saw it), for it was felt that his word not to divulge its contents was rather more likely to be kept than that of the politicians. His immediate reaction was to ask whether it was the intention of His Majesty's Government to grant Dominion status to individual Princely States in the same way as Pakistan and India. The Viceroy replied that this was not HMG's intention. Bhopal, thereupon, bitterly complained that the British were once more letting the Princely States down, and that he, as the Muslim prince of a Hindu state, would be put at the mercy of Congress.

Three days later, he resigned his position as Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes and announced that he would consider himself free and independent the moment the British departed from India to choose the destiny of his State for himself. He left Mountbatten in no doubt that he abhorred Congress and would have nothing to do with a Congress-dominated India. These were brave words, but they were not very realistic. The Viceroy, while agreeing that the Independence Bill contained the words: 'On the other hand, should any State not enter into a relationship with a Dominion, we should be forced to consider a separate relationship with it', flatly informed the Princess that he would consider any representations from the Princely
States on this matter as 'purely hypothetical'. He was resolved to do nothing about it.

In any case, he realized that the scurry for shelter had already begun. The Maharajah of Bikaner had already gathered a considerable number of important Princes together into a group which had expressed its willingness to join the Indian Federation before independence, and would, therefore, become part of India after the transfer of power. They hoped in this way that they would safeguard their rights and privileges. Like Bhopal, who hoped by a show of independence to do the same, they were doomed to disappointment.

It was perhaps typical of Mountbatten's attitude towards them all that he warmly supported Sir Eric Mieville when he suggested that a good way to persuade the Princes to join either the Indian or the Pakistan Constituent Assemblies would be to point out that 'if they fail to join either, they will be outside the Commonwealth and therefore ineligible for future decorations from the King'. To sweeten them further, particularly the minor Princes, the King announced that he was extending the style of Highness to all rulers with a salute of nine guns, and to their lawful wives and widows. George Abell hastily recommended that this concession should not be mentioned to a meeting of the Princes which was due that day, for although it would please and make more amenable the minor Princes to whom the title was now extended, it would not please the more important Princes who already had this privilege.

At the same time, the King indicated that he would be prepared to grant the title of His Highness to the second son of the Nizam of Hyderabad. The Viceroy said he had asked for this because he realized that in future negotiations the Nizam was going to be difficult, and this grant might tip the scales in favour of the Nizam's co-operating.

In truth, the Indian Princes were on the verge of panic and practically on the run. The Political Adviser, Sir Conrad Corfield, had tried from the moment independence for British India became inevitable to persuade them (a)
to liberalize their administrations, and (b) to form a solid block with which to resist the encroachment of the politicians of British India. He was a convinced royalist himself and he hoped that the presence of a ‘cousin of the King’ as Viceroy would give him the backing he needed to keep the Indian Princes out of the hands of the Indian politicians, particularly Congress politicians.

To his dismay, he found the Viceroy extremely unsympathetic. He did not seem to be worried about the future of the Princes. ‘When the date (for the transfer of power) was fixed for August 15,’ wrote Sir Conrad Corfield, in a note to the author, ‘it became more important than ever that he should appreciate the difficult position of the Indian States. It proved impossible, however, to distract his attention from British Indian problems.’

For the Indian Princes had much to lose. Vast incomes, for instance, from customs and taxes and mineral wealth, which until now they alone had controlled. Almost godlike privileges, which their subjects might deny only at the risk of their livelihood or their freedom. The power to decide, with no one to gainsay them, whether their people should live in squalor or comfort, and whether they themselves should be profligate or sober and just. It is true that some of the rulers were wise, employed professional premiers who ran their administrations, and did not waste all their privy purse on dancing girls and wild living; but even these rulers were autocrats, often ruling by whim. It is true that Sir Conrad Corfield, as head of the Political Department, had the power to remove those Princes who indulged in ‘excesses’, but excesses never included political persecution, and no ruler was ever removed for imprisoning those who tried to bring democracy to his State.

Corfield has since confessed to the author that he regrets this. He feels that the history of the Indian Princely States might have been changed had the British intervened more freely in their affairs and insisted that they ‘constitutionalize their authority, limit their private expenditure, and group themselves into viable units’. He admits that the
Crown should have proffered more advice to secure these reforms. ‘But how could the Crown do so,’ he says, perhaps a little disingenuously, ‘when the Rulers were the first to point out that pressure would be contrary to treaties and engagements governing their relationship?’

Corfield was determined, however, to do two things when independence came for British India. He set out to make sure that at least two or three Princely States, chief among them being Hyderabad, would be saved from engulfment by Congress. He also decided that he would make it as difficult as could be for the other States to be absorbed.

For this he used the instrument known as ‘Paramountcy’. The Princely States had treaties with the British Crown. Otherwise, they were completely independent States, owing no sort of allegiance to British India. When the transfer of power took place, paramountcy would automatically lapse—and the Princely States would immediately get back those powers which had been taken over by the British. In other words, all of them, the largest and smallest of them, would become independent States. They would be within their rights in expelling from the territory troops of the Indian Army, which had been stationed there by agreement with the British. Indian railways, which ran through their States by agreements arranged by the British, would be stopped. Indian post and telegraph offices, which operated under a franchise from the British, could be closed. Passage through the States from one part of British India to another could be barred.

Pandit Nehru and his Congress colleagues argued that the Princely States could never really call themselves independent because ‘they had not the power to declare war or conduct their own foreign affairs’. They must therefore, Nehru insisted, come to some interim arrangement to ensure a continuity of agreements with the rest of India, and absorb themselves into the new Indian Dominion without delay.
This was something Sir Conrad Corfield was determined to prevent.

Having failed to interest the Viceroy in his problems, he had for some time been carrying on a direct correspondence with the Secretary of State for India in London, Lord Listowel, who, for a Labour Minister, showed surprising sympathy for Sir Conrad’s view that the paramountcy which Britain held over the Princely States should not, at any price, be handed over to the new Indian Dominion.

When Lord Ismay and Mr George Abell left for London in May 1947, with the first and disastrous (or Dickie Bird) Plan for Independence, Sir Conrad went with them. He told the Viceroy that he was going home to ‘arrange about the lapse of paramountcy’. He said afterwards:

‘I don’t think he understood, and I did not explain, what the lapse of paramountcy would mean. My job was to look after the interests of the Princely States. It was no part of my job to make things easier for India.’*

In London, Corfield had several talks with Lord Listowel and secured from him a pledge to which both the Secretary of State for India and the Government afterwards stuck, despite repeated protests from Mountbatten and the Indian leaders. He agreed with Corfield to include a clause in the India Independence Bill which lapsed paramountcy only on the day when India became independent, so that India—unless it could make arrangements by agreement beforehand—would be confronted on 15 August by nearly six hundred Princely States containing a hundred million people, each State completely independent. As Pandit Nehru afterwards said, this would go a long way towards the process which he called ‘the Balkanization of India’.

This plan of Corfield’s might well have succeeded in creating chaos and confusion for India had it not been for an act of omission, no doubt inadvertent, which earned him the antagonism of the Viceroy. It will be remembered that when the first or ‘Dickie Bird’ Plan was abandoned in

* In conversation with the author.
favour of the second or Menon Plan for independence, the Cabinet summoned Mountbatten to London and the Viceroy agreed, somewhat reluctantly, to go.

He cabled for his York aircraft (which had taken Ismay, Abell and Corfield to London with the first plan) to be sent back to him. Corfield, having obtained all that he wanted from Lord Listowel, came back in it. And here he made an error—though, as has been said, it was no doubt inadvertent. He did not tell the Viceroy of his negotiations in London or even inform him of his return. Instead, the moment the Viceroy left for London in the York plane, Sir Conrad Corfield immediately went to work on the brief which he believed (rightly, as it turned out) he had received from Lord Listowel.

He ordered his Staff in the Political Department to begin cancelling all the arrangements, such as the stationing of troops, the operation of railways, the working of post offices, customs and such like, which had been made between the Paramount Power (Britain), acting on behalf of the Princely States, and British India. He also ordered his subordinates to extract from the files all the confidential reports and communications which had taken place between his Department and the Princes, including those murky and squalid occasions when Princes had had to be rebuked or disciplined or removed for their excesses. These files he ordered to be burned. The file on the ‘Mr A. case’ involving the Maharajah of Kashmir was consigned to the flames, as were those concerning the pyromaniac tendencies of the Maharajah of Alwar, the murder of the dancing girl Mumtaz Mahal, and other notorious scandals; also other predilections and peccadilloes of the Princes which had not, for one reason or another, ever been allowed to become public. Altogether, four tons of papers concerning the Princes were destroyed. Certain others were shipped by diplomatic bag to the Imperial archives in London, to be sifted there.

Mountbatten was annoyed by Corfield’s neglect to get in touch with him and by the excess of zeal and speed with
which he started to execute what he believed to be his
dominated duty to the Princes.
It was only when his plane was flying between Delhi
and Karachi on its way to London, that a member of the
crew mentioned to the Viceroy that Sir Conrad Corfield
had been a passenger on the journey the other way. He
scribbled a message to V. P. Menon, who was a passenger
with him, saying:
'D'you know what that son-of-a-bitch Corfield has
done?'
'No, what?' scribbled back Menon.
'Sneaked back to India without telling me. I wonder
what he's up to?'
From this moment, the position of Corfield and the
Princes deteriorated rapidly. On 13 June, a meeting was
held at the Viceroy's House over which Mountbatten pre-
sided, and Nehru, Jinnah and Conrad Corfield were among
those present. It was obvious from the start that Nehru
was in a boiling rage, and when he rose to speak he lashed
out at Corfield.
'By what right have the Political Department,' he asked,
'gone ahead and taken action that will be highly injurious
to the Government of India?'
He soon made it obvious that he was referring to the
Political Department's action in relinquishing rights ac-
quired by the British through paramountcy in the Princely
States.
'I have been writing letters on this subject for four
months,' said Nehru, 'and have got nowhere. I and my
colleagues have not till now been shown the common
courtesy of being brought into consultation. A completely
unilateral action has been taken.' Then, turning to the
Political Adviser, he said: 'I charge the Political Depart-
ment and Sir Conrad Corfield particularly with misfeas-
ance. I consider that a judicial enquiry on the highest
level into their actions is necessary.'*

* Government of India Records.
He sat down, obviously in the grip of violent emotion. Sir Conrad Corfield looked at Mountbatten to see whether he would rebuke Nehru for his extraordinary attack, but the Viceroy remained silent. Eventually, Jinnah drew back his chair and said frigidly:

'If Mr Nehru is to introduce emotion, bombast and unfounded allegations into the discussion, it does not seem worth while going on with the meeting.'

