

**The Origin and Development of Akali Party
in the Punjab up to 1947**

by

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PREFACE

"Modern Sikh History" writes Lt.-Col. Birdwood in his book 'A Continent Experiments', "is centred round the Akali Party." True; modern Sikh history is but an integral part of modern Punjab, in which the Akalis have played a very important role. It is in this context of modern Punjab that we can study the Akali Party's achievements and failures. Very few books appear to have been written specifically on the Akalis. There are no doubt references to them in the works of Birdwood, Penderel Moon (*Divide and Quit*); and Allen Johnson Campbell (*Mission with Mountbatten*), but little or no systematic treatment is found anywhere regarding the political activities of the Akali Party. Khushwant Singh, Dr. Ganda Singh, Harbans Singh Uppal and Dr. Gokul Chand Narang in his 1960 edition of '*The Transformation of Sikhism*', have no doubt given brief accounts of the Akali Party in their scholarly presentations of the history of the Sikhs. But a fuller account remains to be given of a party which is still playing an important role in Indian politics and which produced parliamentarians like the late Sardar Baldev Singh, the first Defence Minister of free India; Sardar Swaran Singh, the present Defence Minister; Sardar Hukam Singh, former Speaker of the Lok Sabha and now Governor of Rajasthan; Sardar Ujjal Singh, Governor of Madras; and the late Sardar Pratap Singh Kairon, former Chief Minister of the Punjab.

In writing my thesis 'The Origin and Development of Akali Party in the Punjab up to 1947', I have been inspired by a desire to do justice to the party's historical role in modern Punjab. Writing a thesis on contemporary subject is, I feel, a risky proposition. Full and critical account of the origin, progress and development of a close but epoch-making political event is always a delicate and difficult task; for the secret, and sometimes silent, origin of such a movement is often shrouded in the mazes of imperfect records and conflicting reports; while jealousy and spite on the one hand, no less than suspicion and distrust on the other, leading to misrepresentations and exaggerations, serve not a little to obscure the vision and warp the judgment of contemporary minds.

Divergent reports which I gathered from newspapers and periodicals have not been altogether free from doubt and contradictions. The available books on the topic were still more obscure and defective in their accounts. Much of the material could not be brought to India at Partition in 1947, and unfortunately, neither the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee nor the head office of the Akali Party located at Amritsar is in possession of official or authentic documents. Moreover the National Archives denied me the privilege of looking into the relevant papers which might have cleared much of the cloud from many a mystery.* However, I have endeavoured, even in the absence of important books, to exploit the available material scattered in newspapers in the Punjab,

especially The Tribune of Lahore now at Ambala Cantt; the Akali Patrika of Lahore, available in irregular form in the Santokh Singh Hall at Amritsar, and books published in Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu. Interviews with leaders who actively participated in the movement and the manuscripts and letters preserved by them have helped me immensely in making this project comprehensive. For this I am grateful to the late Baba Kharak Singh, the late Sardar Pratap Singh Kairon, Master Tara Singh, Sardar Mangal Singh, Sardar Ishar Singh Majhail, Giani Kartar Singh, Sardar Ujjal Singh and the late Lala Duni Chand Ambalvi.

I owe a special debt of gratitude to Dr. S.N.Rao, Registrar, Kurukshetra University, who has guided and supervised my work despite his indifferent health. My thanks are also due to Dr. R.L.Ahuja, Mr. Satindra Singh and Mr. J.S.Butalia, whose criticism and suggestions have added value to this study.

June 1967

Kailash Chander Gulati

* Vide National Archives of India's letter No. F. 5-121/64-R-2, dated June 24, 1964.

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CHAPTER I

THE ORIGIN AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE

AKALI PARTY

Akalis, Their Origin and Character

The Shiromani Akali Dal was formed on December 14, 1920 during the time of the Gurdwara Reform Movement. It had its headquarters within the precincts of the Golden Temple in Amritsar. This organisation was responsible for major reforms in the management of Sikh shrines and their control through the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee. The Shiromani Akali Dal emerged as a full-fledged political party in the Punjab during the 1936-37 elections held under the Government of India Act-1935.

The word 'Akali' is derived from 'Akal',¹ a compound term consisting of 'Kal' and the derivative 'a'. 'Akali', therefore, means 'deathless' or 'immortal'. It is one of the names of Divinity and has probably been given to a remarkable band of devotees for their exclaiming 'Akal!' 'Akal!' in their prayers.²

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1. a) 'Kal' is a Sanskrit word meaning 'time', 'period of time', 'time of the world', 'death by age', 'destiny', 'fate', 'time of death', often personified and represented with attributes of Yama or even identified with 'time the destroyer'.
 - b) 'A' is prefix, which means 'not' 'without'. The compound word 'Akal' thus means 'never dying', or 'Immortal', and is one of the names of Divinity.
 - c) 'Akal' also means 'wrong' or 'bad time' 'unseasonable' (Apte V.S., The Students Sanskrit English Dictionary, Motilal Benarsi Das, Delhi, 1959, p. 2)
 - d) But in Punjabi (according to the Punjabi Dictionary published by the Language Department 1961) 'Akal' also means 'out of time', 'untimely', 'unseasonable', 'immortal' (a title of God), p. 2.

Murray has given a somewhat different explanation. According to him, the term 'Akali' or 'immortal' ('Akali' meaning God and 'Akali' 'God's worshipper'), derived from 'Akali Purusa' or worshippers of the Eternal.³ The word, therefore, means 'immortal' or 'followers of 'Akali Purkh' or Immortal God.⁴

'Akali' appears to be a popular name as suggested by Malcolm.⁵ It may also be a self-assumed title bearing its obvious meaning.⁶

2. Malcolm, John, The Sikh Religion, A Synopsis, Sushil Gupta (India) Private Ltd., Calcutta, (1958) p. 99

3. Hastings, James, (Ed.) Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, T & T. Clark, Edinburgh (1926) p. 268 Vol. 1

But, in Sanskrit, Karpurush means 'time personified', 'minion of Yama,' 'the God of Death'. In Sanskrit there is no such word as 'Akali Pursh'. It is only in Punjabi that we find it in the form of 'Akali Purkh,' which means 'The Immortal One' (God), "Akali Purkh Ko Chhad Ke Bhaje Dev Ko Aur; Janam Janam Bhermat Phiro Lai Nai Sukh Ki Haur" (One who worships another than the Immortal One, falls into transmigration of souls and finds no place or rest.) Vide Punjabi Dictionary, pp. 19-20

4. Bingley, A.H., Sikhs, Central Printing Press, Siala, (1899) p.67

5. Malcolm John, The Sikh Religion, A Synopsis, p. 99

6. Hastings, James, Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, p. 268
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∴ The origin of the term Akali can be traced to the 17th century when Guru Gobind Singh (1675-1708), the tenth Sikh apostle, gave his patronage to a devoted band of his followers, blessing them as 'Akalis'. They were also called 'Nihangs'.⁸ An Akali of the old times was distinguished conspicuously by his dark blue and chequered dress, a peaked turban, often surmounted with steel quoits; and, as MacLagan wrote in 1891, "by the fact of his strutting about, like Ali Baba's prince, with his thorax and abdomen festooned with curious cutlery."⁹ The dark blue turban is worn by the Akalis among the Sikhs even today.

The Akalis, by virtue of their special origin, considered themselves not only morally superior to their co-religionists but also assumed the role of the guardians of the Sikh faith. They reprimanded even Maharaja Ranjit Singh¹⁰ and ~~the late~~ Maharaja Narinder Singh (d. 1862) of Patiala¹¹ for their moral lapses. They also helped Ranjit

7. MacLagan, E.D., Census 1891, The Punjab and its Feudatories, Part I, Calcutta, p. 107
8. Ibbetson, Denzil, Punjab Castes, Government Printing Press (1916) p. 228
9. MacLagan, Census(1891) p. 107
10. When in spite of remonstrances from his community, Maharaja Ranjit Singh continued indulging in certain evils, he found his corrector in one of his own devoted captains. As he was walking in the precincts of the Golden Temple, he was hauled up by Akali Phula Singh, who rebuked him in the presence of all by saying that he was unfit to be the leader of the Khalsa until he had mended his ways. The Maharaja, as Dr. Ganda Singh in his book Ranjit Singh (1940) writes, pocketed the reprimand and submitted that he was ready to pay any fine which a commission of five might impose upon him for his "past errors". Phula Singh said that fine was no punishment and that the Maharaja deserved to be flogged in public. Ranjit Singh bared his back. Tears came into the eyes of the spectators. It could not but create a feeling of profound respect for the Maharaja for his submission

Singh in his military campaigns. In fact, he owed many of his celebrated victories, ^{to} Akali warriors like Sadhu Singh and Phula Singh (d. 1823), the two legendary figures in Sikh history, for their dash and valour and acts of bravery displayed by the former at Multan in 1818 and the latter at Attock in 1823.¹²

* * * *

Chief Khalsa Diwan

Up to the beginning of the 20th century this zealous group among the Sikhs kept strict vigilance over the interests of the community. But with the beginning of the revivalist movement in the Punjab in the wake of British rule, there came about many social and political changes. Like other communities the Sikhs too organised

to the censor. Thereupon only a fine was imposed. Also see Teja Singh's The Growth of Responsibility in Sikhism, p. 57

11. Teja Singh, The Gurdwara Reform Movement and The Sikh Awakening, Dash Sewak Book Agency, Jullundur (1922) Pp. 444-445
Akali Kehar Singh reprimanded Maharaja Narinder Singh of Patiala in 1859. He would not see the Maharaja who had come to Anandpur, and ordered him first to go to Keshgarh and get pardon for his feilings. The Maharaja did so. After confessing and doing penance, he was baptised.
12. Mooltan District Gazetteer (1883-84) Pp. 27-29;
Letif, S.M., History of Punjab, Calcutta Central Press, Calcutta (1891) Pp. 411, 429
Cunningham, J.D., History of the Sikhs (Ed.) H.L.O. Garrett, S.Chand & Co. (1955) Delhi, Pp. 131-155
Khushwant Singh, Banjit Singh, George Allen & Unwin Ltd. (1962), London, Pp. 55, 56, 57, 125
Ahuja, R.L., Banjit Singh, Lahore Book Shop, Ludhiana, Pp. 91-92

themselves into different groups to protect and promote their political rights. Among the organisations which came into existence before the Akali Party emerged as the most powerful political body of the Pan the most important was the Chief Khalsa Diwan.¹³

13. Khushwant Singh, The Sikhs, Pp. 98-101
 The Chief Khalsa Diwan was brought into existence in 1902, when Lahore and Amritsar Khalsa Diwans were fused together and all the Singh Sabhas were brought under its guidance and superintendence. In 1873 an association styled the Guru Singh Sabha was formed and a plan to organise educational facilities for Sikhs, with particular emphasis on Gurmukhi and the scriptures was put into action. A Khalsa School was opened in Amritsar, and the University authorities were persuaded to start Gurmukhi as a subject for higher studies in Oriental College at Lahore. Commentaries on Sikh scriptures were written and journals were started in English and Punjabi languages. The movement established at Lahore became popular with the Sikh middle class. In 1879 a Singh Sabha was established at Lahore. By 1886 several new sabhas were opened. Lord Landsdowne, the Viceroy, in 1890 expressed "heartly sympathy with the movement." In 1894 Lt. Governor, Punjab, and Commander-in-Chief agreed to become its patrons at Lahore. In 1886 rivalry started between the Lahore and Amritsar sabhas. But this did not impede the progress of the movement. In 1892 was founded the Khalsa College, Amritsar. In 1902 these sabhas were joined together and renamed as the Chief Khalsa Diwan. It received financial support from the Sikh princes, and Sir Charles Rivaz, the Lt.-Governor, himself organised the campaign for raising funds from the Sikh landowners for educational activities of the Diwan. In 1904 a conference was held on the college premises at Amritsar under the presidency of Maharaja Hira Singh of Nabha and the institution was put on a sound financial basis by endowments. In 1908 an educational committee was formed and from then onwards annual educational conferences were held in different parts of the Punjab. New schools, colleges, orphanages, and other educational institutions followed in the wake of these conferences. The religious, literary and educational contributions of the Singh Sabha movement had a lasting effect. Vir Singh's Khalsa Tract Society and the weekly Khalsa Samachar and other works of a religious-literary nature did much to enrich Punjabi literature.

The Chief Khalsa Diwan was founded in 1902. It was primarily a social and educational body. The fact that it enjoyed the patronage of the British rulers and the financial backing of the ruling princes made it a handmaid of the Government. The British, too, helped it for their "enlightened self-interest." Sir Charles Rivaz, Lieut-Governor, for instance, organised a campaign for raising funds from Sikh land-owners for the educational activities of the Diwan. The explanation is not far to seek. Before the non-co-operation movement of the Congress in 1920-22, the British looked upon the Sikhs as their right hand as they had helped them quell the rebellion of 1857 and re-establish their sway over the country.¹⁴ Being an ultra-loyalist body, the Chief Khalsa Diwan always supported the Government. When the Sikh revolutionaries, who were members of the Ghadr Party, returned to India in 1915,¹⁵ the Diwan supported the Government's ruthless measures taken against them. Similarly, during the notorious Martial Law regime in the Punjab four years later, when the Government was condemned for shooting hundreds of innocent people and for other high-handed acts of the army, police and magistracy, the Diwan did not join the national chorus of condemnation. On the other hand, it called upon the Sikhs to stay loyal to the Government. As the Sikhs had rendered meritorious services to the Empire during the War, the Chief Khalsa

14. Narang, Gokul Chand, Transformation of Sikhism (IInd Ed.), New Book Society, Lahore, (1945), p. 380

15. Khushwant Singh, The Sikhs, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London (1953), p. 112

Diwan argued, it was the bounden duty of the sons of Satguru to keep themselves aloof from any movement against law and order. It exhorted them to maintain their traditional loyalty to the Emperor and to serve the Government in preserving peace.¹⁶

Although the growth of the nationalist movement in the country inevitably had its impact on the activities of the Diwan, its methods continued to be constitutional. It confined its activities to ^{the} holding ^{of} conferences, adopting resolutions, issuing pamphlets¹⁷ and making appeals to the good sense of the British sovereign or his satraps.¹⁸ When Dalip Singh, the exiled son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, in his letter (June 20, 1889) from Russia appealed to Sikh Sardars to help him regain his lost kingdom, the Diwan insisted on his being loyal to the British Crown, vide their reply dated October 30, 1889.¹⁹ In fact, it told him that the Sikhs would work against him if he persisted in his anti-British activities. Even scholars like Bhai Vir Singh and Bhai Jodh Singh, who were leading lights of the Singh Sabhas, refrained from associating themselves with the contemporary political movements.²⁰

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16. Manifesto issued by the Chief Khalsa Diwan, *The Tribune*, Lahore, 25-4-1919.
17. Khushwant Singh, *The Sikhs*, p. 101
18. *The Tribune*, 25-4-1919
19. Jagjit Singh, *Singh Sabha Lahar*, Taran Taran, p. 61
20. Hira Singh Darad in the *Phulwari* issues of March and April, 1956, goes to the length of asserting that 'Rana Surat Singh' (1905) the epic poem of Bhai Vir Singh, was a symbolic compromise of the Sikhs made with the British Government and thus enjoy the fruits of their loyalty.

The Canal Colonisation Bill Movement²¹ (1907) was the first popular upsurge in the Punjab in which the masses were awakened by political leaders like Lajpat Rai (1865-1928) and Ajit Singh (d.1947) by means of political propoganda and patriotic songs like "Pagri Sambhal Jatta"(O, Jat, see that your turban, the embodiment of your honour, is not dislodged) of Banke Dayal (1880-1929). But the

21. Sedition Committee's Report, Government Printing Press, Calcutta (1918), p. 100

The Land Colonisation Bill was introduced by Sir Denzil Ibbetson in 1907, which sought to change the "Law of Inheritance of Land" by prohibiting the erection of buildings and plantations of trees in the agricultural land in the Chenab Canal colonies. There was a proposal to raise the tax also. The public meetings were organised to protest against the Bill at Lyalpur and Rawalpindi in which Ajit Singh and Lajpat Rai turned out to be prominent leaders, who were deported the same year.

Also see Lajpat Rai's Autobiographical Writings(Ed.) V.C.Joshi, University Publishers, Delhi(1965), p.135

The bill was vetoed by the Governor General Lord Minto within three weeks of the deportation of Lajpat Rai in spite of the opposition of the Punjab Governor Sir Denzil Ibbetson and some of the members of the Governor General's Council. Lord Minto refused assent to the Bill because he believed it to be "a very faulty piece of legislation - legislation which would be unadvisable at any time, but which at present moment, if it became law would add fuel to the justifiable discontent which has already been caused."

followers of the Singh Sabhas did not write a single line in support of the movement. While Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) gave up his knighthood in protest against the Jallianwala Bagh massacre of 1919, Bhai Vir Singh (1872-1957), a leading light of the Chief Khalsa Diwan, does not appear to have commented on the tragedy even once in his voluminous works, though the brutal killing had taken place in his home town.

According to Khushwant Singh, the Chief Khalsa Diwan was able to monopolise the entire field of Sikh activity for nearly a quarter of a century (1890-1914) when semi-democratic institutions were beginning to be introduced on a franchise favourable to the propertied middle class.²² But it could not keep pace with the rising tide of mass opinion that emerged under the influence of ^{the} national movement. As the Chief Khalsa Diwan exhorted the Sikhs to be loyal to a Government which had perpetrated such atrocities as the Amritsar massacre, "it suffered heavily in prestige among the common people and became thoroughly discredited."²³

* * * *

The Central Sikh League

Moreover, a feeling grew among the Sikhs that without a political organisation of their own, their interests ran the risk of being neglected altogether, or, at any rate, of not being adequately safeguarded. No doubt, the community had at no time been wanting in politically conscious, public spirited and patriotic

22. Khushwant Singh, The Sikhs, p. 137

23. Ibid. p. 101

leaders some of whom had thrown in their lot wholeheartedly with the Indian National Congress. But there was no Sikh organisation as such either to ventilate the grievances of the community or to safeguard its economic and political interests. For achieving that end a meeting of prominent Sikhs of all shades of opinion was held in Bradlaugh Hall at Lahore. It decided to set up the Central Sikh League.²⁴

The inaugural session of the Central Sikh League was held in Bande Matram Hall in Amritsar on December 27, 1919, simultaneously with the annual sessions of the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League in Amritsar, with the avowed "object of learning something from the other communities who were in their political youth and vigour".²⁵ The Hon. S.B. Gajjan Singh, a moderate Sikh, presided. Among others present were Sant Singh, Gurbux Singh, Ujjal Singh, R.S. Beisakha Singh (leader of the Chief Khalsa Diwan), Bhai Jodh Singh, and Amar Singh of the Lyall Gazette.²⁶ Though both its president, S.B. Gajjan Singh, and vice-president, Captain Gopal Singh Phagowalia, were loyalists and of moderate views,²⁷ The Central Sikh League could not remain immune to the influence of the non-co-operation movement which had surcharged the political atmosphere of the country. Soon, its leadership passed into the hands of

24. The Tribune, 10-12-1919, Statement of the Secretary of the proposed Central Sikh League.

25. The Tribune, 30-12-1919.

26. The Tribune, 30-12-1919

27. The Tribune, 30-12-1919

nationalist Sikhs.²⁸ One of its militant units, the Lyallpur branch, at its meeting on March 18, 1920, placed on record that it had learnt with great apprehension that the names of S.B. Gajjan Singh and Capt. Phagowalia were on the committee of the O'Dyer Memorial Fund, which was sponsored by the pro-British Punjabis and the Mahants who presented General O'Dyer with £ 28000 and a golden sword proclaiming him as "the defender of the Empire."²⁹ It considered the association of these leaders with the committee as "the height of infamy" and opined that their membership controverted both the letter and spirit of the resolution on Punjab disturbances passed at the annual session of the Central Sikh League. The meeting called upon these two gentlemen to sever their connection with the Fund and thus show that they respected their own resolution.³⁰

At its second session, held in Lahore in October 1920, Baba Kharak Singh,³¹ a nationalist leader, was elected president of the Central Sikh League. He was taken out in a mammoth procession along Mahatma Gandhi, Shaukat Ali and Mohammad Ali. The session was attended by over a thousand delegates and about six thousand visitors. Mahatma Gandhi and other Congress leaders, like Rambhaji Dutt Chowdhury, Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew, Agha Mohd Saifdar, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Maulana Mohammad Ali, Dr. Mohammed Alam and Maulana Shaukat Ali, also, attended the conference.³² The delegates, mostly from the rural areas,

28. The Tribune, 30-3-1920

29. Khushwant Singh, The Sikhs, p. 106

30. The Tribune, 30-3-1920, Resolution passed by the District Central Sikh League, Lyallpur.

31. The Tribune 22-10-1920: Kharak Singh (1867-1963) was

took a lively interest in the proceedings. Almost a whole day was spent on drafting the non-cooperation resolution, which was in the same vein as the resolution adopted by the Indian National Congress at its special session earlier.³³ However, there was a minor difference. In the preamble to the resolution of the Sikh League a new ground for non co-operation was added, namely, the utter disregard shown by the Government for the rights of the Sikh community. Pro-British Sikh leaders like Sewa Singh and Bhai Jodh Singh, who tried to speak against the non-cooperation resolution, were heckled. The resolution was passed by an overwhelming majority -- only about a dozen delegates voting against it.³⁴

The eclipse of the moderate and pro-British Sikh leaders in the Central Sikh League became complete when the organisation gave itself a new constitution on July 22, 1921.³⁵ Its aims and objects were re-defined as "attainment of Swarajya by all legitimate, peaceful and constitutional means; promotion of Panthic unity; fostering patriotism and public spirit among the Sikhs, and development and organisation of their political, moral and economic resources." The new constitution provided for a broad-based council of 101 (a favourite

the son of an army contractor of Sialkot. He was for some years the most powerful leader of the Sikhs. Though called a Baba, he had no connection whatsoever with the communists.

33. The Tribune, 22-10-1920

34. The Tribune, 22-10-1920

35. The Tribune, 23-7-1921, Text of the New Constitution.

number among the Sikhs) members excluding ex-officio members. Eighty members were to be elected according to a scheme prepared by the executive council and 21 to be nominated by the elected members. The annual membership fee was fixed at annas four (the same as for the Congress) to make it a mass organisation.³⁶ By August 1921, district Sikh leagues were established at Gujranwala, Lahore, Lyallpur, Amritsar, Simla, Sialkot, Jhelum, Ferozepore, Jullundur, Hoshiarpur and Delhi.³⁷

The third annual session of the Central Sikh League was held at Lyallpur in 1921. Local Khilafat, Congress and Sewa Samiti volunteers attended in large numbers. The conference venue looked like a sea of black turbans as if the delegates were in mourning for the dead in various incidents perpetrated by the British. A resolution on Congress lines supporting non-cooperation was passed and instructions about boycott of Government institutions and offices were included in the resolution. Decision on non-payment of taxes was, however, deferred.³⁸ The conference passed a resolution urging that the National Flag, to be adopted by the Congress should not be given a communal colour. If, however, the flag colours were to represent Hindus and Muslims, the Sikh League demanded that the Sikh colour (yellow) be also included.³⁹

36. The Tribune, 3-5-1921, The statement of Sardul Singh Caveeshar; also see The Tribune, 23-7-1921

37. The Tribune, 31-8-1921, The statement of the Secretary, Central Sikh League.

38. The Tribune, 13-10-1921, The proceedings of the third Annual Session.

39. The Tribune, 13-10-1921

The Central Sikh League, as an organised political body met in annual sessions at various places and passed resolutions in favour of the movements launched by the Indian National Congress, including the Khilafat movement. It created political consciousness among the Sikhs but was overshadowed in the political field by the Shiromani Akali Dal, which acquired for itself the status of a religio-political organisation of the community after 1935, mainly because of its prominent role in the Gurdwara Reform Movement.⁴⁰

* * * *

Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Emergence of the Shiromani Akali Dal

Well has Khushwant Singh said, "The movement for the liberation of the gurdwaras (1919 to 1926) was generally described as the Akali Movement."⁴¹ It is interesting to study how the Gurdwara Reform Movement originated in the discontent among the Sikh laity against the malpractices of the Mahants, the hereditary heads of gurdwaras; how the law's delay led the frustrated people to seize gurdwaras by Direct Action and how there arose a conflict between the Mahants and the government on the one hand and the zealots among the Sikhs on the other and how this conflict assumed proportions of a movement and lent a new direction and dimension to the character of the Akalis.

It would, therefore, be not out of place to trace the origin and the development of the movement in which Akalis seized a role

40. Partap Singh, Giani, Gurdwara Sudhar, the Akali Lahar, Singh Bros., Amritsar (1951) p. 102

41. Khushwant Singh, The Sikhs, p. 139

which later on became a political one in an era of rapid political changes.

Gurdwaras,⁴² after all, form a part of the Sikh Trinity of G's -- Guru, Granth Sahib and Gurdwara. The Sikh temple, founded by or in the honour of the Sikh Gurus, has ever remained a centre of the Sikhs' social and religious life. Giani Pratap Singh has observed rightly that a gurdwara "is more than just a place of worship. It is also a school, a meeting place and a resting house."⁴³ In all gurdwaras the presence of the Granth Sahib is essential. It represents the Sikh Gurus, whose spirit, according to Sikh belief, is present in its body. Hymns from the Granth Sahib are recited daily in gurdwaras. It is the religious duty of all Sikhs to visit the gurdwara daily, to listen to the recitations from the Granth Sahib and to sing hymns.⁴⁴ Besides arranging recitations from the Granth Sahib, and providing secular and religious instructions to the children of the Sikhs, the gurdwara-in-charge has to give food to the hungry and shelter to the homeless and itinerants.⁴⁵ For meeting these demands, a gurdwara is usually well-endowed. It has a handsome income in the way of money-

42. Gurdwara literally means guru dwara or 'Guru's gate'. The Sikhs enter this gate to go into the presence of their Guru for spiritual benefit. A Sikh must offer his respects to the Guru twice a day, in the morning as well as in the evening. A Sikh and a gurdwara are inseparable. Gurdwaras are known to have played a vital part in shaping the history of Sikhism. They came into prominence with the movement for their liberation in the third decade of the present century.

43. Partap Singh, Giani, Gurdwara Sudhar, the Akali Lahar, p. 24

44. Khushwant Singh, The Sikhs, p. 102

45. Ibid

offerings from worshippers. A gurdwara is, thus, an integral part of the Sikh religious and social life.⁴⁶

During Sikh rule, the gurdwaras were managed by Mahants, who usually belonged to the Udasi sect of sadhus or the local congregation. The office of the priest, in course of time, became hereditary.⁴⁷ Some of these priests became indulgent towards Hindu forms of worship within the precincts of the gurdwaras. They did not rigidly observe the Khalsa forms and symbols. The moral standards of most of them were, to say the least, dubious.⁴⁸

After the annexation of the Punjab in 1849, the British authorities in order to create their influence over the Sikh masses took over the administration of the four important gurdwaras (known as Takhats) at Amritsar, Anandpur, Patna and Mander in Hyderabad. In the others, numbering about 260, the Mahants continued to be in charge, becoming more and more independent of the Sikh congregations with the passage of years.⁴⁹ The weaknesses of the Mahants created a sort of religious discontent among the Sikhs laity. Allegations of unauthorised expenditure of offerings and sacrilegious misuse of the sacred precincts became common.⁵⁰ Remedies provided by law were found to be inadequate. Civil suits involved huge expenses.⁵¹ The Mahants were wealthy. The congregation, on the other hand, had to rely on

46. to 48. Ibid

49. to 51. Ibid, p. 103

voluntary contributions for litigation.⁵²

The Singh Sabhas did not exploit the discontent among the Sikh masses against Hindu practices and the Mahants took no initiative to reform themselves. The Chief Khalsa Diwan, which was a political offshoot of the Singh Sabha movement, also remained inactive, if not indifferent. It enjoyed the patronage of the princes and landed aristocracy. Besides it was pro-Government. Probably under their influence, the Mahants of important shrines, writes Khushwant Singh, joined hands with the loyalists in excommunicating the revolutionaries as renegades from the faith. A Government report acknowledged its gratitude to the "Committee of the Sikh Gentlemen" who at the cost of much personal trouble and risk rendered loyal and valuable service in catching and controlling the movements of thousands of returned emigrants dispersed throughout Punjab.⁵³ On top of it, the Mahants honoured General Dyer at the Golden Temple as a defender of the Sikh faith and presented him with a robe of honour after the Jallianwala Bagh massacre on April 13, 1919, which Churchill had described as a 'monstrous event', an 'event which stands in singular and sinister isolation' in the annals of British history.⁵⁴

The relations between the Sikhs and the Government, which had become strained over the Rikab Ganj Gurdwara affair worsened after

52. Ibid

53. Ibid, p. 132

54. Ibid, Pp. 105-106

the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy. The demolition of a wall of Gurdwara Rikabganj in Delhi on January 14, 1914, aroused the Sikh community. The feeling of resentment spread. A then C.I.D. report says: "There is a movement in favour of raising a body of Sikh martyrs who should be prepared, even at the cost of their lives, to forcibly repair the wall of the Rikabganj Gurdwara."⁵⁵

In October, 1919, the Central Sikh League held a meeting in Lahore at Bradlaugh Hall and gave a public call "for 100 shahida (martyrs) who would proceed to Delhi and reconstruct the wall at all costs."⁵⁶ This threat, writes Khushwant Singh, was to take effect two months hence in December, but the Delhi Government, through the good offices of Maharaja Ripudaman Singh of Nabha, restored the demolished wall at his expense.⁵⁷

The sense of triumph which came with it filled the Sikh leadership with a crusading enthusiasm and they started occupying gurdwaras all over India. The Akalis exploited the situation. They jumped in spontaneously, as volunteers to seize gurdwaras and to eject the Mahants. They came from all over the province and they came in jathas organised districtwise. A proverb current in those days was "Aa Gai Fauj Akali Dere Kar Deo Khali" (the Akali army has come, evacuate the derahs.)⁵⁸

55. The Tribune, 8-4-1927, The C.I.D. Report on Gurdwara Movement read by Hakim Ikram-ul-Haq, D.S.P., C.I.D. in the Nankana Sahib case.

56. Ganda Singh (Ed.) Punjab, Khalsa College, Patiala (1962), the article of Sardul Singh Caveeshar, p. 293

57. Khushwant Singh, The Sikhs, p. 106

58. Nahar Singh Gani, Azadi Da Lahran, Giani Harbhajan Singh, Amritsar 1, 208

Some of the Mahants offered no resistance and parted with their hereditary rights. The government recognised the change. Such gurdwaras as were seized through direct action came to be placed under the control of a committee known as the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee.⁵⁹ The Akalis were styled as its "sword arm" which would seize the gurdwaras by direct action and surrender these to this organisation. The multiple leadership of Akali jathas came to be organised under a unified body called the Shiromani Akali Dal (the Host of God)⁶⁰ formed in December 1920 at Amritsar "to raise and train volunteers for action, in taking over gurdwaras from recalcitrant Mahants and then looking after them."⁶¹ Giani Nahar Singh holds that the S.G.P.C. was a non-official authority for the control of gurdwaras, while the Shiromani Akali Dal was an army that would take action and seize gurdwaras from Udasi Mahants or Government Sarbrahs.⁶² Besides the Akalis and a large number of retired soldiers who surrendered their pensions to join Akali Dal, there were the remnants or survivors of the Ghadr Party who had returned to their villages in the province and escaped the gallows by sheer luck, after all the police and the Mahants did to run them to earth. They came forward at this juncture to be quits with the Mahants and the government. The Shiromani Akali

59. Khushwant Singh, The Sikhs, p. 106

60. Akali Patrika, Lahore, 12-4-1924. An article in the Akali Patrika of April 12, 1924, tracing the history of the Akali movement gave credit to Sunder Singh Lyallpuri, Sardul Singh Caveeshar and Mangal Singh for being the pioneers of the agitation in Punjab against the demolition of the boundary wall of Gurdwara Rikabganj.

61. The Sikh Review, Calcutta, July 1963, p. 25

62. Nahar Singh, Azadi Dian Lahran, p. 208

Dal, thus acquired a semi-military character, but under the influence of Gandhi's Satyagraha Movement exercised through the leadership of Baba Kharak Singh, Shiromani Akali Dal volunteers took an oath to eschew violence and to practice passive resistance.⁶³

These Akalis, to quote Teja Singh, formed a new order quite distinct from the old one. True, they were militant but also non-violent. By virtue of their non-violence, unflinching zeal and the spirit of martyrdom, they won a name for themselves.⁶⁴ The name Akali caught the public imagination. In May, 1920, the Khalsa Akhbar, an Urdu Weekly, published by Harehand Singh, was renamed "Akali".⁶⁵

The first Jatha of Akalis, called the Sewak Jatha, was organised by the people of Sialkot. Since they had failed to gain control of the gurdwara through a civil suit, the Sikhs of the city decided to help themselves and began to hold weekly and then daily morning

63. Baba Kharak Singh Abhinandan Granth, article of Santokh Singh Vidyarthi, Pp. 184-185

64. Teja Singh, The Gurdwara Reform Movement, p. 446: All the volunteers who joined the Gurdwara Reform Movement were described as Akalis. Also Sant Singh, former M.L.A. (Central) and later India's Ambassador to Ethiopia, writes in Baba Kharak Singh Abhinandan Granth, Pp. 76-77 "In the offensive launched by the S.G.P.C. Against the Punjab Government for the Gurdwara Reform Movement non-violent satyagraha was offered by valiant Sikh volunteers called Akalis."

65. Ganda Singh, some Confidential Papers of the Akali Movement, S.G.P.C., Amritsar (1965) p. IX

services in the gurdwara in utter defiance of the Sarbrah, Ganda Singh, the nominee-manager of the shrine appointed by the widow of the late Mahant.⁶⁶ Baba Kharak Singh agreed to lead the movement when the jatha approached him for help. Under his leadership, the jatha occupied the Gurdwara Babe-De-Beer about half a mile from the city.⁶⁷ The law took its course and arrested five Sikhs under Section 107 Cr. P.C., but the Divisional Commissioner intervened and the matter was patched up.⁶⁸

But all the gurdwara disputes were not solved as amicably. Some Mahants clung to their hereditary possessions and resisted the direct action taken against them. The Government on its part could not allow forcible possession of the gurdwaras when the Mahants appealed to it for protection claiming the gurdwaras as their hereditary property. Thus, a clash between the Mahants supported by the Government and the Sikh masses became inevitable and assumed alarming proportions. The Mahant of Tarn Taran in Amritsar district, for instance, is alleged to have assaulted a batch of nineteen Akalis who waited upon him to discuss the future of the shrine.⁶⁹ Hazara Singh, a descendant of a Sikh misaldar, was killed,⁷⁰ another Akali, Hukam Singh, succumbed to his injuries later.⁷¹ Others were also injured and arrested.⁷²

66. Teja Singh, Gurdwara Reform Movement, p. 134

67. Baba Kharak Singh Abhinandan Granth, p. 183

68. Teja Singh, Gurdwara Reform Movement, Pp. 134-135

69. Dukhi, Munsha Singh, Life History of Bhai Mohan Singh Vaid, Taran Taran, p. 372

70. Ibid; Jagjit Singh (Akali (1920-1927) Si Sabha Lahar

The Nankana Sahib tragedy occurred a fortnight later. A party of worshippers under the leadership of Lachhman Singh, a well-known Akali, entered the gurdwara, took their seats on the dais and began to recite from the Holy Book.⁷³ The Mahant's hirelings fell upon the worshippers, butchered them in cold blood and then set their bodies on fire.⁷⁴ The police later discovered the charred remains of 130 bodies.⁷⁵ It found the temple des^ecrated with blood and the Holy Book torn.⁷⁶ The law took its course. Mahant Narain Das was sentenced to life imprisonment while some others were sentenced to death.⁷⁷ The cause, however, was won. The possession of the gurdwara was given to the Sikhs and the other gurdwaras in the town also came under the management of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee.⁷⁸

In November the same year (1921), the Deputy Commissioner forcibly took away the keys of the treasury of the Amritsar Golden Temple with the ostensible object of forming a provisional advisory committee and thereby "legalising the status quo." The Akalis appeared

Taran Taran, p. 21

71. Harbans Singh, The Heritage of the Sikhs, Asia Publishing House, Bombay (1964), p. 155
72. Khushwant Singh, The Sikhs, p. 107
73. Ibid
74. Ibid
75. Dukhi, Munsha Singh, Life History of Bhai Mohan Singh Vaid, p. 398
76. Khushwant Singh, The Sikhs, p. 107
77. Ibid
78. Dukhi Munsha Singh, Life History of Bhai Mohan Singh Vaid, P. 399

on the scene and refused to let the nominee of the Government enter the temple precincts. Baba Kharak Singh, their leader, the secretary, Mehtab Singh (1879-1938) and Master Tara Singh⁷⁹ were arrested and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment.⁸⁰ The Government intervened and offered to return the keys to the committee but the offer was declined. It was only after all the leaders were released in January 1922 that the keys were accepted by Baba Kharak Singh.⁸¹ The Akalis thus forced the Government to recognise the S.G.P.C. as an acknowledged organisation of the Sikhs.

Another incident in which the Akali Dal played a leading role was the morcha of Guru Ka Bagh. Guru Ka Bagh^{*} was a piece of land attached to a gurdwara which had been surrendered by the Mahants to the Sikhs.⁸² Wood had all along been cut from the garden trees for use in the common kitchen of the temple. Mahant Sunder Dass lodged a complaint against the Sikhs for trespassing.⁸³ On August 8, 1922,

79. Master Tara Singh was born in Rawalpindi on June 24, 1885 in Malhotra Hindu family. He was converted to Sikhism while at school, educated at Rawalpindi and then at the Khalsa College, Amritsar. After taking his Bachelor's degree in 1907 he took a diploma in teaching and became a teacher in the Khalsa School, Lyallpur. The title 'Master' has been attached to his ever since. He joined the Akali movement at its inception and became the dominant figure in Sikh affairs in 1930. Since then the Master has been playing a very dominant role in the Sikh politics.

80. Ibid, Pp. 131-132

81. Kharak Singh Abhinandan Granth, Pp. 187-188

82. Khushwant Singh, The Sikhs, p. 109

83. Ibid

* Guru Ka Bagh is situated at a distance of 12 miles from Amritsar where two gurdwaras have been erected sacred to the fifth and the ninth gurus.

the police arrested the Sikhs.⁸⁴ The Akalis launched a mass struggle and large batches of volunteers marched to Guru Ka Bagh from all over Punjab.⁸⁵ They were stopped and mercilessly beaten by the police. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Hakim Ajjal Khan, Dr. Rajendra Prasad and the Reverend C.F. Andrews came to see how the passive resisters were being beaten by the Punjab police.⁸⁶ In September 1922, the Indian National Congress constituted a committee under the chairmanship of Srinivas Iyengar to enquire into the atrocities committed by the police.⁸⁷ On the personal intervention of the Governor, Sir Edward Maelagan, the beating was stopped, but arrests continued.⁸⁸ Sir Ganga Ram, a well-known philanthropist of the Punjab, purchased the disputed site and handed it over to the Sikhs.⁸⁹ Thus ended the dispute.

