

THE

NATIONAL

ARCHIVES

Partition of British India

Key Stages 3-5 | Postwar 1945-present

Lesson

The Partition of British India

In an accompanying video, Iqbal Singh, Hannah Carter and Eleanor Newbigin introduce a document relating to the partition of British India. They explore what this document's tone and content can tell us about British official's attitudes to the violence that occurred after partition. Students also hear an oral testimony from Iqbal's aunt whose family were displaced in 1946 due to growing tensions in British India.

Find the video on our YouTube channel here:

https://youtu.be/Yb_gq-wZDig

The video and resource were launched at a plenary session at the SHP conference 2022.

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Suitable for:

KS 3-5

Time period:

Postwar
1945 - present

Connections to curriculum:

Key Stage Three

Challenges for Britain, Europe and the wider world 1901 to the present day

- Indian independence and end of Empire
- Britain's place in the world since 1945

Teacher's notes

This film and set of resources is suitable for an assembly, form time or a lesson on the history of the partition of British India. The film is around 10 minutes in length.

There is an accompanying glossary to support students.

Class activities:

Teachers may want to use the documents included in the resource to extend learning. It is suggested that students look at the Starter Source first. This is the same document used in the film. You might want to encourage students to come up with a question relating to the Starter Source, these questions could be returned to at the end of the lesson/series of lessons.

Then students could work in smaller groups looking at the other documents. There are questions they can explore and they are invited to draw comparisons with the telegram.

There is also a creative outcome that is suggested inspired by Iqbal's aunt's testimony.

Sources

- Starter: Telegram, September 1947. Catalogue ref: DO 142/416 .
- 1a. Photograph of: Jawaharlal Nehru, Lord Ismay, Lord Mountbatten, and Muhammed Ali Jinnah. Dinodia Photos / Alamy Stock Photo
- 1b. 'The Indian Situation' – personal notes from Lord Ismay, 1947. Catalogue ref: DO 121/69
- 2a. Punjab, India and Pakistan boundaries, 1947. CO 1054/76
- 2b. Letter from Santokh Singh, 1 June 1946. Catalogue ref: CAB 127/106
- 2c. Report from The Times, 25th August 1947. Catalogue ref: DO 142/416
- 2d. Page from report 'Appreciation of the East Punjab' by J.S.H. Shattock, 16 March 1948. Catalogue ref: DO 142/439
- 3. A brief survey of the work done in India by the British, October 1945. Catalogue ref: WO 208/755
- 4. Report on refugees after Partition, October 1947. Catalogue ref: DO 142/416
- 5a. Oral testimony from Iqbal's aunt about the Partition.
- 5b. Dehra Dun Valley by PINS © Bhupinder Singh, 2022
- 5c. Mr Ansari House by PINS © Bhupinder Singh, 2022

Background

Introduction to Partition

The partition of British India occurred in August 1947 when the British government withdrew from India after almost two hundred years of British rule.

People in British India had called for independence for decades. But, until the early 1940s, very few people—in Britain or India—would have thought that this independence would take the form of dividing up land.

A very important reason for British rule in India was military resources, particularly soldiers. In 1942, a point of uncertainty in the war for Britain, and growing Indian opposition to colonialism, the British government announced they would leave India after the war. There were many different political leaders and groups who disagreed about how to make everyone feel represented after Britain left. Muslims only made up a quarter of the population but these communities were not spread evenly. There were a few areas where Muslims were most of the population. There were calls from some Muslim leaders for these regions to have greater independence. Divisions grew.

By late 1946 British officials had given up on finding a solution in which many different groups could be represented within a single state. In February 1947 Lord Mountbatten was sent to oversee Britain's withdrawal. On the 3rd June 1947 he stunned everyone by announcing with leaders Jawaharlal Nehru and Muhammad Ali Jinnah that Britain would give power to not one but two new governments - the government of India and the government of Pakistan, a year earlier than previously planned.

Officials from Britain and British India were given just 9 weeks to work out how British India would be divided. The final borders split the eastern and western areas of British India and ran through the provinces of Punjab and Bengal, important areas economically and politically with a roughly 50:50 split of Indian and Muslim populations.

Independence was declared on 14th and 15th August 1947 but the borders of these two new nations were announced 2 days later on the 17th of August. This meant that people celebrated independence without knowing for sure quite where the line between these two countries would be drawn.

People living in the regions affected by partition felt scared and uncertain about their future – not wanting to end up on the 'wrong side' of the border. In the months around August 1947 over 15 million people are thought to have migrated across the new borders. In Punjab in particular this huge human migration was accompanied by brutal violence- some of which we can see as a reflection of the fear and uncertainty of what was going on,

Background

of the future. However it is important to stress that much of the violence was not random but orchestrated by militias connected to various political parties who wanted to secure the best possible outcome after the British left India.

Communal disturbances

Our mystery document begins with the heading 'communal disturbances' which is a word we do not really recognise today. But it was a term that was widely used by officials in British-India to describe tensions between different religious groups. The use of the term 'communal' instead of just saying 'religious' showed that the British thought they were dealing with something specific to Indian society. It was thought that because of strong religious ideas Indian people were most likely to resolve things through violence. Religion was always assumed the cause, not more specific, local issues, which enabled officials to see the violence as something they were not responsible for, that it was caused by timeless differences between people.