Corfield rose and said smoothly:

'I have nothing to hide. Everywhere I have acted under the instructions of the Crown Representative and with the approval of the Secretary of State. As to the relinquishing of rights, it has been accepted by the Secretary of State that if such rights were retained by the Paramount Power up to the very date of transfer, His Majesty's Government would be false to their promise that paramountcy would not be transferred to the new Dominions.'*

Both Nehru and Jinnah, the latter more mildly, then attacked Sir Conrad of his destruction of State documents. He replied that the process he was following was being carried out in consultation with the Imperial Record Department, which was a very skilled body. He was ready to give his guarantee that nothing of value would be destroyed. But he was obviously determined that nothing should get into the hands of the politicians which might give them a stick with which to beat the Princes. While the documents were being sorted, he said, there would be some which should not be handed over to the Government of India; but he agreed in future not to put them to the flames but to hand them over to the U.K. High Commissioner.

It was at this meeting that Nehru announced that the Congress Party had accepted a suggestion that a States Department be formed to deal with the Princes, and Jinnah thereupon said that the Muslim League would do the same. Corfield strenuously objected. He contended that though each Dominion could decide this question for

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* Government of India Records.
itself after the transfer of power, it would not be in keeping with the spirit of British promises to the Princes if these Ministries were allowed to be established in advance of the transfer.

'It seems to me,' he said, 'that whatever the safeguards or precautions, these Ministries will, if established under the aegis of the Crown, be looked upon and will behave as though they have inherited the paramountcy which the Political Department has exercised hitherto.'*

He protested in vain. The meeting ended with baleful glances between Corfield and Nehru, and an icy politeness between Corfield and the Viceroy. Next day, the Viceroy tried to make amends for his failure to support his subordinate the day before. He wished to take this opportunity of telling Sir Conrad, he said, what he thought about the attack which had been made upon him at the last meeting with the Indian leaders by Pandit Nehru. He explained that it had always been his policy to refuse to enter into discussions with the Indian leaders concerning the behaviour of British officials. Nevertheless, he felt that on the occasion referred to he should perhaps have made it absolutely clear to Nehru (who was, however, not present on this occasion) that he, of course, completely dissociated himself from the latter's remarks and was unable to consider accepting the strictures which he had made. He added that he could not believe that Pandit Nehru would even have followed up his accusations if he had been asked to substantiate them, or had been told that they would be gone into carefully.

Sir Conrad accepted the gesture with a cool nod. Relations between the two men were henceforth extremely strained.

For Sir Conrad, however, there were two great consolations. He had, first, seen to it that documents likely to help the Indian Government in their relations with the Princes had been destroyed or whisked out of their reach;

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* Government of India Records.
and, second, he had made sure that in no circumstances would paramountcy be passed on to either of the new Dominions. He bustled around among the more important Princes stressing that, when the transfer of power came, they had three choices and not two for their future. They could opt to join either Pakistan or India, but they could also decide not to accede at all and declare themselves independent. He stressed this interpretation of the Indian Independence Bill was not just his own, but also that of the Secretary of State.

The Maharajah of Travancore was sufficiently encouraged by this to announce that his would become an independent sovereign State after 15 August, and that he was appointing a trade agent with Pakistan. The next day, the Nizam of Hyderabad announced that his State would also remain independent.

It looked for a time as if Sir Conrad was winning his battle on behalf of the Princess. Congress was alarmed and alerted. A meeting was called in Delhi on 14 June by the All-India Congress Committee to protest against the ‘Balkanization’ of the country. A strongly worded resolution was passed declaring that Congress did not agree with the British Government’s interpretation of paramountcy. It maintained that relations between India and the States could not be adversely affected by the lapse of paramountcy, and refused to admit the right of any State to declare its independence and live in isolation from the rest of India.

But Sir Conrad told his Princes to hold firm. The position was clear: On 15 August paramountcy ended; they were free. And many a Prince, whose private armies had been built up to great strength during the War, began to flex his muscles and smell the untrammelled independence ahead, when the British nanny would have been called away and there would be no one to say to him nay.

The best hope that Sir Conrad had of seeing an independent Princely State established was in Hyderabad, where the territory was vast, the coffers were full, the
Nizam was fiercely anti-Congress, and his army was large and well-run. There was only one trouble here. The Indian Army had nearly a division of troops inside the State, and one of the reasons why Sir Conrad was so anxious to relinquish arrangements with the States in such a hurry was to get these troops out. But in this case, he had no luck. Repeated requests to Baldev Singh, the Defence Member, had been side-tracked.

In desperation, Sir Walter Monckton, the Nizam’s legal adviser, wrote to Ismay on 22 June to ask him to persuade the Viceroy to intervene.

He wrote: ‘I am by no means at the end of my troubles here [in Hyderabad]. The State has been pressing the Political Department for the removal of the Indian Army troops from our cantonments. There are 7 or 8,000 Indian Army fighting troops in the State including armoured formations. The Nizam thinks it quite intolerable that they should remain here after the 15th of August. They would in effect be an Army of Occupation. But such pressure as the Political Department has been able to exert has been quite ineffective. Whether the Defence Member is stalling or not, I don’t know; but it does look as if those who will form the Government of the Indian Union would not be unwilling to find themselves with an Army of Occupation here. I spoke to the C-in-C. [Auchinleck] about it and he said (privately) that we should have nothing to worry about while he was directing the Army. This is cold comfort.

‘The Crown Representative is still the Crown Representative and he could direct the Government to take steps to move the troops out of State territory by the 15th August.

‘The State is writing a further letter asking for information about the dates and stages of the programme by which the troops will be removed, in view of the acceleration of the departure of the British. The letter will ask for a reply within a specified time. If no reply is forthcoming, a question will be asked in the House giving the steps taken by
the State and the result, and asking whether this Army of Occupation will be permitted to remain.’

It was the first major move in the struggle for Hyderabad’s future which was to intensify in the days to come. V. P. Menon wrote in his *The Integration of the Princely States* that any decision which allowed the States, comprising two-fifths of the land, to ‘return to a state of complete political isolation was fraught with the gravest danger to the integrity of the country’.

He added: ‘The prophets of gloom predicted that the ship of Indian freedom would founder on the rock of the States.’

Sir Conrad Corfield and other defenders of the Princes were, however, being a little too optimistic. At the very moment that they breathed the heady air of victory something came out of the blue and floored them.

The blow came from the clasped hands of those two able political operators, Sardar Patel and our old friend V. P. Menon. When the Congress Party had decided to form a States Ministry they picked Patel as the obvious man to head it. Their mood was belligerent. They despised the Princes and they resented the British for lapsing paramountcy. They hoped and expected that the strong man of the Party would roll up his dhoti and wade in with sound, fury, and effect.

Patel was far too wily a negotiator to do any such thing, particularly since he had the measure of Sir Conrad Corfield and admired him as a skilled and dangerous adversary. This was, he decided, no time for flailing fists and loud cries of screaming rage and fury. The blow must be subtle, unexpected, and must leave no unnecessary bruises.

Three days after his own appointment, he called in V. P. Menon and asked him to accept the job of Secretary of the States Department. ‘I told Sardar,’ Menon wrote later, ‘that it was my intention to take all the leave I had earned and to retire from Government service after 15 August. Ever since 1917, I had been dealing with constitutional

* Government of India Records.
reforms. I have never expected that I would see freedom for India in my lifetime. Since that had materialised, my life’s ambition was achieved.... Sardar told me that because of the abnormal situation in the country, people like myself should not think in terms of rest or retirement. He added that I had taken a prominent part in the transfer of power and that I should consider it my bounden duty to work for the consolidation of freedom. I naturally agreed that the country’s interests, and not my personal predilections, should be the guiding factor.*

Menon agreed to take on the job. The combination of his agile brain and Patel’s driving personality was to prove even more formidable on this occasion than it had been during the negotiations for the Independence Treaty.

Almost at once V. P. Menon demonstrated his skill as an adviser and tactician. Sir Conrad Corfield, he said, had tried to make things as difficult as possible for India by having paramountcy lapse immediately the British departed. Well, it was true that this might make things awkward for the new Indian Dominion if they had to start negotiating with the Princes over every little arrangement—army arrangements, postal arrangements, customs arrangements, currency arrangements, railway arrangements—which the British had now begun to cancel. But since there was less than eight weeks to go before independence, why bother about such details? Why not approach each Prince in turn and negotiate on a simple formula. Ask them simply to accede to the Indian Union under three subjects only: Defence, External Affairs, and Communications.

‘But what if they refuse?’ asked Patel.

‘How can they refuse?’ replied Menon. ‘Until now, the British protected each Princely State from unrest. If there were political or communal agitations, the British saw to it that order was restored. But now the British are going. It is true that some of the bigger States can keep

* V. P. Menon, The Integration of the Princely States.
some sort of order through their own private armies. But if the people rise up and begin to demand their freedom, the right to be independent themselves, to join India—if popular agitation begins to threaten the rule and safety and even the lives of the Rulers, where can they look to for protection except to us?"

Sardar Patel said that he saw what Menon meant. He had for some time been head of the organization which controlled the Congress underground movements in the Princely States.

Patel still could not stomach the action of the British in allowing paramountcy to lapse. It was not a friendly action, he insisted; it would endanger Indian security. Menon immediately reassured him.