The fifth Akali-Government clash was originally political in character, but took a religious turn because of the mishandling of the situation by the police forces of Nabha State and Punjab. Maharaja Ripudaman Singh of Nabha was made to abdicate in favour of his son, and was exiled to the Dehra Dun (U.P.), and later on deported to Kodai Kanak in South India Ostensibly he had a dispute with the Maharaja of Patiala and the British Court of Enquiry

84. Ibid

85. Teja Singh, Gurdwara Reform Movement, pp. 400-404

86. Khushwant Singh, The Sikhs, p. 110; Letter of Dr. Rajendra Prasad to the present author, 25-2-63

87. Sikh Review, Calcutta, August, 1963, p. 30

88. Khushwant Singh, The Sikhs, p. 107

89. Ibid

gave a verdict against Nabha. But the fact was that the British Government wanted to depose the Maharaja for his pro-Akali and Congress sympathies. Consequently he was deposed on July 7, 1923. This led to an agitation in the country, particularly among the Sikhs.⁹⁰ September 9 was observed as Nabha Day to protest against the injustice done to Maharaja Ripudaman Singh.⁹¹ The people of Nabha State organized a non-stop two-day recitation of the Granth Sahib in their gurdwaras. One such gurdwara was in Jaito, a village on the border of British India and the princely State.⁹² The police of the State as well as of the Punjab raided the gurdwara, disrupted the recitation of the Holy Book,⁹³ and arrested the Akalis from inside the gurdwara for taking part in the agitation against the British Government. But by interrupting the recitation of the Granth Sahib, the Government offended the religious susceptibilities of the Sikhs.⁹⁴ Batches after batches of passive resisters converged on Jaito to court arrest. The Government declared the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee and the Shiromani Akali Dal illegal bodies and arrested 59 Akali leaders.⁹⁵ But the jathas continued to march on Jaito to court arrest. One such jatha was fired upon on February 21, 1924. Many

90. Sahni, Ruchi Ram, Struggle for Reform in Sikh Shrines, (Ed.) Ganda Singh, Sikh Itihaas(1965), p. 198

91. Sikh Review, September 1963, p. 22

92. Prateep Singh Giani, Gurdwara Sudhar, Pp 306-308

93. Ibid

94. Ibid

95. Ibid

were killed and injured. As expected, the Government enquiry into the Jaito firing exonerated the State police,⁹⁶ but the truth was made known to the world by the testimony of a New York Times correspondent who stated that members of the jatha carried no weapon whatsoever and were quite haraless.⁹⁷ The trouble dragged on till October 1924, for about one year and three months till the Government yielded. The Akhand Path was held again at the Jaito gurdwara without any hindrance.

It was stated in the Punjab Legislative Council in a debate on the Gurdwara Bill (1925) that in the clashes between the Akalis and the Government, at Tarn Taran, Nankana Sahib, Guru Ka Bagh, Bhai Pheru and Jaito, 300,00 persons had been arrested, 400 had died or been killed, 2,000 wounded and a fine of Rs. 15 lakhs imposed on the volunteers, including the forfeiture of the pension of retired soldiers.⁹⁸

During these four years, the relations between the British Government and the Sikhs became bitter. The Government went so far as to place a ban on the civil and military recruitment of Sikhs.⁹⁹ But in view of their sufferings for a just cause, the Akalis won the sympathy not only of the Congress but also of Hindu leaders and even

96. Ibid

97. Ibid, p. 377

98. Sikh Review, September 1963, p.27

99. Narang, Gokul Chand, Transformation of Sikhism, p. 347

of foreigners. The Akali leadership, as Khushwant Singh puts it, "is rightly credited with the success of the movement for the liberation of gurdwaras."¹⁰⁰ Since they formed the spearhead of the movement, the Akalis rose in prestige and acquired respect and popularity among the Sikhs.

To legalize the new pattern of the management of the gurdwaras, the Punjab Government announced the appointment of a committee of enquiry on February 16, 1921. The committee was "to consider the existing management of Sikh gurdwaras, shrines, etc., and the efforts being made to alter such management and to report on the best method of settling disputes and of regulating future control of the institutions." But the matter dragged on because of the diametrically opposed views expressed at the preliminary conference ^{by} between the Sikhs and the Mahants. To resolve the problem Sir Fazli-Hussain, Minister for Education, moved a resolution in the Punjab Council for gurdwara administration. But the Hindu members of the Council, who had by then identified themselves with the interests of the Mahants, succeeded in moving an amendment on which the Sikh members refused to vote. The Government dropped the measure and asked the Sikhs to submit a memorandum justifying their demands.¹⁰¹

On March 20, 1921, a meeting of Sikh leaders was held at the

100. Sikh History, September 1963, p. 27

101. Khushwant Singh, The Sikhs, p. 113

Golden Temple. Some of the leaders refused to cooperate with the Government while their co-religionists were still in jail or continued to be arrested. On April 8, 1921, the Government issued the text of the Sikh Gurdwaras and Shrine Bill. The four Sikh members on the select committee disagreed with the Bill's provisions and appended a minute of dissent. The Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee was in no mood to enter into negotiations, Harbans Singh of Attari and Prof. Jodh Singh resigned from the Committee.¹⁰²

No legislative progress could be made for some time because of the arrests in connection with the keys affairs, the Guru Ka Bagh morcha and the Nabha agitation. The issue was taken up only after the passive resistance movement ended. Finally, the Sikh Gurdwaras Bill became an act in November 1925 after it had been approved by the Akali leaders in jail. It provided for the control of all historic shrines by an elected body, called the Sikh Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee. It also provided for the setting up of a tribunal to settle disputes about shrines and their properties.¹⁰³

Passive resistance ceased as soon as the Akalis realised that most of their demands had been conceded. The only hitch was the question of the release of the arrested leaders and workers. The Government was willing to release the prisoners conditionally, i.e.,

102. Ibid, p. 113-114

103. Ibid. p. 115

on an understanding to be given by the Akalis that they would agree to work the Gurdwara_s Act. The Shiromani Akali Dal issued a notification "characterising the Government terms as humiliating and unworthy of acceptance by the self-respecting Sikh community. It ordered that no Sikh prisoner should sign any undertaking."¹⁰⁴ The executive committee of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee also adopted a resolution that "not^u mindful of the sympathetic attitude taken by Sir Malcolm Hailey, Governor of the Punjab, with regard to the gurdwara movement, this committee is compelled to arrive at the decision that the conditions imposed for the release of prisoners are wholly unnecessary, unjust and derogatory. Under the circumstances, the committee regards this course as unfair and thus deprecates it."¹⁰⁵

As Mehtab Singh and Giani Sher Singh not only expressed satisfaction with the Bill but also offered to work the Gurdwara_s Act, they were released along with 20 other Akali leaders and invited to take over the management of the shrines. Some others, like Master Tara Singh and Baba Kharak Singh did not come out as they refused to give any undertaking.¹⁰⁶ This led to a rift within the Akali ranks. When a meeting of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee was held to elect office-bearers, Amar Singh Jhabal, Jaswant Singh Jhabal,

104. Cit. Voice of India on the Sikh Settlement, Director, Information Bureau, Punjab (1925), Pp. 32-33

105. Ibid

106. The Tribune, 26-1-1926

Mangal Singh (b. 1892) and others walked out of the meeting alleging it as illegal since most of the Akali leaders were still in jail, and organised themselves into a separate body known as the Akali Party. They held a preliminary meeting in Amritsar on February 1, 1926, and elected Bhag Singh Canadian and Jaswant Singh Jhabal as president and general secretary respectively. Mehtab Singh was unanimously elected president of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee after the Jhabal brothers and Mangal Singh and others had walked out.¹⁰⁷ The Akali party launched a campaign against the released leaders. Its working committee passed a resolution eulogising the services of those still in jail.¹⁰⁸ For resolving the differences between both the parties an arbitration board was appointed on May 16, 1926 by the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee. Prof. Teja Singh of Khalsa College (Secretary), S. Harnam Singh, Sub Judge, S. Narsain Singh, M.L.C., (Chairman), S. Kundan Singh of Hoshiarpur and S. Joginder Singh of Patiala, were the members of the board.¹⁰⁹ After hearing both the parties the board gave its verdict on June 6, 1926. While deploring the disruptionist tactics of both groups the board appreciated the brave deeds performed by them during the gurdwara reform movement. For bringing ^{amity} between them, the board ruled, that the Akali Party should express sincere regret for having said or written anything objectionable

107. The Tribune, 2-2-1926; and also Giani Mahar Singh, Azadi Dian Lehara, p.208

108. The Tribune, 4-2-1926, Split in Akali Ranks

109. The Tribune, 19-5-26

against Mahtab Singh and others, who justified their action in coming out of jail only to bring about peace and amity in the Panth. They however, asked the other group's forgiveness and express^{ed} regret for having written or said anything likely to be offensive.¹¹⁰

After this both the parties joined hands to work jointly for the welfare of the Panth. Then the Akali Dal became a new force to reckon with.

110. The Tribune, 12-6-1926

CHAPTER II

INDIAN POLITICS AND THE ROLE OF THE AKALI PARTY UP TO 1930

Akali Party Boycotts the Simon Commission

The years 1924 to 1927 were largely the years of Hindu-Muslim strife. The slackening of the nationalist movement caused the energies of the people to be diverted to internal problems. With the abolition of the Khilafat by the Turks in 1924, many of the nationalist Muslims in India dissociated themselves from the Khilafat movement and began to support the national cause. However, some continued to keep alive the Khilafat committee, as Maulana Shaukat Ali did in Bombay. Where this was not possible, they started other organisations of a sectarian character under various nomenclatures. This provoked a corresponding reaction among Hindus. Branches of the Hindu Mahasabha began to spring up all over the country.¹

The Hindu Mahasabha, like its Muslim counterpart, attracted to its fold not only some erstwhile nationalists but also a large number of men who were afraid of participating openly in the political movement and wanted a safer platform for themselves. The growth of the sectarian movement, among both Hindus and Muslims accentuated inter-communal tension. The opportunity was availed of by the British rulers to weaken the nationalist forces. The main causes of inter-communal rioting were cow slaughter by Muslims and the playing of music before a mosque or a temple was defiled in any way. Once there

1. Bose, Subhash Chandra, Indian Struggle (1920-1934), Thacker, Spink & Co. Ltd., Calcutta (1948), Pp. 172.

was tension between the two communities in a particular locality, it could easily spark the flame of communal passions. It was not difficult for third parties to employ agents to do this dirty work.² During this period serious riots broke out in Lahore, Multan, Bareilly and Nagpur.³ According to official estimates, which are always conservative, about 250 persons were killed and 2,500 injured.⁴

In view of this unfortunate situation, Srinivas Iyengar, the then president of the Congress who was an outstanding Swarajist leader of Madras, undertook a countrywide tour in 1927 to find out some solution of the communal tangle.⁵ In the Punjab, he was welcomed, besides others, by Mangal Singh and Master Tara Singh, who placed the Sikh view-point before him. Master Tara Singh assured him that Sikhs would not demand separate electorates in Punjab if joint electorates were introduced throughout the country with reservation of seats for minorities.⁶ The proposal was considered by the Congress Working Committee and also by the All-India Congress Committee, which met in Bombay on May 15 and 16, 1927. A communal formula was evolved which contemplated joint electorates with reservation of seats on the

2. Ibid

3. Patabhi, Sitaramayya, The History of the Indian National Congress, Vol. I, Padma Publications Ltd., Bombay (1946, reprint), Pp.313-314

4. Ibid, Lord Irwin's address to the Indian Legislature on August 29, 1927.

5. Bose, Subhash Chandra, Indian Struggle (1920-1934), Pp.171,176-177

6. Durlabh Singh, Valiant Fighter, Lion Press, Lahore (1942), p.87

basis of population in the provinces and the Central legislature, and provided reciprocal concessions to minorities, including Sikhs in the Punjab, by mutual agreement for giving them weighted representation and for maintaining the same proportion in the Central legislature as well.⁷

Though the resolution was comprehensive, it left the position of Sikhs vague. The "reciprocal concessions" provided benefits to Hindus and Muslims because both these communities were represented in all provinces. In most provinces Hindus were in a majority, whereas in some Muslims were in a majority. They were in a position to offer reciprocal concessions to each other by mutual agreement. But the position of Sikhs was altogether different. They were not in a majority anywhere and, therefore, could not provide reciprocal advantage to any other community. They could be satisfied only if a clause was added to the formula providing special concessions to Sikhs in the Punjab.

The matter again came up before the Madras session of the Congress in December 1927 held under the presidentship of Dr. M. A. Ansari,

7. Pattabhi, Sitaramayya, The History of the Indian National Congress, Vol. I, p. 312
 Also see Mitra, Nripendra Nath, Indian Annual Register, Annual Register Office, Calcutta, Vol. I, 1927, p. 36. (Hereafter cited as Mitra's Register): To overcome this difficulty, Mangal Singh suggested joint electorates; adequate protection for minorities by reservation of seats wherever they demanded it, and creation of new provinces on this would solve the situation in a way not unfair to any party. While it gave protection to minorities, the Sikh and Hindu minorities would not demand any separate rights in both Bengal and Punjab, which meant that communal representation would be virtually abolished in these provinces.

veteran Muslim leader.⁸ Master Tara Singh, who attended the session as an All India Congress Committee member, urged the Congress Working Committee to amend the formula. The Working Committee conceded his demand. This satisfied the Sikhs for the moment.⁹

Meanwhile, Lord Irwin announced the appointment and composition of the Simon Commission^{on} November 8, 1927.¹⁰ It consisted of seven members drawn from the three political parties in the British Parliament with Sir John Simon as chairman. The appointment was made under Section 84 of the Government of India Act, 1919, which provided for decennial review of the political situation in India, somewhat reminiscent of the political surveys made by the British Parliament into the affairs of the East India Company at the time of the renewal of the Company's Charter.

The statutory commission was due in 1929, but it was not surprising to find a Tory Government advancing the date of the commission. It wanted to dispose of the Indian question while it was in power lest the Labour Party, if it happened to succeed the Tories, made sizable concessions to the Indian demand for home rule. Since the general elections in England were due in 1929, the Conservative

8. Bose, Subhash Chandra, Indian Struggle (1920-1934), pp. 204-205. Also see Mitra's Register 1927, Vol. II, pp. 380-381, 384-385: The Madras session is memorable for two resolutions: one boycotting the Simon Commission "at every stage and every form," and the other directing the executive to convene an all-parties conference for drawing up a constitution acceptable to all parties.

9. Durlabh Singh, Valiant Fighter, pp. 89-90

10. Banerjee, A.C., Indian Constitutional Document (Vol III), II Ind Ed., A. Mukherjee & Co., Calcutta (1949), p. 157.

Government found it expedient to appoint the statutory commission in 1927.¹¹ However, cooperation of all political parties in Britain was secured for the working of the commission.¹² The commission was asked to inquire into the working of the system of government, growth of education, development of representative institutions in British India and the need to establish the principle of responsible government or to extend, modify or restrict its application. It was also asked to examine the question of the establishment of second chambers of provincial legislatures.¹³

At the annual session of the Congress in December 1927, a resolution was passed advocating boycott of the Simon Commission "at every stage and in every fora."¹⁴ The exclusion of Indians from the commission was considered an affront. There was hardly any political party worth the name which could be found to cooperate with the commission. With the exception of the European associations, the Anglo-Indian press and a small section of Muslims, headed by Sir Mohammed Shafi in the Punjab, India stood solidly against the commission.¹⁵

There were, however, two opinions among the Sikhs on the question of cooperation with the commission. The followers of Sir

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& 13. Bose, Subhash Chandra, Indian Struggle (1920-1934), Pp. 202-203; also Menon, V.P., The Transfer of Power in India, Orient Longman, Bombay (1957), Pp. 34-37

14. Mitra's Register, (1927), Vol. II, Pp. 59-61, 384-395

15. Ibid, Pp. 59-61

Jogindra Singh,¹⁶ Minister for Agriculture, the Chief Khalsa Diwan and other toady elements decided to cooperate with the commission. Some prominent Sikhs of Punjab, including a few members of the Punjab Council headed by Sir Jogindra Singh, met at Rajasanshi on January 24, 1928 at the invitation of Lt. Raghbir Singh, M.L.C. After a preliminary discussion, they decided to form the Central Sikh Association "with the object of safeguarding the political rights of Sikhs and to represent the case of the community before the Simon Commission." They considered the appointment of the commission as a matter of great importance for small communities "who could now get their rights ensured." They felt that "the Sikhs deserved a better deal as before Annexation they were the rulers of the Punjab and had done more than any other community to accelerate the progress and prosperity of the province." Moreover, they based their claims for preferential treatment on their land-holdings and military services. They said, "We own a very large share of land of the province and pay more than one-third of the total revenue to the State. The record of our military services is unparalleled in the history of British India. Our claim, therefore, for special consideration is justified

16. Sir Jogindra Singh (1877-1946), a jat of the Baath sub-caste, was a land-owner with estates in Uttar Pradesh and in the Montgomery district. He served in Patiala State for some years before coming to the Punjab. In 1926 he became Minister of Agriculture in the Punjab and thereafter held different ministerial posts for ten years. In July 1942 he was nominated to the Governor General's Executive Council and became member for Health, Education and Lands.

by our stake in the country, by our solidarity and by the sacrifices which we have made for the State."¹⁷

These Sikh Leaders, like the Congress, resented the non-inclusion of Indians in the commission and urged the Government to give to representatives of the Central Legislative Assembly a position parallel with the commission in all respects. They expressed their sincere desire to cooperate with other communities if an agreement could be reached on presenting a joint demand to the commission. At the same time they made it clear that if the communities were not able to reach an agreement, the Sikhs would present their special claims before the commission "without any hesitation whatsoever and demand adequate representation in the provincial councils and the Central legislature, based on their traditional importance and revenue paid to the State and in consonance with the sacrifices made by us in the defence of our country and the Empire."¹⁸ Another of their special claim was for representation for the community in the provincial and central cabinets. They noted with regret that since the inclusion of Indians in the Viceroy's Council no Sikh had found a place there.¹⁹

The Chief Khalsa Diwan, true to its loyalty to the British Government submitted a separate memorandum pleading for (1) removing communal representation altogether; (2) designating the Governor as a purely constitutional head without any direct hand in the administration excepting the power of veto; (3) giving the legislature full control

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& 19. The Tribune, 25-1-1928
Also Akali Patrika 27-1-1928

over finance, and (4) subordinating the executive and bureaucracy to the will of the legislature.²⁰

On the other hand an all-parties conference of Sikhs was convened at Amritsar on January 30, 1928, to consider the Sikh attitude to the Simon Commission. About 150 prominent Sikhs, including a large number of Akalis, attended. Among the prominent Akalis were Baba Aharak Singh, President of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, and Mangal Singh, who had returned from their tour of Bengal and Burma.²¹ Besides, Banta Singh, Ujjal Singh (b. 1895) and Harbaksh Singh, M.L.Cs, S.B. Mehtab Singh were present. They all appealed to Sikhs to boycott the Simon Commission and to observe complete hartal on February 3 when the commission was scheduled to land in Bombay.²² Accordingly, the Central Sikh League and Shiromani Akali Dal decided to boycott the commission and to advise the Sikhs to join the hartal called by the conference.²³

While moving the Simon Commission Bill in the British Parliament Lord Birkenhead, Secretary of State for India, had challenged Indian statesmen to produce an agreed solution to the communal problem. Indian leaders picked up the gauntlet and to that end convened an all-parties conference in Delhi in February and March 1928. The most

20. Sahni, Ruchi Ram, *Struggle For Reform In Sikh Shrines*, p. 57

21. *The Tribune*, 1-2-1928

22. *The Tribune*, 1-2-1928

23. Nahar Singh, Giani, *Azadi Dian Lehnan*, p. 286; Ganda Singh, (Ed.) *Punjab*, article of Ishar Singh Majhail, p. 290

thorny problem before the conference was that of Hindu-Muslim-Sikh representation in the legislatures under the new constitution.²⁴

* * * *

Akali Party Rejects Nehru Report

Sikh parties too took up the challenge. To represent the Sikh point of view and to evolve a common formula an all-parties Sikh conference was convened. It elected seven delegates to the Delhi conference. They were Baba Kharak Singh, Mehtab Singh, Master Tara Singh, Giani Sher Singh, Amar Singh, Mangal Singh and Bhag Singh Vakil. The Central Sikh League too decided to join the Delhi conference to draft the Swarajya constitution as well as to solve the question of Sikh representation on the basis of the resolutions passed by the All-Parties Sikh Conference and the Central Sikh League. The resolution on Sikh rights passed by the All-Parties Sikh Conference held at Amritsar on January 30, 1928 held that communal electorate and representation were harmful to the country. But keeping in view "the existing condition" and as the Congress and the Muslim League had accepted the principle of joint electorate with reservation of seats on communal lines, the conference resolves that Sikhs in the Punjab, being an important minority, could only protect their rights by being given a third share in the administration and representation.

24. Bose, Subhash Chandra, Indian Struggle (1920-1934), Pp.209-210

The resolution also declared that Sikhs would not bear domination of any majority community in face of others being allowed separate representation and demanded that the principle of joint communal matters adopted by the Madras Congress regarding Hindu-Muslim settlement be applied to Sikhs and that adequate safeguards be afforded to the Sikh minority in the provinces of Sindh and North-Western Frontier Province.²⁵

Sardar Bahadur Mehtab Singh and Gyani Sher Singh, two of the seven Sikh delegates, sent a letter to Dr. Ansari, President of the Indian National Congress, expressing "disappointment and sorrow" at the all-parties conference's resolution suggesting representation in the Central and provincial legislature on purely population basis.²⁶ Another grievance of the Sikhs was that not a single Sikh had been taken on the 20-member committee appointed to settle the question of communal representation and other matters. In their letter the two Sikh leaders said "that the Sikhs shall not accept representation in Central and provincial legislatures on a population basis so far as the Punjab was concerned. In spite of being in the smallest minority of the three communities in the Punjab, the Sikhs are quite prepared to accept representation on a non-communal basis and thus prove that they are patriotically prepared to make sacrifices for national welfare and advancement."²⁷

25. The Tribune, 1-2-1928

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27. The Tribune, 29-2-1928, Sikh leaders' letter to the Congress President.

The General Secretary of the Shiromani Akali Dal also sent a telegram to the Congress President saying that "the Sikhs will not submit to any communal majority nor shall they accept communal representation on the basis of population alone." Sikhs being in a minority are prepared to make a sacrifice by agreeing to abolition of communal representation.²⁸

When the all-parties conference reassembled on May 19 in Bombay, the Sikh point of view was again represented by Master Tara Singh and Mangal Singh.²⁹ The conference appointed a sub-committee with Motilal Nehru as chairman to evolve an agreed formula.³⁰ The committee, later known after the name of its chairman, met frequently at Allahabad and issued in August 1928 its report which was unanimous, subject to certain reservations made in the preamble. It was signed by Motilal Nehru, Sir Ali Imam, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, M.S. Aney, Mangal Singh, Shuaib Qureshi, G.R. Pradhan and Subhash Chandra Bose.³¹ The report, in the main, recommended joint electorates and reservation of seats for the Muslim and non-Muslim minorities with the right to contest additional seats, but made no mention of reservation of seats for any community in the Punjab and Bengal.

The report was no doubt the result of the labour of great brains. But it satisfied neither the Mohamadans nor the Sikhs.

28. The Tribune, 2-3-1928

29. Mohinder Singh, ~~Ankhi Sarma~~, Panthic Tract Society, Amritsar (1950) Pp. 96, 97

30. Bose, Subhash Chandra, Indian Struggle (1920-1934), p. 210

31. Nehru, Moti Lal, Nehru Report of All-Parties Conference, Indian National Congress Committee, Allahabad (1928), p. 160

The latter's reaction was strong and vociferous.³² A large section among the Sikhs regarded the report as most unfair and unjust. They wondered why the Punjab and Bengal had been excluded from the reservation clause when special reservation was allowed to the Hindus in Sindh and North-West Frontier Province and to the Muslims in U.P., C.P., Bombay and Madras -- in fact in all provinces where they were in a minority. There seemed to be no reason why the Sikhs should not be granted the same concession in the province where they were in a minority. The Sikhs considered it unfair and as gross violation of the pledge given to them at the Madras Congress.³³

The all-parties conference met again in Lucknow from August 28 to 31 to consider the report of the Nehru Committee. Besides Mengal Singh, Master Tara Singh, Gopal Singh Quami, Giani Sher Singh, some other Sikh leaders were invited. They all protested strongly against the recommendation made in the report.³⁴ To accommodate the Sikh point of view a pact was proposed between the Sikhs and the Congress.³⁵ The proposal repeated the recommendation of the Nehru Report with minor changes. It provided joint electorates on the basis of adult franchise without reservation of seats for any community in the Punjab and required that the formula be given a trial for at least ten years, after which, if necessary, suitable amendment might

32. Bose, Subhash Chandra, Indian Struggle (1920-1934), p. 210

33. Gureharan Singh, Ankhi Surma, Sikh Literature Distributors, Delhi, (1950), p. 96

34. Ibid

35. Nehru, Moti Lal, Nehru Report of All-Parties Conference, August, 1928, p. 164 (Punjab Muslims, however, accepted the recommendations)

be made. The formula did not find favour with Master Tara Singh, Giani Sher Singh and others. They argued that the Sikhs were an important minority. To give them weighted representation, 30% of seats in the Punjab must, therefore, be allotted to them.³⁶

Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and several others had long discussions with the Sikh leaders. In the end, the pact was signed by the Punjab delegates, including Mangal Singh. Though an enthusiastic worker of the Akali Party, Mangal Singh was also a member of the Mehru Committee. In obedience to party discipline he had signed the Mehru Report without a minute of dissent and thus put the seal of Sikh assent on its recommendations. Master Tara Singh and Giani Sher Singh however, appended strong minutes of dissent.³⁷

The dissenters said:

1. "We agree to support the Mehru Committee Report provided the method of election in the Punjab is by proportional representation;
2. "We concede that adult suffrage is the most democratic principle but we feel that it is not practicable under the present circumstances and is premature";
3. "If, however, it is decided to introduce adult suffrage immediately our expression of opinion as stated above may be noted. We presume that adult suffrage does not carry with it recognition of any principle of communal representation directly or indirectly, to which we are strongly opposed."

36. Durlabh Singh, Valiant Fighter, p. 93

37. Mehru Report and proceedings of All-Parties Conference (1928), Lucknow, 31-8-1928, p. 164; The Tribune, 1-9-1928 and 9-9-1928; Nitra's Register (1928), Vol. II, p. 66

Another protest but in a different key, came from Baba Kharak Singh, veteran Sikh leader, who had not expected Congress leaders to ever propose such a low constitutional status as Dominion status for the "Fatherland". He did not think it out of place to say that the committee seemed to have laboured under the delusion that the British Government would at once give to India whatever the Congress demanded and, therefore, they had deemed it advisable to be moderate in their demand.³⁸

The Nehru Report with its strong minutes of dissent became a cause of agitation for the Sikh community and made a crack in the solidarity of the nationalist forces in the Punjab. It also generated sharp differences among the Sikhs. A cleavage occurred between Master Tara Singh and Mangal Singh on the one hand and between Baba Kharak Singh and the Congress on the other. Master Tara Singh sent a telegram to Motilal Nehru strongly protesting against the Nehru Report.³⁹

A meeting representing different Sikh schools of thought was held on September 19, 1928, at Shahid Missionary College, Amritsar, to discuss the Nehru Committee's Report.⁴⁰ Baba Kharak Singh presided. There was a heated discussion on a resolution moved by Master Tara Singh, vice-president of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, that Sikhs would not relinquish their rights in so far as special

38. The Tribune, 22-8-1928
Also Akali Patrika, 23-8-1928

39. Tara Singh, Master, Meri Yad, Sikh Religious Book Society, Amritsar (1945), p. 101

40. The Tribune, 22-8-1928
Also Akali Patrika, 23-8-1928

representation had been allowed to minorities in other provinces. The resolution urged that the Sikhs, as an important minority, should be allowed the same consideration in the Punjab.⁴¹ Anar Singh Jhabal and Mangal Singh led the opposition to the resolution, but after about six hours of heated discussion, an amended resolution, moved by Gopal Singh Quami, was carried by a majority. It said that it was wrong to say that Sikhs did not want separate representation. ~~Though~~ The Sikhs wanted communal representation to be done away with, "but if separate representation is to be allowed to Muslims and non-Muslim minorities in other provinces, then separate representation should be allowed to Sikhs, too, who formed an important minority in the Punjab, as admitted by the Nehru Committee."⁴² On the passage of this resolution, Mangal Singh, the only Sikh member who had served on the Nehru Committee, resigned general secretaryship of the Central Sikh League and also editorship of the 'Akali'. Master Tara Singh was provisionally appointed to both these offices.

Though the working committee of the Shiromani Akali Dal gave general support to the Nehru Report, it did not approve of its decision regarding Dominion status as the objective of the constitution. It also considered communal representation in any form harmful to healthy national growth and urged that reservation of seats even for minorities

41. The Tribune, 22-8-1928
Also Akali Patrika, 23-8-1928

42. The Tribune, 22-8-1928, Text of Resolution.
Also Akali Patrika, 23-8-1928

in provinces other than Punjab and Bengal be abolished, and all understandings and agreements which tended to keep communalism alive in the country be declared null and void.⁴³

However, a number of nationalist Sikh leaders like Sardul Singh Caveeshar, Anar Singh Jhabal, Baba Gurdit Singh of the Komagata Maru fame, Giani Hira Singh 'Dard', Saraukh Singh Jhabal, General Secretary, Shiromani Akali Dal, Giani Kartar Singh and many others issued a manifesto saying that the views expressed by Mangal Singh in the Nehru Committee had their full support and that he deserved the special thanks of the community for what he had done. In general, they supported the recommendations of the committee, though they "differed here and there with the proposals made." Regarding communal settlement they said: "It would have given us much pleasure if reservation of seats on communal basis for certain minorities had been done away with even at this stage, but under the present circumstances we doubt if any better solution of the communal problem would have been possible than what has been proposed by Pt. Moti Lal Nehru and his colleagues."⁴⁴

To Sardul Singh Caveeshar the stand taken by Master Tara Singh and others appeared to be illogical, unpatriotic and not in the interests of Sikhs. When the Sikhs had so far always been for abolition of communal representation, how could they now demand the same for their

43. The Tribune, 21-8-1928

44. The Tribune, 22-8-1928, Sikh leaders' manifesto.

community in the Punjab? he asked. He argued that communal representation was either good or bad. If it was good, the Sikhs should demand it on its merit, but if they regarded it as evil, and if the Nehru Committee had not been successful in abolishing it in other provinces, it passed one's understanding how any reasonable man could press for its introduction even in those provinces where it had been done away with. Referring to Master Tara Singh's remark that the Nehru Committee, by proposing reservation of seats for minorities was "creating nurseries of communalism in different provinces," Cavesahar asked: "How can he justify his position by saying that if these nurseries are not destroyed similar hotbeds should be created in the Punjab."⁴⁵

In general the Sikhs abhorred communal representation. Even the Chief Khalsa Diwan, which represented the pro-British and moderate section among the Sikhs, opposed it. In its memorandum to the Simon Commission, the Chief Khalsa Diwan asserted that the Sikhs would be "the first to welcome a declaration that no considerations of caste or religion shall affect organisation of a national government in the country. They are prepared to stand on merit alone provided they, in common with others, are permitted to grow unhampered without any impediment by way of reservation for any other community."⁴⁶

45. The Tribune, 26-8-1928

46. The Tribune, 21-10-1928

In his presidential address at the 10th Central Sikh League conference at Gujranwala, Baba Kharak Singh again asked the Sikhs to "throw the Nehru report into the waste paper basket because of its agreeing to Dominion status."⁴⁷ He threatened to resign if it was not done. Consequently, a resolution was moved declaring that the Nehru report was not acceptable to the Sikhs and that they regarded the solution of the question of communal representation offered therein as "unjust and highly prejudicial to the interests of the community."⁴⁸ It demanded reservation of 30 per cent seats in the provincial legislature and the same proportion of representation from the Punjab in the Central legislature based on joint electorate and plural constituencies. In the opinion of the conference the report tended to keep alive communal representation in various forms by basing the franchise on communal consideration.⁴⁹

Amar Singh Jhabal moved an amendment saying that the Central Sikh League reiterated "its considered and emphatic opinion that Swarajya should be established in India without delay." The amendment further stated that the Central Sikh League approved in general the

47. The Tribune, 24-10-1928; Mitra's Register (1928), Vol. II, Pp. 432-433; Baba Kharak Singh Abhinandan Granth, Pp. 201-202
Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya, who attended the session, requested Baba Kharak Singh to accept Dominion status for the time being and stop his agitation. Babaji smilingly replied: "Fanditji, I respect you but how can I accept seal-slavery. The Congress, by asking for the Dominion status, has lowered its prestige. I do not want this ugly stigma to stick to my nation's honour. Hence, I have decided to fight until the Congress rescinds its resolution."

48. The Tribune, 26-10-1928

49. The Tribune, 26-10-1928

constitution drafted by the Nehru committee subject to the modification that the goal should be complete independence and not Dominion status; that there should be no reservation of seats in provinces, and that the right conceded to the Muslims to reopen the question of joint electorate after ten years be withdrawn. The amendment was not accepted,⁵⁰ and the original resolution was passed.

Towards the close of the session, strong words were exchanged between Baba Kharak Singh and his new colleagues on the Sikh League working committee regarding the resolution on complete independence, which had been passed by the subjects committee the previous night. But his new colleagues took special care that the resolution was not moved. Baba Kharak Singh walked out of the session. He was followed by some others. With the going out of Baba Kharak Singh, Master Tara Singh, Bhag Singh and Avtar Singh and their friends, the exit of nationalists from the Central Sikh League was complete.⁵¹

Analysing the composition of the delegates who attended the session, Mangal Singh contended that "if names and places of residence of the delegates be examined, it will be found that although more than 90 per cent of the Sikhs live in the rural areas of the Majha, Doaba and Malwa, the percentage of delegates from these areas was hardly 5 per cent of the total and most delegates from these areas voted in favour of the Nehru report."⁵² Thus, according to him, the Central Sikh League session was not truly representative of the Sikh community.

50. Mitra's Register (1928), Vol. II, p. 433, proceedings of the 7th Sikh League Conference; The Tribune, 26-10-1928

51. Ibid

52. The Tribune, 27-10-1928, Mangal Singh's statement

A delegate countered Mangal Singh's inference by saying that almost all those who had voted in favour of the resolution were drawn from the 15 overwhelming Muslim districts. Sikhs in these districts were in a hopeless minority and had had the unfortunate experience of Muslim majority in the Council as well as in district and other local boards. They had come in large numbers to the session as they had felt intensely on the question. This had enabled the moderates among the delegates to push forward their claim, which they had been pressing consistently for a very long time, and to get the resolution passed that the Nehru report was unacceptable to the Sikhs and that they needed 30 per cent seats. Had the meeting been held, say in Ludhiana, the block of 16 lakh Sikhs of the Majha, Malwa and Doaba would have made itself vocal. The decision might well have been exactly the reverse of the Gujranwala decision.⁵³ Later, Harnam Singh, Secretary of the Central Sikh League, wrote to the President of the All-Parties National Convention requesting him to place on record that the League stood for complete independence and did not favour Dominion status.⁵⁴

By the time the Nehru report came up for discussion before the all-parties convention at Calcutta (1928), Sikh opposition to it had become crystallised.⁵⁵ Sikh leaders conveyed their feelings to Mahatma Gandhi, who recognised the injustice done to them but expressed his helplessness in getting the report modified.⁵⁶ The convention

53. Akali Patrika, 30-10-1928; The Tribune, 30-10-1928

54. Proceedings of All-Parties Convention published by All-India Congress Committee, Allahabad (1928), p. 58

55. Mitra's Register (1928), Vol. II, Pp. 432-433; Sadhu/Singh, ^{Swarup} The Sikhs demand their Homeland, Lahore Book Shop, Lahore (1946), p. 29

attempted to give final touches to its recommendations before passing it on to the Congress. A fairly large number of delegates representing all shades of political opinions were invited. Practically all prominent Sikh leaders, thirty in number, attended. Master Tara Singh, along with his supporters, met leading Congress leaders and forcefully represented to them the Sikh case, as a result of which Dr. Ansari and Gandhi agreed to lend their moral support to the claims of the Sikhs.⁵⁷ Pandit Motilal Nehru also agreed that if the Sikhs were able to have an amendment passed at the convention he would not oppose it. On the other hand, Jinnah, who had just come back from England and was also attending the convention, made the Punjab problem more intricate by demanding that the Muslims be given a representation of 56 per cent on the basis of their population in the Punjab and a weightage representation of 33 per cent at the Centre.⁵⁸

The convention leaders felt greatly upset and were compelled to form a sub-committee to consider the points raised by the Muslims and Sikhs and to make recommendations thereon. Pandit Motilal Nehru, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Mahatma Gandhi, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Jinnah, Malik Barkat Ali, Maulana Abdul Qadir Qasuri, Maulana Azad, Maulana Zafer Ali Khan, Master Tara Singh, S.B. Mehtab Singh, Harnam Singh, Giani Sher Singh, Mangal Singh and some others were on the sub-committee,

56. Mitra's Register (1928), Vol. I, Pp. 122-125

57. Ibid

58. Ibid

which, however, failed to evolve an agreed formula. Some of the members were amenable to Jinnah's claim, but the latter did not care to discuss the Sikh demand and walked out of the committee.⁵⁹ The next day the matter came up before the convention and Jinnah made an eloquent speech justifying his claim. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru supported him. On the other hand, Mehtab Singh and M.N. Jayakar refuted his claim with equal brilliancy. The convention ultimately rejected Jinnah's "irrational demand."⁶⁰

The Sikhs too tried to press their demands for some favourable consideration but with no success. On behalf of the Central Sikh League, a long statement was issued announcing its determination to withhold its support from the Nehru report and to take no further part in the convention.⁶¹ The grievance of the Sikhs was that the report tended to pave way for another communal war. They charged "that those who talk ^{the} loudest and agitate the most are listened to, however iniquitous their demand may be."⁶² The Sikh leaders walked out of the convention, disgusted, disappointed and disillusioned.⁶³ However, the Secretary of the Central Sikh League assured the convention "that the

59. Durlabh Singh, Valiant Fighter, p. 95; Gurcharan Singh, Giani, Ankhi Surma, Pp. 96-97

60. Ibid

61. Mitral's Register (1928) Vol. I, p. 131. On behalf of the Central Sikh League, Mehtab Singh moved an amendment to the communal portion of the Nehru report to the effect that communalism should not be made the basis of the future policy of India in any shape or form, direct or indirect and that the Nehru report should be amended accordingly.