Documents at The National Archives

The documents at The National Archives alongside those at the British Library India Office collection and records published in the Transfer of Power collection are some of the major collections of records in the UK about the period we are studying. While there is some duplication, the records at The National Archives are particularly strong for records of policy making at the highest level and for records of British armed forces stationed in India.

Useful links:

Partition Museum- Oral History <https://www.partitionmuseum.org/oral-history/>

SOAS- India: People partition oral archive <https://digital.soas.ac.uk/oa3/all>

1947 Archive <https://www.1947partitionarchive.org/>

The National Archives- Panjab 47 <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/panjab1947/>

Tasks

Starter

1. Look the Starter Document DO142/416

Context -

The document is titled 'communal disturbances'. 'Communal' is not a term we use a lot today but was used in British-India by officials to describe tensions between religious groups. It was thought that Indian people had stronger religious beliefs than British people and, as a result were more likely to resolve things through violence.

- What type of document is it?
- When was it sent?
- Who sent it and who to?
- Why was this document sent?
- What do you notice about the numbers and figures that are used?
- What is the tone of the document?
- How do you think British officials got the information for this document?
- What does the title 'communal disturbances' reveal about how British officials viewed the violence?
- How useful is this document for exploring what happened in the months following the Partition of British India?

2. Explore more documents relating to the partition of British India.

Source One - Decision making

Look at Source 1a.

Context -

Photograph of Jawaharlal Nehru- the first Prime Minister of independent India (left) Lord Ismay- Chief of Staff to Lord Mountbatten (centre left) Lord Mountbatten- British Viceroy of India (centre right) Muhammed Ali Jinnah- First governor-general of Pakistan (right)

Tasks

- How would you describe the expressions of the leaders?
- What could you infer about relations between the different leaders?
- What can you see in the background of the room? How does this relate to the decisions being made?
- How much does this document reveal about the decision to partition British India?

Look at Source 1b Lord Ismay letter DO 121/69

Context -

Lord Ismay was chief of Staff to Lord Mountbatten and therefore closely involved in negotiations.

- What audience was intended for this document? Hint- look at the text at the top of the document.
- It is described as a 'personal note.' How does this affect the tone of the document?
- How does Lord Ismay describe the partition of British India and the following months? (See Section 2 and 3)
- What does he suggest about who is responsible for the way partition happened and the violent outcome?

2. Violence following the Partition of British India: Sikh case study

Look at source 2a, a 1947 map of the Punjab, India and Pakistan boundaries.

Context -

Lahore was a special place for the Sikhs. It was the location of many important Sikh religious and historical sites. In addition Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, was born in Nankana Sahib, near Lahore. However this was a Muslim majority area and was made part of Pakistan. This didn't take into account that non-Muslim people had strong connections to this area, they had businesses and had played a large role in developing the Punjab. Before the boundary line was drawn there were appeals from many in the Sikh community to give greater acknowledgement to Sikh history and heritage than they feared a focus on Muslim and non-Muslim populations would allow.

Tasks

- What does the red line and the red dotted line show on the map?
- When do you think this document was made? Hint: Look at the date mentioned in the key.
- The boundary lines for Pakistan and India were drawn mainly by looking at the percentage of Muslim people in the population. What group of people may have objected to this and why?

Look at Source 2B, A letter from Santokh Singh, 1st June 1946. CAB 127/106

Context -

Santokh Singh was a writer who wrote in Punjabi, with a Sikh father and a Hindu mother. He is writing to Lord Pethick Lawrence, a British politician involved in the negotiations leading to the partition of British India.

- What is the tone of the letter? Give an example to support.
- What does it reveal about the concerns of the Sikh population relating to the partition of British India?

Look at Source 2c, a Cover note and extract from a newspaper article from The Times, 25th August, 1947. DO 142/416

- What does the newspaper article suggest about the situation in Punjab by late August?
- Why do you think the British government are collecting this newspaper article?

Look at Source 2d, a page from 1948 report by J.S.H. Shattock. DO 142/439

Context -

J.S.H Shattock was based at the British High Commission at Delhi. The British High Commission reported between its offices in India and also informed bodies like the Commonwealth Relations Office in London about what was happening in India.

- How does Shattock describe the situation in the Punjab during August and September 1947?
- What does this document suggest was the impact of this violence?

Tasks

3. Communal tensions- British perspective

Look at Source 3, notes on British involvement in India from 1945.

Context -

This is a page from a set of notes made by an unknown British official. 'Communal' is not a term we use a lot today but was used in British-India by officials to describe tensions between religious groups. It was thought that Indian people had stronger religious beliefs than British people and, as a result were more likely to resolve things through violence.

- When was this document written?
- How is this document written?
- What did the author mean by the title 'communal differences'?
- What does the author think is causing divisions between religious groups? Hint: Look at the paragraph that begins 'Consequently neither Hindus or Muslims are willing...'
- How effective does the author think British rule in India has been? Hint: Look at the final paragraph.

4. Forced displacement of people

Look at Source 4, a report on refugee movements after partition.