"The Political Department thinks that it will ruin us," he said. "But my view is that the lapse of paramountcy is a blessing in disguise. All those treaties which the British had with the Princes gave the Princes all sorts of privileges—non-interference in their affairs, for example, except in cases of flagrant misbehaviour. If paramountcy had been passed on to us, we should have inherited them. We would have had to go on treating the Princes as demi-gods in their own States. But not now. Paramountcy lapses. So do the privileges. We start with a clean slate. It is our turn now to say how the Princes will behave."*

V. P. Menon had another brilliant idea. "I proposed that the active co-operation of Lord Mountbatten should be secured," he wrote afterwards. "Apart from his position, his grace and his gifts, his relationship to the Royal Family was bound to influence the rulers. Sardar wholeheartedly agreed and asked me to approach him without delay. A day or two later, I met Lord Mountbatten and mentioned to him my talk with Sardar and our tentative plan. I asked for his help in getting the States to accede to India on three subjects (defence, external affairs and communications).†"

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* Remarks recalled in conversations with the author.
Menon adroitly argued his case, pointing out that the States would not be losing anything in the result, but that it needed great statesmanship to bring it about and who but the Viceroy was capable of it?

'I felt that he was extremely touched by my remark,' Menon went on, 'that the wounds of partition might to some extent be healed by the States entering into relationship with the Government of India and that he would be earning the gratitude of generations of Indians if he could assist in achieving the basic unity of the country. He told me that he would think the matter over... I confess that I was seized momentarily by the fear that Lord Mountbatten might be adversely influenced by some of his advisers. But to my relief and joy he accepted the plan... Nehru, with the approval of the Cabinet, readily entrusted Lord Mountbatten with the task of negotiating with the rulers on the question of accession and also with the task of dealing with Hyderabad.*

It was done. The Viceroy had come in on the side of the new Indian Dominion—and against Sir Conrad Corfield and the Political Department. Sir Conrad fought bitterly for his view that the Princes had every right to choose independence if they wished, and need not accede. 'But Lord Mountbatten thought otherwise,' he wrote later, in a note to the author. 'He was persuaded that unless he used his influence to persuade the States to adhere to their neighbouring Dominion in advance of the lapse of paramountcy, there was grave risk to the economic and peaceful administration of the country after the transfer of power... It is interesting to note that Mr Jinnah had no desire to force adherence upon the States within Pakistan's sphere of influence. He was quite prepared to negotiate with each of these States on the basis of their legal independence and technical freedom of choice after Pakistan was established. Mr Nehru and Mr Patel, however, persuaded His Excellency that a similar course for India would be too dangerous.'

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Sir Conrad was ordered to summon rulers and representatives of the States to a Conference at which the Viceroy proposed to persuade them to choose adherence to India in advance of the lapse of paramountcy.

'Mountbatten is now in the thick of the States problem,' noted his Press adviser, Campbell-Johnson. 'As with his diplomacy prior to the June 3 plan, he took a calculated risk and is personally sponsoring the Instrument of Accession and undertaking to get all the Princes into this particular bag, while V. P. sold the project to Congress. He embarked with the assurance of Patel's decisive support.)*

The meeting with the Princes on 25 July 1947 was probably the most spectacular example of Mountbatten's skill, charm and tremendous arts of persuasion. He was by this time fully convinced that accession to India or Pakistan—with no alternative of independence—was the only possible course for the Princes to follow. His estrangement from the Political Department was well-nigh complete. He began to share Patel's resentment over the lapse of paramountcy after a visit from a distinguished Indian, Sir B. N. Rau, who pointed out that 327 Rulers of petty States, whose average area was about 20 square miles apiece, average population about 3,000 and average revenue about £1,000 per annum, would with the lapse of paramountcy gain the powers of life and death over their subjects. Rau appealed to Mountbatten to have a clause inserted in the Independence Bill which would restrict their powers and make it certain that the authority of the Crown Representative in respect of the small States should hereafter be exercised by the new Dominions. Mountbatten cabled to the Secretary of State saying: 'I did not myself realise that 327 owners of small estates would after lapse of paramountcy have power of life and death, where before they only had power to give three months' imprisonment,'† and gave full backing to Rau's suggestion. The Secretary of

* Alan Campbell-Johnson, Mission with Mountbatten.
† Government of India Records.
State for India replied that this would fundamentally alter the intention of the Bill towards the Princely States; that the lapse of paramountcy must stand, and that no alteration could be made. For the first time, the Viceroy began to understand what the lapse of paramountcy really meant, and what arrangements Sir Conrad Corfield had made while in London.

At the meeting on 25 July, therefore, to quote the words of Campbell-Johnson, 'he used every weapon in his armoury of persuasion, making it clear at the outset that in the proposed Instrument of Accession, which V. P. Menon had devised, [the Princes] were being provided with a political offer from Congress which was not likely to be repeated.... He reminded them that after the 15th of August he would no longer be in a position to mediate on their behalf as Crown Representative, and warned those Princes who were hoping to build up their own store of arms that the weapons they would get would in any case be obsolete.'

He then proceeded to use every blandishment in his repertoire to persuade the Princes to sign on the dotted line, not least of them being a promise that he would persuade Congress that, if they did so, the Princes would be allowed to go on receiving titles and honours. He was by turns bullying and bantering. As the Princes sweated in the heat of the Delhi summer—it was 108.4 in Delhi that day, and the fans in the Chamber of Princes merely whipped the princely perspiration into a froth—he picked them out like schoolchildren and asked them whether they would sign. The expression on the face of even the richest of them was the sad, lost look of men in defeat. They had come to the meeting convinced that the Viceroy was going to save them and their privileges from the encroachment of the Congress vandals. After all, he was one of them, wasn't he? At first, the very sight of him had bucked them up, for, despite the heat, he had come to the meeting in

full Viceregal uniform, his chest flashing with a breastplate of orders, decorations and medals. He looked every inch a cousin of the King, symbol of their hopes, protector of their privileges.

It was typical of his magnetism that, even while forcing them to realize that they were doomed, he still kept them good-humoured and compliant. There were no angry outbursts, only spurts of laughter at his sallies. Perhaps the most famous incident occurred when he questioned the Dewan (or Prime Minister) of one large State and asked him whether his maharajah would sign the Instrument of Accession. The Dewan replied that he had received no instructions from his master, who was abroad.

'Surely you must know your Ruler’s mind,' said Mountbatten, 'and can take a decision on his behalf?'

'I do not know my Ruler’s mind,' replied the Dewan, 'and I cannot get a reply by cable.'

The Viceroy picked up a glass paper-weight which was on his desk. 'I will look into my crystal ball,' he said, 'and give the answer.' Pause and heavy silence. 'His Highness,' said the Viceroy, dramatically, 'asks you to sign the Instrument of Accession.'

The Princes broke into spontaneous laughter and applause. At least, if they were signing their death-warrants, Mountbatten was making it possible for them to go to their doom with a smile on their lips.

The smile on the face of Sir Conrad Corfield, however, was wintry. And his private comment afterwards was bitter indeed.

'In order to make this proposal [the Instrument of Accession] less unpalatable,' he wrote in a note to the author, 'he [the Viceroy] had persuaded Mr Patel to agree that adherence would be limited to the sphere of Defence, External Affairs and Communications, with a definite promise that no financial liability would be involved and that in no other matters would the new Dominion encroach upon the internal autonomy or the sovereignty of the States.'
He (Corfield) added: 'As there was nothing to prevent the new Dominion, after the transfer of power, extending its sphere of influence through the States Department, these limitations and safeguards could obviously be made valueless in due course, and in fact quickly became so. For the Viceroy to use his influence, built upon the past exercise of paramountcy, in order to persuade trusting Rulers to accept such dubious propositions was, to say the least, un-British.'

But the Viceroy's soothing words had their effect, and one by one the Princes queued up to sign. Not all of them. Hyderabad still stood aloof. So did Travancore and Bhopal and Jodhpur and Indore, among others. With the exception of Hyderabad, Mountbatten called the recalcitrant Princes in to see him, or their Dewans.

'A leading Dewan informed me after one such interview with His Excellency,' said Corfield, 'that he now knew what Dolfuss had felt like when he was sent for to see Hitler; he had not expected to be spoken to like that by a British officer; after a moment's pause, he withdrew the word "British".'

This was undoubtedly the Dewan of the Maharajah of Travancore, who came to see Mountbatten in private to tell him of his master's determination to proclaim his State's independence after 15 August. He sharply attacked Nehru as unstable and Patel as ruthless. The Viceroy told him not to be a fool nor too precipitate. He then turned him over to V. P. Menon, who reminded the Dewan that Travancore* was the strongest breeding ground of Communism in India. What if the Communists suddenly rose up in revolt against the Ruler after 15 August? If Travancore was independent, the Dominion of India would have to refuse to come to its aid. The Dewan departed, thoughtful and discomfited.

The States Department had by this time found its feet. Patel and Menon were increasingly confident that, with Mountbatten's influence in the background, they would

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* Which became part of Kerala after independence.
have most of the Princes signed, sealed and delivered before 15 August. Menon, particularly, felt that the time had come at last to break the influence of Sir Conrad Corfield. His affection for the Political Department had been cool ever since the occasion, during the War, when it had vetoed his appointment as Dewan of a large Princely State because he was 'not sufficiently above his nationality'. He now went to the Viceroy with reports ('I naturally had my spies in the Political Department,' he said) that Sir Conrad was persuading Bhopal and a number of other Princes to make a last-ditch stand against accession, urging them to form themselves into a Third Force of independent States along the lines which Bhopal had been pursuing some months before. Menon protested that this was intolerable interference.

'The position is such,' he said to Mountbatten, 'that I am afraid that a choice must be made. Either Sir Conrad Corfield goes, or I go.'*

He knew, as the Viceroy knew, that there really was no choice. Mountbatten had gone so far with Menon and Patel now that, in the face of such an ultimatum, there was nothing to do but call in Sir Conrad and tell him to pack his bags.

The Political Adviser was more than willing to go. 'As soon as the new States Departments were established,' he wrote in a note to the author, 'I fixed July 25th as the date of the proposed conference and obtained permission to vacate the post of Political Adviser and return to England by air on July 23rd.'

His feelings as he left were bitter indeed. 'Even at this late stage,' he wrote, 'the Rulers found it difficult to realise that they were being deserted by the Crown and left to make their peace with the new Dominions in circumstances in which complete power was being transferred to their political opponents. Had they listened to the Crown's past advice to constitutionalise their authority, to limit

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* Recollected during conversations with the author.
their private expenditure and to group themselves into viable units, they could have negotiated from strength.