Also Coatsman, India in 1928-1929, Government Printing Press, Calcutta p. 35

62. Mitral's Register (1928), Vol. I, p. 133
 1928) Vol. II, Pp. 432-433; Sadhu (Singh), Swarup

Central Sikh League will ever be prepared to work shoulder to shoulder with fellow countrymen for the emancipation of Mother India and shall do its utmost to break the shackles and trammels of foreign yoke.⁶⁴

The Hindu leaders felt greatly perturbed by the walk-out. Pandit Dharam Vir Singh of U.P. moved a resolution that the Sikh should be given the same measure of representation in Punjab which the other minorities enjoyed in other provinces. Pandit Neki Nam Sharma of Hissar supported the resolution, while Dr. Mohammad Alam and Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, both from the Punjab, opposed it. The speeches delivered by the movers were impressive and reasonable. It was expected that the resolution would be carried by a considerable majority but Motilal Nehru intervened unexpectedly and swung opinion the other way. When a division was called, the resolution was lost by six votes.⁶⁵

Motilal Nehru's volte face forced several Sikh nationalists to reconsider their stand. Earlier, he had assured the Sikhs that he would have no objection if they were able to have an amendment passed in their favour. It is difficult to surmise what led him to go back on his assurance at the critical moment. Teja Singh Chuharkhana who had all along kept aloof from the Nehru report agitation, lost

The Sikhs Demand Their Homeland, p. 29

64. Proceedings of the All-Parties Convention, Calcutta, December 1928, p. 132

65. Durlabh Singh, Valiant Fighter, Pp. 99-101

his temper and remonstrated with Dr. Ansari, Pandit Motilal and others. Gandhiji was unfortunately observing silence that day. However he sent to the Sikh leaders a chit stating that the cause of the Sikhs would not be ignored and that justice would certainly be done to them.⁶⁶

The Sikh members returned from Calcutta empty-handed. The Panth was shaken to its roots and a number of conferences and protest meetings were held throughout the province against the Mehru report. The annual session of the Central Sikh League was held on October 1929 at Lyallpur, a couple of months before the Congress session. Talk of probable boycott of the Congress by the Sikhs was in the air. Mahatma Gandhi conveyed his good wishes to the session through Sardul Singh Caveeshar and hoped that the League would have the wisdom not to boycott the Congress as the question was not closed but open for discussion and adjustment.⁶⁷

At that time, there were three factions in the Sikh League. One, led by Baba Kharak Singh, stood for non-co-operation with the Congress. The second, led by Giani Sher Singh, stood for 30 per cent representation for the Sikhs. This group was willing to co-operate with the Congress conditionally, i.e., subject to recognition of their claim by the Congress. The third faction, led jointly by Mangal Singh

66. Ibid

67. The Tribune, 12-10-1929
Also Akali Patrika, 13-10-1929

and Baba Gurdit Singh, stood for unconditional co-operation with the Congress. It comprised Congressite Sikhs. Master Tara Singh, the president, named a committee of 14 to effect a compromise.⁶⁸

Personally Master Tara Singh did not favour a boycott, nor did he stand for unconditional support of the Congress. "We cannot boycott the Congress permanently," said Master Tara Singh in his presidential address. "We are born to fight for freedom, and we cannot stand aloof from an organisation whose sole object is such a right."

Exhorting the Sikhs to be firm in the fight for freedom, he said: "I would not mind if you, instead of standing with the Congress, boycott it and stand in front of it in the fight for freedom. But if you boycott the Congress and stand in the back lines, it will be a matter of shame for our community. Those who are for boycotting the Congress must devise some positive fighting programme, and I am sure all the people here will be with them. But if you simply pass a resolution to boycott the Congress and oppose whatever the Congress does, you fall in the snares of bureaucracy. Some, tired of our inactivity, may rejoin the Congress; the rest may die their natural death. I beseech you to be very cautious when considering this question. On the other hand, if we go on working with the Congress

68. The Tribune, 15-10-1929, proceedings of the 11th Annual Session of Central Sikh League.

as before, our attitude may be misunderstood and we may not be considered earnest in our demands. This is also dangerous and we have to chalk out a via media. It is not difficult to chart a safe course, if you gentlemen consider unity to be the chief need of the time.⁶⁹

The subjects committee passed by 96 votes to 41 a resolution for co-operation with the Congress. It also resolved to press the Sikhs' claims at the Congress session. A counter-resolution was moved by Amar Singh of "Sher-i-Punjab" for boycott but it was rejected. However, when the resolution for co-operation came up before the open session, rowdiness was created by a section of the audience and the President had to adjourn the session sine die. Both parties claimed that their resolutions had been passed. The result was that the Central Sikh League could not officially come to any definite conclusion on the attitude to be adopted towards the Lahore Congress. Baba Kharak Singh, leader of the non-co-operators, denied that the League had passed a resolution for co-operation with the Congress. He said that even if the co-operation resolution had been passed by the League he would not have regarded it as "the voice of the Sikhs." According to him, the Sikhs as a community were in favour of boycott. He claimed to have met very little opposition to the boycott plan during his recent tour of the province.⁷⁰

69. The Tribune, 16-10-1929, Master Tara Singh's presidential address at the Central Sikh League
 ✓ Also Akali Patrika, 16-10-1929

70. Baba Kharak Singh's interview with Tribune, 16-10-1929

An effort at compromise between the two parties was made at a diwan held at Nanakana Sahib under the auspices of the Gurdwara Committee. Master Tara Singh again stressed his point that the Sikhs should remain united and give another opportunity to the Congress to concede Sikh rights. A resolution, proposed by Master Tara Singh, urged the Sikhs to muster strong at Lahore to show to the Congress that Sikh co-operation was indispensable for the attainment of the national goal.⁷¹

The resolution was interpreted by pro-Congress elements to mean that permission had been given to Sikhs to attend the Congress session and to influence its decision by mustering strong there. Others interpreted it as a part of the policy of speaking from a position of strength. But Baba Kharak Singh denied any such implication. According to him, the diwan at Nanakana Sahib had only given a call to the Sikhs to muster strong at the Akali conference to be held during the Congress session at Lahore to protest against the flagrant injustice done to them by the Congress. As to the question of the Sikhs attending the Congress, he had permitted Master Tara Singh to do so only in his private capacity and not as a representative of the Panth. "No other Sikh has been permitted by me to attend the Congress as I consider such a course to be opposed to the best interests of the Sikhs."⁷²

71. The Tribune, 19-11-1929, proceedings of the Nanakana Sahib Diwan; Also Akali Patrika, 20-11-1929

72. The Tribune, 26-11-1929, Baba Kharak Singh's Press statement.

The goal of Dominion status, set by the Mehru report, was another cause of Baba Kharak Singh's indignation against the Congress. In his opinion the Congress, by adopting "the condemnable Mehru report," had dragged the country from the lofty ideal of complete independence to semi-bondage of Dominion status. Therefore no Sikh was to cooperate with the Congress unless and until it rectified its blunders by throwing the Mehru report into the waste paper basket. "The Congress, by accepting the Mehru report, has put on the forehead of India's dignity the blackest stigma of infamy that ever disgraced a nation." There was a definite purpose behind Baba Kharak Singh's move for boycott of the Congress. He wanted to impress upon the Congress the importance of the Sikh community. He felt that boycott of the Congress by the Sikhs would "bring home to the Congress that the Sikhs are a living nation."⁷³

To make the Congress session in Punjab a success, decision to set up the Sikh Nationalist Party was taken on November 2, 1929. A meeting was held a few days later. Baba Gurdit Singh was in the chair. The Jathedars (presidents of district Akali jathas) of Lyallpur, Sheikhpura, Gujranwala, Ludhiana, Gurdaspur, Amritsar, Sialkot, Lahore, etc., and many other prominent Sikhs attended. It was unanimously decided that a Sikh Congress party be formed. Gajjan Singh was elected president and a representative executive was formed.⁷⁴

73. The Tribune, 26-11-1929, Baba Kharak Singh's Press statement.

74. The Tribune, 6-11-1929, Sikh National Party formed
Also Akali Patrika, 7-11-1929

Some leaders found it an opportune moment to wean the Sikhs away from the Congress. The feeling of frustration and annoyance of the Sikhs with the Nehru report was exploited by these leaders to boycott the ensuing Congress session. To counter the anti-Congress propaganda some Sikh workers of the Doaba met on March 17, 1929, and resolved that "although the Central Sikh League has not accepted the solution of the communal problem as proposed by the Indian National Congress, yet the meeting is most emphatically of the opinion that it is the bounden duty of every Sikh to fully co-operate with the Congress in the struggle for country's freedom. To stand aloof from the national struggle at this juncture is to strengthen the hands of the foreign Government and to put obstacles in the way to attainment of Swarajya, which act, besides being unpatriotic, is harmful to the interests of the Sikhs themselves."⁷⁵

The Congress could not afford to annoy the Sikhs as it needed their full co-operation for the success of the Lahore session. It tried to appease them. Motilal Nehru wrote to Sardul Singh Caveeshar saying that the door of negotiations had been kept wide open. He deplored "that no settlement of the Sikh question was possible at the Calcutta convention with their consent, but there is every reason to hope that a satisfactory solution will be found in the near future." He also quoted Mahatma Gandhi's speech at the convention regarding Sikh rights when he had said that "personally, I think we have not done full justice to the Sikhs? Hence it was necessary for all of them to put their heads together to make suggestions and evolve order out of chaos."⁷⁶

⁷⁵. Akali Patrika 19-3-1929; The Tribune 19-3-1929
⁷⁶. The All-Parties Conference (1928), p. 144

The Lahore session of the Congress, held in December 1929, was a momentous one. It passed the historic resolution demanding complete independence and declaring that the word Swarajaya in Article 1 of the Congress constitution shall mean "complete independence," and that the "entire scheme of the Nehru Committee report should be considered to have lapsed." To make the Congress policy as consistent as possible with the change in its creed, the Congress resolved upon complete boycott of the Central and provincial legislatures and committees constituted by the Government. It called upon Congressmen and other freedom fighters to abstain from participating directly or indirectly in future elections, and directed Congress members of the legislatures and committees to resign their seats forthwith. It further appealed to the nation to prosecute zealously the constructive programme of the Congress and authorised the AICS, whenever it deemed fit, to launch ~~again~~ a programme of civil disobedience, including non-payment of taxes.⁷⁷

By another resolution the Congress declared that in view of the lapse of the Nehru report it was unnecessary to reaffirm the Congress policy on communal question, for in independent India the communal question could be solved on strictly national lines. "But as the Sikhs in particular, and the Muslims and other minorities in general, had expressed dissatisfaction at the solution of the communal question proposed in the Nehru report, the Congress assures the Sikhs,

77. Congress Bulletin, January 9, 1930, p. 2

Muslims and other minorities that no solution thereof in any future constitution will be acceptable to the Congress that does not give full satisfaction to the parties concerned."⁷⁸

During the session, Gandhi, Motilal Nehru, Dr. Ansari and some other members of the Congress Working Committee had met Baba Kharak Singh to know his mind. The Baba told them that he wanted the Congress to declare in unequivocal words its goal of complete independence. To this Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders gladly agreed.⁷⁹

The Congress leaders also solved the crucial question of equal and fair treatment to all minorities by drafting a resolution in the presence of Baba Kharak Singh. The resolution stated "that the Congress will not accept any constitution which did not give equal and fair treatment to all minorities, particularly Sikhs." Thus, the main points of difference between the Congress and Baba Kharak Singh were amicably resolved.⁸⁰

Though the main credit for getting the resolution on "Poorna Swarajaya" passed goes to Jawaharlal Nehru, it is no less shared by Baba Kharak Singh who, by his ceaseless efforts and sincerity, convinced the Congress that the right goal was complete independence.⁸¹

78. Ibid, p. 4

79. Baba Kharak Singh Abhinandan ~~Sketch~~, p. 203

80. Ibid

81. Ibid



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An Akali conference was also held simultaneously at Lahore with Baba Kharak Singh as president. A resolution passed at this conference demanded that if communal representation was to continue the Sikhs should get 30 per cent. representation in Punjab and that their interests in other provinces should be suitably protected. Another resolution empowered Baba Kharak Singh to form a committee of not more than seven to continue negotiations with the Congress. If these proved fruitful the Sikhs should co-operate wholeheartedly with the Congress.⁸²

Master Tara Singh, President of the Central Sikh League and Vice-President of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, felt satisfied with the resolution passed by the Lahore Congress. "There were people," he said, "who were trying to lead the Sikhs into the bureaucratic snare. Congress leaders have risen to the occasion and acted like statesmen. Mahatma Gandhi is to be congratulated for it is he who is mainly responsible for this resolution. I am sure that the Congress will gather great strength and a wave of enthusiasm will sweep the Sikhs."⁸³

On January 12, 1930, a meeting of the executive committee of the Shiromani Akali Dal was held. It failed to come to any decision on the question of co-operation with the Congress. But after Baba Kharak Singh's departure from Amritsar that day, an all-parties conference of the Sikhs decided to withdraw the boycott of the Congress.⁸⁴ But it repeated that Sikhs wanted 30 per cent share in case any settlement of the communal issue was negotiated. In consonance with the Lahore

82. Akali Patrika, 2-1-1930; The Tribune, 2-1-1930

Congress resolution to boycott the coming elections and to resign seats in existing legislatures, Master Tara Singh called upon Sikh councillors to resign because it was the Sikh Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee which had got them returned unopposed in 1927 and which still owed allegiance to the Congress.

There was still another party of Sikhs which, though not so vocal and popular as the Central Sikh League and the Shiromani Akali Dal, did casually fret and fume against the Congress. It consisted of loyalist Sikhs whose activities, like those of the Punjab Hindu Sabha, were confined to holding meetings and passing resolutions. This party included the titled gentry belonging to "aristocratic" families, known for their pro-Government attitude. In April 1929, some of them, mostly belonging to Amritsar District, decided to form a Central Sikh Association for safeguarding the rights of the community. Sadhu Singh presided over its first meeting which resolved that since the Nehru report and the Congress had trampled upon the legitimate rights of the Sikhs, meetings should be held all over the district to explain to the Sikhs the dangerous implications of the Nehru report and the risk their martial community would run by supporting the Congress.⁸⁵ A committee was appointed to do propaganda in the Press.

A general meeting of the Central Sikh Association was held in

83. Akali Patrika, 4-1-1930, Master Tara Singh's Press statement
Also The Tribune, 4-1-1930
84. Akali Patrika, 14-1-1930, The resolution passed at the All-Parties Sikh conference, Amritsar; The Tribune, 14-1-1930
85. The Tribune, 7-4-1929

February 1930 under the presidentship of S.B. Raghbir Singh, M.L.C. It observed that the withdrawal of the Nehru report in the absence of an alternative scheme should not be misconstrued to mean that Sikh claims had been duly recognised by the Congress. It further declared that the declaration of independence at this stage, "when an epoch-making conference was proposed to be held in England," would hamper speedy attainment of a Dominion constitution for India.⁸⁶ It appealed to the Sikhs not to subscribe to any programme which aimed at the destruction of the existing social and political structure and warned that "the Congress programme of civil disobedience is calculated to letting loose disruptive forces in the country, which is bound to bring chaos all round." It appealed to the Sikhs to wait till the Round Table Conference had been held in London. It also advised against the resignation of Sikh members from legislatures.⁸⁷

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Akali Party's Participation In The Civil Disobedience Movement

At the session held in Lahore in December 1929, the Congress changed its creed to one of complete independence and decided not to attend the Round Table Conferences, which were convened by the British Government in London to formulate some sort of agreement in the distribution of political power among various political groups in India. In this session the Congress working committee had appointed Gandhi

86. The Tribune, 11-2-1930, Central Sikh Association's resolutions

87. The Tribune, 11-2-1930, Central Sikh Association's resolutions

as the sole authority to decide the time and the manner of the launching of the civil disobedience movement.⁸⁸ People anxiously looked for instructions which they were required to follow for early attainment of freedom.⁸⁹ Mahatma Gandhi sensed the atmosphere correctly and stated that civil disobedience alone could save the country from impending lawlessness and secret crime, since there was a party which believed in violence in the country, which would not believe in the efficacy of speeches and resolutions, and which believed only in direct action. He, therefore, resolved to place himself at the head of the national struggle to keep it within the limits of non-violence.

Early in January 1930, the first order of the Congress Executive Committee went out that January 26, 1930, be observed throughout the country as 'Independence Day'. On that day a manifesto, prepared by the Mahatma and adopted by the Congress working committee, was to be read from every platform and accepted by the people. The manifesto was a declaration of independence, a pledge of loyalty to the Indian National Congress and to the sacred fight for India's liberty. Reports from different parts of the country showed that the Independence Day celebrations were a great success.⁹⁰ These reports gave the necessary

88. Menon, V.P., Transfer of Power, p. 42

89. Bose, Subhash Chandra, Indian Struggle (1920-1934), p. 247

90. Ibid; Nehru, Jawaharlal, An Autobiography, Allied Publishers, Bombay(1962), Pp. 209-210

indication to Gandhi and he felt that the time was ripe for action.⁹¹

Events began to move fast. On January 30, Gandhi started his broadside on the Government by publishing in Young India his Eleven-Point Demand, which included abolition of the salt tax and total prohibition⁹² but the demand failed to evoke any response from the Viceroy. The Congress working committee, meeting at Sabarmati in February, authorised Gandhi to start the civil disobedience movement. In a letter to the Viceroy on March 12, Gandhi informed him of his intention to "disregard the provision of the salt law." On the fixed day he started with 79 co-workers to disobey the salt tax at Dandi. Though he chose the seemingly trivial course of breaking the salt law, it made a strong appeal to the masses; and, contrary to expectation, proved a remarkable success. Salt became "a mysterious word, a word of power."⁹³ During the three weeks of March, the salt satyagraha caught the imagination of the nation and gained momentum. On April 6, when Gandhi picked up some pieces of salt lying on the beach, the civil disobedience movement commenced. Before starting the movement Gandhi had appealed to his countrymen and political parties to join hands with the Congress in the national struggle.

As in all provinces, prominent leaders met in Punjab to consider his appeal. A conference of representative of political parties like

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91. Nehru, Jawaharlal, An Autobiography, Pp. 209-210
 92. Pattabhi, Sitaramayya, The History of the Indian National Congress, Vol. I, Pp. 363-365
 93. Nehru, Jawaharlal, An Autobiography, Pp. 209-210

the Congress, nationalist Sikhs and Muslims and members of the Naujawan Bharat Sabha was held at Bradlaugh Hall in Lahore to start a civil disobedience movement in the Punjab simultaneously with other provinces.⁹⁴ Maulana Abdul Qadir Qasuri, President, Punjab Provincial Congress Committee, presided. He appealed to all the political parties to sink their differences and to come forward to take part in the coming struggle for freedom and be united in heart and action. He said that the time for mutual bickering was gone and everyone, whether he belonged to the Tilak school of politics, the Sikh League or Naujawan Bharat Sabha, should come forward at the call of the motherland.⁹⁵

Master Tara Singh assured the conference that nationalist Sikhs would not lag behind in the national struggle. Although the Sikhs had a grievance against the Congress for not including their colour in the national flag, they were prepared to forget all differences and fight shoulder to shoulder with the Congress.⁹⁶ After a prolonged discussion,

a "war" council, consisting of Maulana Abdul Qadir, Dr. Satya Paul, Pt. K. Santanam, Master Tara Singh, Baba Kharak Singh and Lala Chhabil Das was formed.⁹⁷ Later Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew and Dr. Mohammad Alam were included in the war council at the Punjab Satyagraha Conference held at Gujranwala. Baba Kharak Singh refused to serve on the council unless the Sikh colour was included in the National Flag. It

94. The Tribune, 27-3-1930

95. The Tribune, 27-3-1930

96. Ibid

97. Ibid

is interesting to note that while the civil disobedience movement was opposed by Baba Kharak Singh, who was then the President of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, it was supported by Master Tara Singh, its vice-president.⁹⁸

On March 9, the Shiromani Akali Dal offered 5,000 volunteers for the civil disobedience movement proposed by Gandhi. It also called upon all Sikhs "to do their duty in this critical hour and muster strength as true and valiant soldiers under the banner of Mahatma Gandhi,"⁹⁹ despite the fact that though Gandhi had assured the Sikhs that the Sikh colour would be included in the National Flag, it had not been done. On the other hand, it resolved that to keep aloof from the struggle was not in keeping with the noble traditions of the Sikhs. The Shiromani Akali Dal, therefore, advised the Sikhs to join the struggle "but under their own banner." The executive also fixed the quota of volunteers for various districts.¹⁰⁰ When in the heat

98. The Tribune, 15-4-1930.
Baba Kharak Singh said: "I have full sympathy with the cause of the Congress, but regret I can not co-operate with it unless and until the colour representing the Sikh community is incorporated in the National Flag." Master Tara Singh said that the Sikhs were in a peculiar position. Mahatma Gandhi had not yet included their colour in the flag. If they remained aloof and Mahatma Gandhi's fight succeeded, the Sikh would have no place to live. If the Sikhs failed to participate in the movement they would be held responsible. He suggested that the Sikhs should fight under their own flag.

99. The Tribune, 11-3-1930
Also Ganda Singh, Brief History of the Sikhs, S.G.P.C. (1952), Amritsar, p. 64

100. The Tribune, 14-4-1930

of the civil disobedience movement shooting took place in the North-Western Frontier Province¹⁰¹ it had stirred Master Tara Singh to the depth of his soul. He declared "that the Sikhs, in sympathy with their tyrannised countrymen, would shed their blood at the same place where the Pathans had shed it. It was said that the Sikhs and Pathans were each other's enemies. That was absolutely wrong. The Sikhs and Pathans were sons of the same motherland, and if any such impression prevailed that they were enemies, the Sikhs would wash it off by mingling their blood with that of the Pathans. The Sikhs must, therefore, go to their rescue and lay down their lives and do their duty honourably as enjoined upon them by their Gurus." He made this declaration at Jallianwalla Bagh before a huge gathering. One hundred fearless Akalis with their kirpans volunteered to march to Peshawar.

101. As in the rest of India the NWFP Congress notified that picketing of liquor shops would commence on April 23. A day earlier the feelings of the people were stirred when an AICC team to inquire into the working of the NWFP Regulations was stopped at Attock and not allowed to enter that province. To protest against this the people took out a procession and held a public meeting at Shahi Bagh, Peshawar. Next morning all important leaders, including Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Syed Lal Badshah, were arrested. When two of the leaders were being taken to the police station, the police van got punctured. The leaders undertook to go on foot to the police station. Hundreds of people followed them shouting slogans. When the people were about to return they saw armoured cars rushing at them. An Englishman came dashing on a motor-cycle, collided with an armoured car and was run over. In the resultant melee several men were crushed. The infuriated mob set one of the cars on fire. The troops in the armoured cars were ordered to fire on the mob, and within a short time the whole of the Bazar was turned red with the blood of the Pathans. According to the Government 30 were killed and 33 wounded, but unofficial sources put the toll at nearly seven times the government figure.
 Patabhi, Sitaramayya, The History of the Indian National Congress, Vol. I. Pp. 411-12

Each one of them seemed fully determined to lay down his life for the country. It was like an army of dedicated martyrs. The jatha was stopped by the police at Dina near Jhelum and mercilessly lathi-charged until every member became unconscious. Master Tara Singh was earlier arrested when the jatha was still in Lahore and imprisoned in the special jail at Gujarat.¹⁰²

At a joint meeting of the Central Sikh League and the Shiromani Akali Dal at Lahore in August 3, 1930, it was decided to boycott the forthcoming general election in obedience to the Congress mandate.¹⁰³

But at a meeting of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, held on August 31, Baba Kharak Singh, who was ailing and consequently was brought on a stretcher to preside over the meeting, threatened to resign unless the Shiromani Akali Dal refused to work under the Congress flag.¹⁰⁴

The Punjab Provincial Congress Committee adopted a conciliatory attitude on the question of inclusion of the Sikh colour in the national flag. Pandit K. Santanam conveyed to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, President of the Indian National Congress, the PPCC recommendation that the Sikh colour should be incorporated in the National Flag.

102. The Tribune, 14-5-1930 ✓

103. The Tribune, 5-8-1930

104. The Tribune, 3-9-1930, Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, Shiromani Akali Dal and Congress.

He pointed out that there had been a good deal of agitation among the Sikhs on the point with the result that a certain section of the community was keeping aloof from the national movement. Pandit Nehru replied that the Congress had adopted the National Flag by a resolution, and that practice and convention had made the party flag the National Flag. He also denied that the colours were designed to represent various communities. He did not like the PPCC decision, which he called hasty and untimely. He felt that if every provincial Congress committee acted separately in this matter, they might have a variety of flags.¹⁰⁵

Another attempt was made in the meeting of the executive committee of the Akali Dal in November next. The committee rejected the resolution of Baba Kharak Singh by nine votes to seven that the Sikhs should refuse to work with the Congress until it included the Sikh colour in the National Flag. At this Teja Singh, vice-president, Waryam Singh and Bhag Singh, resigned their membership of the Akali Dal.¹⁰⁶

(Baba Kharak Singh's group did not participate in the Congress civil disobedience movement; consequently it lost ground among the people. Master Tara Singh's group gathered force from its association with the Congress, and by its participation in the civil disobedience movement it gained prestige as a nationalist group and won the sympathy of all non-loyalists. At the same time because of its constant re-iteration of communal demands at Congress forums, it continued to enjoy

105. Nehru-Santanam correspondence on the National Flag, The Tribune, 2-11-1930.

106. The Tribune, 27-11-1930

the confidence of the Sikh masses with the result that it emerged strong enough to claim the title of Akali Party exclusively for itself.¹⁰⁷

107. Khushwant Singh, The Sikhs, Pp. 115-116

CHAPTER III

COMMUNAL AWARD AND AKALIS' POLITICAL GAINS

Round Table Conferences And The Communal Award

Next to the civil disobedience movement in 1930, the most important political development of the year was the decision of the British Government to invite representatives of Indian political parties, various groups and interests to a Round Table Conference in London. This was because the Indian parties had failed to evolve an agreed constitution. Lord Irwin's announcement had promised a conference between His Majesty's Government and Indian leaders after the submission of the report by the Simon Commission. Accordingly, a conference was called at London for consultations on the new constitution.

The most conspicuous element of the Indian delegation was the section which represented communal interests in the country. Ram Gopal in his book 'Indian Muslims' says that "the presumptive representatives of the Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and others had been so chosen by the Viceroy that they were aggressively vocal on communal matters. They talked in London quite as exasperatingly as they did in India."¹

The first Round Table Conference met between November 12, 1930, and January 19, 1931. The total number of delegates was 89, of whom

1. Ram Gopal, Indian Muslims, Asia Publishing House, Bombay (1959) p. 288

16 were British Parliamentary delegates; 57 representatives of British India and 16 of Indian States. In his opening address, the British Prime Minister, Ramsay Macdonald proposed an Indian federation with the provinces and States as units, and a responsible executive at the Centre with defence and external affairs excluded from its purview. There were at that time three prominent Sikh organisations, namely, Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, which supervised the Gurdwara affairs, its semi-militant wing, the Shiromani Akali Dal, and the Central Sikh League, which looked to all the political interests of the Sikh community.

Like the Congress, the Sikh organisations boycotted the first Round Table Conference for want of assurance from the Governor-General regarding the final objective of giving India self-government. To save its face, the Government, however, chose Master Tara Singh's namesake, who was a judge of the High Court of Patiala, to represent the Sikhs at the conference. Giani Sher Singh and some other leaders of the Central Akali Dal ^{1a} tried to abduct him at Rajpura railway station while he was on his way to Bombay. But he forestalled their move and was successful in reaching London as scheduled.² At the conference, however, Tara Singh supported the nationalist view and sided with Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru on all matters of political and constitutional import.³

- 1a. A new organisation formed by Baba Kharak Singh and Giani Sher Singh on 14-2-1933, which would be discussed in the ensuing pages.
2. Nahar Singh, Giani, Azadi Dian Laharan, p. 280
3. Harbans Singh, The Heritage of the Sikhs, Pp. 172-173

The annual session of the Central Sikh League was held at Amritsar under the presidency of Master Tara Singh. It was attended by Mahatma Gandhi and other Congress leaders. Master Tara Singh declared that Sikh representatives at the first Round Table Conference were not nominees of the Sikh League. Therefore, the decision of the Conference could not be binding on the Sikhs.⁴ The Sikh League was opposed to communal representation but in case it had to continue, the League put forward 17 demands.⁵ The demands included mainly the setting up of a national government; one-third share of the Sikhs in the Public Service Commission; the joint electorate with no reservation of seats and the transfer of Mohammedan areas to the Frontier Province to produce communal balance; five per cent share for the Sikhs in the Upper and the Lower Houses; the inclusion of at least one Sikh in the Central Cabinet and the adoption of Punjabi language as the official language of the province.⁶

It is evident from the above demands that the Sikhs, though in the name of wider national interest condemned the political reservations, claimed special rights for themselves in every aspect of political life, claiming themselves to be a special minority.

On March 5, 1931, the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was signed and all the

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- Mitra's
 4. Indian Annual Register (1931) Vol. II, p. 302
 5. Ibid
 6. See Appendix I

~~all the~~ political prisoners arrested during the civil disobedience movement, including Master Tara Singh, were released. Gandhi accepted the offer to attend the Second Round Table Conference in London on behalf of the Congress. But before proceeding there he wished to have the communal problem fully solved. He met communal leaders, princes, leaders of the minorities and important organisations. A representative deputation of Sikhs under the leadership of Master Tara Singh also met him. The deputationists placed the Sikh point of view before Gandhi and stressed that the Sikhs, being an important minority, required adequate safeguards in any future constitution framed for India. The deputation handed over to Gandhi the 17 demands of the Central Sikh League which had already been approved by the Central Sikh League at its annual session.⁷

Second Round Table Conference

The Second Round Table conference commenced on September 17, and lasted till December 1, 1931. It was attended by Gandhi as the sole representative of the Congress.⁸ The Sikhs were represented by Ujjal Singh and Sampuran Singh of Lyallpur. The Government set up a minorities committee to deal with the question of communal representation. But agreement eluded its members. Its proceedings were deadlocked because of the Muslim refusal to accept joint citizenship

7. The Tribune, 27-3-1931, they met Mahatma Gandhi on March 24.

8. H. Harbans Singh, The Heritage of the Sikhs, p. 173

with the rest of the nation. Sampuran Singh told the minority sub-committee, of which he was a member, that "if Muslims were given a statutory permanent majority in the Punjab legislature there would be a Muslim Government and with the mighty British Empire at their back there might be a civil war and we might be altogether annihilated and washed off the face of the world."⁹ He further said, "I don't say that there should not be a majority of any single community, but not to care for the other communities and to give this one single community a statutory majority is, I think, against all principles of constitutional law."¹⁰

The Muslim delegates, piloting their case with cool and calculated confidence, were not provoked. Replying on their behalf, Sir Mohammad Shafi said, "I confess I was pained as well as astonished at the language used by the responsible representative of our sister community, the Sikhs. I, for one, had hoped that the followers of that great saint Baba Guru Nanak who, when he died, was claimed by the Musalmans as a Mussalman and by the Hindus as a Hindu, would find this tale to be a uniting factor between Muslim and Hindu communities of the Punjab."¹¹

In the sub-committee, presided over by a British statesman, the Hindu, Muslim and Sikh delegates, annoyingly interrupted one another's speeches and appeared like litigants with the chairman as the arbitrator. They did not make any progress, all sticking to the positions

9. Ram Gopal, Indian Muslims, p. 229

10. Ibid

11. Ibid; Azim Hussain, Fazi-i-Hussain, Longmans Green & Co. Ltd.,

they had taken during and after the deliberations of the all-parties conference.¹²

Third Round Table Conference

The third Conference was called to consider the reports of the committees which had been deliberating during the previous months. Only 46 Indians were invited. The Sikh nominee, Tara Singh of Ferozepore, protested against provincial autonomy under a permanent and dominant Muslim majority in the Punjab. He demanded safeguards to ensure that measures affecting the minorities would not be passed without the consent of three-fifths of the community concerned and would be subject to the veto of the Governor. He pleaded for weightage in services, a 5 per cent representation in the Federal legislature, and Sikh representation in Sindh. The conference results were published in the form of a White Paper in March 1933. A joint committee of the two Houses of the British Parliament was set up under Lord Linlithgow (later Viceroy of India) to work out details of the future administration of India.¹³ Edward Thompson in his book, 'Enlist India for Freedom' (1940) says, "During the Round Table Conference, there was rather an obvious understanding and alliance between the more intransigent Muslims and certain particularly undemocratic British political circles. The alliance is constantly asserted in India to be the real block to progress. I believe I could prove that this was largely true."

12. Ram Gopal, Indian Muslims, Pp. 229-232

13. S. Khushwant Singh, History of the Sikhs, Vol. II (1839-1964), Princeton University, Princeton (1966), Pp. 232-233

And there is no question that in former times we frankly practised the divide and rule method in India. From Warren Hasting's time onwards men made no bones of the pleasure the Hindu-Muslim conflict gave them; even such men as Elphinstone, Malcolm and Metcalfe admitted its value to the British.¹⁴

In the absence of a mutually agreed inter-communal formula the British Government undertook to settle the question. On 17th August, 1932, the Prime Minister, Ramsay Macdonald, made an announcement which came to be known as the Communal Award.¹⁵ The award created the following 12 separate electoral compartments: (1) Hindus (2) Muslims (3) Sikhs (4) Anglo-Indians (5) Britishers (6) Depressed Classes (7) Indian Christians (8) Landlords and Capitalists (9) Commerce and Industry (10) Labour (11) University (12) Women.

By this award the communal demands of the Muslims, as embodied in Mr. Jinnah's fourteen points, were fully conceded. The Muslims were accorded separate electorates and reservation of seats in provincial legislatures; the proposed autonomy for the provinces envisaged a weak central set-up, which was precisely what they wanted. The award also assigned special seats to the members of the depressed classes and provided that "these seats will be filled by election from special constituencies in which only members of the depressed classes electorally qualified will be entitled to vote. Any person

14. Thompson, Edward, Enlist India for Freedom, V. Gollancz, Ltd. (1940), London, p. 56

15. 6. Pattabhi, Sitaramayya, The History of the Indian National Congress Vol. I, Appendix VI, p. 657

voting in such a special constituency will, as stated above, be also entitled to vote in a general constituency.¹⁶ Not unexpectedly, the Communal Award created a storm in the country and was received with indignation by the intelligentsia.¹⁷ The award conceded separate electorates but Hindus and Sikhs regarded this mode of representation anti-national and wanted joint electorates to be substituted by mutual agreement.¹⁸ In the Punjab, Sir Jogindra Singh and Dr. Gokul Chand Narang proposed joint electorate provided (1) seats were reserved for

16. Pattabhi, Sitaramayya, This History of the Congress, Vol. I, p. 657

17. The Tribune, 19-8-1932: Sir Gokul Chand Narang called it a "cup of poison". "Indian will be split up into a large number of jarring elements than those existing at present."

Raja Narendra Nath, a prominent Hindu leader said: "Sikhs can never accept it. It is also unfair to Hindus. It is against the very essence of nationalism and strikes at the root of what the Congress has been fighting for."

"The Communal Award has inflamed feelings of indignation among Hindus and Sikhs. It is unacceptable to the Congress." -- Dr. Kitchlew, President of the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee.

Parsi leader M.C. Chagla said, "The community that has come off best is the British community."

~~Parsi leader M.C. Chagla said, "The community that has come off best is the British community."~~

"The Award is bound to create bitterness in the minds of Sikhs." -- Mehtab Singh.

"This can never be accepted by the Sikhs. It is impossible to submit to it... It is the last attempt of bureaucracy to disunite India." -- Sant Singh, MLA.

Giani Sher Singh advised Sikhs to resign from the Assembly. He also asked Sir Jogindra Singh to resign his office as Minister.

Jogindra Singh, Sir Sunder Singh, Giani Kartar Singh, Ujjal Singh, Sampuran Singh, Bhagat Sawant Singh and Sir Daljit Singh jointly said, "Faith of Sikhs in Government's sense of justice

Muslims and Sikhs in the same proportion as in the Communal Award; (2) Muslims and non-Muslims were equally represented in the cabinet; and (3) a public services commission was constituted to recruit 50 per cent Muslims, 30 per cent Hindus and 20 per cent Sikhs.¹⁹

The proposals were agreed to by Sir Sikander Hyat Khan, Chaudhuri Shahabuddin and Ahmad Yar Khan Daultana on the condition that Mian Fazl-i-Hussain, the Unionist leader, had no objection to acceptance of joint electorates and the Muslims did not suffer in their representative capacity or, in other words, their population strength was reflected in the electorate. Though the Muslims constituted 56 per cent of the population they formed only 44 per cent of the electorate, while the Sikhs, who were only 13 per cent of population, comprised 24 per cent of the electorate. The Hindu population was almost fully reflected in the electorate. Mian Fazl-i-Hussain wanted, therefore, to remove the disparity between the percentage of the electorate by adjusting the franchise of the three communities.²⁰

Mian Fazl-i-Hussain was prepared to accept joint electorates provided: (1) the franchise reflected the population of the three

has been shaken. They can never submit to the Award."