- What type of document is this?
- What language is used to describe displaced people?
- It was made by the international news agency Reuters. What do you think its purpose was?
- How do you think the author gathered their information?
- How does the language and tone of the document compare to the Starter Source?

Tasks

5. Oral Testimony

Listen to the oral testimony from Iqbal's aunt about partition.

Context -

These are extracts from a conversation with Iqbal's aunt whose family were displaced prior to the partition of British India. There are themed audio clips and a typed transcript.

- What type of document is this?
- What challenges did Iqbal's aunt face when her family were displaced?
- Iqbal's aunt shows a lot of empathy for Mr Ansari who was Muslim and recognition that he must have felt loss, like her family did.
- How does that challenge some of the simplistic ideas about 'non- Muslim' and 'Muslim' people in the Starter Source?
- How useful do you think oral testimony is as a source to learn about partition? Explain your answer.

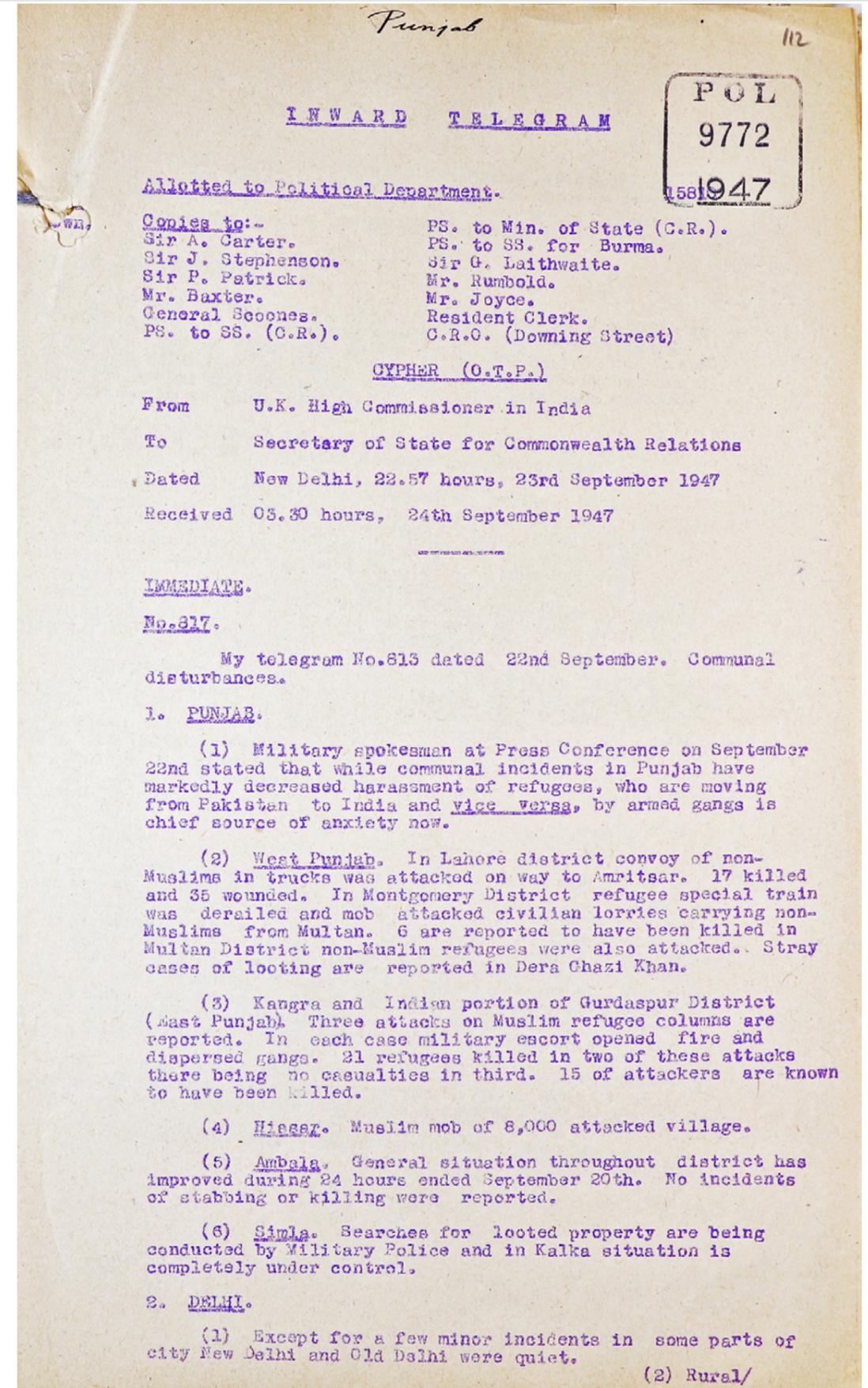
Creative activities

Look at the illustrations by artist Pins, inspired by Iqbal's aunt's testimony. These are suggestions for activities you could do:

- Pick another scene from the testimony and create a graphic drawing of it. You can use words and captions.
- Listen to more oral testimonies from people who lived through Partition [here](#). Create a graphic drawing of their story.