'It can be argued that the Crown should have proffered more than advice in order to secure these reforms: but how could the Crown do so when the Rulers were the first to point out that pressure would be contrary to the treaties and engagements governing their relationship? To denounce these treaties and engagements as out of date might have been politically disastrous. The new Dominions however were not so squeamish.'

He added: 'Meanwhile, the time was so short in which to make a decision that most of the Rulers accepted Lord Mountbatten's advice and signed their Instruments of Accession without demur.' And he ended, sadly:

'Indeed, so strongly had the tide begun to turn that when the Political Adviser left, three weeks before the lapse of paramountcy, only three Rulers came to bid him farewell. Six months earlier, in Bombay, no State was unrepresented when he was invited by the Conference of Rulers and their Ministers to proffer his advice. Up to that time the States had maintained a united front; but no advice would prevail against communal discord, and as soon as that common front disintegrated, the day of personal rule in India came to an end.'

But not quite as quickly as that.

It is true that a majority of the Princes accepted the inevitable and signed the Instrument of Accession at once. The first of them was the Maharajah of Bikaner, who had once been an old friend of the Viceroy. He put his name to the paper with a dramatic gesture.

The Maharajah of Baroda signed, then clasped his arms around Menon's neck, and wept like a child. One of the rajas had a heart attack immediately after signing.

Still a number of important Princes were holding back, in spite of Mountbatten's persuasion. The Dewan of the Maharajah of Travancore, Sir C. P. Ramaswami Ayar, had returned to Cochin to tell his master of the Viceroy's advice that he should sign the Instrument and of Menon's
hint that, in the event of trouble in the State, India would refuse to help unless he acceded. The Maharajah tried to temporize by telegraphing Mountbatten to say that he would ‘agree’ to the conditions but hoped that this would preclude him from signing them. The Viceroy telegraphed back that this was not enough. A signature was necessary. At the same time, the Working Committee of the States Congress Committee in Travancore, an underground organization, called for demonstrations against the Maharajah. There were clashes in the streets with the State Police. Sir C. P. Ramaswami Ayar was stabbed and seriously wounded by an unknown assailant. The Maharajah telegraphed to the Viceroy that he was signing the Instrument. Sardar Patel ordered the local Congress Committee to cease their demonstrations at once.

It was a clear demonstration of Congress’s power to incite disaffection in the Princely States and of the determination of Patel and Menon to act ruthlessly against those princely fish who refused to swim into the net. The lesson was salutary, and it was not lost upon the other Princes. They began to sign in increasing numbers.

But certain Princes still held out. Hyderabad, of course; Kashmir, Mysore, Bhopal and Jodhpur; and the Nawab of a small State on the Kathiawar coast of Western India called Junagadh.

Menon’s Intelligence Service in the Political Department informed him that British members of the department were actively working to persuade the Maharajah Hanwant Singh of Jodhpur not to sign the Instrument of Accession to India but to choose Pakistan instead. This he had the perfectly legal right to do. The Viceroy had downed his thumb on princely independence, but he had emphasized that each State could choose to accede to the Dominion whose frontiers were contiguous with it. Jodhpur’s frontiers, like those of two other Rajput Princes, were contiguous with both India and Pakistan.

Like the majority of the Princes, Jodhpur was antipathetic to Congress and suspected that there would be little
future for him in the Indian Dominion. He was a free-
swinging young man who loved polo, flying, and dancing
girls. He was extravagant and reckless and gay. One of
his grandfathers had once given a party for Lord and Lady
Curzon at which a pie was served to each of the two
hundred guests, and when the top was taken off, out flew
a tiny coloured song-bird. ‘One of them perched in my
tiara,’ Lady Curzon reported. The young Maharajah went
in for rather different kinds of tarts, though no less ex-
ensive. He had little time for equality and ran his State
on arrogantly authoritarian lines, and he was in no mood
to change his ideas or his way of life.

He decided to make a secret visit to Mr Jinnah, who
might be more amenable to his charms. He took with
him the Maharajah of Jaisalmer, whose State also flanked
Pakistan. Jinnah was overjoyed to see them. He knew
that if these two big States acceded to Pakistan, many of
the other Rajput States might well do so, too; their acces-
sion would more than compensate for the loss of half of
the Punjab and Bengal by partition, and it would be a
severe blow to Congress’ plans for capturing all the most
powerful Princes. He, therefore, took a blank sheet of
paper from a drawer in his desk, slid it across to Jodhpur,
and said:

‘Write your terms on that, your Highness—and I will
sign them.’

Jodhpur truned to Jaisalmer. ‘Will you join me?’ he
asked.

‘On one condition,’ Jaisalmer answered. ‘I must have
it agreed in writing that, in the event of trouble between
the Muslims and the Hindus, I and my State will be allow-
ed to remain completely neutral.’

Jinnah assured him that there would be no trouble any-
way, and that he must not worry about such trifles. But
the conversation seems to have made Jodhpur realize for
the first time that he, the Hindu Maharajah of a State with
a Hindu majority, would be going over to a Muslim coun-
try. He said he would like time to think things over, and
returned to his hotel in Delhi.
It was there that V. P. Menon, who had been apprised of what was afoot, arrived that evening to see him. Jodhpur at first refused to receive him. Menon sent a note to say that he had brought an urgent message from the Viceroy. When he was shown into the Maharajah’s suite, he said:

‘I have come from the Viceroy. He wishes to see you at once. You must come with me to the Viceroy’s House.’

Mountbatten was, in fact, at this moment completely unaware of what was happening and had not asked to see Jodhpur at all. None the less, the Maharajah and Menon hurried across to the Viceroy’s House where Menon left Jodhpur in the waiting-room. He himself sent an S.O.S to the Viceroy asking to speak with him at once and was shown up to his bedroom. He told the Viceroy of Jodhpur’s meeting with Jinnah and of the Muslim League plot to capture the Rajput States for Pakistan. He asked Mountbatten to see Jodhpur and talk him out of his wish to accede to Pakistan. Then the two of them went down to the waiting-room to see Jodhpur, who was by this time impatient, surly and suspicious. It was the sort of prickly situation which Mountbatten cherished.

He was immediately his most charming and yet his steeliest self, a patient schoolmaster about to read a lesson to a promising but unruly pupil. He said at once that the Maharajah had every legal right to accede to Pakistan if he wished, but did he really realize what the consequences might be? As the Hindu ruler of a largely Hindu State, he was surely going against the principle that India was being divided into a Muslim and a non-Muslim Dominion. His decision to accede to Pakistan might cause considerable communal disturbance in Jodhpur, where there was a strong, if unofficial, Congress movement.

The Maharajah was quickly reduced to bluster. ‘Mr Jinnah gave me a blank sheet of paper on which to write my own terms,’ he said: ‘What will you give me?’

Menon: ‘I’ll give you a blank sheet of paper too, if you like. But it will bring you nothing but false hopes, like the other.’
With Mountbatten urging compromise by both sides, it was eventually agreed that Menon should make certain minor concessions to Jodhpur, and that he should visit him in Jodhpur with these terms set out in a letter a few days later.

‘Then that’s settled,’ said the Viceroy, slapping them both on the back. He was by this time in a high good humour. He was called away for a few moments at this point, and, as soon as he had gone through the door, the young Maharajah swung on Menon.

‘You tricked me,’ he said. ‘You got me here on false pretences. I’m going to kill you!’

He had a revolver in his hand, and he was pointing it straight at V. P. Menon’s head. ‘I refuse to accept dictation from you,’ he went on.

Menon is a portly man whose figure and face do not suggest heroics, but he faced the angry Prince with what dignity he could muster.

‘If you think that by killing me you will get more concessions,’ he said, ‘you are mistaken. Stop these juvenile theatricals.’

At this point, Jodhpur burst into laughter and put the revolver away. When Mountbatten returned, Menon told him that he had been threatened with a revolver.

‘This is no time for jokes,’ the Viceroy said mildly. ‘Now what about signing the Instrument?’

But it was not until three days later that the pugnacious and resentful Jodhpur was finally corralled. He had by this time returned to Jodhpur, and it was there that Menon took the Letter of Agreement containing the concessions which he had made. When his car reached the Maharajah’s Palace, he found a vast and hostile crowd outside it, all of them shouting and gesticulating against Menon and Congress. It was with difficulty that he was rescued by the State police and taken into the palace. There a grinning Jodhpur was waiting for him.
That was just to show you that I can call up demonstrators too,' he said.

It was the first incident in what, for Menon, was to prove a trying day.

The Instrument of Accession was signed. The terms of Agreement were accepted by both parties.

'And now,' said Jodhpur to Menon, 'you and I must have a drink. This is a day for drinking. I have been defeated. You have won a victory. Let's drink.'

He clapped his hands and summoned whisky and two glasses. He poured out two half-tumblerfuls and downed his own, while Menon sipped his. More and more whiskies disappeared down the Maharajah's throat, and he kept urging the abstemious Menon to drink, drink, drink.

Finally, Menon said he would drink no more with Jodhpur unless he first went away and bathed and changed. His own head was throbbing. Jodhpur was becoming good and drunk.

'All right,' said the Maharajah, 'but only if, when I come back, you and I drink champagne. Lots and lots and lots of champagne.'

Menon protested that he could not drink champagne. It gave him a headache. He preferred whisky.

'See what a dictator you are!' cried Jodhpur. 'Now that you are in the ascendant! Already you tell me what to drink.'

He was eventually persuaded to leave and change. When he came back, bottle after bottle of champagne came with him. Weakly, Menon called for whisky. He got another glass of champagne instead. Meanwhile, the Maharajah's A.D.C. had been summoned. He must call the band and organize a banquet for that evening.

At the banquet, there was meat and game and wines and more champagne. The band played indefatigably. Dancing girls flitted back and forth. The worthy Menon kept his eyes away from them and went on talking about Accession, until, at one point, Jodhpur angrily ordered the band away.
‘I can’t hear what you’re saying for all this bloody noise,’ he said. ‘Why on earth didn’t they get me an orchestra instead?’ To his A.D.C.: ‘Go on, bring me an orchestra.’

Menon mildly pointed out that the Maharajah himself had asked for a band.

‘That just shows,’ said Jodhpur solemnly. ‘It’s about time the Government of India took over. What a State—when an A.D.C. takes orders from a man who has drunk a bottle of whisky and three bottles of champagne!’