18. Azim Hussain, Fazl-i-Hussain, Pp. 279-281

19. Ibid

20. Ibid

communities in the voting register; (2) the reservation of seats as prescribed in the award was confined to general constituencies and not to special constituencies which had joint electorates; (3) there was no time-limit for reservation of seats as the hands of future legislatures could not be tied, and (4) arrangements would be made whereby areas having the largest population of any community would return most of the members of that community under the reserved seats system.²¹

Sir Jogindra Singh and Raja Narendra Nath accepted the conditions prescribed by Mian Fazl-i-Hussain but Sir Jogindra Singh could get only seven of the thirteen Sikh members of the Legislative Council to sign the proposed agreement. Ujjal Singh, Sampuran Singh, Master Tara Singh and Sant Singh ~~who were the other two~~ and two others objected to the differential franchise proposed by the Unionist leader and started a campaign against the Punjab formula.²²

Unity Conference

When the various proposals could not bring conciliation among the different communities, Pandit M.M. Malaviya and Maulana Shaukat Ali convened a meeting at Allahabad, on November 3, 1932, popularly known as the Unity Conference. The conference was fully representative of all sections of the people. It was attended by 63 Hindus, 11 Sikhs, 39 Muslims and eight Christians. The conference passed a number of resolutions dealing with most of the points about which differences did or could arise and made good progress.²³ Suddenly Sir Samuel Hoare, the Secretary of State for India, in a bid to sabotage the conference

21. & 22. Ibid

23. Prasad, India Divided, (3rd Ed.), Hind Kitabs Ltd., Bomb

made an announcement in London that His Majesty's Government had decided to reserve for the Muslims one-third share in the Central legislature.²⁴ This was slightly in excess of what was mutually agreed upon by the Indians. The announcement was a clever move to wean away the Muslims from the Unity Conference. The result was that the conference broke up unceremoniously. The conference proving abortive, the Communal Award became the final settlement of Hindu-Muslim representation in legislatures.²⁵

Khalsa Durbar

An all-parties Sikh conference was held at Lahore on July 28, 1932, under the presidentship of Giani Sher Singh, vice-president of the Central Sikh League. It rejected the award as it established communal raj in the province by creating a religious majority, irremovable by an appeal to the electorate. The conference "voiced its grim determination not to submit to such a majority and not to allow the successful working of any constitution which does not provide full protection to Sikhs by guaranteeing an effective balance of power to each of the three principal communities in the Punjab." The conference

24. This statement was announced at the Third Round Table Conference.

25. Ram Gopal, Indian Muslims, p. 239. The conference after prolonged sittings resolved that Muslim majority might be allowed in the Punjab. But ample safeguard should be reserved for the Sikh minority in the province. Representation of 5% and a Sikh Minister should be taken in the Centre and special consideration be given to them in the army. Similarly Muslims were given 30% representation in the Centre.

pledged to make every sacrifice for the protection of the interests, honour and religion of the Sikhs.²⁶

A 17-member council of action was constituted on 24-7-1932 in Lahore which included prominent leaders like Master Tara Singh, Giani Sher Singh, Avtar Singh, Sant Singh, M.L.A., Sampuran Singh, Lyallpur, M.L.C., Giani Kartar Singh, Ujjal Singh, Amar Singh of Sher-i-Punjab, Bata Singh, Deputy President, Punjab Legislative Council, Sir Sunder Singh Majithia and Baba Kharak Singh.²⁷ The council of action decided to organise a volunteer corps -- the Akali Shadidi Dal -- of 1,00,000 to fight communalism.²⁸ In response to the resolution of the council of action, Ujjal Singh and Sampuran Singh Lyallpuri resigned their seats on the consultative committee of the Round Table Conference.²⁹

On September 26 and 27, 1932, the council of action convened another meeting in Lahore, of representatives of all shades of Sikh opinion to discuss steps against the Communal Award. At the gathering, presided over by Amar Singh of the "Sher-i-Punjab," it was decided to form the Khalsa Durbar with a maximum of 250 members, of whom about 200 were to be elected by Sikhs in various districts of Punjab and the remaining by Sikhs in other provinces of India as well as in other parts

26. Akali Patrika, 27-7-1932. All Parties Sikh Conference, Lahore. Also The Tribune, 27-7-1932.

27. The Tribune, 27-7-1932. Also Akali Patrika, 28-7-1932.

28. Akali Patrika, 3-8-1932. Also The Tribune, 3-8-1932.

29. Akali Patrika, 28-9-1932. Also The Tribune, 28-9-1932.

of the world where Sikhs resided.³⁰ This was almost the same procedure as had been adopted by the Sikhs about ten years previously while constituting the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee -- the famous Sikh organisation of the gurdwara reform period. The conference called upon Sikh members of the central and provincial legislatures to hand over their resignations from the legislatures to the Khalsa Durbar in protest against the Communal Award. The Khalsa Durbar was authorised to submit these resignations to the Government whenever it thought fit.³¹

The next meeting held under the presidentship of Avtar Singh condemned Sir Jogindra Singh and others who had appended their signatures on behalf of the Sikh community to the proposals of Mian Fazl-i-Hussain and requested the Sikh Sabha to expel them from the Sabha.³² But soon the old rivalry between Master Tara Singh's group and that of Baba Kharak Singh came to the fore. Within one year of the formation of the Khalsa Durbar, Baba Kharak Singh's group left the Durbar to form a separate organisation of its own, thus reducing the Khalsa Durbar to a renovated Shiromani Akali Dal.³³ The immediate cause of the rift was a secret letter alleged to have been written by Giani Sher Singh which became the subject of discussion in a meeting of the

30. The Tribune, 28-9-1932

12. 31. The Tribune, 28-9-1932 ✓

32. Azim Hussain, Fazl-i-Hussain, p. 281
Also The Tribune, 11-5-1933

33. 13. The Tribune, 22-9-1932

executive committee of the Khalsa Durbar held in September, 1933. Giani Sher Singh, Amar Singh of the 'Sher-i-Punjab' and Harbans Singh Sistani walked out of the meeting. After their withdrawal the executive committee announced "for the information of the sangat (congregation) that the Khalsa Durbar had nothing to do with the meeting which had been called by Mehtab Singh, Giani Sher Singh and Amar Singh." It disapproved of the meeting as it feared it would generate disunity among the Sikhs.³⁴

34. The Tribune, 22-9-1933. The Khalsa Durbar executive meeting was held under the presidentship of Avtar Singh. The resignation of the president was placed before the house. Ishar Singh Majhail proposed that the resignation should be considered along with Master Tara Singh's suggestion that the election of office-bearers should be held by the general committee. Giani Sher Singh supported Master Tara Singh's suggestion and demanded postponement of the proposed joint session of the Khalsa Durbar and the Central Sikh League. Ishar Singh, Mehtab Singh and Kartar Singh Dhwana charged that Giani Sher Singh was not acting according to his professions. The executive was irreconcilably divided on the issue. So Master Tara Singh moved the following resolution: "whereas the executive committee of the Khalsa Durbar, on account of certain reasons, has not been able to do any solid work, this meeting recommends to the general body that the executive should be elected again and for this purpose a meeting of general committee should be held on October 17, pending which this meeting requests the president not to press the acceptance of his resignation."

Before the resolution was adopted Giani Sher Singh got up to make a statement. The president asked him to put the statement in black and white and then read it to the House. For that he got 10 minutes. Giani Sher Singh, Amar Singh of the 'Sher-i-Punjab', Harbans Singh Sistani then made a statement containing allegations against the Akali Party and walked out of the meeting.

The grievance of the group which walked out was that the Khalsa Durbar had been originally constituted on "no party" lines but later Master Tara Singh had given it a party colour. "The representatives of the Khalsa Party," said Giani Sher Singh in a statement after the walk-out, "attended the meeting of the executive committee to see whether there was any possibility of its working on original non-party lines." They felt that Master Tara Singh's party was not prepared to work on non-party lines and carry on the programme of the Khalsa Durbar against the Communal Award. According to Giani Sher Singh, the Akali Dal had not recruited the Shahidi Dal as decided upon by the Khalsa Durbar, and Master Tara Singh's party was obstructing Panthic unity. He charged that Master Tara Singh's group wanted to keep the Khalsa Durbar in its grip and eventually to wreck it.³⁵

The fears of Giani Sher Singh and his followers came true when a resolution was passed in the Sikh League-cum-Khalsa Durbar Conference merging the Sikh League with the Khalsa Durbar. The merger resolution stated that since the aims and objects of the Central Sikh League and the Khalsa Durbar were identical, there was no necessity of having two separate bodies.³⁶ It was also resolved that as the two bodies had been merged, the constitution of the Khalsa Durbar be redrafted. There was some opposition to this move. Some of the dele-

35. The Tribune, 22-9-1935.

36. Akali Patrika, 19-10-1933. Sikh League -- Khalsa Durbar Conference (merger of Sikh League in Khalsa Durbar)
Also The Tribune, 19-10-1933.

gates said that the Sikh League was a political body whose object was to work shoulder to shoulder with the Congress for attaining complete independence. It included "extremists". The Khalsa Durbar, on the other hand, included Sikhs from all walks of life, including Government officials. It had primarily been set up for fighting the Communal Award. By the amalgamation of the two bodies under the leadership of the "extremists", the "moderates" were driven out.³⁷

The joint conference, however, reaffirmed that the Khalsa Durbar was the premier political body of the Panth and any decision regarding the political rights of the Sikhs and the future constitution of India would not be acceptable to them unless it was endorsed by the Khalsa Durbar.³⁸ Its complexion thus became political. The purpose behind the merger, it was said, was to form a strong and united political organisation of the Sikhs. Under its new constitution, the membership of the Khalsa Durbar was thrown open to every Sikh and after the general election in 1935 it established branches all over the country.³⁹

Thus the Central Sikh League, an important political organisation of the Sikhs, ceased to exist after 15 years of stormy life and after having played an important and vital role in the politics of the Punjab and India. All later efforts to revive it failed.

37. Ibid

38. Ibid

39. Mitra's Register (1935), Vol. II, p. 311

Khalsa Central Council

The split between Master Tara Singh and Giani Sher Singh over the question of Communal Award, which threatened Panthic unity at the meeting of the one-year-old Khalsa Durbar and the walk-out of Giani Sher Singh and his supporters from that meeting,⁴⁰ resulted in the complete separation of his party from that of Master Tara Singh. Giani Sher Singh's supporters held a separate meeting on September 28, 1933, at Bradlaugh Hall in Lahore as they alleged that Master Tara Singh's party did not allow them to meet on the premises of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's Smadh, the venue of the Khalsa Durbar meeting. Over 200 Sikh workers attended and decided to establish the Khalsa Central Council,⁴¹ a new Sikh organisation in place of the Khalsa Durbar.

Giani Sher Singh explained that despite his best efforts the partisan spirit among Akalis had continued to increase and all his efforts to bring about a rapprochement between the two groups^{had} been of no avail. He and his friends had wanted to reform the Akali Dal according to the wishes of the Panth but in vain.⁴² They had also tried to settle amicably the anti-Patiala agitation⁴³ launched by the

40. Giani Nahar Singh, Azadi Dian Laharan, p. 211

41. &

42. The Tribune, 29-9-1933, (New organisation amongst Sikhs)

43. There prevailed a great discontentment among the Sikhs against the promiscuous morals of the Maharaja Bhupinder Singh of Patiala. He was generally accused by the Sikhs for not giving due share to the Sikhs in the State services. The Akalis thought that the Maharaja had conspired with the British Government in the deportation of Maharaja Ripudaman Singh of Nabha to Kodaikanal, who had gained popularity among the masses for his anti-British and independent ideas. Further the Akalis alleged that to

Master Tara Singh's group by asking the Shiromani Akali Dal, the Sikh Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, the Central Sikh League and other Sikh bodies not to take part in the agitation and to leave the dispute to the Maharaja of Patiala and his subjects. Their request about the proper functioning of the Khalsa Durbar to achieve its real object, namely, modification or scrapping of the Communal Award, had also fallen on deaf ears.⁴⁴

please the British Government the Maharaja of Patiala extended all possible help to curb the Akali agitation launched to reform the Gurdwaras. The Maharaja got Sewa Singh Thikriwala (1878-1935) transferred to the Patiala jail, ^{and others} were released. A deputation led by Baba Kharak Singh waited upon the Maharaja but all such appeals fell on deaf ears. Akalis started the agitation to get him released at all costs. Master Tara Singh wrote vituperative articles in the Urdu and Punjabi editions of the 'Akali' attacking base moral and the sinful designs of the Maharaja. A compromise was arrived at between the Master and the Maharaja's emissaries Nawab Liaquat Hayat Khan, the Prime Minister of the State and Raghbir Singh, the Inspector-General of the State police; after which Thikriwala was released who, however, was again arrested after some time. He died in jail, creating a yawning gulf between the ruler and the Akalis. In the 1934 Gurdwara Elections the Akali candidates Mangal Singh and Sant Singh defeated the Maharaja-sponsored Chief Khalsa Diwan candidates which made the Maharaja conscious of the value of the Akali friendship. Some reconciliation was brought about through the efforts of Jodh Singh, Bawa Harkishan Singh and Raghbir Singh after about nine years of strained relationship. Yet the Akalis and the Maharaja never settled down to happy terms till the death of the latter in 1939. His son Maharaja Yadvindra Singh maintained good contacts with the Akalis later on.

See Anilakh, Jagat Singh, Ik Jivan, Ik Itihaas (Biography of Sewa Singh Thikriwala) Punjabi Sahit Sabha, Barnala (1959) and Durlabh Singh's Valiant Fighter.

⁴⁴ The Tribune, 29-9-1933, New organisation amongst Sikhs.

The Khalsa Central Council was to consist of three bodies -- the Khalsa Akali Dal, the Khalsa Missionary Society and the Khalsa National League. These bodies were to spread the Sikh religion, to organise the Panth, to work for political advancement of Sikhs, to safeguard their rights, to work for the freedom of the country and to make strenuous efforts for scrapping the Communal Award.⁴⁵

The executive committee of the Khalsa Central Council at its meeting on October 23, 1933, considered the resolution⁴⁶ passed by Master Tara Singh's party at the combined session of the Khalsa Durbar and the Central Sikh League in Lahore on October 16 and 17 regarding communal representation "as suicidal to Sikh rights because the British Government, the Congress and other big communities in the country have accepted the principle of communal representation, which has become a settled fact in the constitution. Instead of doing away with communal representation, the passing of this resolution will injure the cause of the Sikhs alone."⁴⁷

The Central Council's attitude towards communal representation was, in fact, more communal than that of Master Tara Singh's party for the latter considered communal representation and separate electorates acceptable as a necessary evil only so long as the Muslims

45. The Tribune, 29-9-1933

46. The Tribune, 18-10-1933. Harnam Singh moved the following resolution: "The only way to Swaraj is abolition of communal representation in various legislatures, and as it appears that mutual communal settlement has at present become difficult on account of the unjust and iniquitous decision of the British Government, the conference recommends to the Panth to work for abolition of communal representation. The conference declares that the Sikhs will not submit to any constitution based upon the Communal Award."

insisted on them. The Central Council considered it necessary for the very existence of the Sikhs. This was one of the important differences between the two -- the other being on the policy towards Sikh princely States, particularly towards Patiala. The Kharak Singh-Sher Singh group was for adoption of the "laissez faire" policy towards the native states. In this respect, too, Master Tara Singh's party was more progressive.

Central Akali Dal

After the split in Akali ranks, both the parties claimed to speak for the Panth, but Master Tara Singh's party was more representative of the community as was evident from the results of the elections to the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee. Master Tara Singh's party had held control of the same ever since the second elections to that body in 1930. Baba Kharak Singh was president of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee for a short while in the beginning. When ousted, Baba Kharak Singh's followers had to coin a new name for themselves -- The Central Akali Dal.^{47a}

The September 1933 split led to the formation of the 'Azad Shiromani Akali Dal. Jaswant Singh Jhabal became its president and Ranjodh Singh Tarsikha its general secretary.⁴⁸ But this new party was dis-

47a. 14. The Tribune, 14-2-1933. Formation of the Central Akali Dal.

48. The Tribune, 28-10-1933.

Ranjodh Singh stated that the Dal had been formed to achieve the good for which Sikhs had made sacrifices, i.e., to secure gurdwara reform. He deplored that soon after the passage of the Gurdwara Act, Sikh leaders were divided into parties and the result was that nothing useful had been done. The Azad Akali Dal had been formed because of the refusal of the President of the Shiromani Akali Dal, to admit certain constitutional objections raised in the meeting held on October 15 at the Smadh of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The Dal would not identify itself with either Master Tara Singh's or with Giani Sher Singh's party but,

banded soon and an alliance was made with Giani Sher Singh's party and the new party -- The Central Akali Dal -- was constituted. At a well-attended meeting held in Guru ka Bagh, leaders of both parties agreed to accept Baba Kharak Singh as their leader. They also agreed to form the Central Akali Dal with Baba Kharak Singh as president, Jaswant Singh Jhabal and Amar Singh as vice-presidents and Nanjodh Singh Tarsikha as general secretary.⁴⁹

In early 1934, Harbans Singh Sistani and Kartar Singh Jhabal declared that they had decided to appoint Baba Kharak Singh as their 'dictator'. They assured him that they would work as ordered by him. Subsequently, this decision was reiterated by these Akali leaders at a huge diwan held on February 10, 1934. Under the circumstances, Baba Kharak Singh, "with perfect faith in the Akal Purkh and the Satgurus," thankfully accepted it.⁵⁰ This step infuriated the other wing of Akalis. The Shiromani Akali Dal made a public declaration that a minority of the Sikh community had no right to appoint a dictator. "The membership of the Shiromani Akali Dal," said Master Tara Singh, "is open to every adult Sikh. So to organise a rival body to such a democratic institution is unjustifiable. It is a pity that the minority party held a private meeting to set up a new organisation to which no leaders of the majority party was invited; yet ~~not~~^{it} claims the right to appoint a dictator. The Shiromani Akali Dal

would on the other hand try to cement the differences between them.
49. Ibid; 14-12-1933
(The Tribune)

50. The Tribune, 26-2-1934. Baba Kharak Singh's statement

and the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee refuse to be dictated by the minority party or its dictator."⁵¹ The executive committee of the Shiromani Akali Dal also asked Sikhs not to recognise Baba Kharak Singh or any other Sikh leader as dictator of the community, and not to participate in the forthcoming Sikh National Conference convened by the Central Akali Dal.⁵² The District Akali Jatha of Amritsar decided to expel such of its members who had joined the Central Akali Dal. About a dozen members walked out of the meeting as a protest against this resolution.⁵³

The proposed Sikh National Conference was held in Lahore in March 1934 and resolutions about Sikh rights, the Communal Award and Shahidi Dal were passed.⁵⁴

Efforts were made by some neutrals to save the Panth from a split. In December 1933, some Sikh professors of Khalsa College, Amritsar, and other well-wishers formed a body called the Gur Sewak Sabha to resolve the differences between two parties among the Sikhs.⁵ Their attempts failed. Master Tara Singh and Gopal Singh Qaumi tried to induce Giani Jher Singh to come to a settlement, but the latter demanded dismemberment of the organisations controlled by Master Tara

51. The Tribune, 1-3-1934, Baba Kharak Singh as Dictator, Master Tara Singh's Press statement.

52. The Tribune, 12-3-1934

53. The Tribune, 12-3-1934

54. Mitra's Register (1934) Vol. I, p. 336, proceedings and resolutions of the Sikh National Conference. Also The Tribune, 29-3-1934

55. The Tribune, 4-1-1934, Sikh Differences reported.

Singh's party. Master Tara Singh who, in the meantime, had gone to Burma, wrote a letter to the Gur Sewak Sabha offering to retire from politics and active Panthic service. He even promised not to return from Burma for 'some time' so that people might forget him. The offer was made to avoid a rift in the Panth. Master Tara Singh also agreed to disband the Shiromani Akali Dal, but refused to hand over the Khalsa Durbar and other organisations to the board of arbitrators, proposed to be appointed to settle the difference.⁵⁶ Giani Sher Singh refused to make any compromise.⁵⁷ Master Tara Singh returned from Burma after a few months.

Reconciliation efforts were resumed on Master Tara Singh's return. The talks began in January and after three months of protracted negotiations partial accord was reached in April 1935, i.e., more than a year after the first attempt.⁵⁸ But even this partial accord

56. ¹⁶ The Tribune, 4-1-1934

57. ¹⁷ The Tribune, 12-7-1934

58. The Tribune, 21-4-1935. Text of the Sikh Parties settlement as released to the Press: The following is the text of the agreement reached between the representatives of the two Sikh parties: "Both parties should nominate four persons (two from each) and these four should decide all points of dispute. Where they fail to agree, the point should be referred to Baba Jawala Singh, of the First Lahore Conspiracy Case, who will act as arbitrator. Of the members of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, Shiromani Akali Dal, Sikh National Conference, Khalsa Durbar, the Gurdwara Committee constituted under Section 85 of the Gurdwara Act and other District Akali Dal or District Jathas, whosoever be asked by Baba Jawala Singh to retire should retire and the above-mentioned organisation be disbanded, amalgamated or changed in accordance with the decision of Babaji. The vacancies so occurring will be filled by him. The award of Baba Jawala Singh will be final." The agreement was signed by Gopal Singh Gauri, Harnam Singh, Master Tara Singh, Giani Sher Singh, Ishar Singh Majhail and Harbans Singh Sistani.

was short-lived. The executive committee of the Central Akali Dal, instead of ratifying the agreement, put alternative suggestions, expressed its willingness to dissolve the Central Akali Dal and ratify the agreement "provided that instead of one arbitrator, there should be five, including Baba Jwala Singh, and they should take oath before Sri Akal Takht Sahib that they believe in Sikh religion, that they stand for Sikh rights and that they consider the Communal Award anti-Indian and are for its rejection."⁵⁹

The after-thought was enough to undo all the efforts at reconciliation and unity of two groups. The question was not which proposal was better as one was a mere proposal and the other a signed agreement which had been so easily put aside. What guarantee was there that any future agreement would be faithfully accepted? It was after years that the Panth had agreed on a person who could be trusted as an arbitrator by both parties. To find four more such persons appeared an impossible task. However, Ishar Singh Majhail, Secretary of the Shiromani Akali Dal, offered to leave the question of appointment of the other four arbitrators to Baba Jwala Singh if the Central Akali Dal promised not to back out again.

Giani Sher Singh, leader of the Central Akali Dal, made another move in May 1935 for a compromise. He proposed that all persons who had at any time after the passage of the Sikh Curdware Act, remained

59. The Tribune, 29-4-1935, Resolution of the Central Akali Dal Executive.
Also Akali Patrika, 29-4-1935

members of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, Shiromani Akali Dal, Central Akali Dal, Khalsa Darbar, Sikh National Conference, Central Sikh League, or any other Panthic organisation directly connected with any one of these or had contested election on their ticket, should resign and take a pledge that they would not contest any election for five years to make room for new Panthic workers to come forward and lead the community.⁶⁰

It was too radical a suggestion requiring great sacrifice from entrenched leadership and as such was not even considered seriously. In June 1935 another formula was suggested by the Central Akali Dal that the two parties should send five names each to Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya with a request that he should pick up two names from each list and himself be the fifth man to decide the quarrel between the two rival Akali factions.⁶¹ Such outside interference was not, however, acceptable to the Master Group and the matter remained where it was.

Despite Master Tara Singh's control of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, Baba Kharak Singh remained popular with the Sikhs for some years. Gradually his followers fell away and joined other parties. By 1947, he was almost alone, a venerable lonely figure, bent with age and suffering, but full of fire and fight whom all Sikhs respected, many exploited, but only a few followed.⁶²

60. 18 The Tribune, 13-5-1935

61. The Tribune, 5-6-1935

62. 19 Khushwant Singh, The Sikhs, Pp. 139-140

Moreover, his Central Akali Dal had no definite political programme of its own. The only constant feature of its activities was its anti-Akali attitude.⁶³

The Akali Dal - which emerged as a para-military political organisation during the Curdware reform movement - although careful to maintain its separate entity, continued to lend support to the Congress party in the freedom movement against the British. At the same time it functioned as a pressure group of the Sikh community in relation to the Congress party. For instance, the Akali Dal opposed the Nehru Committee Report because it was considered not particularly advantageous to the Sikhs. For its part, the Congress party, while receiving support from the Akali Dal, channelled the Sikh demand into the mainstream of nationalist movement. Thus, in 1929 at its session in Lahore, the Congress party acceded to the demand that it should not agree to a constitution which was not acceptable to the Sikh community.

While co-operating with the Congress party, the Akali Dal engaged independently in political activity to secure privileges for the Sikh community. Here it felt that the Muslim community was the main block to its demand for greater representation for the Sikh community in the Punjab Legislature. At the turn of the century,

63. ^v Khushwant Singh, The Sikhs, Pp. 139-140

when increasing emphasis was being placed on the separate political entity of the Sikhs, demands were made for separate and weighted representation for the Sikh community in the services and other representative bodies. Under the Montagu-Chelmsford Reform of 1919, the Sikhs were given separate electorates and representation in the Punjab legislature to the extent of 18½ per cent of the total number of seats, even though they formed only 13 per cent of the total population of undivided Punjab.⁶⁴ The Musliams, who represented 55 per cent of the population, received reserved representation of 50 per cent in the legislature. The Hindus, who were a little over 30 per cent of the population, received about the same share in the legislature.

The allocation of seats did not, however, satisfy the Sikh community. Sikh organisations and representatives at various conferences and in representation to various commissions continued to press for an even greater representation for the community. They wanted an allocation which would give them 30 per cent of the seats, the Hindus 30 and the Musliams 40.⁶⁵ Above all, they were interested in preventing the Musliams from having a majority in the legislature. At the same time, they assured the Musliams that the latter had nothing to fear from a combination against them of other groups in the legis-

64. Great Britain, Indian Statutory Commission, Memorandum submitted by the Punjab Government, His Majesty's stationery office, 1930, London, X 18.

65. Great Britain, Indian Statutory Commission, selections from memoranda and oral evidence by non-officials XVI, Part I, Pp. 135-147. The oral evidence was presented by several important Sikh leaders, including Sir Sunder Singh Majithia, Prof. Teja Singh and Bhai Jodh Singh.

lature for "the Sikhs have hitherto thrown in their lot more often with Mohammadans than with Hindus, especially as their interest, as a rural and agricultural community, have coincided with those of the Muslims."⁶⁶

The Muslims were, however, strongly opposed to any such proposition. They insisted that the majority community should not be made a statutory minority in the legislature. They further maintained "that the distinction which, of late, has been drawn for political purposes between Hindus and Sikhs is non-existent" and "artificial", that Hindus and Sikhs belonged to the same community, and that together they constituted such a large minority (45 per cent) that did not merit special safeguards.⁶⁷

In 1932 when the British Government finally decided on the allocation of seats through the Communal Award, the result was the establishment of a statutory majority for the Muslims in the Punjab legislature. The Sikhs received a representation of 19 per cent.⁶⁸

The Akali Dal, which by this time had become a major force in Sikh politics, was dissatisfied with this arrangement. It began agitations for a solution that would give the Sikhs increased representation and at the same time rescind the Muslim majority in the legislature. During the 1930s the Akali Dal strongly opposed not only the Muslim

67. Ibid

68. Ibid, p. 125. Oral evidence by a deputation of the All-India Muslim League.

69. Gwer, Maurice, and Appadorai, A, Speeches and Documents on the Indian Constitution (1921-1947) Vol. I, Oxford University Press, Bombay (1957), Pp. 261-265.

League, which avowedly stood for Muslim interests, but also the Unionist Party, which the Akali Dal considered to be promoting primarily Muslim interests under the cover of a secular economic programme oriented towards the rural areas. It was bitterly critical of any Sikh who associated with the Unionist Party.

CHAPTER IV

FIRST GENERAL ELECTIONS

AKALIS JOIN OPPOSITION

Elections and the Akalis

The Communal Award continued to be the central theme of Indian politics. The Muslims felt reassured by the special rights and concessions it afforded them. The Hindus were naturally hostile, but the Congress, in view of the divergance of opinion between the two communities, adopted an attitude of discreet neutrality. In a meeting in Bombay in October 1934 it declared that it neither accepted nor rejected the Award. The Sikhs considered the Award a means to their existence. They were its bitterest opponents and did not slacken the vigorous campaign against it. But they were numerically too few to have their protest heeded. The British Parliament set its seal of approval on the Award by passing the Government of India Act of 1935.

The provincial elections held under the Act gave birth to several new parties. Before the elections, there were only two prominent parties among the Sikhs -- the Shiromani Akali Dal, and the Chief Khalsa Diwan, an organisation of landed aristocracy. But with the advent of provincial autonomy, the Diwan changed its label and fought elections under the name of the Khalsa National Party. It was organised by Sir Sunder Singh Majithia and Sir Jogindra Singh. They collected around themselves all anti-Akali and pro-British elements, constituting a separate election board. The Khalsa National

Party had no faith in slogans like complete independence, but adopted the other items of the programme of the Akali Party with slight modifications. It was willing to work out the new constitution and also accept office. Sir Jogindra Singh was authorised to issue a detailed manifesto.¹ Explaining the creed and programme of his party, Sir Jogindra Singh said at Ferozepore on August 7 that the Khalsa National Party stood for Swarajya in the true sense of the term and was determined to work ceaselessly towards its attainment by all constitutional means. Despite many imperfections in the new constitution, the party was willing to work to remove these. It would also devote its energies to uniting the communities and work for abolition of the Communal Award.²

Referring to connections with Britain, Sir Jogindra Singh remarked: "what is wrong with India's connections with Britain? I am aware of our subordination, economic drain and other limitations, but we cannot ignore the fact that England stands sentinel at the gates of India, on land, sea and air, guaranteeing peace within and protection from invasions, thus permitting us to grow out of our communal conflicts and learn to govern ourselves."³ He also outlined the party's social aims of raising the standard of living of every man, woman and child, thus creating a new demand, both for raw

1. The Tribune, 16-6-1936

2. The Tribune, 13-8-1936

3. The Tribune, 13-8-1936

produce and manufactured articles, and providing new markets, work and employment.⁴

The Khalsa National party was not in favour of dividing rural and urban interests. In services, it stood for safeguarding the interests of the Sikhs by securing a fixed proportion in recruitment based on an All-India settlement.⁵

In a subsequent interview with "The Tribune", Sir Jogindra Singh said that the Khalsa National Party, unlike other parties, was not merely concerned with elections. It had a higher ambition to organise the Sikh community, to work steadfastly in every village and town and unite the community to work out a constructive policy. Its objective was to effect an inner change to prepare the ground for communal concord, realisation of nationality and its fruit - self-government. The party was also pledged to abolition of the Communal Award, not by edict but by agreed settlement.⁶

A meeting of the Shiromani Akali Dal and the Khalsa Durbar was held in Amritsar in June 1936 under the presidentship of Mangal Singh, M.L.A. About 100 prominent leaders attended.⁷ There was prolonged discussion to set up a joint election board on behalf of all Sikh parties. But it was not favoured by the majority, and

4. The Tribune, 13-8-1936 ³

5. The Tribune, 13-8-1936 ⁴

6. The Tribune, 20-8-1936, Khalsa National Party -- what it stands for -- Sir Jogindra Singh's written statement.

7. The Tribune, 16-6-1936 ⁵

eventually it was decided to set up a joint parliamentary board of the two main parties only, namely, the Shiromani Akali Dal and the Khalsa Durbar. The decision of the board was to be final in the choice of candidates. A 20-point election manifesto was drawn up.⁸ The manifesto inter alia said that the party "will fight for complete independence and co-operate with those politically advanced parties whose programmes and ideals approximate those of its own; will offer strong opposition to the Communal Award; will oppose the formation of a Ministry by those parties which do not agree to amend the Communal Award and replace it by a joint and national solution; and will work for abrogation of the constitution embodied in the Government of India Act, 1935, and for its replacement by a new constitution acceptable to the people of India."⁹ The Akali Dal and the Khalsa Durbar conveyed their unwillingness to co-operate with the Chief Khalsa Diwan.

Congress-Akali Concord

In the initial stages of the election campaign the Akalis were against joining hands with the Congress. Master Tara Singh, President of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee was opposed to any Sikh candidate standing on the Congress ticket. He regarded religion as supreme, the service of the country being only a part of religion. He felt that the Congress could not be trusted if it hesitated in upholding Sikh rights in a matter like the Shahid Ganj dispute. It was his fear that the Congress would keep aloof even if the Muslims

8. The Tribune, 16-6-1936 6.

9. See Appendix II 7.

attacked the Golden Temple and would not condemn the murder of Sikhs by Muslims.¹⁰ He asserted: "I am a traitor to such a Congress which is under the influence of the Muslims. I shall continue to be such so long as it does not turn to the right path of true service to the country by avoiding the Muslim influence." However, he promised to be in the front-line if the Congress engaged itself in a struggle against the Government. He was denounced as "our Aurangzeb" by Hira Singh Dard, a staunch nationalist.¹¹

The opposition to the Congress by the Shiromani Akali Dal now became open. Master Tara Singh did not like the Sikhs to contest the elections on the Congress ticket as they would, then, have to remain neutral under Congress whip on important matters like jhatka, and Shahid Ganj and this would amount to treachery to the Panth.

The Sikh candidates, contesting on the Shiromani Akali Dal and Khalsa Durbar ticket, signed a pledge to work in the legislature under the instructions of the Joint Selection Board and not to co-operate with the Unionist Party under any circumstances.¹²

The uncompromising attitude of some of the Akali leaders towards the Congress caused a rift in Akali ranks. Mangal Singh, President of the Khalsa Durbar, resigned from the Board as he felt that the

10. The Tribune, 5-7-1936

11. The Tribune, 5-7-1936

11a.^b The Unionist Party (1923) was a party of landlords. Though predominantly a Muslim organisation, it included among its members Hindus and Sikhs landholders and agriculturists as well. The landowners feared extinction in competition with the commercial class. So they had united to form a party to defend their privileges.

^a The Tribune, 7-1936. Pledge of Sikh candidates.

Board should not oppose Congress candidates, particularly prominent partymen, ^{since} ~~when~~ the Sikh Congress Party had declared openly that it would oppose the Communal Award and protect the legitimate interests of the Sikhs. He also felt that the Board should not set up candidates whose political antecedents were unsatisfactory from the nationalist point of view.¹³ Harcharan Singh Bajwa, General Secretary, Central Khalsa Youth League, resigned from the Board on similar grounds.¹⁴

In October 1936 Congressite Sikhs met and after a long and heated discussion resolved to form a compromise board with a view to conferring with other progressive parties of Sikhs and making adjustments on Sikh seats.¹⁵

However, before long efforts at conciliation between the Congress and the Akalis were made. Dr. Gopi Chand Bhargava, Punjab Congress chief, announced that the Akali Party had decided to join hands with the Congress and to wholeheartedly co-operate with the Congress Parliamentary Board in combating "reactionary forces in this official-ridden province." Thereafter, an agreed list of candidates for the Sikh constituencies was drawn up. The Akalis were to contest 14 of the 24 seats, 10 being left to Congressite Sikhs. The Akali list included names of Baldev Singh, Swaran Singh,

13. (v) The Tribune, 27-10-1936; also Mangal Singh's letter to the present author dated 31-3-1966

14. The Tribune, 28-10-1936

15. The Tribune, 4-10-1936, Punjab Congress Sikh Party formed.

Pratap Singh Kairon, Giani Kartar Singh, Narotam Singh and Kapur Singh.¹⁶ It was also agreed that the Akali Party candidates returned to the legislature would form part of the Congress Legislature Party and would be amenable to its discipline.¹⁷

In April 1937, probably the most important meeting of Akali workers during the past 15 years was held behind closed doors. Only the invitees were admitted. Due care was taken to scrutinise identity cards. The meeting passed a resolution expressing its full confidence in Master Tara Singh. To enable Akali workers to devote themselves wholeheartedly to the work of mass contact, it was decided that no member of the working committee should remain on the executive committee of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee or any other gurdwara committee. It was also decided to help the Congress in striving for freedom of the country.¹⁸

Some important Congress-minded Akalis were, however, not satisfied with the way the Shiromani Akali Dal was working. They convened a separate meeting. The prime initiators of the move were Giani Kartar Singh, Pratap Singh Kairon, Guramukh Singh Musafir and Ishar Singh Majhail. The meeting decided to form a Congress Akali Party to work among the Sikhs.¹⁹ Giani Kartar Singh was elected president; Balwant Singh Sukhia, who was general secretary of the Shiromani Akali

16. || The Tribune, 18-11-1936, Gopi Chand Bhargava's statement
Also The Tribune, 20-11-1936, Gopi Chand Bhargava's arbitration
in Sikh elections.

17. The Tribune, 20-11-1936

18. Akali Patrika, 7-4-1937 Akali Party to help Congress
Also The Tribune, 7-4-1937

✓ 19. Akali Patrika, 18-5-1937, Congress Akali Party formed.

Dal, was elected vice-president and Pratap Singh, general secretary. However, the new party was short-lived as the general body of the Akali Dal in June asked the Sikhs to join the Congress.²⁰

The 1937 elections to the Punjab Legislative Assembly resulted in a clear-cut majority for the Unionist Party.²¹ But despite the absolute majority, Sir Sikander Hyat Khan, now the leader of the Unionist Party, decided to seek co-operation of other parties like the National Progressive Party, including members elected on the Hindu Election Board ticket, some Hindu Independents, and the Khalsa National Party. In his coalition cabinet, Sir Sikander included Sir Manohar Lal of the National Progressive Party and Sir Sunder Singh Majithia of the Khalsa National Party. Both these parties stood for working the Constitution for what it was worth.

Explaining why he had accepted office, Sir Sunder Singh Majithia said that "the policy of his party was not "destructive." On the contrary it was prepared to co-operate with any party in the future government of the province provided it could do so on "an honourable understanding." That understanding had been reached with the Unionist

20. ¹³ Akali Patrika, 15-6-1937.
Also The Tribune, 15-6-1937

21. After the death of Mian Fazl-i-Mussain in 1936, Sir Chottu Ram should have succeeded him as the leader but to appease the Muslim rank and file of the Unionist Party, Sir Sikander was persuaded to give up the job of Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of India and come to Punjab to assume the party leadership. To the critics of the Unionist Party, this move provided a lever to prove the communal character of the party.

Party and the manner in which the new constitution was worked would show how the understanding was honoured by the Premier and the Cabinet. According to Sunder Singh, the Khalsa National Party was out to do solid constructive work and was opposed to self-advertisement and false propaganda. The destructive policy carried on by other groups (the reference was to the Akali party) during the past decade had caused disruption and chaos in the community, he insinuated.²²

Sikander-Jinnah Pact

Within one year of their coming in power, the Unionists came into the lap of the Muslim League. Since Jinnah was anxious to secure the support of a Muslim majority province he invited Sir Sikander Hyat Khan, the Punjab Premier, to the Lucknow session of the All-India Muslim League there. On October 15, 1937 Sir Sikander Hyat Khan held consultations with Jinnah. At the meeting a pact, known as the Sikander-Jinnah agreement, was reached.²³ The pact was

22. The Tribune, 11-3-1937, Khalsa National Party statement on why Sir Sunder Singh Majithia accepted Ministership

23. ¹⁴ Khosla, G.D., Starn Backoning, Bhawnani & Sons, Delhi (1949), Pp. 312-313.

The Sikander-Jinnah pact was drawn up at Lucknow on October 15, 1937. Its terms were:

(i) That on his return to the Punjab Sir Sikander Hyat will convene a special meeting of his party and advise all Muslim members of his party who are not members of the Muslim League already to sign its creed and join it. As such they will be subject to the rules and regulations of the Central and Provincial Boards of the All-India Muslim League. This will not affect the continuation of the present coalition and of the Unionist Party;

(ii) That in future elections and by-elections to the legislature the groups comprising the present Unionist Party will jointly support the candidates put up by the respective groups;

(iii) That the Muslim members of the legislatures who are elected on or accept the League ticket will constitute the Muslim League

announced to the Council of the All-India Muslim League and references were made to it repeatedly in responsible League quarters later without any repudiation by Jinnah or the League itself.²⁴ The immediate effect of the agreement was to convert the Unionist Muslims into Muslim Leaguers and the Punjab Government a coalition of the Muslim League, Hindu agriculturists, Sikhs, depressed classes, Indian Christians and Europeans.²⁵

The Shiromani Akali Dal reacted sharply to the new development. A meeting of its executive and Akali M.L.A.s resolved that Akali members of the Legislative Assembly should join the Congress party in the Assembly to strengthen the forces of nationalism. They considered the Sikandar-Jinnah Pact as a "definite move of the reactionaries to keep the waning power and influence of British imperialism, and to check the growth of nationalism in India."²⁶ The Dal also decided to boycott the unity conference convened by the Unionist Party for communal concord and peace "in view of the repressive policy of the Unionist Government and its recent exposure through the Sikander-

Party within the legislature. It shall be open to the Muslim League Party so formed to maintain or enter into coalition or alliance with any other party consistently with the fundamental principles, policy and programme of the League. Such alliances may be evolved upon after the elections. The existing combination shall maintain its present name "The Unionist Party."

24. Ram Gopal, Indian Muslims, p. 285; also Shastri, Raghuvir Singh, Sir Chhottu Ram, Chhottu Ram Trust, Rohtak (1966), p. 317.