Starter: Telegram, September 1947

Catalogue Ref: DO 142/416



Starter: Telegram, September 1947

Catalogue Ref: DO 142/416

Transcript

INWARD TELEGRAM

Allotted to Political Department.

Copies to:-

Sir A. Carter	P.S to Min. of State (C.R.).
Sir J. Stephenson	PS. To SS. for Burma.
Sir P. Patrick	Sir G. Laithwaite
Mr. Baxter	Mr. Joyce.
General Scoones	Resident Clerk
PS. To SS. (C.R.).	C.R.O. (Downing Street)

CYPHER (O.T.P.)

From U.K. High Commissioner in India
To Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations
Dated New Delhi, 22.57 hours, 23rd September 1947
Received 03.30 hours, 24th September 1947

IMMEDIATE.

No. 817

My telegram No.613 dated 22nd September. Communal disturbances.

1. PUNJAB

- (1) Military spokesman at Press Conference on September 22nd stated that while communal incidents in Punjab have markedly decreased harassment of refugees, who are moving from Pakistan to India and vice versa, by armed gangs is chief source of anxiety now.
- (2) West Punjab. In Lahore district convoy of non-Muslims in trucks was attacked on way to Amritsar. 17 killed and 35 wounded. In Montgomery District refugee special train was derailed and mob attacked civilian lorries carrying non-Muslims from Multan. 6 are reported to have been killed in Multan District non-Muslim refugees were also attacked. Stray cases of looting are reported Dera Ghazi Khan.
- (3) Kangra and India portion of Gurdaspur District (East Punjab). Three attacks on Muslim refugee columns are reported. In each case military escort opened fire and dispersed gangs. 21 refugees killed in two of these attacks there being no casualties in third. 15 of attacks are known to have been killed.
- (4) Hissar. Muslim mob of 8,000 attacked village.
- (5) Ambala. General situation throughout district has improved during 24 hours ended September 20th. No incidents of stabbing or killing were reported.
- (6) Simla. Searches for looted property are being conducted by Military police and in Kalka situation is completely under control.

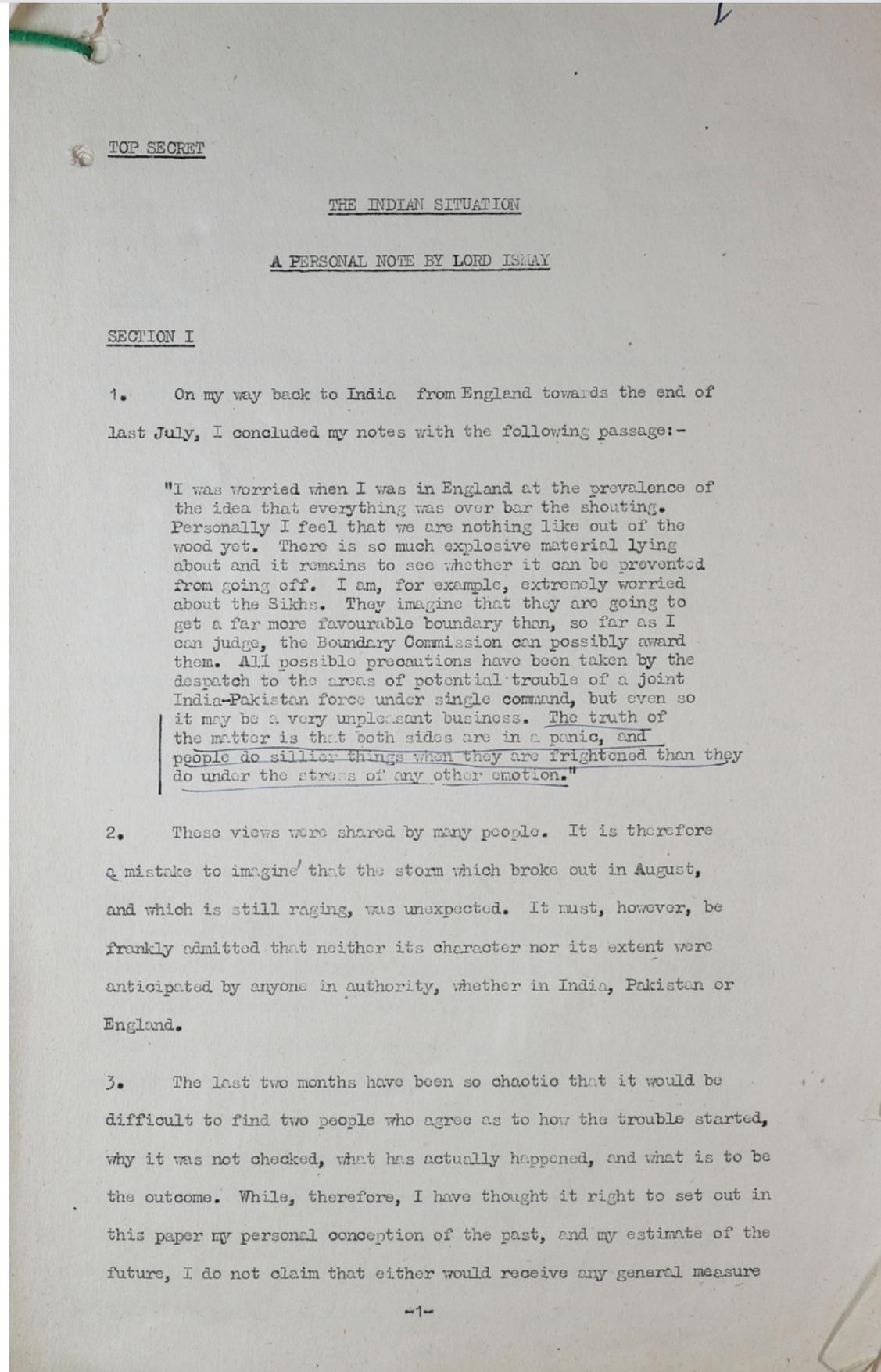
2. DELHI.