He took off his turban and threw it on the floor.

It was time, Menon thought, to take his train back to Delhi. But Jodhpur would have none of it. He bundled the Secretary to the States Department into his private plane and, still very drunk, took off for Delhi, diving, twisting, and doing every aerobatic in the book except a loop, on the way.*

It was a very sick Menon who landed in Delhi. But he had his Instrument of Accession, and he had saved the Rajput States from Pakistan.

A few days later, the Nawab of Bhopal gave in too. His plan for a Third Force was in ruins. Though a Muslim himself, his State was largely Hindu and he dare not take the risk of turning it over to Pakistan. His surrender was a handsome one. He wrote to Sardar Patel:

‘I do not disguise the fact that while the struggle was on, I used every means in my power to preserve the independence and neutrality of my State. Now that I have conceded defeat, I hope that you will find that I can be as staunch a friend as I have been an inveterate opponent. I harbour no ill feelings towards anyone, for throughout I have been treated with consideration and have received understanding and courtesy from your side. I now wish to tell you that so long as you maintain your firm stand against the disruptive forces in the country and continue

* The Maharajah of Jodhpur was killed while stunting his plane in 1952. His latest wife, a dancing girl from Bombay, died with him.
to be a friend of the States as you have shown you are, you will find in me a loyal and faithful ally.’

Patel rose to the occasion.

‘Quite candidly,’ he wrote back, ‘I do not look upon the accession of your State to the Indian Union as either a victory for us or a defeat for you. It is only right and propriety which have triumphed in the end, and, in that triumph, you and I have played our respective roles. You deserve full credit for having recognized the soundness of the position and for the courage, the boldness and the honesty of having given up your earlier stand which according to us was entirely antagonistic to the interests as much of India as of your own State. I have noted with particular pleasure your assurance of support to the Dominion Government in combating disloyal elements irrespective of caste, creed or religion and your offer of loyal and faithful friendship. During the last few months it had been a matter of great disappointment and regret to me that your undoubted talents and abilities were not at the country’s disposal during the critical times through which we were passing, and I therefore particularly value this assurance of co-operation and friendship.’

It was the end of the beginning, but only the beginning of the end. Large States, small States, maharajahs, rajahs, and jagadirs, they all queued up to sign. But as the day for independence approached, three still stood out—and two of them were the most important Princely States in India.

The one which was not, which was merely a pawn in the game, was a small but rich princeton among the Kathiawar States of Western India called Junagadh. It was the only Kathiawar State with a Muslim Prince, and the Nawab of Junagadh was something special. He was a Ruler in the same tradition, though not of the same religion as the pyromaniac Maharajah of Alwar. Not that he set fire to racehorses. But he had the same taste for the exotic, the bizarre and the brutal. Junagadh happens to be one of the most lovely and fascinating corners of India. Up above its
walled, Moghul city rise two great hills, over 3,800 feet in height, which are centres of Hindu religious pilgrimage. To one come lepers hoping, by praying in the temple on the summit, to be cured. To the other, the mountain of Girnar, come members of the Hindu sect, the Jains.

The Jains are vegetarians who believe in Right Cognition, Right Conduct and Right Faith. Right Cognition means acceptance of the fact that every living person or thing in the world has a soul. Right Conduct means charity towards everything, including the minutest creatures of the earth. Nothing living must be killed. Jain priests wear gauze masks to prevent the inhalation of a fly which thus might be destroyed. Right Faith naturally includes non-violence towards all men and all living creatures. In a land not over-considerate towards its animals, Jains collect and care for birds and donkeys, dogs, cats, mules and camels which fall victim to age, disease or the savagery of man.

On the mountain of Girnar, the Jains have built a magnificent and, in the circumstances, fantastic monument to their ideals and beliefs. Up the mountainside, much of it of Alpine steepness, they laid a stone staircase whose route, in parts, has been hacked out of solid rock and which is only three feet wide, with a drop of a thousand or fifteen hundred feet over its edge.

Up the stairs the Jains carried blocks of marble with which, on the higher slopes right up to the summit, they have built a series of elaborate temples, filled with beautiful carvings, to which a Jain ascends to pray for his soul, or his marriage, or the birth of his children. Only a too fat, too weak, or too rich Jain (or an effete tourist) allows himself to be carried to the top by porters. The majority of pilgrims march up through the blazing heat, and then descend to join the naked sadhus and sacred monkeys at the bathing ghats below.

Junagadh had (and still has) one other claim to uniqueness. In its large forest of Gir live the only remaining lions in Asia.
It seems ironic that in this centre of dedicated non-violence, within sight of the temples of Girnar, should be a Nawab who was particularly devoted to the more sanguine pursuits. It was, to some extent, a family tradition. His father had a favourite habit of destroying his political opponents and those courtiers who earned his displeasure by making them perform a sort of 'walk the plank' ceremony from a castle orifice on to some particularly sharp rocks below. The Nawab himself had two hobbies: breeding dogs and hunting. He bred dogs and he loved dogs. Around his palace he had built a series of elaborate kennels (rooms would be a better description) in which he kept his favourite pets—about a hundred and fifty of them—each with its own bath, serving table, bed, attendant and telephone. There was a palace vet, and Englishman, to look after them. When dogs were brought in, they were placed on palanquins and carried by retainers into the Nawab's presence. When two of his dogs were mated, the Nawab invariably declared a public holiday in the State.

He also kept a pack of hounds with which he went hunting. The Indians say that his particular pleasure was to starve his hounds, deliberately shoot deer or lions to wound them, and then release the hounds for the pleasure of watching them tear their prey to pieces.

As a Muslim, the Nawab had four wives and several concubines. His attitude towards them proved to be as ambiguous as it was towards the Instrument of Accession.

After the Viceroy's meeting with the Princes, the Nawab of Junagadh indicated at once that he would sign the Instrument and accede to the union of India. Despite his attachment to Islam, this seemed logical in the circumstances. Junagadh's population was between 80 and 90 per cent Hindu. Its territory was surrounded on all sides except the sea by Princely territories, all of whose rulers were Hindu and had opted for India. Its nearest link with Pakistan was by sea, 240 miles away. India's largest, fattest and most amiable Prince, the Jam Sahib of Nawanagar, had been appointed spokesman for the rest of the
Kathiawar rulers, and he reported to Delhi that there would be no trouble about accession from any of them. It seemed as if the future of this large and complicated jig-saw puzzle of States had been settled.

So far as Junagadh was concerned, however, it had not. While he spoke soothing words to Congress, the Nawab was, in fact, in touch with Pakistan. It is hard to believe that Mr Jinnah really wanted Junagadh within his new Dominion. Separated from Pakistan, surrounded by Indian territory, it would have proved an administrative nightmare at a time when Mr Jinnah had more vital problems than he could cope with. But as a pawn in the game which both the Muslim League and Congress were playing at this moment, Junagadh was invaluable.

There was a much larger and more important State to the north—the prosperous and lovely state of Kashmir—which had not yet signed the Instrument of Accession, and whose Ruler had not yet indicated to which Dominion he would accede. Both Dominions wanted the territory, and it had a common frontier with both of them. Which side would Kashmir choose? The situation here was the exact opposite of Junagadh in that the Maharajah was a Hindu and the population was almost overwhelmingly Muslim; but the problem of accession was so similar as to make Junagadh, at least for Mr Jinnah, the perfect testing ground of Congress strategy and sincerity in Kashmir.

A Muslim League politician, Abdul Kadir Mohammed Hussain, had been infiltrated into Junagadh early in 1947, and, shortly after both the League and Congress agreed to partition, this politician succeeded in ousting the old Dewan, Nabi Baksh, who was in favour of acceding to India. Hussain now went to work on the Nawab and soon convinced him that the Congress would kill off his beloved dogs, curb his passion for cruel sports, ration his concubines and nationalize his Gir lions. On the other hand, Pakistan would not only encourage him in the free life but would also send armed police to restore order should his
people protest against his decision to consign them to Pakistan.

The Instrument of Accession had been sent to the Nawab to sign immediately after the Viceroy’s meeting, but days passed and it was not returned. Repeated telegrams were sent to him by Menon and Patel, but they were ignored. The days of independence drew nearer, but so far as Congress was concerned the Nawab remained mum. There was, therefore, panic in the States Department when it was learned from the newspapers that Junagadh had decided to accede to Pakistan. No other notification was sent to the Indian Union, and it was in the Press that they read the Nawab’s communique, which said:

‘The Government of Junagadh has during the past few weeks been faced with the problem of making its choice between accession to the Dominion of India and accesion to the Dominion of Pakistan. It has had to take into very careful consideration every aspect of this problem. Its main preoccupation has been to adopt a course that would, in the long run, make the largest contribution towards the permanent welfare and prosperity of the people of Junagadh and help to preserve the integrity of the State and to safeguard its independence and autonomy over the largest possible field. After anxious consideration and the careful balancing of all factors the Government of the State has decided to accede to Pakistan and hereby announces its decision to that effect. The State is confident that its decision will be welcomed by all loyal subjects of the State who have its real welfare and prosperity at heart.’

Now Jinnah and the Muslim League leaders knew that this statement was a farrago of nonsense, even if the Nawab of Junagadh did not. The State of Junagadh was not just one tract of territory. Several enclaves of Junagadh territory were inside other Kathiawar States, such as Baroda, Gondal and Bavhnagar, which had already acceded to India. Slap-bang in the middle of Junagadh itself were a number of Mangrol States, which had also acceded to India. They were now surrounded by Pakistan territory
and could not trade with the rest of Kathiawar except by going through Junagadh customs. The situation was one of hopeless confusion, and only a dunderhead like the Nawab of Junagadh would have failed to see it.

The Indian Government immediately telegraphed to Liaquat Ali Khan to ask him whether Pakistan intended to accept the accession of Junagadh, but got no reply. The Muslim Leaders were obviously enjoying the chaos of the situation and the fury of the Congress, and had no intention of doing anything to help. Weeks passed before they finally issued a statement to the effect that Junagadh's accession had been accepted, and that the State was now considered by them as part of the Dominion of Pakistan. Except for dispatching a small force of police, however, they did nothing practical to incorporate the State within the Dominion. They knew only too well that the Hindu majority in the State was pro-Indian, that the underground Congress movement was exceedingly powerful, and that any overt move to exploit the State as part of Pakistan would lead to an explosion. Except for a few fanatics, anyway, the Muslim League had no wish to do anything. All they had to do was sit back and wait.