25. Ibid

26. Akali Patrika, 29-8-1937, Text of the Resolution passed by the Shiromani Akali Dal on October 28, 1937 at Amritsar. Also The Tribune, 29-8-1937

Jinnah Pact, coupled with the resolutions passed at the Lucknow session of the Muslim League in October 1937. According to the Dal, these developments were "a negation of nationalism and calculated to thwart communal harmony, concord and amity."²⁷ The meeting to leave the coalition government and join the nationalist ranks in view of the increasing communal tendency of the Unionists.²⁸

In November 1938 the Akalis held an all-India Akali conference at Rawalpindi under the presidency of Baldev Singh.²⁹ Akali and Congress flags were flown side by side. The conference expressed no-confidence in the Unionist Government because of its repressive measures and exhorted the Sikhs to join the Congress, the only representative political organisation in the country. By another resolution, it characterised the various agrarian measures passed by the Unionist Ministry as measures to contravene the rule of equality, and opposed

27. ¹⁶ Akali Patrika, 29-8-1937, Text of the Resolution passed by the Shiromani Akali Dal on October 28, 1937 at Amritsar. Also The Tribune, 29-8-1937

28. Akali Patrika, 29-8-1937, Text of the Resolution passed by the Shiromani Akali Dal on October 28, 1937 at Amritsar. Also The Tribune, 29-8-1937

29. Baldev Singh (1902-1961), a jat of Chokar sub-caste of village Dumana (district Ambala), was the son of a wealthy steel magnate. He made his debut in Sikh politics in 1937, when he was elected to the Punjab Assembly. He financed many ventures of the Akali party, including the Sikh National College at Lahore. In June 1942 he entered with an agreement known as the "Sikander-Baldev Pact" with the Unionists, whereby the Akalis called off their agitation against Sikander-Hyat government. One of the terms of the agreement providing his replacing Dasaunda Singh in the Punjab Cabinet. Baldev Singh was the Sikh representative in the negotiations for the transfer of power and became the first Defence Minister of Nehru's government. He remained at the helm of Sikh affairs till 1957, when he was replaced by Swaran Singh.

them on grounds of being quite expropriatory in character and "designed to strengthen the domination of the Unionists."³⁰

In his presidential address Baldev Singh said: "Next to my duty towards God and my great Gurus, I sincerely believe that it is my duty to obey the mandate of the Congress and I hold that the Congress mandate is binding upon me. This I do, not because of my personal considerations, but as I consider the Congress to be the trustee of our national honour and national self-respect and the only national organisation that has done more for the liberation of our mother country and the emancipation of the poor masses than any other organisation."³¹

Henceforth the party aligned itself more closely with the Congress party in the Assembly. It further asked its members to join the Congress with the result that many of its functionaries came to occupy high positions in the Congress organisation. Some critics however, said that the Akali Party had joined the Congress for its own purposes. Be that as it may, the Akali Party's policy first of co-operation and then of collaboration with the Congress continued till the Second World War broke out.³²

30. Akali Patrika, 28-11-1938, Proceeding of the All-India Akali Conference, Rawalpindi. The Resolution was moved by Harnam Singh and seconded by Giani Kartar Singh.
Also The Tribune, 28-11-1938

31. The Tribune, 29-11-1938, Baldev Singh's Presidential address.
Also Akali Patrika, 29-11-1938

32. Nayar, Baldev Raj, Minority Politics in the Punjab, Princeton University Press, Princeton (1966), p. 79

CHAPTER V
SECOND WORLD WAR
AND
AKALIS' CO-OPERATION WITH THE GOVERNMENT

While the Indian political parties were deeply engrossed in fighting tenaciously the constitutional battle, a world-shaking calamity happened. German Fuhrer Hitler (1889-1945) declared war on Poland on the morning^{of} September 1, 1939. Following the broadcasts of Neville Chamberlain and His Majesty, the King Emperor on September 3, Crown-representative Lord Linlithgow declared in India that war had broken out between Great Britain and Germany and pleaded *for* whole-hearted sympathy and support of all the parties in the country.

At the time of the Munich crisis in 1938, the Punjab Premier, Sir Sikander Hyat Khan, ^{had} made a statement in the Punjab Assembly pledging the Punjab's unconditional support to Britain in the event of war. "When we offered our hand in the last war," he said, "we were still in our political apprenticeship. It is offered again by the Punjab, which has attained political maturity."¹ In May 1939 a resolution to the same effect was carried unanimously in the Punjab Assembly.² On August 25, Sir Sikander repeated his assurance when

1. Coupland, R. Indian Politics 1936-1942, Oxford University Press, Bombay (1944), p. 43

2. Ibid

he said that "the manpower and resources of the Punjab will be unhesitatingly and ungrudgingly placed at the disposal of Great Britain and her allies in the service of our Motherland and for the sacred cause of justice, righteousness and freedom."³

In November the same year, he moved a resolution in the Punjab Assembly declaring the people's determination to resist aggression and protect the security and honour of the Punjab and India, but at the same time asking for an assurance that the constitutional position would be reconsidered after the war for giving India Dominion status with effective protection for minorities. The resolution was carried by 104 votes to 39.⁴

Though there was some evidence of defeatism in some Congress quarters as a result of this, Punjabis as a whole, including Akalis, remained true to their martial tradition and provided a steady flow of recruits to the armed forces and backed without demur the Government's "unswerving war policy."⁵

The working Committee of the Indian National Congress deeply sympathised with the fate of Poland and appreciated the motive of England and France in going to war against the fascist Powers for the protection of democracy.⁶ The Akalis felt the same way. About

3. Ibid

4. Ibid

5. Ibid

6. Pattabhi, Sitaramayya, The History of the Indian National Congress, Vol. II, Padma Publishers (1946), Bombay, Pp. 129-130

500 leading Sikhs assembled at Amritsar under the presidency of Master Tara Singh and offered to co-operate with the government in its effective prosecution of war provided justice and fair play were guaranteed to the Sikhs.⁷

A deputation of leading Sikhs loyal to the British Government led by Lt. Raghbir Singh of Rajasahansi and including Joginder Singh Mann, M.L.A., S.B. Ranjit Singh of New Delhi, Bishan Singh, ex-M.L.C. and Mrs. and Master Sujjan Singh of the Sikh Missionary College, Amritsar, met the Maharaja of Patiala and appealed to him to lead the Panth at the critical hour and to impress upon the Sikh masses the desirability of joining the army in increasingly large numbers. While agreeing with the views of the deputationists, the Maharaja offered his moral and material support to such sections of the Sikh community as sought to defeat the dictatorship of the totalitarian States.⁸

Thereupon the Sikh leaders established the Khalsa Defence League, convened an all-parties Sikh conference at Lahore on January 20, 1941, which called upon the Sikhs to join the Army in large numbers. As a result the Sikhs gave their whole-hearted co-operation to the successful prosecution of the war.⁹

Following the example of Sikhs, non-Congress Hindu leaders like Raja Narendra Nath, Bhai Parasa Nand and Sir Gokal Chand Narang,

7. The Statesman, Delhi, 2-10-1939

8. The Tribune, 18-1-1940, 21-1-1940, 27-2-1940 and 2-4-1940

9. The Statesman, 21-1-1941

also appealed to their community to stand by the Empire in its hour of trial against Nazism and enslavement of small nations that it implied.¹⁰

On the all-India level, the Congress, the Muslim League and the Communist Party too offered to support the British.¹¹

However, there occurred an unfortunate and disquieting incident among the armed forces. In April 1940 a Sikh squadron of Central India Horse refused to embark at Bombay for the Middle East.¹² This caused a flutter in Army Headquarters. There was some talk of disbanding all Sikh units; more seriously, a proposal was put forward to stop all further recruitment of Sikhs.¹³ The Punjab Government opposed any such drastic step and decided to try to restore unity by conciliation.¹⁴ At the suggestion of Major Billy Short, a British army officer who was a great admirer of the Sikhs, he and a number of specially selected officers were deputed to probe and report on Sikh unrest in certain Army units and in principal Sikh districts. Major Short was posted at Lahore as a liaison officer. A few other like-minded officers were posted in the main areas of Sikh recruitment "to stimulate efforts by the civil and military authorities to allay Sikh disquiet and induce among the Sikhs a healthier attitude towards the war and recruitment."¹⁵

10. This War, why should the Punjab take a hand in it? Civil and Military Gazette, Lahore, p. 28

11. Ibid, pp. 25-26

12. Moon, Penderel, Divide and Quit, Chatto & Windus, London (1962), p. 32.

13, 14

& 15. Ibid, Also Moon's letter to the present author dated 15-4-1964

On the other hand, some of the Sikh politicians were equally perturbed. The Sikhs occupied a favoured position in the Army. In terms of economics, it meant something in the shape of pay and pension in a land of chronic under-employment. It was very much in their interest to retain the position. But if owing to misconduct of some Sikh troops or disaffection of the Sikh population, the recruitment of Sikhs was stopped or reduced, that favoured position would be lost forever. This was a danger which no Sikh could overlook or ignore and its meaning was not lost upon the Akalis.¹⁶ Hitherto the attitude of the Akalis had generally been anti-British and they had constituted, along with the Congress, an opposition to Sir Sikander's Unionist Government. Most of their leaders had spent their lives in anti-government agitations and even been to jail. It was largely Akali influence that had shaken the loyalty of the Sikh soldier. It was not easy, therefore, for the Akalis to perform a complete volte face and openly advocate full and unqualified collaboration with the Unionist Government and the British in the prosecution of the war.¹⁷

Sikander-Baldev Singh Pact

But to safeguard the position of Sikhs in the Army, some of the Akalis felt inclined to modify their attitude towards the British. The danger of being isolated, unbefriended by either the Congress, the Muslim League or the British, began to dawn on them. In the jockeying

16. Ibid

17. Ibid, Pp. 32-33

for position in anticipation of the end of British Raj, who, except the British, would support a minority community like the Sikhs?¹⁸ Circumstances were, therefore, not unfavourable for revival of Anglo-Sikh amity and for facilitating a rapprochement.¹⁹ Major Short, as hinted earlier, threw himself into the work of reconciliation with enthusiasm and was soon accepted by leading Sikhs. He became an intimate friend of Sir Sikander and other influential Punjabi Muslims and even won the confidence of the Governor, Sir Henry Craik. Major Short conceived his immediate and pressing task to be to rally maximum Sikh support for Britain's war effort by restoring Anglo-Sikh amity and by inducing the largest possible measure of Sikh-Muslim amity in the Punjab.²⁰ But he also viewed current Punjab affairs in the wider context of India's future. "Settle the Sikh," he would say, "and you settle India." There was an element of truth in this, for, the Muslim-Sikh problem in Punjab was a reproduction in microcosm of the general Hindu-Muslim problem in India. A political settlement in the Punjab, acceptable to the Sikh minority, therefore, besides serving the immediate purpose of war, would contribute to the larger end of an all-India Hindu-Muslim settlement. With true but ill-fated prescience Major Short worked for Sikh-Muslim accord, which meant an alliance

18. Ibid

19. Ibid

20. Ibid, Pp. 33-34

between the Unionists and Akalis.²¹ His first efforts were repulsed. This was not surprising, for though Akalis were in the process of becoming rather less hostile to the British and so indirectly less hostile to Sir Sikander's pro-British Unionist Government, there was still much suspicion on both sides. To the Akalis, Sir Sikander's ostensible support of the demand for Pakistan seemed hard to reconcile with any genuine goodwill for the Sikhs.²² The crisis of leadership in the Khalsa Nationalist Party caused by the death in 1940 of Sir Sunder Singh Majithia, a Minister in the Punjab Cabinet, forced the Akalis to see, however reluctantly, which side the Sikh bread was buttered. With his death the political importance and influence of the Khalsa National Party and the Chief Khalsa Diwan almost came to an end. An attempt was made to find a new leader in the person of his son, Kirpal Singh, a business magnate of the United Provinces. His political career, however was nipped in the bud as he was defeated by the Akalis in the by-election caused by his father's death.²³ Dasaundha Singh, a man of no political standing and of average ability, was elected successor to Sir Sunder Singh Majithia in the Cabinet in preference to Ujjal Singh, the most active assistant of Sir Sunder Singh and by far the most able Sikh parliamentarian, because he was

21. Ibid

22. Ibid

23. Khushwant Singh, The Sikhs, p. 138

not a Jat by descent.²⁴

Seizing the opportunity by the forelock, Baldev Singh initially a Congress-Akali backbencher and later leader of the Akali Party in the Assembly, formed a new Sikh party in the legislature in March 1942. Some members of the Khalsa National Party, some independent Sikhs and the Akalis joined the new party.²⁵ He held talks with Sir Sikander and "discovered in him readiness to meet all legitimate Sikh demands."

During these days the main wish of the Akalis was that Pakistan should not materialise. In the then prevailing mood of Punjabi Muslims the Akalis thought that an alliance with the Unionists would reduce the demand for Pakistan to only an aspiration; for, without the support of Punjabi Muslims Pakistan could not materialise.²⁶ Even if the latter were compelled to translate into reality their nominal adherence to the idea of Pakistan, a Unionist-Akali alliance was likely to prevent division of the province between two sovereign States. Their alliance might, it was sanguinely held, lead to an offer to Sikhs of special rights and privileges which would make them feel that their community had a more glorious future as a part of Pakistan, supported by the combined might of Muslims and Sikhs than as an insignificant fragment of Hindu India.²⁷

24. Ibid, Pp. 142-143

25. Akali Patrika, 22-3-1942
Also The Tribune, 22-3-1942

26. Moon's letter to the present author dated 15-4-1964

27. Moon, Penderell, Divide and Quit, Pp. 33-36

The prospect then of disruption of Punjab, which the demand for Pakistan seemed to portend, made natural and possible the coming together of the Unionists and the Akalis. To the well-wishers of the province an understanding between them certainly seemed desirable. Major Short persevered, and with good reasons, for in face of the demand for Pakistan, some kind of understanding between the Akalis and the Punjabi Muslims was indispensable if dissipation of Punjab's war effort was to be avoided. Both sides knew that division was contrary to the interests of Punjabis, whether Muslim, Sikh or Hindu. Every one dreaded it.²⁸

On June 15, 1942, Baldev Singh entered into an agreement with Sir Sikander, and joined his cabinet on 26-6-1942 as a Minister for Development. The agreement is known as the Sikander-Baldev Singh Pact. Its terms, which were embodied in a letter addressed by Sir Sikander to Baldev Singh, related to jhatka meat; teaching of Gurmukhi; legislation regarding religious matters; Sikh recruitment to Government service, and Sikh representation at the Centre. The terms were so framed as to apply equally to all communities in the Punjab.²⁹

In his letter, Sir Sikander wrote that the policy of the Government in regard to religious and quasi-religious matters was

28. Ibid

29. Akali Patrika, 16-6-1942; also The Tribune, 16-6-1942; Gurcharan Singh, Ankhi Surma, p. 130; Mohinder Singh, Sardar-e-Azam, Pp. 103-104

that in the absence of agreement between the parties the status quo should be adhered to.³⁰ As for legislation relating to religious matters, Sir Sikander agreed to set up a convention that in religious matters the community concerned alone should have the right to decide whether the matter, when it came before the House, should be proceeded with or not.³¹ It should be left to the members of that community to take a decision at all stages of such legislation.

Regarding the question of jhatka meat, Sir Sikander agreed "to issue instructions that in Government institutions where separate kitchens exist or can be provided for Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs and where facilities exist for obtaining meat, every community should be free to cook and use meat slaughtered according to its own rites, subject only to such restrictions as may be necessary to avoid injury to the feelings of the other communities."³²

Baldev Singh had asked for introducing Gurmukhi as the second language in schools where adequate number of students asked for facilities for its teaching.³³ The Premier admitted that he was aware that there was a feeling among the Sikhs that facilities should be provided for teaching Gurmukhi to children as it was their cultural language and that there was a feeling among all communities that provision should be made for teaching children the language in which their respective scriptures were written. The Government could not meet that demand owing to its financial implications and the dearth of teachers conversant with all the languages since most of

30, 31, Akali Patrika, 16-6-1942, correspondence released to the Press
32 & (Akali-Unionist negotiations). Also The Tribune, 16-6-1942

the primary and middle schools were single-teacher schools.³⁴

As regards recruitment to the services, Sir Sikander reminded Baldev Singh of the officially fixed proportions for various communities including the Sikhs, who had been allotted a 20 per cent share. "To ensure that each community gets its share and priority in the matter of opportunities a block system has been introduced under which each community is allotted posts in a carefully considered sequence; it is the duty of every Minister to see that no departure from this formula is countenanced."³⁵ Regarding Sikh representation at the Centre, the Premier assured Baldev Singh that if and when an expansion or change in the existing Executive Council was contemplated, the Sikh claim would, as hitherto, have his full sympathy and support. He would also be glad to support the Sikh claim for due share in the Central Services.³⁶

While the Sikander-Baldev Singh pact brought the Sikhs and the Unionists together, Punjab Congress circles felt uneasy. Diwan Chaman Lal, Congress M.L.A., characterised the pact as an attempt to strengthen a weakened Ministry. He claimed that 20 Unionists had agreed to the formation of a coalition ^{ministry} to be backed by the Congress party without accepting office. Negotiations to this effect had been going on and it had been decided to demand a division on a suitable

34, 35. Akali Patrika, 16-6-1942, correspondence released to the Press & (Akali-Unionist negotiations). Also The Tribune, 16-6-1942
36.

budgetary demand. The government had forestalled such a move and, without assigning reasons, intervened to put a sudden end to the budget session.³⁷

Rebutting Diwan Chaman Lal, Master Tara Singh said that it was a pact between Sir Sikander and Baldev Singh and the Akalis were no party to it. The pact was purely communal. The Akalis would continue to fight as before against the Unionists or any other party on political issues like complete Independence for India and Pakistan.³⁸ The Communists regarded this pact as an agreement between landlords and capitalists to have no more controversial legislation and to tax the poor.³⁹

Commenting on the pact, Penderel Moon, the then Deputy Commissioner, Amritsar, says, "Its significance is that a predominantly Muslim Government should have been able to come to terms, even temporarily, with a party of extreme Sikh nationalists. This is something to the good, and if the truce holds good for a few years it may develop into a real understanding between the Unionist Government and the Akalis and bear fruit in the form of a far-reaching Sikh-Muslim compromise regarding sharing of power in Punjab. If such a compromise were effected, it would facilitate and perhaps give a clue to similar solution of the all-India problem."⁴⁰

37. The Tribune, 14-6-1942, Attempt to strengthen a weak Ministry -- Diwan Chaman Lal's statement on the Akali-Unionist Pact.

38. Kharak Singh and Master Tara Singh on Sikander-Baldev Singh pact. Master Tara Singh's reply to Kharak Singh, as appeared in The Tribune on 25-6-1942.

39. The Tribune, 1-7-1942

40. Moon, Penderel, Divide and Quit, p. 37

An immediate outcome of this pact was the change in the Akalis' attitude to Gandhi's "Quit India" movement, launched in August 1942. Only a handful of Akalis took part in it.⁴¹ The Sikhs soon reaped the first harvest of the pact. The Viceroy expanded his Executive Council and among the eleven Indian members he included a Sikh, Sir Jogindra Singh, as Member of Education, Health and Land. As a result, the Punjab Government recovered most of its strength and it looked as if it would outlast the war but on December 26, 1942, Sir Sikander died suddenly of a heart attack.⁴² In March 1943, the remaining 11 members of the Khalsa National Party joined Baldev Singh's party. Thus the Akalis were left without a rival Sikh group in the legislature. This cleared the way for them at the coming elections in 1945-46. As stated earlier the Central Akali Dal had already become a paper organisation.⁴³

41. Moon's letter to the present author dated 15-4-1964

42. Coupland, R., Indian Politics 1936-1942, Pp. 43-44
When the Viceroy had enlarged his Executive Council earlier in July 1941, the fact that none of its eight Indian members was a Sikh was taken as a slight by the Sikh community, and though the Punjab Premier was not in any way responsible he was blamed for it. A stormy Sikh conference was held at Amritsar in 1941. It passed a resolution threatening direct action.

43. The Tribune, 17-3-1943

CHAPTER VI

MOVE FOR PAKISTAN

AND

AKALIS' COUNTER-DEMAND FOR KHALISTAN

Muslim League Demand for Pakistan

The Second World War, which involved the British in a grim struggle for survival, gave the Indian Muslims a golden opportunity to manoeuvre for political advantage. In March 1940, at the annual conference of the Muslim League at Lahore, they declared themselves a separate nation and demanded that portions of India where they were numerically in a majority be sliced off and constituted into a sovereign Muslim State.¹ With the Muslim League demand for Pakistan

1. The idea of Pakistan was first propounded by the philosopher-poet Islam, Allama Mohammad Iqbal, in his presidential address at the annual session of the Muslim League at Allahabad in 1930. The religious dream of the poet was given the shape of concrete political formula.

In a pamphlet entitled "Now or Never", published in 1933, he advocated division of India into two spheres: Muslim and Hindu. He wrote: "We don't inter-dine, we don't inter-marry. Our national customs and calendars, even our diet and dress, are different. Hence the Muslim demand a separate national status."

In the hands of a politician of Mr. Mohammad Ali Jinnah's cold, unyielding logic, will and subtlety, this doctrine of separation was charged with an ominously practical meaning. Pakistan became the accepted creed of the Muslims of India. Mr. Jinnah once said: "Let the British, before they quit, make an award giving the Muslims their bit of the country, however small it might be, and they would live there, if necessary on one meal a day."

the whole outlook of political parties in Punjab underwent a sea of change. Little attention was henceforth devoted to constitutional problems, while more and more time began to be given to evaluation and criticism of this new factor in politics. Punjab politics now entered a new era.

Sikhs' Reaction -- Demand for Khalistan

Sikh opposition to the Pakistan scheme was more bitter since an overwhelming majority of the Sikh population was settled in the Punjab. In other provinces, the Sikhs were an insignificant part of the population. Pakistan would mean Muslim Raj to them and it was all the more painful particularly when they remembered that they had ruled over the Punjab hardly a hundred years ago. The All-India Akali Conference held in 1940 at Attari, a village between

These words truly reflected the temper of Muslim India. The Muslim League achieved its goal in August 1947 when India was divided into two parts -- India and Pakistan, the later became a sovereign Muslim State.

Mehta, Asoka, Patwardhan, Achyut, Communal Triangle, Kitabistan, Allahabad (1942), Pp. Appendix III.

Also Coupland, R., Indian Politics (1936-1942), Pp. 198-207.

The credit for coining the word Pakistan goes to Chaudhari Rahmat Ali. He coined the word thus: 'P' for Punjab, 'A' for Afghanistan (Part of North-West Frontier Province), 'K' for Kashmir, 'S' for Sind and 'Tan' for Baluchistan. It must be noted that unfortunately the eastern part, namely Bengal, was left out in such a name formation though, in actuality, it is a part of Pakistan.

Lahore, and Amritsar, viewed with deep concern the growing endeavour of certain Muslims to convert the Punjab into a part of Pakistan, and decided to resist such a demand by all possible means.² The Khalsa National Party, too, passed a resolution at its meeting in Lahore on March 29, 1940, condemning the demand for Pakistan.³

Two more Sikh conferences were held at Lahore in June under the presidency of Baba Kharak Singh of the Central Akali Dal group and Sant Singh of the Shiromani Akali Dal group, respectively, to condemn the League demand for Pakistan.⁴

Not to speak of Hindus of western Punjab, even eastern Punjab's Hindu Jats like Sir Chhoté Ram opposed the idea of Pakistan. While addressing a Jat conference at Sonapat, he said that he would resist

2. \ Mitra's Register (1940), Vol. I, p. 357.

3. \ Mitra's Register (1940), Vol. I, p. 357; The Tribune, 2-4-1940

The resolution said: "That the division of India into Hindu and Muslim independent States, as envisaged by the recent resolution of the Muslim League, was fraught with the most dangerous consequences, detrimental alike to the best interests of the various communities in general and the country as a whole; that the resolution (demanding division) had created a situation which might mean parting of the ways for the Sikhs and the Muslims with whom the Khalsa National Party had been co-operating in the best interests of the province and the Sikhs; that the party hoped that saner counsel would prevail and a catastrophe that was staring the country in the face would be averted; that it would be the height of audacity for anyone to imagine that the Sikhs could tolerate for a single day the undiluted communal rule of any community in the Punjab which was not only their homeland but also their holy land; that as a logical consequence of the League resolution the Sikhs would be fully entitled to claim back the sovereignty of the Punjab which was only held as trust by the British during the minority regime of Maharaj Dalip Singh."

4. 3 The Tribune, 10-6-1940

with force any attempt to create an Islamic State.⁵

On December 1, 1940, an anti-Pakistan conference was convened at Lahore and addressed by Dr. M.S. Aney, (later Governor of Orissa), Mahashe Krishan, Krishan Gopal Dutt (later Finance Minister, East Punjab), Jalal-ud-Din Amber M.L.A. (a Christian leader), Prof. Abdul Majid Khan, nationalist Muslim, Raja Harinder Nath, Hindu leader, Giani Kartar Singh and Master Tara Singh. It passed a resolution against the proposed formation of Pakistan.⁶

In the beginning, the official Congress attitude was somewhat indifferent. At its Ramgarh Congress in 1940 it did not take any notice of the League resolution. Congressmen were busy at the time with individual satyagraha launched by Mahatma Gandhi.⁷

Dr. V.S. Bhatti of Ludhiana published a pamphlet demanding establishment of a buffer State between India and Pakistan to maintain peace. He named this buffer state Khalistan. The Khalistan of his conception included some of the predominantly Sikh districts of Punjab, the Sikh States of Patiala, Nabha, Jind, Faridkot and Kalsia, and non-Sikh states such as Malerkotla and Siala Hill States. The Punjab districts included in "Khalistan" were Ludhiana, Jullundur, Ambala, Ferozepore, Lahore, Amritsar, Lyallpur, Gujranwala, Sheikhpura, Montgomery, Hissar, Rohtak, Karnal and Multan. Besides these, Delhi, a portion of Sind, Bahawalpur and Rajputana were also included

5. The Tribune, 2-4-1940; Shastri, Raghuvir Singh, Sir Chhotu Ram, Pp. 336-342

6. The Tribune, 2-12-1940

7. Patabhi, Sitaramayya, The History of the Congress, Vol. II, Pp.

to permit a passage to the sea. He wanted the Maharaja of Patiala to head that State and to have a cabinet of representatives of federating States.⁸

In response to an invitation by Sikh leaders like Baba Gurdit Singh, Nanjodh Singh Tarsikha, Jagjit Singh, editor of Khalsa Sewak, and several others, about 120 representatives of various Sikh organisations of Amritsar district assembled at Amritsar on May 19, 1940, to discuss the Khalistan scheme. The conference evolved the concept of Khalistan to include territory from Jammu to Jammu which the late Maharaja Dalip Singh had given as "amanat" (trust) to the British. A demand was also made for establishing two more Sikh States, one at Hazoor Sahib in Hyderabad Deccan, and the other at Patna in Bihar. A sub-committee of 21, with power to co-opt 10 more, was formed to do propaganda for Guru Khalsa Raj.⁹ Another conference was called on May 24 at Jagraon where the Sikhs of the Malwa region reiterated the demand for Khalistan in case the Pakistan scheme of the Muslim League was accepted by the British Government.¹⁰ To avoid any future constitutional disaster in the country, C. Rajagopalachari, veteran Congress leader, came out with a "sporting offer" on August 23, 1940, to persuade his colleagues in the Congress Party to accept a nominee of the Muslim League as Premier of India with a right to nominate persons of his own choice in a national government. His purpose was to promote an agreement with the Muslim League with a view to attaining independence for the country.¹¹

8. The Tribune, 14-4-1940, Dr. V.S. Bhatti, Khalistan Scheme; Also Rajendra Prasad, India Divided, p. 254

The working committee of the Shiromani Akali Dal considered the offer unjust, undemocratic, anti-national and detrimental to the rights of non-Muslim communities. The offer, in its opinion, violated the pledges given by the Congress to the Sikhs and other minorities in 1929 at the Lahore Congress. It demanded from the Congress High Command immediate repudiation of the offer. It also viewed "with grave suspicion the utterances of C. Rajagopalachari expressing readiness to accept the Pakistan scheme under certain circumstances and requested the Congress to immediately clarify its position with regard to the scheme in clear and unequivocal terms, assuring the Sikhs and other non-Muslims that the Congress would oppose the scheme under all circumstances." The Shiromani Akali Dal also called upon the Sikhs to carry on a persistent agitation against the Pakistan proposal.¹²

Cripps Mission

Despite the protests of leaders of various political parties, the possibility of a Muslim State coming into being was specifically recognised in the British War Cabinet's formula presented to Indian political parties by Sir Stafford Cripps in the spring of 1942 when the British fortune seemed to be ebbing away. Pearl Harbour was

9. ⁶ The Tribune, 21-5-1940, Sikhs consider Khalistan Scheme

10. The Tribune, 29-5-1940, Sikhs want buffer State

11. ⁷ Menon, V.P., Transfer of Power, p. 95

12. ⁵ The Tribune, 11-9-1940, Akali Dal Working Committee's Resolution
Also Akali Patrika, 12-9-1940 ✓

attacked and occupied by Japan on December 7, 1941. Singapore fell on February 15, 1942 and Rangoon on March 7, 1942. Four days later Winston Churchill, who had replaced Chamberlain as Prime Minister of Britain, announced in the House of Commons that Sir Stafford Cripps would visit India to seek the assent of leaders for the constitutional position of India -- both present and future.¹³ Sir Stafford arrived in New Delhi on March 23 with a scheme for India's constitutional status, popularly known as the "Cripps proposals."¹⁴

Prior to Sir Stafford's arrival, Lord Linlithgow sent invitations to all the political parties to meet the former in New Delhi.¹⁵ Between March 24 and 29 Sir Stafford Cripps met almost all prominent leaders of Indian political parties and the Viceroy, his Executive Council, and Governors of provinces. The third All-India Akali Conference, scheduled to be held at Vahilla, Lyallpur district, at the end of March under the presidency of Master Tara Singh, was postponed on account of the arrival of Sir Stafford Cripps.¹⁶

Sir Stafford had brought with him a draft proposal on the future of India with the object of creating new Indian Union which would constitute a Dominion Associator with the United Kingdom and other

13. Indian Review, April 1942, The Diary of the Month, p. 200

14. Ibid

15. Ibid

16. Akali Patrika, 23-3-1942, also The Tribune, 23-3-1942

Dominions. It conceded the right to any province to go out of the Union, and the right of non-acceding provinces to agree upon a new constitution of their own with a status equal to that of the Indian Union.¹⁷ In substance, the proposal accepted the principle of Pakistan.

The minorities shuddered at the idea of reversion to Islamic theocracy of medieval ages. There was a storm of protests from all the parts of the country, for it was, as Birdwood says, "the official clue to the future."¹⁸ A deputation of the Sikhs¹⁹ met Sir Stafford Cripps on March 31, 1942, and told him that the cause of the Sikh community had been "lamentably betrayed" because it was unjust to allow the extraneous trans-Jhelum population, which only accidentally came into the province, to dominate the future of Punjab proper." The deputation also pointed out that the population of the Sikh States of Patiala, Nabha, Jind, Kapurthala and Faridkot, which was about 25 lakhs, had only 20 per cent Muslims, while the population of the Muslims in the other area from Delhi to the banks of Ravi, was only 45,05,000 out of a total population of 121,151,000; and if the two were combined the ratio of the Muslim population would go down still further.²⁰

Baba Kharek Singh, the President of the Central Akali Dal, declared on April 1, 1942, "that the Proposals of the War Cabinet

17. ^p Indian Year Book (1942), Times of India Press, Bombay, pp. 818-819

18. ¹¹ Birdwood, C.B., A Continent Experiments, Skeffington & Son, Ltd., London (1945), p. 94

19. ⁹ The deputation consisted of Master Tara Singh, Baldev Singh,

not only conceded to all intents and purposes the separatist demand for partition of India but actually encouraged the idea of separatism by holding out hope to every religious community, which ultimately was bound to spread through ... whenever they are even in a bare majority."²¹ The acceptance of these proposals will, therefore, mean complete frustration of the national movement. What was more, the scheme was totally unacceptable as it did not provide for an effective safeguard for the rights of the Sikhs. Master Tara Singh, Giani Kartar Singh and Giani Sher Singh declared that Pakistan would be formed on "their dead bodies!"²² The proposals, on the one hand, did not offer any permanent solution to the national tangle, on the other, they tended to create fissiparous communal tendencies. It could never be acceptable to the Congress and to the leaders dreaming for united independent India.

Quit India Movement

Cripps went back but he left behind a bitter trail of disappointment. The feeling of frustration was intensified as the conviction grew that British imperialism was not willing to part with India, happen what may. The Congress felt desperate and as the agony of war

Sir Jogindra Singh and Ujjal Singh.

20. The Tribune, 1-4-1942. The letter of the Sikhs deputation to Sir Stafford Cripps, dated 31-3-1942. Also see Birdwood's A Continent Experiments, Pp. 258-259.

21. Mitra's Register (1942), Vol. II, p. 243

22. Ibid

was prolonged, the temper of the people rose. There were some who welcomed the Japanese advance with a fond hope born of spite and hatred of British rule. In this mood of despair the All-India Congress Committee met in Bombay on August 7, and 8, 1942, and passed the "Quit India" resolution.²³ The British Government retaliated immediately and early in the morning of August 9, a large number of Congress leaders were arrested all over the country.

The Akalis were divided over the issue of "Quit India" movement. One group, led by Master Tara Singh, opposed it, while the other led by Giani Gurnakh Singh Musafir, Pratap Singh Kairon, Darshan Singh Pheruman, Udham Singh Nagoke and others favoured it and offered themselves for arrest. The group led by Master Tara Singh even helped the Britishers in recruitment for the army.²⁴ On September 26, 1942, in his presidential address to the All-India Akali Conference at Lyallpur, Master Tara Singh declared in unequivocal terms that he did not believe in the "funny" doctrine of non-violence as preached by Mahatma Gandhi and advised the Sikhs in their own interest and in the interest of their country not to be fools to be carried away by momentary enthusiasm.²⁵ By one of its resolutions the Akali conference demanded that India be declared an independent sovereign state and a "provisional National Cabinet" be formed forthwith.²⁶

23. ⁴ Nehru, Jawaharlal, The Discovery of India, The John Day Company, New York (1946), Pp. 488-489.

24. ⁵ Ganda Singh (Ed.), The Punjab, article of Ishar Singh Majhail, Pp. 262-271

25. ⁶ Mitra's Register (1942), Vol. II, p. 310

The Quit India movement and the differences between the Congress and the Akalis gave the leader of Muslim League an opportunity to exploit the situation. For silencing Sikh opposition to Pakistan and thereby strengthening the demand vis-a-vis the rest of India, Mohammed Ali Jinnah made more than one attempt to placate the Sikh community by inducing them to accept Pakistan on the basis of guaranteed political, religious and economic safeguards. At one stage it looked as though a section of the Sikh leadership would accept Jinnah's proposal. Some of them seemed to be impressed with the argument that whereas in an all-India federation the Sikh community would be a drop in the ocean, it would not be a negligible factor in Pakistan, not only because of the proportion of Sikh population in the population of Punjab, but also by virtue of statutory guarantees offered to them by the Muslim League leader. Eventually, however, Mr. Jinnah's overtures were turned down because the bulk of the Sikh community was opposed to Pakistan.²⁷

At about the same time there began to grow up in the Sikh community a tendency at exclusivism and self-reliance. This was due, on the one hand, to the growing militant Muslim League campaign for Pakistan and, on the other, the feeling that Hindu leadership

26. Ibid

27. India Year Book (1946), Times of India Press, Bombay, Pp. 902-903

might not hesitate to sacrifice the Sikhs for a settlement with the Muslim League on the all-India level.²⁸ Whereas the bleak feelings of doubt and distrust among the Sikhs apparently thwarted their political aspirations, the exhortations of the Sikh leaders like Master Tara Singh created in them self-confidence to face the alarming situation at all costs.

28. Ibid

CHAPTER VII
AKALIS DEMAND 'AZAD PUNJAB'
AND THEN
'SIKH STATE'

'Azad Punjab'

The Azad Punjab scheme was presented as an alternative to the Cripps proposal, which the Sikhs found most unacceptable. Explaining the scheme, Master Tara Singh said, "My proposal is just opposite to that for Pakistan. Pakistan means communal domination and severance of connection with the Centre. My proposal breaks communal domination and is opposed to severance of connection with the Centre. The Punjab I visualise will consist of 40 per cent Muslims, 40 per cent Hindus and 20 per cent Sikhs. By what stretch of imagination is it called Khalistan?"¹

The Akali Party proposed that the six districts of Ambala division, five districts of Jullundur division and the districts of Lahore, Amritsar and Gurdaspur of Lahore division be cut off from the rest of the province and constituted into a new province, to be called Azad Punjab.² In other words, Azad Punjab would include the districts of Ludhiana, Ferozepur, Jullundur, Hoshiarpur, Amritsar and Lahore, Rupar and Kharar tehsils of Ambala, Batala and Gurdaspur

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1. The Tribune, 2-12-1942, Master Tara Singh's statement on Pakistan and Azad Punjab.
 2. The Tribune, 5-1-1943, Prof. Gulshan Rai's article on Azad Punjab.

tehsils of Gurdaspur and other tehsils of Sialkot, Gujranwala and Sheikhpura districts and some area of Lyallpur district.³ In this area the Sikhs paid about Rs.90 lakhs of the land revenue. Of the 37 lakh Sikhs in the Punjab nearly 30 lakh would be within Azad Punjab. For many years such a State could be administered under coalition arrangements, the balance of power being with the 20 per cent Sikhs.⁴ The Akalis thought that such a division of population gave the Sikhs an ideal balance of power. Such a partition of the Punjab would give to the Muslims in the West Punjab 77 per cent population, a safe majority, and would give absolute majority to no community in the Eastern Punjab.⁵

Thus, through the Azad Punjab scheme the Akalis wanted to readjust the boundaries of the Punjab in such a manner as to prevent the absolute majority of any community except in the North-West Frontier Province. But with the exception of Ludhiana district, the Sikhs were not in an absolute majority in any district of Punjab though they were scattered about in small number in as many as 13 districts of the Central Punjab.⁶ They could not, therefore, wield effective political power in what they called their homeland.

3. Birdwood, A Continent Experiments, p. 70 (see Appendix III for population).


4. Ibid

5. 4. The Tribune, 2-12-1942

6. 5. The Tribune, 5-1-1943, Prof. Gulshan Rai's article on Azad Punjab.

But there were three riders to the scheme. First, after the division of the Punjab into two parts, Hindus and Sikhs on the one hand and Muslims on the other were to be allowed to migrate to those areas which were predominantly populated by their respective communities. Those who migrated were to be allowed to occupy as much property in the new areas as they possessed in those which they had abandoned. The framers of the scheme had probably in mind a future attempt at population transfer on a considerable scale patterned on the German precedent, exchanging Sikhs from Rawalpindi and Jhelum division for Muslims in the Jullundur Doab.⁷ Secondly, it was hoped that the new province would attract the return of Sikhs from outside the Punjab. This, together with the tendency to natural increase in population, would, within a period of fifteen years, bring the Sikhs within a grasp of a working majority and the formation of a solid Sikh national home.⁸ Thirdly, it was imperative to absorb six Sikh States of Patiala, Nabha, Kapurthala, Faridkot, Jind and Kalsia in the proposed State of Azad Punjab.⁹ With all these riders, the sponsors of the scheme were anxious to allay the fears of the other communities.

In December 1942, the principal and staff of the Sikh National College, Lahore, issued a manifesto supporting this scheme aimed at readjustment of the boundaries of the Punjab so as to preclude the

7.  The Tribune, 2-12-1942, Master Tara Singh's statement on Pakistan and Azad Punjab.

8.  Birdwood, A Continent Experiments, p. 70

9.  Ibid, p. 74

possibility of their being in absolute majority in the province.¹⁰

The signatories to the Manifesto held out an assurance to the Muslims, saying that they did not mean to make a bid for domination. Had the Sikhs chosen to follow the example set before them by the Muslim League through their demand for Pakistan, they pleaded, they would have demanded a place where they could dominate. But that was not the case. All that the Sikhs wanted was to escape from the evils of perpetual domination by an absolute irremovable communal majority.¹¹

On the other hand the scheme was not anti-Hindu.¹² In his address at the fourth All-India Akali Conference held at Bhawanigarh

- 10.8 The Tribune, 22-12-1942. Manifesto of the Principal and staff of Sikh National College, Lahore. The Manifesto said: "So long as we remain citizens of the present artificially created Punjab, with a permanent communal majority saddled over us, it is impossible ever to get those rights which are consistent with our self-respect. It is our firm belief that only in a new constituted region, where such a majority cannot exist, can we live without suppression and embarrassment. We hope, therefore, to carry on a relentless campaign for creation of a free Punjab. We want to break off from those north-western districts which, by virtue of their overwhelming Muslim population, tilt the balance in favour of an absolute Muslim majority in the province."
11. The Tribune, 22-12-1942. Manifesto of the Principal and staff of Sikh National College, Lahore. Also see Rajendra Prasad, India Divided, Pp. 254-255. Sant Nihal Singh in an article in the Hindustan Review - "A project for partitioning the Punjab" points out that the Sikhs insist that if there is to be Pakistan then the Sikhs must have their Azad Punjab which according to its propounders would include, 35,00,000 Sikhs of British India and more than 12,50,000 Sikhs residing in the States nearly 48,00,000 Sikhs out of their population of 5.10 million according to the Census of 1941.
- 12.9 The Tribune, 15-3-1943.