- (1) Expect for a few minor incidents in some parts of city New Delhi and Old Delhi were quiet.

Source 1a: Photograph of Jawaharlal Nehru, Lord Ismay, Lord Mountbatten, and Muhammed Ali Jinnah Dinodia Photos / Alamy Stock Photo



Source 1b: 'The Indian Situation' - personal notes from Lord Ismay,
1947 Catalogue Ref: DO 121/69



Source 1b: 'The Indian Situation' - personal notes from Lord Ismay,
1947 Catalogue Ref: DO 121/69

Transcript

TOP SECRET
THE INDIAN SITUATION
A PERSONAL NOTE BY LORD ISMAY

SECTION I

On my way back to India from England towards the end of last July, I concluded my notes with the following passage:-

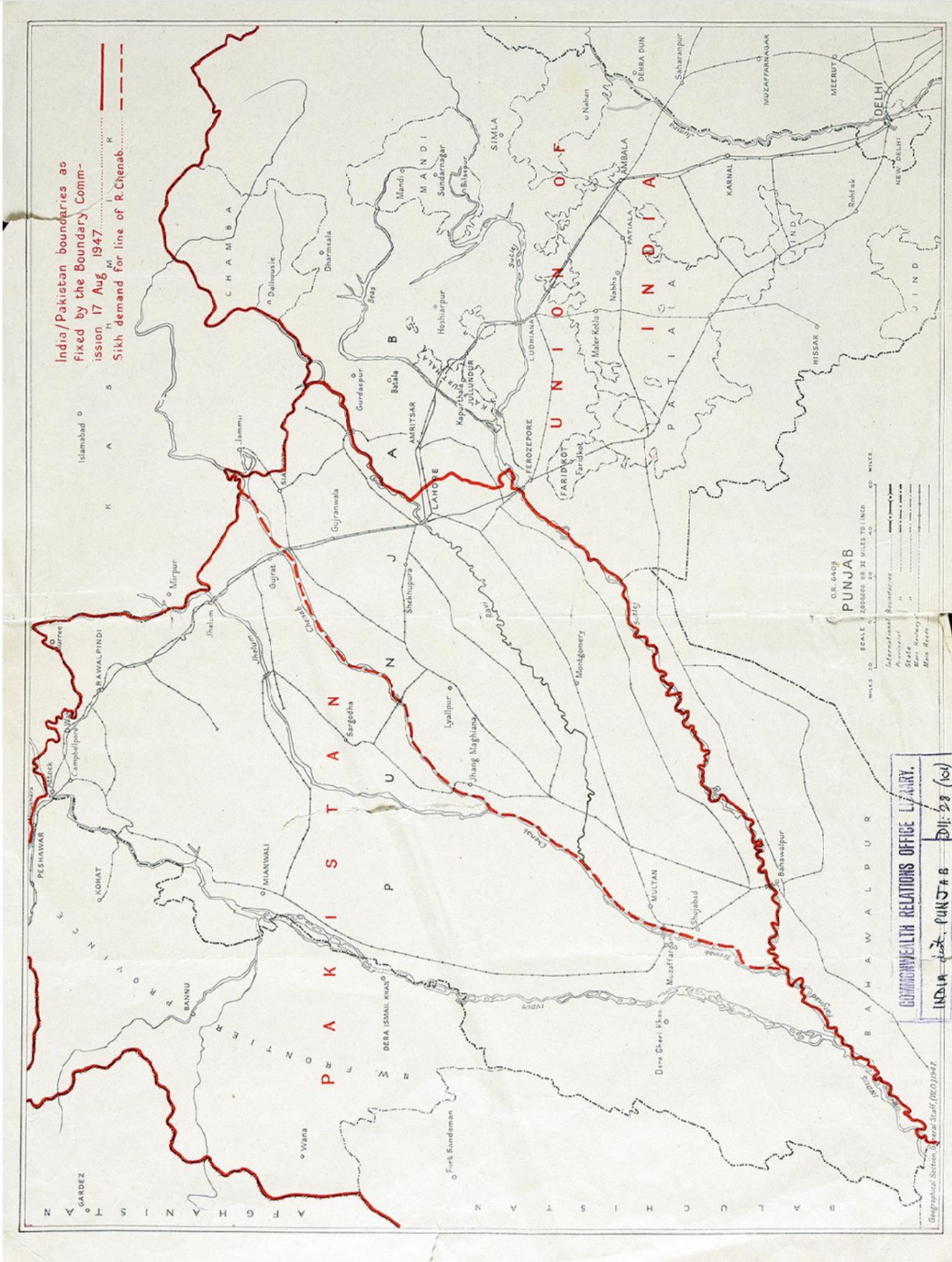
"I was worried when I was in England at the prevalence of the idea that everything was over bar the shouting. Personally I feel that we are nothing like out of the wood yet. There is so much explosive material lying about and it remains to see whether it can be prevented from going off. I am, for example, extremely worried about the Sikhs. They imagine that they are going to get a far more favourable boundary than, so far as I can judge, the Boundary Commission can possibly award them. All possible precautions have been taken by the despatch to the areas of potential trouble of a joint India-Pakistan force under single command, but even so it may be a very unpleasant business. The truth of the matter is that both sides are in panic, and people do sillier things when they are frightened than they do under the stress of any other emotion."