Soon the Indian Union was announcing that Hindu refugees were fleeing from Junagadh as a result of repressive measures by the Nawab. They received an appeal for help from the inhabitants of the Mangrol States inside Junagadh, who claimed they were besieged. The Nawab immediately sent in his troops and occupied Mangrol territory.

Inevitably, the Indian Army marched into those parts of Junagadh territory without the State proper as a reprisal. After that they hesitated, because Congress realized it was being led into a trap. But finally, they decided to act. They had for some weeks been blockading the State, which was getting short of food. Now, laden with supplies, they marched in to a rapturous welcome from the populace. The Nawab had already fled to Pakistan in his private plane. He crammed aboard as many of his dogs
as he could, plus his four wives. One of them discovered, at the last moment, that she had left her child behind in the palace and asked the Nawab to wait while she fetched her. The moment she left the airfield, the Nawab loaded in two more dogs and took off without his wife. He had with him sufficient of the family jewels to ensure the future comfort of himself and his family, but otherwise he had left everything.

Though the Pakistan Government professed to be outraged by the events, it is almost certain that Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan were overjoyed. Junagadh had always been expendable. Its main use, so far as they were concerned, was to test Congress’s good faith. And how had Congress reacted? When a Muslim Prince in a Hindu State opted for Pakistan, they refused to recognize it.

Surely here was a lesson—and they hoped the world was listening—for the future of Kashmir. If the Maharajah of Kashmir, a Hindu Prince in a Muslim State, opted for India, Pakistan had every right to say No, too.

As the last days of the British Raj ticked by, however, the Maharajah of Kashmir went on refusing to say anything at all. Sir Hari Singh was, in fact, receiving every encouragement to keep his mouth shut. Pandit Nehru had no reason to love the Maharajah, who stood for everything which the Indian leader hated; he was a bigot, a profligate and an autocrat with small concern for the people of his State; and he had shown his contempt for Congress by suppressing its members, jailing its leaders, and threatening arrest to Nehru, himself a Kashmiri Brahmin, if he dared set foot inside the State. Yet Nehru sent messages to the Maharajah of Kashmir advising him not to decide too precipitately what he should do. Gandhi emerged from his preoccupation in the South and sent a similar message. Nehru said he felt he ought to go to Srinagar and talk to the Maharajah about his future. Gandhi said he ought to go first, to prepare the way for Nehru, who might get himself arrested.
Mountbatten told them that he would, instead, go himself. After all, he was an old friend of Sir Hari Singh. They had both been A.D.C.s on the Staff of the Prince of Wales when he toured India in 1921. Who could better advise and guide him to the right decision?

He accordingly set off for Kashmir on 21 June 1947 and stayed with the Maharajah in Srinagar. He took George Abell with him and, in the next forty-eight hours, for a negotiator who could be a typhoon of energy when he wished, he accomplished extraordinarily little. To quote his Boswell, Campbell-Johnson:

‘When he got there he found the Maharajah politically very elusive, and the only conversations which took place were during their various car drives together. Mountbatten on these occasions urged him and his Prime Minister, Pandit Kak, not to make any declaration of independence, but to find out in one way or another the will of the people of Kashmir as soon as possible, and to announce by August 14 their intention to send representatives accordingly to one Constituent Assembly or the other. He told them that the newly created States Department was prepared to give an assurance that if Kashmir went to Pakistan this would not be regarded as an unfriendly act by the Government of India. He went on to stress the dangerous situation in which Kashmir would find itself if it lacked the support of one of the two Dominions by the date of the transfer of power.’*

He goes on to say that it was the Viceroy’s intention ‘to give this advice privately to the Maharajah alone. . . . The Maharajah suggested that the meeting should take place on the last day of the visit, to which Mountbatten agreed, feeling that this would allow him the maximum chance to make up his mind, but when the time came the Maharajah sent a message that he was in bed with colic and would be unable to attend the meeting. *It seems that this is his usual illness when he wishes to avoid difficult discussions."

Needless to say, Mountbatten is very disappointed at this turn of events.\(^*\)

What is remarkable about this episode is Mountbatten’s fatalistic acceptance of the Maharajah of Kashmir’s evasions and subterfuges. One could understand if Nehru or Gandhi had accepted his prevarication; they had everything to gain by it. Time was on their side. At any moment the Maharajah might be persuaded, or panicked, into releasing from jail Kashmir’s most influential political leader, Sheikh Abdullah, who was pro-Congress in spite of being a Muslim and could, as a close friend of Nehru, be trusted to campaign for accession to the Union of India.\(^+\)

But why did the Viceroy so meekly accept the Maharajah’s excuses? Here was a State whose future was more likely than any other to cause friction between the two new Dominions if its destiny was not decided. It not only shared its frontiers with both of the new Dominions, Pakistan and India, but also with Tibet, China and Russia and Afghanistan. It was essential that, for the sake of world peace as well as local harmony, its fate should not be left hanging in the air. Aside from its importance to the Indian sub-Continent, Mountbatten as a soldier might have been expected to recognize its geopolitical significance. Here was an opportunity to do a service not only to the two new Dominions but also to stability in Asia. Any strategist could have told him (if he really needed to be told) that it was from this quarter of the world that all the threats to India’s safety and security had hitherto come. He might have been forgiven for saying: ‘All right, let India take it over. They will guard its frontiers better, even if its people are Muslim.’ Or: ‘Give it to Pakistan. It is Muslim territory. As a consolidated Muslim block, Kashmir will help to protect the Northern frontiers of India too against outside invasion.’

\(^*\) My italics—L. M.

\(^+\) His close friend did not, however, hesitate to send him back to jail when he opted later for Kashmiri independence.
What is surprising is that he not only said neither, but that he also did not bounce into the Maharajah’s bedroom and declare, with typical Mountbatten boldness:

‘Look, I know you are trying to get out of a difficult decision. You want to be independent and you know you can’t be. As a Hindu, your inclination, if you have to accede to someone, is to opt for India. But you know your people won’t like it. You know they would rather favour Pakistan. It’s a problem, I admit. But for God’s sake, man, make up your mind. And if you don’t make up your mind before I leave for Delhi in two hours’ time, I shall make up your mind for you—and announce it to your people.’

It would have been no bolder a gesture than many others he had made during the negotiations for the transfer of power, against opponents much more powerful than the effete, ineffective and miserable Maharajah of Kashmir.

Why did he not do it? Why did his flair disappear on this all-important occasion?

Can it be that, exhausted by his constant round of talks, sickened by Jinnah’s evasions over the problem of the Governor Generalship of Pakistan, allergic for the moment to the Muslims, he was suffering from a diplomatic colic too?

As Nicholas Mansergh says in his authoritative Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs:*

‘Kashmir lay at the frontiers of both successor States, it was neighbour to both, and while its ruler was Hindu its people were predominantly Muslim. There was no State in the sub-Continent the future of which, if left unsettled when the independent imperial authority withdrew, was more likely to occasion dissent between the two Dominions. The failure to concentrate more closely upon the problem it presented was destined to prove an oversight fraught with grave consequences.’

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THE DOWNFALL OF THE PRINCES

For Pakistan, of course, it was a considerable defeat, and it rankled for more than one reason. Junagadh had proved that India was not prepared to stomach the accession of a Muslim Prince to Pakistan when the population of the State was Hindu. But when the opposite came about, when a Hindu Prince signed a Muslim State over to India, what happened? India rushed in troops to protect its booty, piously proclaimed its intention of remaining long enough to restore law and order, and then held on.* The waters of Indo-Pakistan relations were embittered for years to come.

While Kashmir was going by what might justifiably be called the Viceroy’s default, the question of Hyderabad was not going at all, in spite of his avid and repeated intervention.

On 9 July 1947, the Nizam of Hyderabad had once more tried to persuade the Viceroy to come in on his side in his fight to retain Hyderabad’s independence from either India or Pakistan. He wrote a letter to Mountbatten in which he said:

‘My dear Lord Mountbatten—During the last few days I have seen Clause 7 of the Indian Independence Bill as reported in the Press. I regret that, as has so often hap-

* The Maharajah of Kashmir was encouraged to procrastinate long after both Pakistan and India became independent. In late October 1947, Pathan tribesmen invaded the State. The Maharajah appealed to India for help. V. P. Menon visited him and he signed the Instrument of Accession to the Indian Union. Immediately, Indian Army troops flew in, beat back the invaders, and took over the State. Lord Ismay has since said (in a conversation with the author) that he approved this intervention because ‘there were Britons in Kashmir who might have been massacred if someone hadn’t gone to their rescue. I therefore encouraged Indian intervention.’ The Maharajah was pensioned off. An Indian promise for a plebiscite of the Kashmir people’s wishes has not yet been carried out. And Sheikh Abdullah, once Nehru’s friend is in jail.
pened in recent months, the Clause, though it was closely discussed with Indian leaders, was never disclosed to, much less discussed with, representatives of my State. I was distressed to see that the Clause not only contains a unilateral repudiation by the British Government of the treaties which have for so many years bound my State and my Dynasty to the British, but also appears to contemplate that unless I join one or other of the two new Dominions my State will no longer form part of the British Commonwealth. The Treaties by which the British Government many years ago guaranteed the protection of my State and Dynasty against external aggression and internal disorder have constantly been solemnly confirmed in recent years, notably by Sir Stafford Cripps in 1941. I thought that I could safely rely on British arms and the British word. Having been persuaded in consequence right up to the last moment to refrain from increasing my Army and adapting my State factories for the manufacture of arms and equipment, nevertheless repudiation of Clause 7 of the Bill has been made not only without my consent but without any consultation with me or my Government.

‘Your Excellency knows that while you were in England I asked that my State should be accorded Dominion status when the British leave India. I had always hitherto felt that after more than a century of faithful alliance in which I reposed all my confidence in the British I should certainly be able to remain, without question, a member of the family of the British Commonwealth. Clause 7 appears to deny me even that. I still hope that no differences will be allowed to interfere between me and direct relations with His Majesty’s Government. I was recently informed that Your Excellency had undertaken to have a declaration in Parliament that the establishment of such relations can be made.