(Patiala) on March 1943, Master Tara Singh said: "By creation of Azad Punjab, not only the Sikhs and Hindus of Azad Punjab will get rid of the present Pakistan but the Sikhs and Hindus living in that portion of Punjab which will be cut off from the present Punjab will also be in a better position." As the Sikh and Hindu population in that portion would be about 5 per cent and 7.2 per cent, they would get weightage on principle which was given to the minorities in other provinces.¹³ It meant that the Sikhs would get at least 15 per cent of the seats in the legislature and the Hindus about 25 per cent. This totalled 40 per cent against the 47 per cent the Sikhs and the Hindus together had in united Punjab's Legislative Assembly. But the 40 per cent would not include any Hindu Jat, or Scheduled Castes. The common economic and cultural interest of these 40 per cent would create cohesion among them. They would be, thus, in a better position to safeguard their interests than they could in a province where 47 per cent Sikh and Hindu representatives consisted of many conflicting elements.¹⁴

Master Tara Singh offered to give up the scheme if the Hindus could prove it to be disadvantageous to them. Later, in June 1943, the Akali Dal declared that Azad Punjab's boundaries would be fixed after taking into consideration the population, property, land revenue and the historical traditions of each of the three communities. It was, however, of the opinion that on the basis of these considerations

13. ^a The Tribune, 15-3-1943, proceedings of the 4th All-India Akali Conference.

14. The Tribune, 15-3-1943

Azad Punjab would comprise Ambala, Jullundur and Lahore divisions and Multan districts of Multan division. But the Shiromani Akali Dal was prepared to leave the final decision to an impartial commission.¹⁵

Opposition To Azad Punjab

The main opposition to the scheme came from the Sikh community itself. Some Sikh critics held that the demand for Azad Punjab would, by implication, be tantamount to conceding Pakistan. The Akalis, on the other hand, held that their demand did not concede Pakistan, but rather tended to dampen Muslim enthusiasm for it. They argued that if Azad Punjab was conceded, the Muslims would think twice before demanding to convert the remaining weak and poor portion into Pakistan, for in that case Pakistan would be so weak a State that it would have to exist at the mercy of the neighbouring powerful Hindustan. Alliance of a weak Pakistan with Afghanistan and Iran could not give it much

15. ¹⁰ The Tribune, 6-6-1943, statement of Shiromani Akali Dal Executive.

The districts affected were :

1. Multan division: Multan (portion only), Montgomery, Lyallpur, Jhang and Muzaffargarh.
2. Lahore division: Lahore, Sheikhpura, Gujranwala, Amritsar, Gurdaspur and Sialkot.
3. Jullundur division: Jullundur, Hoshiarpur, Kangra, Ludhiana and Ferozepur.
4. Ambala division: Ambala, Karnal, Hissar, Rohtak, Gurgaon and Simla.

Also see Rajendra Prasad, India Divided, p. 255.

The 200,00,000 persons (in round figure) living in Azad Punjab exclusive of portion of Multan district lying along with

strength, for both those countries were themselves extremely weak. Master Tara Singh argued: "Create Azad Punjab and there would remain no resources for Pakistan, no factories, no food, no mines, etc. But if the whole of the Punjab is converted into Pakistan, we will be in danger; Pakistan will have both men and material and Hindustan will have material but not as useful."¹⁶

These facile arguments could not, however, convince the section of the Sikhs belonging to Rawalpindi division, who were afraid to be left at the mercy of the Muslims in case either of the two demands, Pakistan or Azad Punjab, was conceded. The idea of exchange of population did not appeal to them. A number of anti-Azad Punjab conferences

Montgomery district, would comprise:-

Sikhs:	34,42,508
Muslims:	91,91,608
Other non-Muslims (mostly Hindus):	<u>72,45,336</u>
Total:	<u>198,79,452</u>

As Nihal Singh said: "Mistrust of the Hindus poisoned the Muslim mind and Pakistan" was projected. "So mistrust of the Muslims has poisoned the Sikh mind. A scheme for partitioning Punjab is being pushed. The men behind it are as determined as they are possessed of political drive and organising ability. If, therefore, Pakistan is insisted upon, the Sikhs refuse to be ignored and insist on a partition on their own terms."

16. The Tribune, 6-9-1943, Azad Punjab, Master Tara Singh's reply to Sant Singh.

were held in Rawalpindi division.¹⁷ They demanded Akhand Hindustan (united India). The opposition from those areas was so vehement that seven members of the Shiromani Akali Dal from Rawalpindi district were expelled from the Dal for open opposition to the Azad Punjab Scheme.¹⁸ The entire Akali Jatha at Jhelum was suspended.¹⁹ At a number of other places in western Punjab, action had to be taken against Akali workers.

The Central Akali Dal, too, considered the scheme detrimental to Sikh interests. Its working committee called upon the Sikhs to throw away the partition schemes into the waste paper basket because they were anti-national, impracticable and detrimental to the interests of the Panth.²⁰ The Central Akali Dal's Working Committee resolved to initiate a campaign against partition of India and to hold Akhand Hindustan conferences at different places. At one of these conferences, Baba Kharak Singh declared that Jinnah and Master Tara Singh were sailing in the same boat "as agents of imperialism."²¹

17. || The Tribune, 6-6-1943; also Birdwood, A Continent Experiments, p. 73. Birdwood says: "Sikhs, further afraid in the new western Punjab, have by no means supported the Azad Punjab scheme, and in Rawalpindi district there is a formidable opposition group with which the accredited leaders have at times had a rough passage. In general terms it might be said that the Sikhs of Gujranwala district and further to the west were for the preservation of the present boundaries, and the unity of India was of greater significance to them than a problematical Sikh State in which they would not be included."

18. 12- The Tribune, 6-6-1943

19. 13- The Tribune, 6-6-1943

20. 14 The Tribune, 8-2-1943. Azad Punjab and Pakistan scheme - resolution of the Central Akali Dal Committee.

In February 1944, a provincial conference of Narankaris, a Sikh sect, was held at Rawalpindi. It also condemned the Azad Punjab scheme, alleging that Master Tara Singh was "dancing to the tune of Sir Stafford Cripps." Holding that they had lost faith in the Akalis, Narankari Sikhs decided to break away from the Shiromani Akali Dal. A nationalist Sikh leader, Sant Singh, M.L.A. further charged Master Tara Singh with playing into the hands of Lord Amery, Secretary of State for India. The Azad Punjab scheme, he alleged, was a figment of Mr. Amery's brain.

In his reply Master Tara Singh reminded Sant Singh that the scheme had first been formulated at Sant Singh's own residence in Delhi in 1931, where Sikh leaders of all shades of opinion had assembled to frame Sikh demands to be presented to Mahatma Gandhi on the occasion of the signing of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact.²² Master Tara Singh also reminded Sant Singh that a resolution supporting the scheme had been passed unanimously at the annual session of the Central Sikh League held at Amritsar in 1931, thirteen years ago. The scheme, he added, had been presented to the Secretary of State at the Second Round Table Conference by Ujjal Singh and Sant Singh himself. A memorial

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21. Mitra's Register (1943), Vol. II, p. 300, The Anti-^{-Azad} Punjab Conference. Prominent among those who attended the conference at Punja Sahib were Sant Singh, M.L.A. (Central), Harbans Singh Siestani, Labh Singh Narang and Durlabh Singh, Secretary of the Progressive Akali party.
22. The Tribune, 16-6-1943, Azad Punjab Scheme - Master Tara Singh's reply to Sant Singh, M.L.A.

sent by the Chief Khalsa Diwan in support of the Sikh demands was included in the scheme.²³ The Akali leader denied that the scheme was the outcome of the demand for Pakistan by Muslims though, he asserted, the arguments in favour of Azad Punjab would get greater force if Pakistan was conceded. "If some people are allowed to go out of India", wrote Master Tara Singh, "why should those who wish to remain in India be forced to go out of it?"²⁴ Unlike the Muslim demand for Pakistan, the Sikh demand for Azad Punjab was not separatist. Perhaps the Sikhs could not demand a Sikh State as they did not form a majority in any considerable area.²⁵

Discussing in 1945, two and a half years later, the demand for Azad Punjab Lt.-Col Birdwood wrote: "This conception, which first found expression in the Sikh deputation's letter to Sir Stafford Cripps, has hardened into a concrete demand. However embarrassing and irritating the Sikh claim may appear, it is but a natural sequence of the greater Muslim demand. Moreover, in one respect, it has better logic than that demand, in that the Sikh ambitions at least spring from the heart of the country affected, and are unaffected by influences imposed from outside. Too well has the world come to realise the epidemical nature of that illusive panacea, self-determination. Identically the same arguments which Jinnah has used to support the case

23. The Tribune, 16-6-1943, Azad Punjab Scheme - Master Tara Singh's reply to Sant Singh, M.L.A.
24. The Tribune, 26-7-1943, Azad Punjab scheme, an article by Master Tara Singh.
25. The Tribune, 26-7-1943, Azad Punjab scheme, an article by Master Tara Singh.

for Pakistan are now advanced by the Sikhs in their Azad Punjab demand."²⁶

Revival of Central Sikh League

The differences between Sant Singh, M.L.A. (Central), and Master Tara Singh over Azad Punjab led to the revival of the Central Sikh League by the former.²⁷ Master Tara Singh opposed the use by Sant Singh of the old nomenclature of Central Sikh League for his organisation. So, Sant Singh named it as the Central Sikh League of India.²⁸ It was to be a purely political organisation for "developing and maintaining nationalism among the Sikhs and organising them to liberate the country from foreign yoke." While furthering the cause of national independence and solidarity, it was not to ignore the interests of the Sikhs. Its secretary, Gopal Singh, said that it would aim at separating politics from the religious work of control and management of gurdwaras. He insinuated that Master Tara Singh and his Akali followers had entered into an alliance with imperialism, the Unionist Ministry, the Muslim League and the Pakistanis and were thus instrumental in keeping the country in bondage.²⁹

The main plank of the Central Sikh League of India was revival of nationalism among Sikh masses, promotion of harmony and friendly

26. Birdwood, A Continent Experiments, Pp. 70-71

27. The Tribune, 13-7-1943. Revival of Sikh League.

28. The Tribune, 19-8-1943. Statement of Sant Singh on the Sikh League.

29. The Tribune, 13-7-1943

relations with Sikh states and their subjects with a view to lending Sikh character to these States by methods of love and co-operation and creation of a machinery to safeguard the interests of the Sikhs in the Central and provincial services.³⁰

Its general body was named the Khalsa Durbar and the membership was open to all Sikhs excepting members of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, the local gurdwara committees and the office-holders of the Shiromani Akali Dal, thus bringing about, in a way, complete separation of politics from the management of gurdwaras.³¹

Though a step in the right direction, the conditions of membership were an obstacle in the way of the newly formed body becoming a popular party. What is more, the Muslim demand for Pakistan and the political climate of 1943-44 had been fully exploited by Akali leaders. Communal passions had been aroused by them by making their followers "religion and danger conscious". The Central Sikh League, therefore, found it hard to make any headway. Consequently, the leadership of the Central Sikh League remained confined to those who could not or did not otherwise become members of gurdwara committee and nursed some real or imaginary grievances against Master Tara Singh.

Akalis Demand Independent Sikh State

In 1944, the demand for Azad Punjab was converted into one for an independent Sikh State as Sikh fears had been aroused by the

30. The Tribune, 14-7-1943, Central Sikh League's main plank.

31. The Tribune, 14-7-1943, Central Sikh League's main plank.

Rajagopalachari formula³² which inter alia conceded the Muslim League's demand for Pakistan. The formula provided that, "after the termination of war, a commission shall be appointed for demarcating contiguous districts in the north-west and east of India, wherein the Muslim population is in absolute majority. In the areas thus demarcated, a plebiscite of all the inhabitants held on the basis of adult suffrage or other practicable franchise shall ultimately decide the issue of separation from Hindustan. If the majority decide in favour of forming a sovereign State separate from Hindustan, such decision shall be given effect to, without prejudice to the right of districts on the border to choose to join either State." The formula had the tacit blessing of Mahatma Gandhi.³³

32. Mitra's Register (1944), Vol. II, Pp. 129-130. Also Banerjee, A.C., The Making of Indian Constitution, Vol I (documents) p. 77

Text of the Rajagopalachari formula:

- (i) Subject to the terms set out below as regards the constitution for free India, the Muslim League endorses the Indian demand for independence and will co-operate with the Congress in the formation of a provisional interim Government for the transitional period.
- (ii) After the termination of war, a commission shall be appointed for demarcating contiguous districts in the north-west and east of India, wherein the Muslim population is in absolute majority. In the areas thus demarcated, a plebiscite of all the inhabitants held on the basis of adult suffrage or other practicable franchise shall ultimately decide the issue of separation from Hindustan. If the majority decide in favour of forming a sovereign State separate from Hindustan, such decision shall be given effect to, without prejudice to the right of districts on the border to choose to join either State."
- (iii) It will be open to all parties to advocate their points of view before the plebiscite is held.

However, it caused deep distress among the Sikhs, as it completely ignored their interests. It drew a line across the Punjab splitting the community into two almost equal halves, one to remain in India and the other to become a part of the Muslim State of Pakistan. At no time was Sikh temper more vocally expressed than now. It was the signal for an outburst of indignation.

On July 14, 1943, Santokh Singh, M.L.A., Harnam Singh, President, All-India Sikh League, Joginder Singh Mann (b. 1905), at present Speaker, Punjab Assembly, and others issued a joint statement against the formula, declaring that the Sikhs would fight it to the bitter end.³⁴ The Sikhs considered the formula an affront to themselves and called a special convention representing all sections of opinion to record their protest. The All-Parties Sikh Conference was held at Amritsar on August 1, 1944, under the presidency of Baldev Singh, Development Minister. The conference unanimously resolved that "the basis of communal settlement outlined in the

- (iv) In the event of separation, mutual agreements shall be entered into for safeguarding defence, commerce and communications for other essential purposes.
- (v) Any transfer of population shall only be on an absolute voluntary basis.
- (vi) These terms shall be binding only in case of transfer by Britain of full power and responsibility for the governance of India.

It was popularly known as "C.R. formula" because its author was Chakravarti Rajagopalachari (i.e., Rajaji) of Madras State.

33. C.R.'s letter to Jinnah dated April 8, 1944. See Mitra's Register (1944), Vol. II, p. 129.

34. Mitra's Register (1944), Vol. II, Pp. 130-131

Rajagopalachari formula is manifestly unfair and detrimental to the best interests of the country and the Sikh community." Its working committee regarded the formula as a breach of faith on the part of Congress leaders who had assured the Sikhs at the Lahore session of the Congress in 1929 that no communal settlement would be accepted by the Congress which did not satisfy the Sikh community.³⁵

Again, on August 20, a representative meeting of Sikhs of various political shades of thought was held at Amritsar at Master Tara Singh's initiative.³⁶ It condemned emphatically the Rajaji formula "because as a result of its enforcement, the Sikhs will be divided into two sections and held in perpetual bondage."³⁷ They declared that no communal settlement reached without the consent of the Sikhs was binding on them. By another resolution the conference asked Master Tara Singh to lead the Sikhs.³⁸ Mangal Singh, M.L.A. (Central), moved a resolution suggesting the creation of an area wherein the Sikhs would not be under the domination either of the Muslim or the Hindu majority.³⁹ It demanded for the Sikhs the same

35. Ibid, p. 210

36. Ibid, Pp. 211-212. As many as 741 invitations were issued. About 561 who attended included individuals and representatives of various Sikh organisations such as the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, Singh Sabhas, Shiromani Akali Dal, Chief Khalsa Diwan, Sikh Defence of India League, Sikh M.L.A.s, Sikh moderates, Nirmaalas and Namdharis. The Central Akali Dal declined the invitation and Sikh communists were not invited but both these absentee groups rejected the C.R. formula separately.

37. Ibid, Pp. 211-214; also The Tribune 21-8-1944, The Sikh demand for independent State -- All Parties Sikh Conference.

38. The Tribune, 3-8-1944; also Gurbachan Singh, Lal Singh Gyani,

rights in all provinces as had been given to other minorities. Mohinder Singh moved an amendment seeking creation of an independent Sikh State. It was supported by Giani Kartar Singh. Ujjal Singh intervened to suggest that Master Tara Singh should appoint a committee to evolve, in consultation with all Sikh interests, a scheme for establishment of an independent Sikh state in case India was to be divided between Hindus and Muslims. Giani Sher Singh said that the Sikhs must have equal rights like brothers. They should be placed under nobody's domination. If a common rule of all the communities was not possible in India, the Sikhs would like to see their own flag flying somewhere in their own territory. Giani Kartar Singh said the Sikhs favoured division of India to save the Panth, but others wanted division to crush and finish the Sikhs. The Sikhs were prepared to agree to division only out of compulsion. If Pakistan was to come under compulsion, because Jinnah's demand could not be resisted, why not give an independent State to the Sikhs too?⁴⁰

But the representative capacity of this conference was questioned by about 50 leaders of various Sikh societies, prominent among whom were Harbans Singh Siestani, Labh Singh Narang and other

The Idea of The Sikh State, Lahore Book Shop, Lahore (1946), P. 11; also Birdwood, A Continent Experiments, 72.

39.18 The Tribune, 21-8-1944

40.19 The Tribune, 21-8-1944

followers of Baba Kharak Singh. The Baba did not attend the conference because it was convened by the Shiromani Akali Dal. The Central Akali Dal and the Chief Khalsa Diwan too boycotted the conference. They held that the majority of the delegates were already for vivisectioning the province and consequent formation of Pakistan.⁴¹

Muslim League-Akali Coalition in North-West Frontier Province

Master Tara Singh argued that the participation of his party and of other Hindus in the coalition with the Muslim League in North-West Frontier Province would avert creation of Pakistan, as only non-Muslim Ministers could protect the non-Muslim communities in that province. Therefore, the Akalis allowed Ajit Singh Sarhadi to join the Muslim League Ministry. It gave a handle to the critics of the Akalis to say that the latter were 'in cohort with the Muslim League.' Giani Kartar Singh, chief lieutenant of Master Tara Singh and known as the brain of the Akali party, had several talks with Jinnah to make the Muslim League accept the Sikh claim in return for Sikh support for Pakistan.⁴²

In the middle of May 1944 was made available an outline of the agreement reached between the Sikhs and Aurangzeb Khan of the Muslim League, who had undertaken to form a Ministry. It is interesting to

41. ²⁶The Tribune, 23-8-1944, Sikh Conference representative capacity challenged -- statement by the representatives of different Sikh societies.

42. Kotewal, Jehangir Ramjee, The Indian Charter, Karachi (1944), p. 216

note that preliminary conversations originated in Peshawar, progressed in Delhi and fructified in Amritsar, the headquarters of the Akali organisation.⁴³ The understanding between Aurangzeb Khan and Ajit Singh Sarhadi was akin to the Sikandar-Baldev Singh pact (1942) in the Punjab whereby the Sikhs were assured of certain rights for promoting their communal and cultural well-being. Those points which could not be settled at Peshawar or Amritsar were left to Jinnah's arbitration.⁴⁴ Ajit Singh Sarhadi, a prospective Minister, held one of the three Sikh seats in the North-West Frontier Province Assembly; another seat was held by the Congress Party and the third was vacant. Thus on paper there was no sanction behind Ajit Singh Sarhadi, but as the deal was negotiated, or at least sanctioned by Master Tara Singh, Ajit Singh Sarhadi considered that he had the moral support of the Sikh community at large.⁴⁵

An amusing sequel to the ministry formation was the mutual taunts and recriminations. While Ajit Singh Sarhadi's name was formally approved on the morning of May 13 after consultations held the previous night between Giani Sher Singh and Aurangzeb Khan (Tara Singh and the Giani Sher Singh generally sailed together), Master Tara Singh deplored on May 29 the acceptance of office by Ajit Singh

43. ✓ Pattabhi Sitaramayya, The History of the Indian National Congress, Vol. II, Pp. 528-529

44. Ibid

45. Ibid

Sarhadi and put it down virtually to the telegram of the Hindu Sabha leader, V.D. Savarkar, of May 19 to him (Master Tara Singh) saying that "wherever a League Ministry is inevitable and Hindu-Sikh interests can be served better by joining it than otherwise, Hindus and Sikhs should join and transform it into a coalition Ministry."⁴⁶

North-West Frontier Province Hindu Mahasabha leader Mehr Chand Khanna deplored Master Tara Singh's statement of May 29⁴⁷ as being inconsistent with the happening of May 12. Master Tara Singh denied vehemently that he had said or done anything to encourage Ajit Singh Sarhadi to accept office. A new point, however, was disclosed, namely that an attempt had been made previously by Ajit Singh Sarhadi to bargain with Dr. Khan Sahib that he (Ajit Singh) would not join the Aurangzeb Ministry if the Sikh community was promised a place in the Frontier Government when the Congress formed a Ministry. As no assurance was forthcoming, the Akalis joined hands with the Muslim League apparently in the belief that "a bird in hand is worth two in the bush."⁴⁸

The Akali decision to co-operate with the Muslim League against the wishes of nationalist India was condemned, as a "stab in the back of nationalist forces", by the executive of the All-India Sikh young men's Association at its meeting held in Amritsar on May 8 under the

46. Ibid

47. Ibid, Master Tara Singh's statement to the Press on May 29 said: "Sardar Ajit Singh accepted ministership in the North-West Frontier Province on his own responsibility and against my advice, but I still have faith in his bona fides."

48. Ibid

presidentship of Dr. Kirpal Singh. It asked why of all the people the Akalis had made a climb-down?⁴⁹ Had not the Sikhs maintained all along that they were opposed to communal representation? Had not they opposed the Communal Award tooth and nail with no ambiguity, such as was imputed (though wrongly) to the equivocation of the Congress, which had neither supported nor opposed the award? Had a decade of persistence by the British converted even the Akalis who had tried now to count their gains on a communal basis? How would four highly placed jobs advance the interests of the Sikh community? The Akalis had all along struggled for full freedom and with that objective in view had joined the Congress by the thousands, controlled the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee and fought shoulder to shoulder with the Congress in the general elections of 1937 on the basis of "Congress with Akali ticket" for their reserved seats.

The Penth's act of lending support to Ajit Singh Serhadi's acceptance of office appeared to be a political somersault that puzzled friends, but it might well be described as realism in politics. If Rajaji's formula was accepted by the Congress, why could not the Akalis catch opportunity by the forelock?

Fifth All-India Akali Conference

The fifth annual session of All-India Akali Conference was held in Lahore on October 14, 1944, under the presidentship of Jathedar

49. Ibid, p. 530

50. Ibid

Pritam Singh Gojran. The entrance to the conference was through "Giani Sher Singh Gate" over which hung a banner saying "Beware of Russian agents". While unfurling the Sikh flag at the conference, Master Tara Singh warned the Sikhs of two dangers -- one from the Communists and the other from Mahatma Gandhi and Jinnah.⁵¹ He added that the Sikhs were not prepared to suffer any wrong at the hands of the British who had denied them their freedom; they were equally unprepared to suffer the light-hearted acts of tyrants like Gandhi and Jinnah, both of whom wanted to impose Hindu and Muslim majorities on the Sikhs by dividing India. The main grievance of the Sikhs was that the Congress had not kept the promise it had made to the Sikhs in 1929 that they would be consulted whenever any communal and political settlement was negotiated.

Significantly, the Sikh demand for an independent Sikh State was not pressed in the open session of the conference. Master Tara Singh, who moved the main resolution, declared that though the Sikhs wanted an independent State for themselves, the demand was being kept in abeyance to keep the door open to negotiations. The conference rejected the Gandhi-Najaji formula for conceding Pakistan, and described it as "great sin."⁵² The conference called upon the Sikhs to carry a ceaseless agitation until the scheme was finally dropped and

51. Nitra's Register (1944), Vol. II, p. 218; The Tribune, 16-10-1944 and 17-10-1944

52. Ibid

the Sikhs were assured that no similar proposal would be put forward or conceded.⁵³

Durlabh Singh, Secretary of the Central Sikh Youth League and the Progressive Akali Dal, wrote to Mahatma Gandhi asking him to remove certain misunderstanding being created by the Akalis to poison the Sikh mind against the Congress.⁵⁴ The points raised for clarification were: Mahatma Gandhiji's attitude towards the Rajaji formula, his refusal to meet the Akali deputation before meeting Jinnah for talks and his rumoured acquiescence in the Sikander-Baldev Singh pact and the Azad Punjab scheme. Durlabh Singh also asked Gandhi to refute the reported statement that he (Gandhiji) "does not favour the idea of the Sikhs remaining in the Congress because of their belief in the sword." In his reply, Mahatma Gandhi said that Sikh interests and the interests of nationalists were safe in his hands and that of the Congress. According to Gandhi, "my association with Rajaji in his formula could not affect the Sikh position in the slightest degree even if Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah had accepted the formula. The Lahore resolution of the Congress referred to by you stands. The result of Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah's acceptance would have been that both of us would have approached the Sikhs and others affected to secure their acceptance. I had made this clear in my letter to Masterji."⁵⁵

53. Mitra's Register (1944), Vol. II, p. 22. Master Tara Singh claimed that there were 57 lakhs Sikhs in India.

54. Ibid, p. 218; The Tribune, 15-11-1944

55. Ibid, Pp. 221-222; also The Tribune 15-11-44. Text of correspondence between Gandhi and Durlabh Singh.

Gandhi denied any pre-knowledge of the Sikander-Baldev Singh pact and details of the Azad Punjab scheme.

Another Akali Leader, Giani Kartar Singh, declared at the Guru Singh Sangat Sabha Conference in Bagh Akalian on October 2, 1944, that the Sikhs would now openly side with the British as the Congress had neglected its promises. He believed that there could be no settlement in the country without the British.⁵⁶ But all the Akalis were not bitter against the Congress. A number of important Akali leader, like Udham Singh Nagoke, Soban Singh Jallaluzman and Darshan Singh Pheruman, were pro-Congress. They had taken part in the civil disobedience movements of 1940 and 1942. It was only during their absence in jail that the Shiromani Akali Dal had changed its attitude towards the Congress. Soon after their release in October 1944, they declared their wholehearted support for Gandhi. Ishar Singh Majhail, General Secretary, Shiromani Akali Dal, declared at the All-India (Jubilee) Akali Conference held at Jandiala, Jullundur district, in November that "the Dal will continue to stand by the Congress in every struggle launched to achieve India's freedom as it had done in the past."⁵⁷ He also criticised severely the Communists and the C.R. formula. But unlike Giani Kartar Singh's group, he did not blame the Congress.

56. Akali Patrika, 3-10-1944
Also The Tribune, 3-10-1944

57. Mitra's Register (1944), Vol. II, p. 223; The Tribune, 27-11-1944; Akali Patrika, 27-11-1944. Majhail's speech at the All-India Jubilee Akali Conference at Jandiala.

Conciliation Move

Towards the end of 1944, a few non-party publicmen decided to form a conciliation committee to find out ways and means for an agreed constitution.⁵⁸ Known as the Sapru Committee, it issued a questionnaire to various parties soliciting their views on fundamental rights, representation of communities in the services, Pakistan, territorial adjustments and alternatives to Pakistan. The Sikhs presented a lengthy memorandum to the Sapru Committee reiterating their stand that the Punjab was the homeland of Sikhs and not of Muslims. They submitted facts and figures to justify their claim. The memorandum was signed by 30 prominent Sikh leaders and legislators, including Master Tara Singh, Giani Kartar Singh, Sampuran Singh Lyallpuri, Surjit Singh Majithia, Bhai Jodh Singh, Swaran Singh, Ujjal Singh and Ishar Singh Majhail. Central Akali Dal leaders, led by Baba Kharak Singh, however kept aloof.⁵⁹

The Sikhs expressed their dissatisfaction with the working of provincial autonomy in the Punjab as it practically meant Muslim rule. Though the cabinet was formed on the British model, the foundation of the electorate on the Communal Award gave the Muslims a majority with the result that the leader of the statutory Muslim majority group automatically became the leader of the House. As if this was not enough, he was given the power to nominate and dismiss ministers not only of his own community but also those taken from the minority

58. Mitra's Register (1945), Vol. II, p. 33

59. The Tribune, 23-2-1945. Punjab, Homeland of Sikhs and not Muslims.

communities. The rules of business of the cabinet were also so formed that no decision could be taken without the consultation and consent of the Premier, with the result that in each and every case he had the last word.⁶⁰

Another Sikh grievance against the Muslims was that they had almost a monopoly of all key posts under provincial autonomy and the Sikh share was less than 10 per cent as against the promised 20 per cent. "The Unionists have done everything in their power," wrote Harnam Singh, President, Central Sikh League, "to degrade and demoralise the Sikhs by interfering in the practice of their religion arbitrarily and to make them feel that they are a subject and subjugated people in their own homeland."⁶¹ He also complained that the western districts of Punjab, which were inhabited predominantly by the Muslims, generally received a higher percentage of grants-in-aid than the central districts. Again, in the western districts no fee was charged from agricultural scholars, while no such exemption was granted to similar scholars in the central districts.⁶²

Replying to the Sapru Committee questionnaire, the Sikh memorandum emphasised the right of religious freedom, use of jhatka meat, carrying of kirpan, right to employ the mother tongue for social and cultural intercourse and for the conduct of administrative business in the region in which it was commonly spoken; freedom of speech, assembly, meeting, procession, press, propaganda, demonstration, etc.⁶³

60. Harnam Singh, Punjab Homeland of Sikhs, Civil and Military Gazette Ltd., Lahore (1945), p. 68.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 70

The memorandum condemned the Pakistan scheme as "unnatural, reactionary and opposed to the best political and economic interests of the country as it "militated against the lessons of history and requirements of geography and because it signed the "death warrant of the future of the Sikh community as a whole."⁶⁴ The scheme was based on the presumption that the Punjab was the homeland of the Muslims only. In case Pakistan was to be created, the Sikhs would insist on creation of a Sikh State which should include a substantial majority of the Sikh population and their important shrines, historic gurdwaras and places, with provision for transfer and exchange of population and property. In case this was not agreed to, the Sikhs favoured a strong Centre with autonomy to the units for cultural and economic development. They preferred the Swiss model of executive with suitable modifications -- an irremovable composite executive in place of the parliamentary system which had failed.⁶⁵

The sixth U.P. Sikh Conference was held at Kanpur on April 29 and 30, 1945, under the presidency of Master Tara Singh. He

62. Ibid

63. Ibid, Pp. 74-76

64. Ibid, p. 77

65. Ibid, Pp. 77-78 & 80

criticised the Sapru proposals⁶⁶ because of their acceptance of the principle of parity and for recommending a commission to go into the question of minority problems. He declared that the Sapru proposals did not adequately meet the demands of the Sikhs community.⁶⁷

The only clause of Sapru proposal with which the Akalis agreed was the rejection of the Pakistan scheme.

A few days later the Frontier Akali Conference was held at Peshwar. In his presidential address, Mangal Singh, M.L.A. (Central), commended the Sapru proposals, saying that the proposal regarding the formation of the Central Government should be welcomed.⁶⁸ The

66. Menon, V.P., Transfer of Power, p. 179. The main features of the Sapru proposals were that a national government should replace the present Executive Council at the Centre; that in the provinces the Congress ministries should resume office but with an admixture of non-Congress parties; that in the constitution-making body, representation of Hindus (excluding scheduled castes) and Muslims should be equal; that similar parity in the Central Assembly should be conditional on Muslims agreeing to joint electorates with reservation of seats instead of separate electorates; that no decision of the constitution-making body should be valid unless it was supported by three-fourths of the members present and voting, and that His Majesty's Government, while accepting the decisions so made, should supplement them by its own awards where the requisite majority was not obtained. The committee firmly rejected the Pakistan scheme.

In spite of the eminent and talented personalities of which it was composed, the Committee failed in its efforts to advance the position. For one thing, the Committee was handicapped by the absence of any top-ranking Muslim. Its rejection of the Pakistan idea and the recommendation of joint electorates made the Muslim League's attitude all the more hostile. There was disapproval, even from non-Congress Hindus, who were unable to acquiesce in the proposal for parity between Muslims and Hindus other than the Scheduled Castes.

67. Mitra's Register (1945), Vol. I, Pp. 61, 304

68. Ibid, p. 304

conference sought an assurance from Britain that the demand for Pakistan would not be conceded in future constitutions.⁶⁹

Communist Sikhs Support for Pakistan

The Communist Party of India underwent a radical change along with its war policy. It declared its full support to the principle of self-determination to nationalities and favoured any scheme that gave that right to the people, particularly to the Muslims. It even displayed big placards in front of its office in Lahore bearing the words 'Pakistan Zindabad'. It also started flying the Muslim League's green flag along with its own red flag. Jinnah saw through them and refused to be their bed-fellow. Muslim orthodoxy was his trump-card and he played it well.⁷⁰

But the Communists were not dismayed. In September 1944 they organised a conference at Amritsar. Sikhs, mostly belonging to the Congress, the Central Sikh Youth League, the Progressive Akali Party and the Malwa Ahalsa Diwan, participated in it. The Shiromani Akali Dal and the Central Akali Dal were conspicuous by their absence.⁷¹

Speaking on the Pakistan resolution, Teja Singh Swatantar, Communist MLA, said that the Muslim League ideology had come to stay and there was hardly a Muslim who did not have faith in that. He declared that there could not be any unity without the establishment

69. Ibid

70. *Mitra's Register* (1943), Vol. II, p. 291. Addressing the open session of the All-India Muslim League at Karachi, Mr. Jinnah observed derisively "that the cleverest people carrying on propaganda are the Communists. They have so many flags, the Red flag, the Soviet flag, the Congress flag and now they have been good enough to introduce the League flag too. They shout that they want a Congress-League settlement. Who says 'no?' But

of Pakistan and deplored that the Akalis were sitting on the fence and playing a game to retain power in Punjab and the Centre. Durlabh Singh, General Secretary, Progressive Akali Dal, moved an amendment suggesting that Mahatma Gandhi should consult nationalist Sikhs before making any final commitment. The following resolution, as amended, was passed: "This meeting welcomes Gandhiji's efforts to end the political deadlock through Congress-League unity and wishes that his efforts be crowned with success at the earliest."⁷²

While the Communists demanded self-determination as an absolute right and were serious about it, the Akalis demanded it only as a counterblast to Pakistan. They would insist upon it only if the Muslim demand was conceded. The Communists because of their pro-war attitude and active support for the Muslim League demand for Pakistan became persons non grata with the Congress, Akalis and Hindus. After the war, the Congress treated the Communists as traitors and expelled them for their opposition to the "Quit India Movement of 1942."⁷³

In the Punjab, the Congress expulsion of the Communists helped the Akalis to spread their influence among the rural areas. The

the question is on what basis?"

71. Mitra's Register (1944), Vol II, pp. 215-217; also The Tribune, 12-9-1944

72. Mitra's Register (1944), Vol. II, p. 217

73. Khushwant Singh, The Sikhs, p. 146

peasants, who had looked upon the Communists as Congressites with a socialist bias, were now told that the Reds were really godless traitors. In the 1946 elections not a single Communist was returned to the Punjab Legislative Assembly. "It was an Akali triumph with the aid of the Congress truncheon,"⁷⁴ remarks Bhushwant Singh.

74. Ibid

CHAPTER VIII

SECOND GENERAL ELECTIONS -- ANALIS JOIN GOVERNMENT

Simla Conference

The failure of the Cripps Mission, the repudiation by Jinnah of the Desai-Liaquat Ali Pact,¹ and the rejection of the Sapru proposals by the political parties created an atmosphere of disappointment, and to overcome that Lord Wavell framed certain proposals on his own. He wanted to solve the intractable communal

1. Menon, V.P., Transfer of Power, Pp. 176-179

Bhulabhai Desai had been working in close co-operation with Liaquat Ali Khan, the de facto leader of the Muslim League Party in the legislature, and there had been a certain amount of speculation with regard to a pact said to have been reached between them. Bhulabhai Desai saw Sir Evan Jenkins, then Private Secretary to the Viceroy, on 13 January. This was followed by an interview with the Viceroy on 20 January. Bhulabhai Desai's plan was as follows:

Desai and Jinnah should be invited to form an interim Government at the Centre;

They would then consult the groups in the Indian legislature and submit names to the Governor-General for inclusion in the Executive Council. The selection would not be confined to members of the legislature; Communal proportions within the Council would be settled by agreement. Bhulabhai Desai would be accommodating about this (he said that, speaking for himself, if the Muslim League insisted, he would agree to equality between them and the Congress, with a 20 per cent reservation for the rest);

The interim Government would work within the present constitution, but all the members of the Executive Council, except the Governor-General and the Commander-in-Chief, would be Indians;

As regards the long-term solution, there would be no commitments. The long-term solution might be easier when the interim Government had been in office for a year or so;

problem and to secure whole-hearted support for the war effort. He, therefore, urged the Secretary of States to permit him to put forth his proposals before the British Cabinet. He reached London on March 23, 1945, and began discussions with the Secretary of State, the India Committee and the Cabinet. His proposals were discussed at length and approved after having undergone many revisions. The surrender of Germany on May 7, 1945, brought about

In the provinces, the existing ministries would not be interfered with, though there might be adjustments based on party agreements with which His Majesty's Government would not be concerned. Section 93 administrations would be replaced by coalition ministries including both Congress and League elements; There would be no general elections either at the Centre or in the provinces; Detenus would not be released before the formation of the interim central Government.

Desai claimed that these proposals had the support of Gandhiji, that they were based on informal talks with Liaqat Ali Khan, and that if the British Government really wanted a central Government with political backing they could get it now. He was confident that Jinnah was aware and had approved of what had passed between him and Liaqat Ali Khan. But Jinnah made a public statement disclaiming any knowledge of the Desai-Liaqat Ali pact, and Desai was later repudiated by the leaders of the Congress as well, and the ultimate result of his labours was his own political extinction!

certain modifications. After about 10 weeks' stay in England, Lord Wavell returned to Delhi on June 4 and broadcast his proposals² on June 14, the declared aim of which was to "ease the present political situation and to advance India towards the goal of self-government."³

It was for the first time that the Department of External Affairs was proposed to be entrusted to an Indian member, for the first time a British High Commissioner in India was to be appointed as was being done in other Dominions, for the first time the Finance and Home members were proposed to be Indians. What was old was that the British Commander-in-Chief would retain his veto, but it was promised "not to be exercised unreasonably."⁴ The Viceroy

2. Bartarya, S.C., The Indian Nationalist Movement, Indian Press, Allahabad (1958), p. 245.

The Wavell proposals:

- (a) Formation of a new Executive Council at the Centre "within the framework of the Constitution, the Governor-General not exercising 'unreasonably' his constitutional power of control".
- i) The Council would represent the main communities and include equal proportions of caste Hindu & Muslims.
 - ii) It would be an entirely Indian Council except for the Viceroy and Commander-in-Chief.