These views were shared by many people. It is therefore a mistake to imagine that the storm which broke out in August, and which is still raging, was unexpected. It must, however, be frankly admitted that neither its character nor its extent were anticipated by anyone in authority, whether in India, Pakistan or England.

The last two months have been so chaotic that it would be difficult to find two people who agree as to how the trouble started, why it was not checked, what has actually happened, and what is to be the outcome. While, therefore, I have thought it right to set out in this paper my personal conception of the past, and my estimate of the future, I do not claim that either would receive any general measure

Source 2a: Punjab, India and Pakistan boundaries, 1947

Catalogue Ref: CO 1054/76



Source 2a: Punjab, India and Pakistan boundaries, 1947

Catalogue Ref: CO 1054/76

Map description

India/Pakistan boundaries as fixed by the Boundary Commission 17 August 1947: [Red line]

Sikh demand for line for River Chenab: [Red dashes]

PAKISTAN

PUNJAB

Red dashes going along the River Chenab, through the area of the Punjab. This shows the border that the Sikhs want.

In this area is the city of LAHORE

UNION OF INDIA

Red line showing the border of the UNION OF INDIA

These places are located in the UNION OF INDIA.

AMRITSAR

JULLUNDUR

FEROZEPURE

Source 2b: Letter from Santokh Singh, 1 June 1946

Catalogue Ref: CAB 127/106

The situation is painful for the Sikhs particularly as the proposals emerge from the British with whom they have had such great friendship for a long time. Sikh blood has been spilt ungrudgingly at every war for the last Century in which the British have been involved. They do not want any reward for this, but their feelings should be understood when their very existence is threatened by the proposals of the British whom they have always regarded as friends.

The Mission has recognised the Sikhs as a minority but have not conceded minority privileges to them as they have done to the only other minority, the Muslims.

Yours truly,

Santokh Singh M.A(Oxon), B.Sc.
of Shahkot.

Source 2b: Letter from Santokh Singh, 1 June 1946

Catalogue Ref: CAB 127/106

Transcript

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of Shahkot.

Source 2c: Report from The Times, 25th August 1947

Catalogue Ref: DO 142/416

Sir P. Patrick
Sir A. Carter *RM*
25/8/47

I attach the article about the Punjab in to-day's "Times" in case you have not seen it. It is the fullest report which we have yet had from any source of what is happening.

It suggests that:-

- Sikh and Hindu troops are no longer ready to fire on their co-religionists
- the death role is likely to be much higher than the few thousands estimated by General Rees. If one gang of Sikhs murders "at least 500 people" in 15 villages in one day and 50 villages are seen in flames at one time, the death role must be very high indeed, spread over the last fortnight during which the situation has been getting increasingly out of hand
- there are evidently not nearly enough troops in the Boundary Force
- civil control has quite broken down.

W.P. Carter

25th August, 1947.

"THE TIMES" OF 25TH AUGUST, 1947.

MASSACRES IN PUNJAB

—♦—

MUSLIMS BUTCHERED BY ARMED MOBS OF SIKHS

—♦—

BREAKDOWN OF CIVIL ADMINISTRATION

From Our Special Correspondent in Punjab

THE JATHAS AT WORK

"A thousand times more horrible than anything we saw during the war," is the universal comment of experienced officers, British and Indian, on the present slaughter in east Punjab. The Sikhs are on the war-path. They are clearing eastern Punjab of Muslims, butchering hundreds daily, forcing thousands to flee westward, burning Muslim villages and homesteads, even in their frenzy burning their own, too. This violence has been organized from the highest levels of Sikh leadership, and it is being done systematically, sector by sector. Some large towns, like Amritsar and Jullundur, are now quieter, because there are no Muslims left. In a two hours' air reconnaissance of the Jullundur district at the week-end I must have seen 50 villages aflame.

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Transcript

Sir P. Patrick

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It suggests that: -

- Sikh and Hindu troops are no longer ready to fire on their co-religionists
- the death role is likely to be much higher than the few thousands estimated by General Rees. If one gang of Sikhs murders "at least 500 people" in 5 villages in one day and 50 villages are seen in flames at one time, the death role must be very high indeed, spread only the last fortnight during which the situation has been getting increasingly out of hand
- there are evidently not nearly enough troops in the Boundary Force
- civil control has quite broken down.