“My hope is that once established these relations will lead to a closer union between my State and the British Crown, with which I have been for so many years in faithful alliance.
"I feel bound to make this protest against the way in which my State is being abandoned by its old ally the British Government.

'The ties which have bound me in loyal devotion to the King Emperor are being severed.

'I hope Your Excellency will place my letter before His Majesty's Government. I shall for the moment refrain from publishing it lest it should in any way embarrass my old friends and allies in the eyes of the world. I must nevertheless retain my right to publish it at a later stage if it should become necessary in the interests of my State.'

But neither the Viceroy nor the Labour Government at home was going to allow Hyderabad, no matter how great his wealth, his past associations, or the size of his State, to opt out of India. It was pointed out to him that His Majesty's Government would never accept a Dominion Government which was, as in Hyderabad's case, completely surrounded by territory which would, in the circumstances, be hostile. 'It would be like Poland all over again,' Mountbatten said. For him there was only one solution: for Hyderabad to sign up under the same three headings as had been accepted by the other Princely States, and then begin bargaining with Menon, Patel and Nehru for special concessions.

It was, as it turned out, good advice, but the Nizam's advisers both in Hyderabad and in the Political Department, where Sir Conrad Corfield's influence was still strong, persuaded him not to take it. He began to build up his army and his band of unofficial terrorists, the fanatic Muslim Razakhars, instead, and gave every evidence that he would fight for his independence, confident that in the end his Faithful Ally, Britain, would come to his rescue. And all Mountbatten's pleadings were in vain; not even his promise that he would secure considerable concessions from the Indian Union if the Nizam would only sign would move the stubborn old Ruler.
Hyderabad was still independent on the day that the British Raj ended. But the moment the British influence completely disappeared, the Indians moved in.*

So, with the exception of Junagadh, Kashmir and Hyderabad, all the proud Princes had signed on the dotted line. There would be negotiations in the days ahead to decide how much they would be allowed to keep of their wealth and how much the new Dominions would pay them in pensions.† For a time they would be allowed to play a small share in the Government of the new Dominions.

But as a Princely Order, their day was done and they knew it. They had been swallowed into the belly of India in a few short weeks after centuries of arrogant independence from the rest of the sub-Continent. The act of gobbling them up had been a remarkable achievement on the part of India’s strategists—perhaps the most remarkable of all the events leading up to Indian independence. For its almost bloodless achievement, the Congress Party had two people to thank: Mountbatten for his blandishments and persuasiveness, and V. P. Menon for his shrewdness in inventing the tactics and recruiting the Viceroy himself to carry them out.

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* So long as Mountbatten remained Governor General of the Indian Union, V. P. Menon and Sardar Patel held their hand. He was allowed to continue his ‘personal negotiations’ with the Nizam. Two days after he left for England, the Nizam indicated that he would be prepared to accept the arrangement known as the ‘Mountbatten Plan’. Replied Patel: ‘Tell him it is too late. The Mountbatten Plan has sailed for home.’ Shortly afterwards, Indian Army troops moved into Hyderabad and occupied it. The Nizam was kept on as a figurehead.

† The majority of them, thanks to V. P. Menon, were treated with great generosity. E.g., most 21- and 19-gun Princes kept their personal fortunes and got an average pension of 18 lakhs a year (£135,000).
CHAPTER EIGHT

DARKNESS AT NOON

IT IS ALL very well to decide, just like that—and just like that was how it was decided—to partition the Indian sub-Continent. But where do you draw the lines that separate one new Dominion from the other?

The lines of demarcation had, of course, to be made in those Provinces where there was a roughly equal number of Muslims and non-Muslims. These consisted of the Punjab, where there were something over 16,000,000 Muslims against 12,000,000 Sikhs and Hindus, and Bengal, where there were 33,000,000 Muslims against 27,000,000 Hindus, Untouchables and Christians. The other Provinces where there were sizeable but nowhere near equal minorities of Muslims or Hindus (such as the North West Frontier Province, Sind, Assam, Bihar and the Central Provinces) went automatically into the Dominion of the majority community, except for certain small tracts of territory.

The inhabitants of the Punjab and Bengal had themselves voted to cut themselves in two, just as the North West Frontier Province (the only Muslim area governed by a pro-Congress regime) had voted to accede to Pakistan. But there was the difference that the Punjab and Bengal decided their future by a vote of elected representatives, whereas the N.W.F.P. decided by a referendum.

The question was where to split the Punjab and Bengal in twain, and who was going to do it.

The proposition was originally made that the aid of the newly-born United Nations Organization should be enlisted for the job, but it was considered as too puling an infant by all parties for such an adult task. At the suggestion of the British Government, the name of Sir Cyril Radcliffe
(now Lord Radcliffe) was put forward as likely to be the most admirable and practical chairman of a small Partition Committee, and it was pointed out to both Muslims and non-Muslims (particularly the Sikhs) that, though an expert on arbitration, Sir Cyril had a particular claim to be a most impartial adjudicator in this tricky situation: he had never been to India in his life, and did not know a Hindu from a Muslim, a Sikh from a Jain, or a tamarind from a peepul tree. Both the Congress and the Muslim League immediately telegraphed their spies in London to probe the background of Sir Cyril, but even the suspicious Mr Jinnah could not find anything to say about him except that ‘he seems to be most successful in the legal profession’.

Sir Cyril Radcliffe had, in fact, first been approached by the British Government to go to India at the end of June 1947. He was asked if he would sit as the neutral head of a joint Indo-Pakistan Commission which would not only decide the future frontiers of the two countries but also assess their joint assets, and divide and assign them. He had barely accepted the task before advices from India persuaded Mr Attlee to change his mind. A separate committee to deal with assets was set up in India under the chairmanship of Sir Patrick Spens. Someone had reached the conclusion that the two jobs combined might prove too much even for the most dedicated committee. Sir Cyril Radcliffe was told that his only task would be to divide the country. ‘Otherwise,’ said an India Office official, ‘you will have nothing to worry about.’

Nothing to worry about! It was a job to make a man boggle.

Sir Cyril arrived in Delhi on 8 July 1947. Independence day was 15 August. Of India’s 350,000,000 people, he had the future homes, livelihood and nationality of 88,000,000 of them to decide. His only briefing for the job was, in his own words, ‘a thirty-minute session over a large-scale map with the Permanent Under-Secretary at the India Office’. It is true that, according to the theory, he would
only be the Chairman of the Partition Commission, and that two separate boards of four judges—two for Pakistan and two for India—would make the final decisions which would actually divide the Punjab and Bengal. They were all Indian High Court Judges, and they were all admirable men (with possibly two exceptions). Under Sir Cyril’s guidance, Justices C. C. Biswam and B. K. Mukherki (for Congress) and Saleh Mahomed Akram and S. A. Rahman (for the Muslim League) would partition Bengal; and Justices Mehr Chand Mahajan and Tejeh Singh (for Congress) and Din Mahomed and Muhammad Munir (for the Muslim League) would partition the Punjab.

That, at least, is what Sir Cyril was told before he left England. He went on believing it for at least forty-eight hours after he arrived in Delhi. On the evening of his arrival, he was summoned by the Viceroy to meet the Indian leaders. Nehru and Patel were there for Congress and Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan were there for the Muslim League. Sir Cyril modestly pointed out that it was quite a considerable task which had been assigned to him and his two boards of judges. He spoke of the vastness of India, of the multitudinous population, of the difficulty of cutting through the great acres of territory on each side of the sub-Continent and so dividing it that communities of people would be cherished, districts saved from division, towns and villages left connected with their hinterland. Normally, he pointed out, this was a job which would take even the most careful arbitrators years to decide, but he realized that here was something urgent. He and his two commissions would do their utmost to help. How long had he got?

‘Five weeks,’ said Mountbatten.

Before Sir Cyril Radcliffe could express his astonishment and dismay, Nehru interrupted:

‘If a decision could be reached in advance of five weeks, it would be better for the situation,’ he said.

The others, Jinnah included, nodded agreement.
It was obviously impossible to explain to any of them that you could not possibly divide a country in such a time, that injustices would be bound to occur, that a little time and patience and research might save endless bickering in the future. It had to be a quick amputation—and that would mean blood.

Sir Cyril established his main office in Delhi, but had two sub-headquarters, one in Lahore for the Punjab and the other in Calcutta, for Bengal. Forty-eight hours after his interview with Mountbatten and the Indian leaders, he plunged into an experience which was to haunt him for the rest of his life.

From the moment he had his first meeting with the members of the two Boundary Commissions, he realized that his would have to be a unilateral decision. In Bengal, the four judges (two Hindu and two Muslim) were quite frank about the position.

'Ve did not volunteer for this task,' they said. 'We were drafted into it. You must realize that we cannot possibly be associated with any decisions you may make on the question of dividing the Provinces. It is not simply that our careers would be harmed. Our very lives would not be worth a scrap of paper if we were involved in decisions where the division of territory is disputed. We will help you all we can with advice. But they will be your decisions, and yours alone.'

In the Punjab, the judges not only refused to co-operate, but they also intrigued against him and against each other. His private discussions with them were 'leaked' into the Muslim Press in bowdlerized form. The Sikh judge could barely bring himself to remain in the same room as the Muslims, and while there he exuded an air of blazing anger. He had some reason. A few weeks before, his wife and two children had been murdered in a Muslim riot in Rawalpindi. Sir Evan Jenkins, the Punjab Governor, had suggested to the local Muslim League Committee that, in the circumstances, it might help if they called upon him and expressed their sorrow at what had occurred. They were not in that sort of mood, and refused.
The task of division in Bengal was difficult but not impossible. Both Sir Frederick Burrows, the Governor, and Mr Suhrarwardy, the Chief Minister, had lobbied assiduously to have Bengal recognized by Britain as an independent State or, failing that, Calcutta accepted as a Free City. But both the Viceroy and the Labour Government in Britain turned down the proposals on the grounds that Congress would never accept them.

‘When you’ve carved up the Province,’ Sir Frederick Burrows said to Sir Cyril Radcliffe, ‘two things will happen. First, there will be absolute bloody murder. Second, East Bengal will become a rural slum.’