The portfolio of External Affairs was to be transferred and Home and Finance Members were to be Indian.

- (b) The main tasks of the Council would be:
- i) prosecution of the war against Japan with utmost energy, (ii) To carry on the Government with all the manifold tasks of post-war development until a new permanent constitution commonly agreed upon comes into force, iii) to consider the means by which such an agreement can be achieved.
- (c) Resumption of office in provinces by coalition ministries.

in his broadcast and the Secretary of State in his statement, however, made it abundantly clear that there would be no change in the administrative machinery without the main elements in the country coming together.⁵

Lord Wavel¹ invited Indian leaders for talks on the basis of his proposals. The invitees included leaders belonging to different political parties and premiers of provinces, former premiers of provinces where Governor's rule had been enforced because of the resignation of Congress ministries, leaders and deputy leaders of parties in the Central Legislature, Rao Bahadur N. Shivraj, the scheduled caste leader, and Master Tara Singh, the Sikh leader.⁶

The Simla conference began on June 25, 1945. By a coincidence, the conference itself was made up, apart from Europeans,^a scheduled caste and^c Sikh representative, of an equal number of Hindus and Muslims.⁷ In all there were 21 invitees.

Master Tara Singh approved the proposals in general, but said that everything would depend on the spirit in which they were worked.

3. Menon, V.P., Transfer of Power, p. 182

4. Banerjee, A.C., Making of the Indian Constitution Documents, Vol. II, A. Mukerjee & Co., Calcutta (1948), Pp. 440-441
Also Bhagat, K.P., A Decade of Indo-British Relations 1937-47, Popular Book Depot, Bombay (1959), p. 309

5. Ibid

6. Banerjee, A.C., The Making of Indian Constitution, Vol. I, Pp. 97-98

7. Mitra's Register (1945), Vol I, p. 239

He feared that by coming together the parties might in the end drift further apart. The Sikhs did not identify themselves with the Congress, though in so far as the Congress favoured India's freedom they were in sympathy with it. For the first time, Master Tara Singh openly declared that Indian Army needed careful consideration as it had its own history and traditions and new ideas about it might injure people who had served the country well.⁸

Jinnah insisted on parity between Hindus and Muslims in the proposed Executive Council and the Muslim League's right to nominate all Muslim members. He could not tolerate nomination of even a single Muslim by the Congress or any Muslim party (such as Punjab's Unionist party), even out of the Congress quota.⁹ The Congress refused to concede Jinnah's demand and insisted upon its own national character and consequently its right of nominating at least one Muslim to the Executive Council. At one stage Master Tara Singh suggested that the dispute should be referred to arbitration. Being only an interim arrangement, each party could stick to its principle, but agree, without prejudice to its claims and rights, to abide by the award of an arbitrator for an interim period.¹⁰ But his advice was not heeded. Both sides considered it a point of principle. Thus, the dispute over one seat led to the failure of the Simla conference.¹¹

8. Menon, V.P., Transfer of Power, p. 197

9. Banerjee, A.C., Making of Indian Constitution, Vol. I., pp. 100-101. Also Mitra's Register (1945), Vol. II, p. 145

10. Mitra's Register (1945), Vol. II, p. 145-150

11. Ibid

Addressing pressmen at Simla on July 15, Master Tara Singh said that he was not surprised at the failure of the conference in view of the attitude which some of the delegates had adopted from the very start. He said that nobody could predict what might be the repercussions of "the failure of big men on a small issue" due to a wave of frustration and despair which was bound to sweep the country.¹² He proposed that if the leaders stuck to their positions as rigidly as they were doing, the issue must be taken out of their hands and those of the Viceroy and decided in a democratic way by the electorate.¹³ Master Tara Singh was, however, happy that the Sikhs had been recognised as one of the four main elements of Indian national life whose consent was necessary for framing any constitution. From this he naively concluded that Pakistan was an impossibility unless the Sikhs agreed to it. The Akali leader, therefore, wanted the Muslims to recognise that just as they could not submit to Hindu domination in united India, the Sikhs too could not submit to Muslim domination in Punjab and as such they (Muslims) had to make efforts to win their goodwill.¹⁴

Master Tara Singh said that while he was fundamentally opposed to Pakistan, he would demand establishment of an independent Sikh

12. Ibid

13. Ibid. Master Tara Singh pleaded for acceptance of the British Government's new plan (in his address to the community at Lahore).

14. Mehta, Asoka, The Simla Triangle, Pp. 50-51

State if the rest of India conceded Pakistan to Muslims. The proposed Sikh State would be established in central Punjab, including Lahore and Amritsar districts, where the Sikhs had their holy places.¹⁵ When he was told the Sikhs were not in a majority in Central Punjab, Master Tara Singh said that he was basing his demand on the analogy of Palestine, which had been declared a Jewish homeland even though Jews formed only 10 per cent of the population.¹⁶

But the chapter of negotiations was not closed with the failure of the Simla conference. Circumstances had rendered continuance of the chain necessary.¹⁷ Two months later Lord Wavell, who had been called to England for consultations with the Labour Government, was able to make a fresh announcement of British policy known as Wavell's plan.¹⁸ The All-India Akali Conference held at Gujranwala in

15. Ibid

16. Ibid

17. Indian Review, September 1946, p. 528

18. Mitra's Register (1945), Vol. II, Pp. 147-149
Wavell's second plan included:

(a) convening of a constituent assembly after the elections of Central and provincial legislatures;

(b) discussion with representatives of legislative assemblies to ascertain whether the proposals contained in the 1942 Declaration were acceptable or a modified scheme was preferable;

(c) discussions with representatives of Indian states with a view to ascertaining in what way they would best take their part in the constitution making body;

(d) formation of an executive council supported by the main Indian political parties. These proposals were issued with the faith that it would be possible for the British Labour Government to promote the early realisation of self-government in India.

September, 1945 rejected the Wavell proposals as being halting and unsatisfactory and as being "based upon the Cripps proposals, which were rejected by the Sikhs and other political parties." The conference assured the Indian National Congress that except for safeguarding the interests of the Sikhs, the Shiromani Akali Dal would co-operate with it in its fight for freedom.¹⁹ Though the conference rejected the British proposals, it decided to contest the elections which were part of the new proposals²⁰ because the new legislatures were to form the basis of the proposed constitution-making body. Master Tara Singh was authorised by the Shiromani Akali Dal to select the candidates.²¹

Despite Babu Labh Singh's election as president of the Shiromani Akali Dal, the chances of Congress-Akali co-operation did not improve much. The Congress had issued a circular forbidding its members to attend the Gujranwala Akali conference, which they had termed as a communal gathering. The Punjab Provincial Congress Committee threatened to suspend 14 of its Sikh members for participating in the Akali

19. The Tribune, 1-10-1945. The proceedings of the sixth All-India Akali conference and text of the resolution passed. For the second time in two years, Master Tara Singh summoned a panthic gathering. Invitations were sent to representatives of various Sikh organisations including moderates, extremists, members of Singh Sabhas, Chief Bhalsa Diwan, Akali Dal, gurdwara committees as also of different religious sects of the Sikh community - to obtain their verdict on the question of fighting the forthcoming general elections on a joint Sikh ticket, so as to return real representative of the Panth to the legislatures. Last time when this gathering was invited at Amritsar in August 1944 the Sikh community had unanimously protested against the C.R.-Gandhi formula for a communal settlement.

20. Mitra's Register (1945), Vol. II, p. 22

21. The Tribune, 1-10-1945. Proceedings of the sixth All-India Akali Conference and text of resolution passed.

conference and for being a party to the resolution adopted by the conference to fight elections on the Panthic ticket.²² Eleven of these members recanted and promised not to indulge in anti-Congress activities any more and even oppose Akali candidates if need be. The Punjab Provincial Congress Committee ultimately decided by a narrow majority to suspend the remaining three members, Babu Labh Singh, Dasant Singh Moga, Senior Vice-President, and Waryam Singh of Kurka Kalan, member of the working committee.²³ This strained relations between the Congress and Akalis.

Second General Elections -- Congress-Akali Coalition

In January 1946, elections were held to the Punjab Legislative Assembly. The Akali Party and the Congress Party had co-operated in the 1937 elections but were now poles apart. In December 1945, Akali-Congress parleys, which had been going on for over three months for an election agreement in Punjab, culminated in a compromise on four out of 33 Sikh seats only. These were considered to be strongholds of the Communists.²⁴ The Congress and the Akalis agreed to

22. The Tribune, 5-10-1945

23. The Tribune, 5-10-1945

24. Akali Patrika, 19-12-1945, Congress-Akali compromise

Also The Tribune, 19-12-1945

The Congress President, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, authorised on 14-12-1945 Maulana Daud Ghaznavi, President, Punjab Provincial Congress, Dr. Gopi Chand Bhargava and Pratap Singh Kairon, members, Congress High Command, to conduct negotiations with Akali leaders because such an agreement was needed for strengthening the Congress inside the Punjab Assembly. Akali leaders like Udham Singh Nagoke were of the opinion that the parting of ways was harmful for the Congress and the Akalis. The talks succeeded. On the side of Akalis credit goes to Baldev Singh, Baba Labh Singh and Master Tara Singh.

divide these four seats equally in order to eliminate triangular contests. But in the remaining 29 Sikh constituencies their candidates faced each other. The Akalis had offered only nine Sikh seats to the Congress against 20 for themselves. This was not acceptable to Sikh nationalists.²⁵

The party position in the 175-member Punjab Legislative Assembly in February 1946 was:²⁶ Congress 51 (Hindus - 40 including 4 Scheduled Castes, Muslims 1, Sikhs 10); Muslim League 74; Unionists 21 (Muslims 12, Hindus 2, Harijans 3, Christians 1, Malik Khizar Hyat, new leader, was elected from three constituencies), Panthic Akalis 23; Anglo-Indians 2; Independent Christian 1, Independent Labour 2, Independent Harijan 1.

It was significant that among Muslims, the Unionist Party, the erstwhile ruling party in the Punjab, was routed by the Muslim League. This fate befell the Unionists because of lack of a consistent policy. On the one hand they supported Pakistan and on the other they claimed to have a non-communal economic programme. This was an unrealistic stand in the changed political conditions of Punjab.

Pakistan And Elections

No doubt, the question of Pakistan was outside the scope of Indian legislatures.²⁷ But the election results unmistakably showed

25. Akali Patrika, 17-12-1945. Akali-Congress Negotiations
Also The Tribune, 17-12-1945

26. The Tribune, 24-2-1946. (i) The Congress Party of 51 had only 18 seats when it first entered the Assembly in 1937. There were two Muslims last time. (ii) The Muslim League Party was 74 strong, though it claimed to have 75 members by including Barkat
Bakht Khan.

The Tribune 2 2-1946. Article of H.N.Brailsford. The Shadow of ^{Famine}

that except the Muslim League no other Muslim party commanded the confidence of the Muslim electorate. The election also revealed that the Hindu masses were solidly behind the Congress.²⁸

In the Punjab, the Muslim League was no doubt the largest single party in the provincial legislature with 74 members but it required 14 supporters more to form the ministry. The Muslim Leaguers were not willing to join the Unionists in a coalition, and vice versa. The Nawab of Mandot spurned Khizr Hyat's offer to give up the Chief Ministership and to join the all-party coalition. The Nawab advised him and his party to stand aside if they genuinely wanted a stable ministry in the Punjab.²⁹

They initiated negotiations with the Congress and Akalis simultaneously. The Akalis got divided on the issue. One group led by Giani Kartar Singh negotiated with the Punjab Muslim League leader, the Nawab of Mandot, while Baldev Singh, the leader of the group, had parleys with Maulana Azad, President of the Indian National Congress and Bhim Sen Sachar, leader of the Congress party in the Punjab Legislature.

The Akali-League parleys almost succeeded. A formula on provincial administration and Sikh grievances was agreed to, but the Muslim League's demand for Pakistan proved a stumbling block. The

28. Ibid

29. The Tribune, 10-3-1946. Khizr Hyat's letter to the Nawab of Mandot and his reply.

Nawab of Mamdot declared that he could sacrifice a thousand ministries but not the principle.

When their talks with the Panthic Party did not succeed, the Muslim Leaguers thought it expedient to approach the Congress. The leaders of the Muslim League, the Nawab of Mamdot, Sir Feroz Khan Noon and Sardar Shaukat Hyat Khan, met Maulana Azad, who had come to Lahore to help in ministry-making in the Punjab. They suggested formation of a coalition ministry of the Congress, the Akali Party and the Muslim League.³⁰ Maulana Azad said that the Congress was willing to accept the proposal provided satisfactory assurances were given on three vital points. (1) the programme of the proposed coalition; (2) the difference between the three parties with regard to the future constitution should be kept out of the actual working of the coalition, and (3) there would be parity in the cabinet between the Muslim League on the one side and the Congress and Akalis on the other as the joint numerical strength of the Congress and Akali parties (51 and 23) was equal to that of the Muslim League (74).³¹ The Muslim League was willing to accept all the three conditions provided the Congress gave the assurance that it would include only non-Muslims in the quota allotted to it and no Congress Muslim would

30. The Tribune, 6-3-1946. Maulana Azad's statement on Ministry making.

31. The Tribune, 6-3-1946. Maulana Azad's statement on Ministry making

be proposed in the cabinet.³² The Congress was not prepared to accept this. The negotiations broke down.

Sachar, in his letter to his Muslim League counterpart, had laid down three conditions for co-operation with the League. First, there was to be parity between the Muslim League on the one hand and the Congress and Akalis on the other in the Cabinet. Secondly, the question of Pakistan and allied matters was not to be raised in the Punjab legislature till the coalition lasted. Thirdly, the coalition programme was to be based on the economic programme of the Congress as detailed in the Congress manifesto for promoting all-round communal harmony.³³

Maulana Azad was convinced that all those charged with responsibility in the Punjab Muslim League had accepted the Congress offer, but when they put a trunk call to Mr. Jinnah, who was at Shillong, they got the orders not to accept it.³⁴ The Nawab of Mamdot attributed the failure of the talks to the same reasons as were responsible for the failure of the Simla conference in 1945. Again, while the Muslim League was willing to concede the sole right of Sikh representation to the Akali Party, it would not accept its claim to a Sikh State without the approval of the Muslim League High Command.³⁵

32. The Tribune, 6-3-1946. Maulana Azad's statement on Ministry making.

33. The Tribune, 6-3-1946, Mamdot-Sachar correspondence released to the Press.

34. The Tribune, 7-3-1946. Congress-League Pact previewed by Jinnah-Maulana Azad's statement.

35. The Tribune 9-3-1946. Statement of Nawab of Mamdot.

With time, patience and discreet promises of loaves and fishes the Muslim League would probably have succeeded in winning over a sufficient number of members to secure a majority.³⁶ But it would not listen to any other view nor appeared to be democratic in its approach. Ultimately, the Congress, the Akalis and the Unionists decided to form a coalition ministry. Baldev Singh induced Khizar Hyat to head the coalition ministry supported by Congress, Hindus, Akalis and his own nine Muslim followers. Khizar Hyat Khan, by all accounts, reluctantly and after much persuasion agreed and the Governor accepted the arrangement.³⁷ The Governor was personally inclined towards the Muslim League, but he found that he had no option but to invite Khizar Hyat Khan, the leader of the Unionist Party, to form the Government.³⁸ They claimed the backing of 98 members out of a total 175; some members crossed the floor on the opening day of the Assembly on March 8, 1946.³⁹ Since the beginning of provincial self-government, the Muslims had played a leading part in every ministry in the Punjab as their number and electorate entitled

36. Moon, *Divide and Quit*, p. 81

37. *Ibid.*, p. 71

38. Azad, Abul Kalam, *India Wins Freedom*, Orient Longman, Calcutta (1959), pp. 128-130

39. *The Tribune*, 8-3-1946. There were three desertions from the Unionist Party to the Muslim League on the opening day of the Assembly. All Independents and Christians joined the coalition.

them to. Now for the first time a predominantly non-Muslim government was installed in power.⁴⁰

Maulana Azad's Role

Political circles throughout the country generally felt that Maulana Azad had shown great skill and statesmanship in the negotiations which had led to the formation of the Punjab Ministry. The 'National Herald', the organ of the U.P. Congress, congratulated the Maulana on the manner in which he had solved the complex and difficult problem of Punjab and went so far as to say that his handling of the situation was one of the clearest examples of statesmanship and skill in negotiation exhibited by any Congress leader. Through Maulana Azad's endeavours, the Muslim League had been isolated. The Congress, though it was in a minority, had become the decisive factor in Punjab affairs.

Jawahar Lal Nehru, however, felt differently. He said that the alliance of Congress with the Unionist Party was wrong in principle. He argued that the Muslim League was a mass organisation and that the Congress should have formed a coalition with the Muslim League and not with the Unionists in the Punjab. This was the line which the Communists had adopted openly.⁴¹ Jawahar Lal was partially

40. Moon, Divide and Quit, p. 71

41. Azad, Abul Kalam, India Wins Freedom, Pp. 128-130

influenced by their views and might have thought that Maulana was sacrificing Leftist principles in forming a coalition with the Unionist Party, consisting mostly of landlords.⁴² Gandhi, however, came out strongly in support of Maulana Azad. He said though the Congress was in a minority in Punjab it had secured a decisive voice in the formation and working of the ministry through negotiation. When Gandhi expressed himself in these categorical terms, all members of the Working Committee supported Maulana Azad and Jawahar Lal had to acquiesce in.⁴³

Congress-Akali Pact

The coalition was further cemented by what came to be known as the Congress-Akali Pact. The agreement was arrived at in November 1946 between the leader of the Congress Legislature Party, Bhim Sen Sachar, and the leader of the Panthic Legislature Party, Swaran Singh, in consultation with and approval of the Congress High Command. Swaran Singh had succeeded Baldev Singh in the Punjab Cabinet when the latter joined the interim Government at the Centre as Defence Minister in September 1946. The terms of the pact⁴⁴ were: (1) That wherever a cabinet vacancy occurred by death,

42. Ibid

43. Ibid

44. The Tribune, 18-12-1946. Congress-Akali Pact binding -- statement by Dr. Lehna Singh, General Secretary, Punjab Provincial Congress Committee.

resignation or otherwise, the vacated seat shall go to a nominee of the same party which represented that seat; (2) That each party would call upon its petitioners to withdraw their election petitions; and (3) That in a by-election the two parties would support any candidate put up as a result of an agreement.

Explaining the pact, Swaran Singh said that "so long as the coalition lasts there cannot be a fight between the coalescing parties outside the legislature." The immediate effect of the ratification of the pact by the Congress was there was a Panthic (Akali) candidate in the Batala Sikh Constituency.⁴⁵ Both parties supported him.

But the working committee of the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee considered the pact as an affront to it since it had not been taken into confidence by Bhim Sen Sachar. It, therefore, repudiated the pact and disapproved the action of the Congress Assembly Party. The working committee considered it not only "un-constitutional and undesirable" but also "retrogressive and obstructive in the path of smooth working of a democratic organisation like the Congress."⁴⁶ The resolution further stated that an agreement of this nature that affected nationalist Sikhs exclusively had seriously injured their political feelings. Under such circum-

45. The Tribune, 18-12-1946.

46. The Tribune, 10-11-1946. Resolution passed by the working committee of the Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee.

stances it had become not only difficult but impossible for them to carry the message of the Congress to the Sikh masses. This development was bound to damage the cause of the Congress among Sikh masses. Mr. Ram Kishan, Secretary of the Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee, and Mehta Rup Lal met Acharya Kripalani, the new Congress President, to apprise him of the situation created by the Sachar-Swaran Singh pact. After listening to them the Acharya declared that the Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee resolution was not valid and that the leader of the Congress Assembly party had acted within his rights. Thus the pact was saved.⁴⁷ It created Akali-Congress amity and provided them an opportunity to work collectively for the national cause.

47. Akali Patrika, 22-12-1946
Also The Tribune, 22-12-1946

CHAPTER IXCABINET MISSION CONCEDES PAKISTANAKALIS DEMAND SIKH HOMELANDCabinet Mission

As the year 1945 came to close, Indo-British relations had improved. This was so because ~~the~~ World War II ended successfully for the Allies; because the British Labour Party won the elections and successfully formed for the first time in British history, a full Labour Government with an absolute majority; because the Indian political prisoners were being slowly released; because of the British Labour Government's fulfilling the constituent Assembly, Indianised army and Governor-General's Executive Council; and because of a lenient attitude towards the three leaders of Indian National Army of Subhash Bose. National struggles for freedom had been intensified all over the world, India too, was in the throes of a crisis, and as Attlee admitted during a debate on the appointment of Cabinet Mission in the House of Commons, the tide of nationalism was running very fast in India and that it was time for clear and definite action. A solution of Indian problem was called forth.¹

With this purpose in view, on February 19, 1946, Britain's Labour Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, announced that his Majesty's

1. Menon, V.P., Transfer of Power, pp. 234-235

Government had decided to send to India a special mission of three cabinet ministers to seek, in association with the Viceroy, an agreement with Indian leaders on the principles and procedures relating to constitutional issue,² with the intention of using their utmost endeavours to help India to attain freedom as speedily and as fully as possible.³ The members of the mission were Lord Pathick-Lawrence, Secretary of State for India, Sir Stafford Cripps, President of the Board of Trade, and Mr. A.V.Alexander, First Lord of the Admiralty.⁴ Among the mission staff was Major Billy Short, who had by this time returned to England.⁵ His inclusion was a small but graceful gesture to the Sikhs, suggesting that their interest would be safeguarded.⁶

The Cabinet Mission arrived in Delhi on March 24. A long chain of meetings and negotiations followed. In all, 472 Indian leaders were interviewed in 182 sittings. Every shade of opinion was taken into consideration. The main parties dealt with, however, were the Congress, the Muslim League and the Sikhs.

Master Tara Singh had an interview with the British delegation on April 5, 1946. He was accompanied by Giani Kartar Singh,

2. Mitra's Register (1946) Vol. I, p. 38
Also Menon, V.P., Transfer of Power, p. 234

3.&4. Ibid

5. Campbell, Johnson, A Mission with Mountbatten, Robert Hale, London (1951), p. 136; also Moon, Divide And Quit, p. 43

6. Moon, Divide And Quit, p. 43

Harnam Singh and Baldev Singh. (The last had a separate meeting with the Mission also). The Mission wished particularly to know whether the Sikh community would prefer the transfer of power to a single body or to more than one body and if power were to be transferred to two bodies, which of them would the Sikh community wish to join; and further if such a thing were practicable and could be arranged, would the Sikhs wish to have a separate autonomous state of their own. The question was significant and meaningful. But each gave his own point of view distinct from that of the others. They represented the case of the Sikh community. They were interviewed together, though each had his own individual view to put forward.⁷

Master Tara Singh told the Mission that he stood for a united India and for some sort of the coalition government of all communities. The Hindus and Muslims were not united and would remain antagonistic for some time. In such a situation, the Sikhs, in a united India, would have a degree of bargaining power. If India were divided the Sikhs would prefer a separate independent Sikh State with the right to federate either with Hindustan or Pakistan.⁸ This would obviate the possibility of their subjugation by the majority of one community or the other.

Giani Kartar Singh's position was that the Sikhs would feel unsafe both in united India and Pakistan. They should have a

7. Menon, V.P., Transfer of Power, p. 242

8. Ibid, Pp. 242-243

province of their own where they should be in a dominant, or almost dominant, position.⁹ When Sir Stafford Cripps asked him to define this province, Giani Kartar Singh suggested it should comprise the whole of Jullundur and Lahore divisions together with Hissar, Karnal, Ambala and Simla districts of Ambala Division and Montgomery and Lyallpur districts of Multan division.

Harnam Singh opposed partition of India because it was against the wishes and interests of the Sikh community. Moreover, both a divided India and independent Sikh State would be easy preys to foreign invasion.¹⁰ He advocated increased representation for Sikhs in the proposed constitution-making body and pleaded for a separate one for Sikhs if there was to be more than one such body.

Baldev Singh, who was a Minister in the Punjab Government at the time, was interviewed separately.¹¹ Sir Stafford Cripps asked him especially how Khalistan could be formed. Baldev Singh suggested that it should comprise Punjab, excluding Multan and Rawalpindi Divisions, with an approximate boundary along with the Chenab. An area comprising Ambala, Jullundur and Lahore Divisions was the smallest that could be contemplated. But the Sikhs strongly favoured a united India because the small successor states would be at the mercy of great powers.¹² Departing from the previous stand of demanding

9. to

12. Ibid, Pp. 242-243

a separate "honoured home" for the Sikh, Baldev Singh held the view that the best solution was a united India with safeguards for minorities in the form of weighted communal proportion in the legislatures.

Elucidating this point Baldev Singh said that in some of the British Indian provinces, such as Bombay, weightage was given to Muslims against the Hindus. If the Muslims were content to have 45 per cent of the seats instead of 51 per cent in the Punjab legislature and the balance were divided between the Hindus and the Sikhs, then Sikh interests could be protected.¹³

Master Tara Singh also submitted^a memorandum on behalf of the Shiromani Akali Dal which demanded a single constitution body promising them proper representation; the abolition of the statutory Muslim majority in legislature; strengthening the Sikhs by increased representation, carving out such a province as to ensure the Sikh majority with the inclusion of important Sikh shrines in it.¹⁴

The Cabinet Mission released its scheme to the press on May 16. Although the mission recognised that the Sikhs were the third important community in India, its proposal really aimed at a settlement between the Muslim League and the Congress party. The mission rejected any proposal for division of India, but suggested instead a confederation type of constitutional system consisting of three tiers - provinces, "groups of provinces" and a very weak federal

13. Ibid

14. See Appendix IV

centre. Of the three groups of provinces, two were Muslim majority groups, one in the north-west and the other in the north-east of India. The Punjab was included in the north-west Muslim majority group. No special weightage was given to the minorities as representation was granted on the basis of the relative numerical strength of the communities. As part of the long-term arrangements, a constituent assembly was to be established for drafting a constitution for India. As for short-term arrangements, an interim government was to be formed consisting of representatives of major political parties.¹⁵

These proposals left Hindus and Sikhs of Punjab without sufficient safeguards in the Muslim majority province of Punjab and in the Muslim majority north-west group of provinces.

It was, however, argued by the Mission that the Muslims would find it impossible to rule the province without Sikh support. The Sikhs would, in fact, hold the balance of power. The Muslim League Party in the Punjab might, for the time being, seem hostile to them, but ultimately, like the Unionist, they would be compelled to use them. By such arguments Major Short and the Cabinet Mission tried to reassure the Sikhs, but they would not be comforted. They had strong suspicions that the Muslims were out to crush them.¹⁶ The two communities, therefore, opposed the proposals. Master Tara Singh felt that under such a constitutional arrangements the Sikhs

15. Menon, V.P., Transfer of Power, pp. 466 to 475

16. Moon, Divide and Quit, pp. 49-50

were doomed.¹⁷

Akalis Demand Sikh Homeland

The Sikhs claimed the Punjab not only as their homeland but also their holy land. In case Pakistan was to be granted to Muslims, the Sikhs insisted on a separate sovereign State for themselves. They rejected the Cabinet Mission scheme on the ground that the position of the Sikhs in Group "B" was very unsatisfactory and they could not hope to get justice at the hands of the Muslim majority.¹⁸

The Sikh demand for a separate state had been officially blessed on March 9, 1946, by the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, the central representative organisation for the control and management of Sikh shrines in the Punjab.¹⁹ The resolution embodying the separate Sikh State theory was supported by several sections, including the Communists, the nationalists and representatives of Sikh States, and was unanimously passed.²⁰ The boundaries of the new Sikh State were, however, not defined in the resolution.²¹

From the trend of the speeches delivered at the meeting, it was clear that the resolution was intended as a counterblast to the Muslim League demand for Pakistan.²² For instance, addressing the meeting, Giani Kartar Singh, M.L.A., said that it was an open secret

17. Menon, V.P., Transfer of Power, p. 272

18. The Tribune, 11-6-1946

19. The Tribune, 11-3-1946. Separate State for Sikhs, (Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee resolution); Akali Patrika, 11-3-

20. The Tribune, 11-3-1946; Akali Patrika, 11-3-1946

21. The Tribune, 11-3-1946; Akali Patrika, 11-3-1946

22. The Tribune, 11-3-1946; Akali Patrika, 11-3-1946

that Pakistan in some shape or form was going to be conceded by the British Government, which had already accepted it in principle. He thought that the right of self-determination in predominantly Muslim provinces with a loose type of federation at the centre might be granted. If the Congress demand for 21 provinces or State, ^{accepted, then there would be no harm if one of the States was} reserved for the Sikhs.²³

A similar demand for a Sikh State, "which should include a substantial majority of the Sikh population and their sacred shrines and historic gurdwaras with provision for the transfer and exchange of population and property," was made by the executive committee of the Shiromani Akali Dal in a resolution passed on March 22, 1946.²⁴ The resolution inter alia stated that the British had taken Punjab as a trust from the last Sikh ruler during his minority, hence it should be returned to them. Moreover their entity was being threatened on account of the persistent demands for Pakistan by the Muslims.

The matter, however, did not end with the passing of resolutions. Master Tara Singh threatened to start a "triangular morcha" -- against the Government, the Congress and the Muslim League -- which were going to be three major parties in the interim government.²⁵ He also wrote a letter to the Secretary of States about the injustice done to the Sikhs.²⁶

23. The Tribune, 11-3-1946; Akali Patrika, 11-3-1946

24. Akali Patrika, 23-3-1946; The Tribune, 23-3-1946

25. Akali Patrika, 25-5-1946; The Tribune, 25-5-1946; Mitrah Register (1946), Vol. I, p. 58.

26. See Appendix V

Formation of Panthic Pratinidhi Board

The Cabinet Mission proposals not only provided a God-sent opportunity to firebrand Akalis, but infuriated even moderate leaders like Ujjal Singh who declared that the proposals had made every Sikh a rebel against the British rulers.²⁷ All parties of the Sikhs, with the exception of the Central Akali Dal, offered unconditional support to the All-parties Sikh Conference which was convened on June 9 and 10, 1946, to consider the Cabinet Mission proposals.²⁸ The Central Akali Dal of Baba Bhardak Singh offered its co-operation provided (1) the conference was convened under the name of All-Sikh Parties Conference; (2) the programme of morcha was made crystal clear and the question of leadership of the morcha was settled beforehand; and (3) the list of invitees was mutually prepared.²⁹ The conference was attended by about 800 Sikhs representing Akalis, Mirsalas, Namdharis, Mangarhias, Nihangs, Chief Khalsa Diwan, All-India Sikh Youth League, Sikh Students Federation and Singh Sabhas. It passed a resolution declaring the Cabinet Mission proposals wholly unacceptable to the Sikhs as these did not meet their just demands and were put forward without their consent. A council of action, called the Panthic Pratinidhi Board, was formed.³⁰ Col. Miranjan Singh Gill of the Indian National Army was nominated its

27. Akali Patrika, 10-6-1946; The Tribune 10-6-1946

28. The Tribune, 10-6-1946; Akali Patrika, 10-6-1946

29. The Tribune, 7-6-1946. Baba Bhardak Singh's statement.

30. Akali Patrika, 10-6-1946; The Tribune, 10-6-1946; Mitra's Register (1946), Vol I, Pp. 202-203

"Dictator".³¹ The other members of the board were Master Tara Singh, Baldev Singh, Bhai Jodh Singh, Udham Singh Nagoke, Sarmukh Singh Chamak and Nidhan Singh Alam, Bawa Harkishan Singh, Babu Labh Singh, President, Shiroamni Akali Dal, Giani Gurmukh Singh Musafir, Col. Raghbir Singh and one representative each of the Chief Khalsa Diwan and the Nihangs. The council was empowered to co-opt more members subject to the condition that the total did not exceed 25, and was authorised to take any action it deemed fit on behalf of the Sikh community as a whole.³²

The resolution was quite right so far as general terms were concerned. But it was never made clear at that moment, or at any other, what exactly Sikh demands were though their thoughts were turning more and more to the idea of partitioning the Punjab so that they might escape altogether the threat of Muslim domination.³³

Akalis Stay Out of Interim Government

On June 16, 1946, the Viceroy and the Cabinet Mission released a joint statement underlining the need for setting up a strong and representative interim government in India.³⁴ The Viceroy invited Baldev Singh to join it as a representative of the Sikhs. The

31. Col. Niranjan Singh Gill had his early education in Aitchison College, Prince of Wales, R.I.M. College, Dehra Dun, and at Sandhurst. He was commissioned in 1925 at an early age and was the first Indian to be appointed Adjutant of a depot at Agra. He was also the first Indian to be appointed in the Garrison Head Quarters. In 1940 he was appointed member of a committee to inquire into the disaffection among Sikhs in the Indian Army. For his independent approach in the report, he incurred the displeasure of the Blimps and they managed to send him away to Malaya. It was during this inquiry that he came into contact with Master Tara Singh and other Akali leaders.

Panthic Pratinidhi Board, however, directed him not to accept the invitation, "participation in the interim government involved acceptance of those very proposals which had been rejected by it."³⁵ Soon after the Sikh conference, Baldev Singh wrote a letter to the British Prime Minister, Mr. Attlee, seeking his personal intervention for remedying the wrong done to the Sikh community by the Cabinet Mission. It was fairly clear, Baldev Singh said, that the overriding factor which had weighed with the mission in formulating its views had been to give every consideration possible to the Muslim League. The League, on the other hand, had made it plain that it accepted the proposals with the object of opting out the Muslim areas and establishing an independent and sovereign Muslim State.³⁶

Baldev Singh emphasised that the mission had admitted the injustice of including predominantly non-Muslim areas (mainly Sikh) within a sovereign Pakistan State.³⁷ The mission had recognised

32. Mitra's Register (1946), Vol. I, Pp. 203-204; The Tribune, 11-6-1946; Akali Patrika, 11-6-1946

33. Moon, Divide and Quit, Pp. 49-50

34. Akali Patrika, 17-6-1946; The Tribune, 17-6-1946

35. Mitra's Register (1946), Vol. I, Pp. 205-206. The Panthic Board held a meeting at Amritsar on June 22 to consider the invitation extended to Baldev Singh by the viceroy. Colonel Miranjan Singh Gill presided. It passed a resolution after six hours' deliberations in which about 50 prominent Sikhs participated. The resolution said: "In view of the decision of the Panthic gathering of June 9 and 10, 1946, totally rejecting the Cabinet Mission's proposals as being unjust and gravely detrimental to the interests of the Sikhs, and in view of the fact that participation in the interim government involves the acceptance of these proposals, the Panthic Board cannot advise any Sikh to serve on the interim government on the present basis."

the weight of Sikh fears against Muslim majority domination. It was true that the mission had rejected the demand of a sovereign Muslim State, nevertheless by imposing the group system it had involved the Sikhs "in what must in the end amount to a perpetual Muslim communal rule;" and it had made no provision whatever for the protection of Sikh cultural, social, or even religious rights on the basis assured to Hindus and Muslims. The Sikh community felt that it was "palpably unjust."³⁸ Statutory provision had been made for resolving major communal issues in the constituent assembly as between Hindus and Muslims, but the Sikhs, who were one of the three main communities of India, had been ignored. Baldev Singh urged that the provision should, in fairness, be extended to the Sikh community.³⁹

Attlee replied that the statement of May 16 could not be altered in the way the Sikhs desired. At the same time, the Viceroy was ever-ready to discuss the position with the Congress President and would have been prepared to do likewise with the Muslim League President had not the League decided to withdraw its acceptance of the statement of May 16. It was unfortunate that the Sikh community should have decided meanwhile not to elect its representatives to

36. Menon, V.P., Transfer of Power, p. 291

37. Ibid

38. Ibid

39. Ibid

the constituent assembly.⁴⁰ It was obviously difficult to raise with any other party the position of the Sikhs in the constituent assembly when, through their own decision, they remained outside it. He hoped that the Sikh community would decide to co-operate in the process of constitution making.⁴¹ It would surely be a mistake if the Sikhs refused to use the opportunity which had been offered to them, simply because they assumed in advance that the mere weight of voting power would be used to injure their vital interests and to deny their natural aspirations. Attlee assured Baldev Singh that the constituent assembly would face its problems in quite a different spirit.⁴²

Sikhs Boycott Constituent Assembly

Despite Attlee's assurance the Panthic Board decided to boycott the elections to the Constituent Assembly in keeping with its decision to reject the Cabinet Mission plan. Sikh Congressmen were scheduled to contest the elections as directed by the Congress, but in view of the majority decision of the Panthic Pratinidhi Board they too decided to fall in line with the board's wishes.⁴³ The only conclusion that the Sikhs seemed to have reached, therefore, was that the members of the British Cabinet were misled as to the true facts of the case. They were treating the Sikhs as they were

40. Ibid

41. Ibid

42. Ibid

43. The Tribune, 11-7-1946

treating the Parsis, the Anglo-Indians or the Scheduled Castes. The Cabinet Mission had obviously neglected the political aspirations of the Khalsa. If the community did not realise its aims by fair and constitutional means, then the majority of its members were prepared to wade in a sea of blood, if necessary, to attain them.⁴⁴

The Akalis were confident that there would have to be a Sikh State. The pity is that they could not see the point of view of others. Nor in their extreme frustration could they think of hammering out a plan out of the impasse. They thought more of fighting than thrashing out the problem. Considering the case of the Sikhs, later in June 1946, Laden Sarasfield wrote in his book, "Betrayal of the Sikhs," that the Congress was solidly against partition of the country was, of course, well known, but it should also have been clear to Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders that those were times when one had to take a realistic view of important problems, even though that view might not be strictly in line with one's own or of one's party's policy, ^{That this was one of the occasions} when such a view was required to clean, because unless you could grasp the potentialities and realities of Pakistan contained in the Cabinet Mission's plan and persuade or

44. Sarasfield, Laden, Betrayal of the Sikhs, Lahore Book Shop, Lahore (1946), p. 132

compel the Muslims to live under what they imagine to be Hindu domination, then you would have to grant the Sikhs Khalistan to remove their fear of Muslim domination.⁴⁵

Soon after the decision to boycott the Constituent Assembly was announced, a telegraphic communication was received from the Congress President, Jawaharlal Nehru, by Kiranjan Singh Gill and Pratap Singh Kairon, M.L.A., member of the Congress High Command, "earnestly requesting reconsideration of the position as this will have far-reaching consequences."⁴⁶ The message also suggested that Congress Sikh members should elect representatives pending consideration of future policy otherwise a conflict would arise with the Congress policy and programme. Nehru pointed out that "it is always possible even after the elections to consider the policy of attendance or boycott".⁴⁷

On receiving the telegram, Congress Sikh M.L.A.s decided to file nomination papers. Pratap Singh, who later became Chief Minister of Punjab, met Kiranjan Singh Gill and Baldev Singh, leader of the Akali M.L.A.s.⁴⁸ He persuaded them to agree to file nomination papers pending reconsideration of the matter. Gill and Baldev Singh, in consultation with Master Tara Singh and Debu Lakh Singh, modified the earlier decision and allowed the Akalis to file their nomination

45. Ibid

46. The Tribune, 11-7-1946; Akali Patrika, 11-7-1946

47. The Tribune, 11-7-1946; Akali Patrika, 11-7-1946

48. The Tribune, 12-7-1946; Akali Patrika, 12-7-1946

papers. The papers were filed by the Congress and Akali nominees at the eleventh hour as under:⁴⁹

Congress Sikhs: Pratap Singh Kairon, Kapur Singh, Babu Bachan Singh and Shiv Singh.