25th August, 1947

"THE TIMES" OF 25TH AUGUST 1947

MASSACRES IN PUNJAB

MUSLIMS BUTCHERED BY ARMED MOBS OF SIKHS

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Source 2d: Page from report 'Appreciation of the East Punjab' by
J.S.H. Shattock, 16 March 1948 Catalogue Ref: DO 142/439

6. Under these conditions alone the new administration was bound to be confronted with many difficulties in the first few months of its existence, but added to these arose a series of events unprecedented in the history of this sub-Continent. Violent and widespread massacres of Muslims by Sikhs and Jats in August and September, 1947, reduced the Province and the interspersed territories of the Punjab Sikh States to a virtual state of anarchy for nearly two months. This was followed during the succeeding months by a complete evacuation of the four million odd Muslim inhabitants of the Province and by the arrival of a similar number of Hindus and Sikhs from Western Pakistan. For several months the whole economy of the Province was crippled. Every public servant and every public service was devoted exclusively to restoring internal peace, to looking after the vast mass of refugees moving in two directions and to making arrangements for their temporary housing and
re-settlement/

Source 2d: Page from report 'Appreciation of the East Punjab' by
J.S.H. Shattock, 16 March 1948 Catalogue Ref: DO 142/439

Transcript

Under these conditions alone (loss of police officer, magistrates, and over full jails OR could say break down in law and order) the new administration was bound to be confronted with many difficulties in the first few months of its existence, but added to these arose a series of events unprecedented in the history of this sub-Continent . Violent and widespread massacres of Muslims by Sikhs and Jats in August and September 1947 reduced the Province and the interspersed territories of the Punjab Sikh States to a virtual state of anarchy for nearly two months. This was followed during the succeeding months by a complete evacuation of the four million odd Muslim inhabitants of the Province and by the arrival of a similar number of Hindus and Sikhs from Western Pakistan. For several months the whole economy of the Province was crippled. Every public servant and every public service was devoted exclusively to restoring internal peace, to looking after the mass of refugees moving in two directions and making arrangements for their temporary housing and re-settlement.

Source 3: A brief survey of the work done in India by the British, October 1945 Catalogue Ref: WO 208/755

INDIA. ~~India~~ - ~~India~~ ^{Yellow} Oct. 1945
D/I. P.M.
A brief survey of the work done by the British in India; progress towards Dominion status; and difficulties in ensuring freedom from external aggression and internal disorder
THE WAR OFFICE. GENERAL STAFF.

Communal Differences
"Divide and Rule" principle to maintain the British Raj, not borne out by those with practical experience of difficulties to which admin. is exposed by the recurrent disturbances.
To accuse British of fomenting communal disturbances is to speak in ignorance or in malice.
The advent of democratic forms of gov. has placed a premium upon political agitation.
Consequently neither Hindus nor Muslims are willing to lose any opportunity of demonstrating importance of their communities, leaders of both sides, appealing to their co-religionists, e.g. Hindu Mahasabha & Muslim Khilafat Committee, continually conducting propaganda against one another.
Prizes - power, place & influence.
Communities draw apart, feelings rise high & some small incident precipitates a crisis.

Apart from periodic waves of fanaticism sweeping over one community or the other, friction arises frequently in the economic sphere.

Whatever criticisms of Br. rule this is clear:-
British rule, alone among the many dominions India has known in her tragic history, has placed the country on the road which leads to national integration and to national self-government.

Source 3: A brief survey of the work done in India by the British, October 1945 Catalogue Ref: WO 208/755

Transcript

INDIA

Oct 1945

A brief survey of the work done by the British in India; progress towards Dominion status; and difficulties in ensuring freedom from external aggression and internal disorder

THE WAR OFFICE

GENERAL STAFF

Communal Differences

"Divide and Rule" principle to maintain the British Raj, not borne out by those with practical experience of difficulties to which admin. is exposed by the recurrent disturbances.

To accuse British of fomenting communal disturbances is to speak in ignorance or in malice.

The advent of democratic forms of gov. has placed a premium upon political agitation.

Consequently neither Hindus nor Muslims are willing to lose any opportunity of demonstrating importance of their communities, leaders of both sides appealing to their co-religion (illegible) e.g. Hindu Mahasabha and Muslim Khilafat Committee, continually conducting propaganda against one another.

Prizes- power, place and influence.

Communities draw apart, feelings rise high and some small incident precipitates a crisis.

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British rule, along among the many dominions India has known in her tragic history, has placed the country on the road which leads to national integration and to national self-government.

Source 4: Report on refugees after Partition, October 1947

Catalogue Ref: DO 142/416

75-Mile Non-Moslem Convoy Quits Pakistan for India *File on Punjab disturbances file*
New Delhi, October 6

One of the greatest mass migrations in history was today nearing completion as a 75-mile convoy of uprooted non-Moslem population continued to pour over the Pakistan border into India from the most fertile areas of the West Punjab.

The whole convoy was expected to have crossed into the East Punjab within the next two or three days. Then the gigantic task of ~~moving~~ moving them will begin.

So vast is this moving mass of humanity - sustained by food dropped by air and by doctors flown to its aid - that it took eight days to pass a stationary point.