In the event, only the second part of his prophecy came true; and that for obvious reasons. East Bengal had always been the hinterland which grew food and jute for Calcutta. Henceforth, it would be deprived of its markets and its port. But Calcutta, with or without East Bengal, would always be Calcutta.

Radcliffe cut cleanly and swiftly, and the fact that outside Calcutta itself most of the Muslims worked in the East while the Hindus concentrated to the West made his task that much easier. This is not to suggest that everyone, or even anyone, was satisfied with his decisions; but the idea of a partitioned Bengal seemed so obviously impossible to most Bengalis that no one could really believe it would be permanent.

The situation in the Punjab was something else again. The moment he arrived in Lahore and studied the facts, Radcliffe was appalled. The sheer impossibility of the task before him was enough to daunt any man. The tempers of the Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs alike were frayed to breaking point. It was as if the Sikhs had only now begun to realize just what they had done in accepting partition; only now begun to see that their most cherished shrines, their richest lands, their most prosperous communities, were in West Punjab and, therefore, could well, under the Boundary Commission Award, go to Pakistan. They descended upon Sir Cyril Radcliffe with petitions,
maps, arguments, threats and bribes. The Muslims in turn began to harry him. And in the background, the trouble-makers of each side began to build up the campaign of violence and intimidation.

The monsoon was late in India that year, and in the Punjab it was oven-hot. To those who have not experienced Indian summer heat, particularly when the rains are late, the first bout of it is an ordeal to remember. By nine in the morning, the body is wet with sweat, clothes are soaked, and the mind is sapped by the fear that it may grow even hotter. It does. In the Punjab, there is the extraordinarily hellish experience to be gone through of finding it so unbearably hot and so blindingly dazzling that it seems as if night—an awful, fire-breathing night—has descended.

'The heat is so appalling,' Sir Cyril recalled later,* 'that at noon it looks like the blackest night and feels like the mouth of hell. After a few days of it, I seriously began to wonder whether I would come out of it alive. I have thought ever since that the greatest achievement which I made as Chairman of the Boundary Commission was a physical one, in surviving.'

He had, by this time, realized that so far as this assignment was concerned he was on his own, completely and utterly. He knew now that he could trust no one. Not even the British. He would be invited to dinner or to have a drink, and then his host would start hinting. In the end, he decided to cut himself off from everyone. He had a young Indian A.D.C. who was leaving India after the transfer of power, anyway, but who had strict instructions not to mention politics. He was also given an enormous Punjabi bodyguard who followed him everywhere. He wore only a nightshirt and a bandolier around his waist with two pistols, and when he stationed himself outside Radcliffe’s bathroom or hovered near his bed, the judge often used to pray—particularly in the hot, dark watches of the night—that he was on his side.

* In a conversation with the author.
The brief which he had been given for the partition of the Punjab was simply that 'the Boundary Commission is instructed 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 take into account other factors.'

But how was he to interpret those 'other factors'? To the meeting each day came Muslim, Sikh and Hindu delegations with suggestions. Sir Cyril never did actually see the land which he was in process of dividing. The delegations arrived armed with their maps, and it was from these that he must make his decisions. The only trouble was that the maps of each side were different. They had 'doctored' them according to their arguments and petitions. One of his principal worries was to obtain a big enough ordnance map upon which he could work and use as a master map—because the two sides were always up to their tricks. It seems extraordinary that when you have to decide the fate of 28,000,000 people you are not even given the right map to do it with.

And always he was confronted by hostile faces, angry arguments and exaggerated claims. One of the memories which remains particularly vivid in Radcliffe's mind is of the day in Lahore when a Hindu came up to him and said: 'Well, I suppose there may be one or two instances where the India Union asked too much.' It was the only occasion when one side indicated that the other side might have a case. And the remark was, anyway, said in a whisper behind the Hindu's hand.

Distressed as he was by the appalling task which faced him, it seemed to Sir Cyril Radcliffe that there was only one thing which could make it both bearable and workable. The biggest problem in the Punjab, as he saw it, was not the disposition of its races, the future of isolated communities, or the division of assets, but a decision as to the control of its irrigation system. This had been built, with a good deal of British inspiration, largely by Sikh money, design and sweat to take the waters of the Province's five
rivers through a system of elaborate canals to the arid wastes of Western and Central Punjab. It was this irrigation system which had turned a desert into the granary of India. Thanks to the canals, the Punjab was a great wheatfield for India, supplying the whole sub-Continent with food. It is true that in 1947, with a late monsoon, the canals were getting dry and the crops would be meagre, but even so they would feed India’s millions.

But this great watering system was, as Sir Cyril saw at once, vitally threatened by partition. The rivers which supplied the water were all in the East, which would inevitably come under India, and the lands which they supplied were all in the West, which would be part of Pakistan. Radcliffe immediately contacted the Viceroy and told him that he would like to submit a proposition to Jinnah and Nehru. Whatever he decided as to the lines of demarcation, he said, would it not be a good idea if both the leaders agreed at once, before the announcement of his Award, that the Punjab Water System should be a joint venture run by both countries. It would thus safeguard the interests of both peoples and form a basis of co-operation which might prove fruitful in the years to come.

He was rewarded for his suggestion by a joint Muslim-Hindu rebuke. Jinnah told him to get on with his job and inferred that he would rather have Pakistan deserts than fertile fields watered by courtesy of Hindus. Nehru curtly informed him that what India did with India’s rivers was India’s affair.* Both leaders were obviously furious with him and hinted that he was playing politics. It was his one and only attempt to try to make a constructive suggestion.

* It must in fairness be admitted that he modified this attitude later, and subsequently became one of the prime movers in the agreement on River Waters which was signed between India and Pakistan—in 1960.
With the slings and arrows of importunate Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs whistling about his ears, he took up the largest contour map he could find and began to draw. Despite the pleas from the Sikhs, who asked for their beloved Lahore, and the Muslims, who pleaded for their communities in Eastern Punjab, there was little he could do. He was not there to decide the fate of religious shrines. He was not there to partition according to the ownership of irrigation canals or factories or farmlands. He was there to slice a province in two parts so that each one could reasonably be joined to the State of which the majority of its people would be ethnically and communally a part.

Sir Cyril Radcliffe had been asked to divide India in five weeks. For such a task, needing as it did years rather than weeks, it did not really matter whether he produced his Award in four weeks, five weeks, or six. In the circumstances, he was bound to cut a town off from its river, a village from its fields, a factory from its storage yard, a railway from its goods-yard. But having been urged to move with speed, he moved with desperate urgency.

This account will have conveyed the fact that he hated his job. The experiences he had with the people of India were hardly calculated to make him love the country. Rarely can one honest, well-meaning man have seen so many of the nastier sides of human nature in so short a time.

He had his Award ready and written well before the deadline which he had been given. He had listened to all the advice. He had studied all the maps, real and fake. He had worked through the heat of midday and the fears of midnight, a lonely and miserable man. When he put his signature to his Award he was too physically worn and too mentally exhausted to wonder what the reaction to it would be from the two communities. He had done the best he could. He had only one desire left: to get out of India. On 9 August 1947 his Award for the division of Bengal was ready. Two days later so was that of the Punjab. Only some minor work needed to be done
on the district of Sylhet, a part of Assam which would, as predominantly Muslim, be assigned to East Pakistan.

The task was done. Sir Cyril Radcliffe flew back to Britain on 15 August, Independence Day, having loathed every moment of his time in the territory of the two new Dominions. ‘Amazing people,’ he said, later.* ‘They had absolutely no conception. They asked me to come in and do this sticky job for them, and when I had done it they hated it. But what could they expect in the circumstances? Surely, they must have realized what was coming to them once they had decided on partition. But they had made absolutely no plans for coping with the situations. Strange chaps. Just didn’t do their homework.’

He added: ‘People sometimes ask me whether I would like to go back and see India as it really is. God forbid. Not even if they asked me. I suspect they’d shoot me out of hand—both sides.’

In every part of India now there were signs to be seen of the upheaval that was coming. Mountbatten had plastered his offices with large tear-off calendars on the sheets of which, in diminishing numbers, was written ‘X Days Left to Prepare for the Transfer of Power’. In turbulent groups all over the sub-Continent, Hindus and Muslims were meeting to argue over the division of assets. (Twelve typewriters for you and four for me. And what do we do with this odd one? You take the ribbon and give me the rest.)† The Delhi newspapers had begun to publish advertisements saying:

‘Are you leaving for Pakistan? If so, do not forget to surrender your ration cards (Food and Clothing) to the Rationing Officer, Delhi Station.’

The railways themselves were in a ferment, and not simply because theft and murder on trains was becoming increasingly prevalent. Muslim engine drivers who had

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* In a conversation with the author.
† The basis of division was three to one in favour of India.
been driving out of Delhi or Calcutta for years, and Hindus who had been driving from Karachi or Dacca would soon be taking trains to new destinations, over tracks which they had never travelled before.

On top of an announcement that 'the railway programme to run special trains from New Delhi to Karachi with Pakistan Staff and records begins on 3 August' came an editorial in the Statesman:

'During the next few weeks the railways will renew their wartime appeals to reduce travel. Everybody should be reminded to ask himself whether his journey is really necessary. We suggest that this is not primarily because of crimes in trains or on the tracks, although there have been some horrid examples recently of those involved in communal grievances considering trains a legitimate target, but because of officials moving from one part of India to another. Indeed, their moves have already begun. Families, wives, children, impedimenta and so forth, as well as the melancholy division of the Armed Forces, will make very heavy demands on railways. Drivers will be travelling over tracks unknown, past signal boxes manned by strangers or from which signalmen have departed. The trains will have to travel cautiously. It will be best if the public keeps off until the sorting is completed. The others may be expected to travel hopefully in order to arrive.'

Could they have guessed what was going to happen, the editors of the Statesman might have been moved to advise absolutely everyone to stay off the trains. 'Fearfully' rather than 'hopefully' was the mood in which most Indians would soon be travelling.

In Lucknow, capital of the United Province, the Nationalist-minded among the population were beginning to cock their eyes at the relics of the Indian Mutiny which their British rulers had cherished for so long. The Metropolitan of India sent an urgent message to the Viceroy asking about the Residence at Lucknow, suggesting that it should be destroyed; otherwise 'an element among the population might perhaps enter and defile it'. He sug-