The convoy included shopkeepers, artisans, doctors, lawyers and one-rich landlords. The old and sick died on the way, but the convoy moved on, blood from torn feet of the weary immigrants staining the dusty road.

Source 4: Report on refugees after Partition, October 1947

Catalogue Ref: DO 142/416

Transcript

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So vast is this moving mass of humanity- sustained by food dropped by air and by doctors flown to its aid - that it took eight days to pass a stationary point.

The convoy included shopkeepers, artisans, doctors, lawyers and once-rich landlords. The old and sick died on the way, but the convoy moved on, blood from torn feet of the weary immigrants staining the dusty road.

Source 5a: Iqbal's Aunt's Testimony

Iqbal's aunt

Iqbal's aunt is a Sikh woman born in what is today Pakistan. Her mother tongue was Punjabi. In late 1946, with the rest of her immediate family she left Rawalpindi (today in Pakistan) to go to Dehra Dun in India.

[Listen to her testimony.](#)

Transcript

Train journey

We were in a train, never seen before, but everyone was quiet, no one was saying anything, later on my mother told me we were all wandering where are we going, what's happening, that's what she told us and I remember Lahore Station, the railway station, where there were people, people, people and my mother's sister and her husband they came to see us at the station saying why are we going, are we mad, they still didn't realise but then grandfather told us we must go, it is going to happen, that everybody will have to leave, those who are not of that religion of Pakistan going to leave. And then the train slowly moves, people are very happy, as children we were going to Ferozepur, Ferozepur, Ferozepur, it was going to be India. And my mother says that everybody was happy, and loud religious things were being said, thank God, we were saved and very sad and very unhappy that they had to leave their homes forever.

Learning Hindi

We had to learn a new language, which was Hindi. In Pakistan it was Urdu and English, and here it was going to be Hindi and English, so we had to go to a Hindi learning school to learn Hindi to go into school, to be admitted, and to learn that language. The teacher who was teaching us came from a very good local rich landlord family so that is a very beautiful memory, of learning the language from her. But we could not go to an English medium school because they were more expensive, and the Hindi medium was low fees and my parents could afford only that for the girls and the boys, brother, cousins, they went to the English medium. That trauma of Hindi medium stayed in me, that complex, lasted I think almost forever, but of course we managed with confidence but I remember wherever you went we grew up they would say you know so-and-so's daughters. They are okay girls but you know they went to the Hindi medium schools, they are simpletons.

Source 5a: Iqbal's Aunt's Testimony (continued)

Refugee Girls

I don't remember the word refugee. It came only when we decided we are going to Dehradun because all the refugees are going towards Dehradun, towards Dehradun. Saharanpur, Rurki, Delhi. We were about to reach Dehradun, a beautiful place, it's a valley between the two mountain ranges of the Himalayas. That is where I remember, 'oh, they are refugees. They are the refugee girls. They are the refugee girls.'

My father

You see when the refugees were given houses which were left by the Muslims who went to Pakistan and the other way around. One very major trauma that in my mind is I must tell you, is my father, who suffered the maximum and he never, never laughed, never smiled easily because he could not get over it. 23 years after partition when he became ill, subconsciously or unconsciously he kept on saying, let's go home, let's go home. And my mother said, we are home. No, no, let's go home. Because he was thinking home that is left behind.

Mr Ansari

We were given this place which belonged to Mr. Ansari, had a beautiful garden, seven types varieties of mangoes and lychees and all kinds of fruit. And he was a very nice man, who also had to leave the other way round, and then when I was thinking of my father saying, let's go home, I wondered, Mr. Ansari must be missing his home, which became our home.

Listen to her testimony: <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/partition-of-british-india/source-5a/>

Source 5b: Dehra Dun Valley by PINS © Bhupinder Singh, 2022



Source 5c: Mr Ansari House by PINS © Bhupinder Singh, 2022



Glossary

Term	Definition
UK High Commissioner in India	The High Commissioner is the UK government's representative in a Commonwealth nation. So British officials in India.
Dominion	This is what India and Pakistan became after independence in August 1947. The countries became part of the Commonwealth.
Commonwealth	An international association consisting of the United Kingdom together with states that used to be British colonies.
Punjab	The Punjab was an area previously part of British India that was divided in 1947. West Punjab became part of West Pakistan (now Pakistan) and East Punjab part of India. The area of Bengal was also divided to form East Pakistan (now Bangladesh).
Communal	This was a term used in British-India by officials to describe tensions between different religious groups.
Refugee column	A line of people who have been forcibly displaced from their homes and are trying to reach safety.
Boundary Commission	This was a group created in July 1947 to recommend how the Punjab and Bengal regions of British India were to be divided. The commission, appointed by Lord Mountbatten, the final viceroy of British India, had four members from the Indian National Congress and four from the Muslim League and was chaired by Sir Cyril Radcliffe. Cyril Radcliffe submitted the map of the new countries.
British Raj	The period of direct British rule over the Indian subcontinent from 1858 until 1947.
Self-government	Government of a country by its own people, especially after having been a colony.
Convoy	A group of people or vehicles travelling together, especially for safety.



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