Akali Sikhs: Baldev Singh, Ujjal Singh, Karotam Singh, Bawa Harkishan Singh.

As the boycott decision stood, Col. Gill convened a meeting of Sikh M.L.A.s on July 14 to reconsider it. The meeting stuck to its earlier resolution for the boycott of the Constituent Assembly. It, however, passed a resolution appreciating the noble spirit of accommodation shown by Nehru at that critical time and assured him of the Sikhs' earnest desire to work in a spirit of understanding and co-operation with the Congress in the cause of independence and justice for all sections of people. Consequently, all the eight candidates withdrew from the contest.⁵⁰

The Panthic Pratinidhi Board appointed a committee of nine to negotiate with the Congress. It comprised Miranjan Singh Gill, President, Maharaj Pratap Singh, Jathedar Udham Singh Nagoke, Giani Kartar Singh, Baldev Singh, Saraukh Singh Chamak, Amar Singh, Sampuran Singh, M.L.A. (Central) and Prof. Neta Singh.⁵¹

Col. Gill led a deputation to discuss with the Congress Working Committee the Sikh attitude towards the Constituent Assembly.⁵²

49. The Tribune, 12-7-1946; Akali Patrika, 12-7-1946

50. Akali Patrika, 15-7-1946; The Tribune, 15-7-1946

51. The Tribune, 12-7-1946

By the middle of August 1946, the attitude of the Panthic Pratinidhi Board changed and it decided to allow the Sikhs to join the Constituent Assembly because "of the situation created by events and development that have taken place since July 5 when the board reiterated its decision to boycott the constituent assembly."

During the intervening period the Secretary of State for India had appealed to the Sikhs to reconsider their boycott decision. The Viceroy too, in his replies to communications from certain Sikh leaders had expressed his willingness "to accommodate the Sikh viewpoint." The main reason, however, for the change was the recognition, though belated, by the Congress Working Committee of the injustice done to the Sikhs by the Cabinet Mission's proposals and the assurance that it would give all possible support to the Sikhs in redress of their legitimate grievances and in securing for them adequate safeguards for protecting their interests.⁵³ But the Board declared that "if, unfortunately, such methods failed then the Panth will undoubtedly be justified in going back to its previous resolve of boycott and direct action and in recalling the Sikh members of the Constituent Assembly."⁵⁴

52. The Tribune, 11-8-1946. Harnam Singh, Saraukh Singh Chamak, Udham Singh Nagoke and Sant Nidhan Singh were members for the delegation.

53. The Tribune, 15-8-1946. Sikhs to join the Constituent Assembly, Panthic Board resolution.

54. The Tribune, 15-8-1946. Sikhs to join the Constituent Assembly, Panthic Board resolution.

In view of the changed circumstances, Master Tara Singh, who in May, 1946, had held out a threat to start a triangular war, now decided to postpone it "indefinitely in the name of Panthic solidarity." It led to the resignation of Niranjan Singh Gill from the presidency of the Panthic Pratinidhi Board. The threat to the Sikh community was considered no longer imminent nor was there any need for direct action.⁵⁵ In November, nationalist Sikhs also decided to quit the Panthic Pratinidhi Board because of a dispute with the Akalis over gurdwara elections.⁵⁶ The Namdhari, too, left the Board due to differences with the Akalis.⁵⁷ As a result the Panthic Pratinidhi Board ceased to be representative body of the Sikhs, although the Akalis kept it alive formally for some time.

On November 26, 1946, the British Cabinet invited the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, and five members of the Interim Government (two Congress, two Muslim League and one Sikh) to England for ironing out the differences regarding the interpretation of the grouping clause in the Cabinet Mission scheme.⁵⁸ After consultations, the British Government issued a statement accepting the Muslim League's interpretation: that the provinces must enter the groups and decisions in sections should be taken by a simple majority vote. The Congress

55. The Tribune, 6-9-1946. Col. Gill's statement.

56. The Tribune, 5-11-1946. Nationalist Sikhs quit Pratinidhi Board.

57. The Tribune, 5-11-1946

58. Congress members: Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel
Muslim Members: M.A. Jinnah and Liaqat Ali Khan
Sikh Members: Baldev Singh

interpretation was that the provinces had the right to decide both as to the grouping and as to their constitution.⁵⁹ The Congress was put in a dilemma by the new interpretation. It could neither accept the new position nor reject it for the latter meant abandoning framing of the constitution through the Constituent Assembly. It hesitatingly accepted the British interpretation.

The Congress decision naturally infuriated the Akalis, who had till then co-operated with the Congress in the hope of securing justice and support for their cause. Master Tara Singh and Giani Kartar Singh considered the Congress approval as betrayal of the Sikhs for now they would have to go into the Muslim majority group of western Indian provinces.⁶⁰ The Sikhs had no alternative but to demand partition of the Punjab more emphatically to save at least half of the Punjab from Muslim domination. Even a nationalist Sikh of Mangal Singh's stature was constrained to remark that "the acceptance of the British Government's interpretation regarding compulsory grouping by the Congress was "another dangerous slip towards Pakistan and that the Sikhs' worst fears had come true that the interests of the smaller non-Muslim minorities like the Sikhs and Hindus in B and C

Vallabhbhai Patel declined to accompany the Congress delegates at the last moment. See Menon, V.P., Transfer of Power, p. 328

59. Mitra's Register (1946), Vol. II, p. 53

60. The Tribune, 7-1-1947

groups would ultimately be sacrificed at the altar of appeasement of the Muslim League. The only solution which will help the Sikhs is partition of the Punjab into two parts with the Ravi as the dividing line.⁶¹

61. The Tribune, 9-1-1947. Partition of Punjab into two parts, statement of Mangal Singh, M.L.A. (Central).

CHAPTER X

FORMATION OF PAKISTAN

THE TRAGEDY OF SIKHS

Muslim League Takes To Direct Action -- Holocaust For Minorities

The Muslim League Council resolved on June 6, 1946, to accept the Cabinet Mission scheme.¹ It authorised Jinnah to negotiate with the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, about the proposed interim government at the Centre till the final transfer of power was executed. After talks with party leaders, the Viceroy invited 14 persons to join his Executive Council. He also announced that if one party declined the invitation, he would appoint others. The Congress Party declined the invitation on June 25 whereas the Muslim League accepted it. The next day the Viceroy made another announcement postponing formation of the interim government. This infuriated Jinnah and the Muslim League, and they accused the Cabinet Mission and the Viceroy of eating their words.² A meeting of the All-India

1. Banerjee, A.C., The Making of Indian Constitution, Vol. I, p. 176.

2. Ibid, p. 221; Moon, Divide and Quit, p. 56; also see Gauba, K.L., Inside Pakistan, Rajkamal Publications, Delhi (1948) Pp. 40-41. In accordance with the Cabinet Mission, a constituent assembly was elected. On September 2 an interim government headed by Pandit Nehru took office. Between May 16 and September 2 the Muslim League adopted a vacillating attitude. At first the League accepted the scheme although it negated a Pakistan visualised by Jinnah. The League later withdrew its resolution rejecting the scheme and turned its attention to direct action. As a result the League went into the wilderness of revolt. The interim government gained prestige while Jinnah quibbled over the scheme. He was distracted with envy at the sudden power and

Muslim League was summoned in Bombay on July 29. It resolved to withdraw its previous acceptance and to reject the Cabinet Mission and further to launch "direct action" for vindicating its honour and for getting rid of the present slavery under the British and contemplated future under Hindu domination.³ The Council called upon the working committee to prepare forthwith a programme of struggle to be launched, if necessary.⁴

From then onward, the speeches made by Jinnah and other Muslim League leaders became more and more provocative and indirectly threatened non-Muslims. In his speech at the Muslim League council meeting, Jinnah said: "Never have we in the whole history of the League done anything except by constitutional methods. But today we bid good-bye to constitutional methods. Today we have forged a pistol and are in a position to use it."⁵ Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan, Abdur Rab Nishtar, Shaukat Hyat Khan and Feroze Khan Noon

prestige which Nehru and his colleagues had attained. The Governor-General, who was sympathetic to the League, however, made it easy for Jinnah's nominee to join the interim government without accepting the Cabinet Mission Scheme or indeed without accepting conditions of any kind. And so while within the interim government the Muslim League was committed to bring to fruition the Constituent Assembly and other details of the scheme, outside it had launched "direct action" in many parts of the country.

3. Banerjee, A.C., The Making of Indian Constitution, Vol. I, Pp. 260-264. Resolution; Ram Gopal, Indian Muslims, p. 316

4. Banerjee, A.C., The Making of Indian Constitution, Vol. I, Pp. 264-265

5. Ibid

incited the Muslims with their provocative and violent speeches, pouring torrents of scorn on non-Muslims.⁶ Direct action, therefore, meant the use of violent means in speech and action against non-Muslims. This was the interpretation given by Muslim League leaders themselves. The cry of Islam in danger inflamed the Muslim masses. Non-Muslims were appalled at the unveiled threats. The British Press was unanimous in condemning the line taken by Jinnah.⁷

6. The Statesman, 1-8-1946; Mitra's Register (1946), Vol. I, p. 96. Liaqat Ali Khan, General Secretary, All-India Muslim League, told the Associated Press of America that direct action meant "resorting to non-constitutional methods; it can take any and whatever form may suit the conditions under which we live." They could not eliminate any method. Direct action meant any action against the law. Abdur Rab Nishtar, leader of the Muslim League in North-west Frontier Province, declared: "Pakistan can only be achieved through shedding blood of ourselves and, if need be, of others. Muslims are no believers in Ahimsa." Shaukat Hyat Khan said: "Punjab Muslims do not believe in non-violence and should not, therefore, be given cause for grievance because once the Muslim lion is infuriated it would become difficult to subdue him." Feroze Khan Noon observed: "I tell you this much that if we find that we have to fight Great Britain for placing us under one central Hindu Raj, the havoc which Muslim will play will put to shame what Chingiz Khan and Halaku did. We cannot eliminate any method. Direct action means any action against the law."
7. Khosla, C.D., Stern Reckoning, p. 44. News Chronicle: "There can be no excuse for the wild language and the abandonment of negotiations which marked the meeting of the League Council. What precisely does Mr. Jinnah think he will achieve by embarking upon violence and at a moment when so substantial a part of his claim has been conceded? Does he think that communal strife will benefit India or even the Muslim part of India? He has only to look at other parts of Asia to see what lies at this end of that journey. It is hopeless, of course, if Mr. Jinnah is wedded to complete intransigence, if, as now seems the case, he is really thirsty for a holy war." Other papers expressed similar views.

The Muslim League took immediate steps to implement the momentous decision. A council of action was appointed to draw up a programme of direct action and to devise ways and means of executing it. The members of the council of action were Liaqat Ali Khan, Nawab Iftikhar Hussain of Daudot, Mustaz Daultana, Shaukat Hyat Khan, Iftikhar-ud-din, Begum Shah Nawaz, Abdur Rab Nishtar, I.I.Chundrigar (both Nishtar and Chundrigar became members of the Interim Government of India in 1946-47), and H.S.Suhrawardy, Premier of Bengal in 1946 and later Prime Minister of Pakistan.⁸ The meetings of the council of action were held in secret, but the results of its deliberations were made manifest a few days later by events which provided the prologue to a long and horrible drama.

The date fixed for launching the direct action was August 16.⁹ The Muslim League Government of Bengal declared the day a public holiday to enable people to "celebrate" it.¹⁰ On that day Calcutta witnessed a carnage as had not been witnessed in the last three decades of India's communal riot-ridden history. The recounting of the holocaust makes a harrowing story. In five days in Calcutta the fire brigades had to attend to 900 calls of arson. The total number of those killed is conservatively estimated at 5,000.¹¹ There were riots in other parts of India on or after that date. It was

8. Talib, Gurbachan Singh, Muslim League Attack on Sikhs and Hindus in the Punjab, S.C.P.C., Amritsar (1950), p. 36.
(Hereafter cited Talib, Muslim League Attack)

9. Khosla, G., Stern Reckoning, pp. 45-47; Ram Gopal, Indian Muslims, p. 317

10. Ibid

11. Talib, Muslim League Attack on Sikhs and Hindus, p. 36

virtually a civil war. The brutal Calcutta killings had their repercussions in Bihar and U.P. where Muslims suffered at the hand of the Hindus. These were followed by murder, loot, arson, rape and abduction of Hindu women on a large scale in Noakhali and Tipperah districts of Bengal in October, 1946.¹²

On September 11, Jinnah offered to the Hindus the choice between Pakistan and civil war.¹³ He also suggested immediate exchange of population to avoid communal riots.¹⁴ All over the country there were signs of a breakdown of the administration. Lord Wavell had proved incompetent to cope with the situation. The legacy he left his successor, Lord Mountbatten, has been described by Allen Campbell Johnson thus: "In short, we have the people rioting; the princes falling out among themselves; the entire Indian Civil Service and police running down; and the British left sceptical and full of foreboding."¹⁵

Trouble kept simmering in Punjab. The existence of a coalition Government in the province -- considered by the Muslim League as the corner-stone of Pakistan -- was an eyesore to it. It was on the look-out for an opportunity to wage war on the coalition Government. The opportunity came in January 1947. Because of an alarming

12. Ibid, p. 44

13. Ibid, p. 39

14. Ibid, Pp. 42-43

15. Campbell-Johnson, A., Mission With Mount Batten, p. 40

increase in their numbers and activities, the Punjab Government notified on January 24 that private armies (including the Muslim National Guards¹⁶ and the Rashtriya Swyam Sewak Sangh)¹⁷ would be considered unlawful associations.¹⁸ Simultaneously the police¹⁹ raided the headquarters of the National Guards in Lahore. Raja Ghaznafar Ali Khan (later a member of the Interim Government of

16. Pyare Lal, Mahatma Gandhi, The Last Phase, Vol. II, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad (1958), p. 49; Talib, Muslim League Attack, p. 20. The Muslim National Guards, a volunteer corps, was organised by the Muslim League in 1938. Like the Khaksars (Khaksars were a militant Moslem body. The movement was started in 1931 by Inayatullah Khan Mashriqi of North-West Frontier Province Educational Service who had resigned his post to organise a brotherhood of Muslims, dedicated to "social service" and ultimately, and somewhat vaguely, to the attainment of political power. The movement spread slowly and sporadically from its headquarters at Lahore and in the pre-war period assumed a quasi-military character. The Khaksars drilled and marched in khaki and, like contemporary Nazi formations, carried spades, a nasty weapon at close quarters. The organisation was financed by Muslim sympathisers and by Inayatullah's own substantial means. See Coupland, R., The Constitutional Problem in India (1936-1942) p. 49) It had an elaborate command. It was the militant arm of the Muslim League and its membership was kept secret. It had its own centres and headquarters, where its members received military training and such instructions as would make them effective in times of rioting. Regular tests were given to the Muslim National Guards in fighting and attacks. Muslim women were taught first aid.
17. Rashtriya Swyam Sewak Sangh. This non-political organisation was started by Keshav Rao in 1925. Its headquarters are at Nagpur and now H.S. Golwalkar is its chief leader. It aims at strengthening Hindus physically, intellectually and morally and also at reviving Hindu culture.
18. Nitra's Register (1947), Vol. I, p. 30
19. Talib, Muslim League Attack, p. 58

India) described it as "an attempt to ban an important part of the activities of the Muslim League itself."²⁰ The police seized 1,000 hatchets, swords, pistols, daggers and badges.²¹ Those Muslim League leaders²² who opposed the search were arrested. They included the Nawab of Mamdot, the Punjab Muslim League chief who later became Premier of West Punjab, Feroze Khan Noon, later Prime Minister of Pakistan; Muntaz Daultana and Shaukat Hyat Khan.

On January 26 the Muslim League decided to launch an agitation, "ostensibly for safeguarding civil liberties in Punjab" but actually to force the government to resign. Sixteen Muslim League M.L.As. were arrested.²³ The agitation spread and became more and more violent. The police, 75 per cent of whom were Muslims, remained silent spectators. The foulest and filthiest abuse was heaped daily on the head of Sir Khizar Hyat Khan, Punjab Premier, and his Muslim colleagues in the Cabinet. Non-Muslim ministers came in for severe castigation minus ~~and~~ abuse.²⁴ Every day processions were taken out to achieve Pakistan by any means.²⁵ Veiled Muslim women also took out processions daily in Lahore and raided the Secretariat.²⁶

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20. Pyare Lal, The Last Phase, Vol. II, p. 9
21. Talib, Muslim League Attack, p. 57; Pyare Lal, The Last Phase, Vol. II, p. 9
22. Ibid
23. The Tribune, 26-1-1947
24. The Tribune, 27-1-1947; Talib, Muslim League Attack, p. 67
25. Ibid
26. Modern Review, Calcutta, March 1947, p. 176

The agitation was ostensibly against the Khizar Ministry, but as the Ministry was supported by the Congress and the Akali parties, it soon assumed a communal colour. After the middle of February, 1947 the agitation took a more violent turn. There were several train holds-up at Ludhiana, Gujranwala and other places.²⁷ An attempt was also made to wreck the Frontier Mail near Rawalpindi.²⁸ At Amritsar a Sikh constable was beaten to death by a Muslim mob on February 24.²⁹ The police had to fire several times at several places. Courts were raided and files tampered with by mobs at various places.³⁰ This upsurge of violence in western Punjab arose from the belief among the Muslim Leaguers that they would not be punished.³¹

At this critical juncture the British Prime Minister, Mr. Attlee, declared that "necessary steps" would be taken "to effect the transfer of power to responsible Indian hands by a date not later than June 1948. "His Majesty's Government will consider to whom the powers of the Central Government in British India should be handed over on due date, whether as a whole to some form of Central Government for British India, or in some areas to the existing provincial governments, or in

27. Talib, Muslim League Attack, p. 59

28. Ibid

29. Modern Review, April 1947, p. 254

30. Ibid; Talib, Muslim League Attack, p. 64

31. Ibid

such other way as may seem most reasonable and in the best interests of the Indian people."³²

This statement brought the prospects of attainment of power very near. It was hailed by Jawaharlal Nehru "as a wise and courageous decision."³³ But it added to Jinnah's anxiety, and placed Khizar Hyat Khan on the horns of a dilemma. Jinnah had now a little more than a year to consolidate his position in western Pakistan. So efforts to reach a settlement in the Punjab and North-West Frontier Province were started.³⁴ The League leaders were more than ever anxious to wrest power in Punjab so that by the time the provincial transfer of power occurred, i.e., in June 1948 or earlier, the Muslim League should be firmly in the saddle to receive power from the British Government and to consolidate the western block of Pakistan.

The official report of Mr. Akhtar Hussain, Chief Secretary to the Punjab Government, describes the position in the province in February as "very disturbing."³⁵ On February 26, the Panthic (Akali) Assembly Party appealed to the Muslim League "to stop these unlawful

32. Banerjee, A.C., Making of The Indian Constitution, Vol. I, Pp. 402-403

33. The Tribune, 22-2-1947. Nehru's Press statement; Menon, V.P., Transfer of Power, p. 340

34. Khosla, G.D., Stern Reckoning, p. 97; Lal Bahadur, The Muslim League, Its History, Activities and Achievements, Agra Book Store, Agra (1954) p. 329.

35. Khosla, G.D., Stern Reckoning, p. 98, Mr. A. Hussain said: "The agitation which the Muslim League commenced on January 24

activities which are bound to have serious repercussions if continued any further "and asked" the Punjab Government to adopt a firm attitude and take speedy action in dealing with the menace to the peace of the province."³⁶ On the same day, the Muslim League called off the agitation following a settlement between the Punjab Government and the President of the Provincial Muslim League.³⁷ The ban on the Muslim National Guards and the Rashtriya Swyam Sewak Sangh was lifted but restrictions on processions and meetings were continued.³⁸ About 1500 League workers were released. The Muslim League decided to celebrate March 2 as Victory Day. In the speeches delivered on the occasion, the agitation was described as a first step in the struggle for achievement of Pakistan.³⁹

Khizer Hyat Khan could not look forward to the continued support of his Hindu and Sikh colleagues as events were widening the gulf between Muslims and non-Muslims. The ties that bound the various elements in the Unionist Party were extremely tenuous. Moreover, the Punjab was part of Group B with a preponderance of Muslim population, and the future of a Punjab politician rested on Muslim

has continued till the time of drafting this report. It has affected all districts. Among Hindus and Sikhs resentment to the agitation is growing and particularly in the case of the latter to an ominous degree. On February 12, Master Tara Singh declared that it was communal in its essentials and had as its purpose the domination of Punjab by Muslims. He called on the Sikhs to prepare themselves to face the Muslim League onslaught, and towards this end to organise the Akal Fauj."

36. The Tribune, 27-2-1947

37. Mitra's Register (1947), Vol. I, p. 40

38. The Tribune, 29-1-1947; Moon, Divide and Quit, Pp. 75-76; Pyare Lal, Last Phase, Vol. II, p. 10.

support. In the circumstances, Khizar Hyat deemed it impolitic to deal with the League agitation with a firm hand. His indecision earned him the odium of Muslims and non-Muslims alike. The former thought that his continuance in office was keeping the League out, while the latter interpreted his mildness as sympathy for the League. The compelling force of Mr. Attlee's statement demanded immediate decision. Realising that whether in office or out, he could not exercise any influence on the course of events, Khizar Hyat resigned on March 2.⁴⁰ Giving the reason for his resignation, he said that continuance of the coalition Ministry was likely to jeopardise the chances of a settlement. Moreover, it was but fair to let the Muslim League, which was the Muslim majority party, speak for the Muslims.⁴¹

Muslim League Invited to Form Government

On March 3, the Governor invited the Muslim League to form a ministry.⁴² The Nawab of Mamdot, leader of the Muslim League Assembly Party, accepted the offer. A wave of resentment spread through

39. Talib, Muslim League Attack, p. 66

40. Khosla, G.D., Stern Reckoning, p. 98; Moon, Divide and Quit, Pp. 76-77; Pyare Lal, The Last Phase, Vol. II, Pp. 9-10

41. The Tribune, 3-3-1947; Moon, Divide and Quit, Pp. 76-77. The reason which he gave to the public was diplomatic. He said that the decision announced by Mr. Attlee required that parties in the province should be brought face to face with realities. "It is now incumbent on me to leave the field clear for the Muslim League to come to such arrangement vis-a-vis the other parties as it might consider in the best interests of Muslims and the province. If I were now to continue to lead a coalition in which the Muslim League is not represented this might put in serious jeopardy such chances as might otherwise exist of a settlement being arrived at between the communities in the province.

42. Mitra's Register (1947), Vol. I, p. 42

Congress and Panthic circles. All the fears engendered by the events of Calcutta and Noakhali seemed about to come true. The Muslim League could not form a ministry without their co-operation and they were determined to withhold it. The Congress and Akali parties held a joint meeting in the Assembly chamber to discuss the situation. Outside, a large crowd of Muslims kept up a continuous barrage of provocative slogans like "we will take Pakistan by force." After the meeting, Master Tara Singh came out of the Assembly chamber and facing the hostile Muslim crowd he flourished his kirpan and shouted: "Eat ke deynge apni jan, magar na deynge Pakistan" ("We may be cut to pieces but we will never concede Pakistan.") The situation was about to develop into a most ugly incident when the police intervened and dispersed the crowd.

The same evening non-Muslims held a mammoth meeting in the grounds of Lapurthala House and the leaders gave vent to their pent-up anger against the Muslim League attitude. ⁴³ Breathing fire and brimstone, the Akali leader told the vast concourse: "O Hindus and Sikhs! Be ready for self-effacement like the Japanese and the

43. Barbara Singh, The Punjab Tragedy, Steno Press, Amritsar (1949), p. 32; Khosla, G.D., Stern Reckoning, Pp. 99-100. Khizar Hyat's resignation and the swearing-in of a Muslim League Ministry put too great a strain on the patience of the Sikhs. Master Tara Singh in a Press interview to "New York Times" on February 28 remarked, "I don't see how we can avoid a civil war. There can be no settlement if the Muslims want to rule the Punjab. We cannot trust the Muslims under any circumstances. The Sikhs have the ability to keep the Muslims out of eastern Punjab, but why should we stop there? We should drive them out of the Punjab entirely. The Sikhs have started to reorganise their own private volunteer army in response to the Muslim League's month-old agitation against the coalition Ministry of the

Nazis. Our Motherland is calling for blood and we shall satiate the thirst of our mother with blood. By crushing Moghulistan we shall trample Pakistan. I have been feeling for many a day now that mischief has been brewing in the province and for that reason I started reorganising the Akali Party. If we can snatch the government from the Britishers, no one can stop us from snatching it from the Muslims. We have in our hold the legs and limbs of the Muslim League and we shall break them. Disperse from here on the solemn affirmation that we shall not allow the League to exist. The world has always been ruled by the minorities. The Muslims snatched the kingdom from the Hindus, the Sikhs grabbed it from the hands of the Muslims and ruled over them and shall even now do so. I have sounded the bugle. Finish the Muslim League." ⁴⁴ Giani Kartar Singh reminded the audience that the yellow flag of the Sikhs used to fly on Lahore Fort and hoped that it would fly there again. ⁴⁵ Congress speakers too addressed the gathering but they were moderate in their speeches.

But Master Tara Singh's utterances were mere threats. The Akal Fauj of his existed only in his imagination, and the preparedness of the Sikhs was little more than an empty boast. This was

Punjab in which the Sikhs were represented." In his public address on March 3 on the grounds of Kapurthala House he was more bellicose.

44. Khosla, G.D., Stern Reckoning, Pp. 99-101; Rajput, A.B., Muhammad Ashraf, Lahore (1948), Pp. 167-169.

45. *Ibid*

demonstrated from the manner in which non-Muslims and more particularly the Sikhs suffered in the March riots. They found themselves without any means of self-defence and perished by the thousand.

On March 4, Hindu and Sikh students of Lahore took out a big procession to demonstrate their resolve not to tolerate the Muslim League ministry. The procession was fired at by the police and also attacked by Muslims in a part of the city. Thirteen persons were killed and 105 injured.⁴⁶ This was the signal for province-wide killing on an unprecedented scale.

The Governor soon discovered that the Muslim League could not form a ministry without the assistance of Hindus and Sikhs, who were not willing to cooperate. As a result he suspended the Constitution on March 5 and assumed to himself all the powers under Section 93 of the Government of India Act, 1935.⁴⁷ This served as a signal for another outbreak of widespread rioting in the Punjab.⁴⁸ The Muslim-dominated districts of Multan, Jhelum, Rawalpindi and Lahore fell in the grip of riotous mobs and hooligans who resorted to large-scale murders, arson, loot, rape and abduction.⁴⁹

46. Mitra's Register(1947), Vol. I, p. 42

47. Ibid, p. 43; Pyare Lal, The Last Phase, Vol. II, p. 10

48. Pyare Lal, The Last Phase, Vol. II, p. 10

49. Talib, Muslim League Attack, Pp. 72, 107, 167, 209; Pyare Lal, The Last Phase, Vol. II, p. 14

The police did not take strong measures against the Muslim mobs. How could they be expected to lay about them vigorously with lathis or shoot them straight or to break up riotous parties of their own co-religionists? And if they did so who would appreciate or reward their services? Certainly not the British, who were about to leave the country, and still less the Muslim Leaguers who were going to be masters of the western half of the province.⁵⁰ Another factor responsible for the lack of police control was the depletion of the services by wartime demands and the grant of leave after the war. As a result Punjab had been left with insufficient British officials of first class quality to man key districts. Many of them were fed up with long years of service without a break and dispirited at the prospect of their careers in India coming abruptly to an end. At this critical moment men were holding posts for which they were not well fitted either by temperament or experience.⁵¹ They remained pathetic witnesses to arson, murder, loot and abduction.

Retaliation soon started in East Punjab in the districts of Amritsar, Ludhiana and in the Sikh states and the vicious circle set entire Punjab ablaze. The similarity of the pattern followed by the rioters in all these places again pointed to a deliberate and well-conceived plan.⁵² By midday of March 19, 1947, according to a

50. Noon, Divide and Quit, p. 80

51. Ibid

52. Ibid, Pp. 81-82; Pyare Lal, The Last Phase, Vol. II, p. 10

statement by Macdonald, Chief Secretary to the Punjab Government, the campaign launched by the Muslim League had cost in casualties

2,049 Hindus and Sikhs killed or seriously wounded. These figures were considered an underestimate.⁵³ The events provoked a strong

reaction against the Muslim League even in the British Conservative press. Pointing to the dangers inseparable from "any attempt to enforce a communal dictatorship by unconstitutional agitation," The Times commented on March 11, that the danger was in no way lessened if the agitation was claimed to be based on "democratic principles."⁵⁴

The Partition of The Punjab

While the minorities in the Punjab were bleeding and the Muslim mobs carried sword and fire before them, the Governor could do little. Even the Central Government found itself helpless. The policy of the Muslim League in the Interim Government was one of a vowed obstruction. It openly maintained that it had joined the Government merely to fight for Pakistan. It was able to defeat almost every progressive measure which the Congress members were desirous of

53. Pandit Nehru's Press Statement, March 17, 1947. "I have seen ghastly sights and I have heard of behaviour of human beings," remarked Pandit Nehru, after a visit to some of the riot-affected places, "which would degrade brutes ... if politics are to be conducted in this way, then they cease to be politics and become some kind of jungle warfare, which reduces human habitations to the state of a desert ... Let people struggle for their political aim if they want to, but they must do so as human beings with a measure of human dignity."

54. Fyare Lal, The Last Phase, Vol. II, p. 11

adopting. The Interim Government had no unity or cohesion and the different departments of administration frequently pulled in different directions. All over the country unrest and lawlessness was spreading and in the Punjab conditions bordering on utter anarchy prevailed. Nehru and his colleagues felt helpless. Frustration and chaos stared them in the face. Years of suffering and hard labour had landed them in a blind alley and the only alternative was ignominious acceptance of partition. A three-day tour of the riot affected cities of the Punjab-Lahore, Multan, Rawalpindi, Amritsar and Jhelum - by Nehru brought home to him the ghastly truth of communalism run amuck, too painful to be endured any longer.

A few non-Muslim delegations met him and insisted that Punjab must be divided in case there was partition of India. As a result, the Congress approach to the problem of Pakistan underwent a radical change. The working committee took the initiative in formally demanding partition of the Punjab.⁵⁵

55. Nitra's Register (1947), Vol. I, pp. 118-119; Pyare Lal, The Last Phase, Vol. II, p. 11; Congress Bulletin, March 26, 1947, p. 5. The All-India Congress Committee, after recording its views on the resignation of the Punjab Premier, stated in a resolution. "During the past seven months India has witnessed many horrors and tragedies which have been enacted in the attempt to gain political ends by brutal violence, murders and coercion. "The Punjab became six weeks ago the scene of an agitation, supported by some people in high authority, to coerce and break a popular ministry which could not be attacked by constitutional methods. A measure of success attended this, and an attempt was made to form a ministry dominated by the group that had led the agitation. This was bitterly resented and has resulted in increased and widespread violence.

In effect, it was an eleventh hour attempt on the part of the Congress to wean away the Muslim League from the principle of partition by confronting it with the theological consequences of its doctrine

"The tragic events have demonstrated that there can be no settlement of the problem in the Punjab, by violence and coercion, and that no arrangement based on coercion can last. Therefore, it is necessary to find a way out which involves the least amount of compulsion. This would necessitate a division of the Punjab into two provinces so that the predominantly Muslim part may be separated from the predominantly non-Muslim part."

See Menon, V.P., Transfer of Power, pp. 347-348. The Muslim League press issued severe criticism of the Congress proposal to divide the Punjab; nor was the solution entirely agreeable to certain pro-Congress sections. The Congress President explained that the Congress had only suggested a division of the Punjab as a means of putting an end to violence, and that the same remedy would hold good for Bengal if circumstances in the province were similar.

On March 9, Nehru wrote to Lord Wavell enclosing copies of the resolutions passed by the Congress Working Committee. Nehru said it was the intention of the Congress to approach the Muslim League for a joint meeting to consider the situation. They wanted to do everything in their power to get the Muslim League representatives into the Constituent Assembly, so that all might function in terms of the Cabinet Mission statement of May 16. If, unfortunately, this were not possible, then the Congress would try to lay down a course of action which would avoid friction and conflict. It was with this object in view that they had sought a meeting with the League and had also suggested the division of the Punjab into two parts. This principle would, of course, apply to Bengal also. The proposal was not a pleasant one for the Congress to contemplate, but such a course was preferable to an attempt by either party to impose its will upon the other. Recent events in the Punjab demonstrated - if such demonstration were necessary - that it was not possible to coerce the non-Muslim minority in the province, just as it was not possible or desirable to coerce others. The Congress felt that the suggested way out would be fair to all parties. If the League accepted the British Cabinet Mission's scheme of May 16 and cooperated in the Constituent Assembly the question did not arise in this form. But even so, it was worth considering whether Bengal and the Punjab should not both

if it persisted in its demand for division of India. The assumption was that, faced with the prospect of being left with a "truncated, moth-eaten" and economically nonviable area, the Muslim League might not press its demand for partition. It was also an effort made in despair in the event of India's partition, to salvage the non-Muslim majority area of that province from Muslim League rule. If the Muslim League insisted on demanding partition, it could not in reason claim exemption from the application of that principle to areas it claimed for Pakistan.⁵⁶

No reply was sent by the Muslim League to the Congress Working Committee's invitation to meet its representative beyond saying that the Congress resolution would "be placed before the next meeting of the Working Committee of the Muslim League." For this no date was fixed. And when a month later the Congress General Secretary inquired when the meeting would be held, he was told that, in view of the discussions which had, in the meantime, been initiated by the

be divided into smaller provinces. In the event of the Muslim League not accepting the Cabinet Mission's scheme and not coming into the Constituent Assembly, the division of the Punjab and Bengal would become inevitable. In reply the Viceroy told Nehru that he would forward the Congress resolution to the Secretary of State ... until the results of the Congress approach to League were known, it would be premature to consider the question of partition of the Punjab and Bengal.

56. Pyare Lal, The Last Phase, Vol. II, Pp. 11-12

new Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, it was not likely that a meeting of the working committee would be called "until a definite stage in the talks had been reached."⁵⁷

The Punjab Provincial Congress Committee endorsed on May 4 the resolution of the Congress Working Committee demanding partition of

Punjab.⁵⁸ Jinnah denounced the demand for partition of the Punjab and Bengal as a sinister move actuated by spite and bitterness.⁵⁹

57. Ibid

58. The Tribune, 5-5-1947. The Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee resolution said: "This committee, while believing in the unity of the Punjab, is of the opinion that the unity of India is more fundamental and necessary. But if division of India becomes inevitable and inescapable because of the reactionary, negative and anti-national and undemocratic stand of the Muslim League, then in view of the present happenings, the part of the Punjab which desires to remain in the Indian Union, is fully entitled to exercise its inalienable right to do so."

59. Mitra's Register (1947), Vol. I, p. 61; Menon, V.P., Transfer of Power, Pp. 355-356. Jinnah issued a statement on 30-4-47 that the proposal for partition of Bengal and the Punjab was a sinister move actuated by spite and bitterness. He said that the principle underlying the Muslim demand for partition was that Muslim League should have a national State in their homeland comprising the six provinces of the Punjab, the North-West Frontier Province, Sind, Baluchistan, Bengal and Assam. If the Punjab and Bengal were partitioned, all the other provinces would have to be cut up in a similar way. Such a process would strike at the root of the administrative, economic and political life of the provinces. He suggested that an exchange of population would sooner or later have to take place and that this could be effectively carried out by the respective Governments in Pakistan and Hindustan. He finally demanded the division of the defence forces and stressed that the states of Pakistan and Hindustan should be made absolutely free, independent and sovereign.

Jinnah's statement drew the retort from Rajendra Prasad that the demand for division of the Punjab and Bengal was in the terms of the Muslim League's Lahore resolution of 1940 and it could not claim any area which were not contiguous and in which the Muslims were not numerical in a majority. He said that if

Muslim League leaders did little even at this stage to reassure the Sikhs or assuage their feelings.⁶⁰ At no stage did Jinnah attempt to win over the Sikhs and secure their acquiescence in Pakistan. He did not even express regret for the recent events in West Punjab.⁶¹ He had given them veiled threats but no promises. He had warned them that division of Punjab would be harmful to them but had not encouraged them to believe that Pakistan would be beneficial.⁶² There were some British officials who considered that in this he was very wise. In their view, the Sikhs wherever they were -- whether in India or Pakistan -- would be a bloody nuisance.⁶³ Jinnah was well advised to steer clear of "the bastards so far as he could."⁶⁴ With a truncated Pakistan he was likely to get two millions of them. This was at any rate better than having the hornets' nest.⁶⁵

A solitary Punjab Muslim League leader, Shaukat Hyat Khan (Sir Sikander's son), seemed to have felt the need for a more positive approach. Consequently, he made a statement assuring the Sikhs that under a Muslim League coalition government, "their legitimate rights would be fully considered and justice meted out to all, freely

there was to be a division of India, then it should be as complete and thorough as possible, including the division of the Punjab and Bengal, so that there might not be any room for contention or conflict.

60. Moon, Divide and Quit, p. 82

61. Ibid

62. Ibid, p. 87

63. Ibid
Ibid

65. Ibid

and equally." But generalities of this kind were quite insufficient to heal the gaping wounds or inspire confidence in Muslim intentions. How could they carry conviction when the Sikhs in north-west Punjab had been murdered and pillaged and their beards set on fire by Muslim gangs with little interference by the Muslim police and little or no expression of regret by Muslim Leagues?⁶⁶

At this critical juncture the Majlis-e-Ahrar, the erstwhile nationalist body of Muslims, changed its policy. Its working committee passed a resolution on March 24, 1947 opposing partition of Punjab. It declared that the Muslims would resist implementation of the scheme and would stand for the unity and integrity of the Punjab. What is more, Ahrar workers were directed to give up immediately all their connections with the Congress.⁶⁷ Khizar Hyat Khan, too, opposed division of the Punjab, as, according to him, it would be ruinous for all communities.⁶⁸ Ch. Suraj Mal (later East Punjab Minister), a Hindu Unionist leader, however, supported the demand for partition of the Punjab if partition of India was to be effected.⁶⁹

In a conference held in Lahore on April 3, Sikh leaders and legislators unanimously declared that division of the Punjab was the

66. Ibid, pp. 82-83

67. The Tribune, 25-3-1947

68. The Tribune, 17-4-1947

69. The Tribune, 18-4-1947

only remedy.⁷⁰ Master Tara Singh, Bawa Harkishan Singh, President of the Panthic Board, and Amar Singh attended the conference by special invitation. The Akali Dal too, at its meeting in Amritsar on April 17, held under the presidentship of Giani Kartar Singh, considered partition of the Punjab as the only remedy to end communal strife in the province.⁷¹ On April 18 Master Tara Singh, Baldev Singh and Giani Kartar Singh met the Viceroy. They told him that the Punjab should be partitioned to avoid communal strife and bloodshed.⁷² On April 22, Bhimsen Sachhar and Swaran Singh, the leaders of the Congress and Sikh Panthic parties in the Punjab Legislative Assembly stated in their representation to Nehru, the Vice-President of the Interim Government, that as an interim and transitional agreement the Governor-General should install immediately two or three regional administrations with separate ministries under one Governor for the two or three zones of the existing province of the Punjab.⁷³ Mangal Singh, M.L.A., said that before 1925 India had nine provinces, which were later on increased to 11. So division meant readjustment of boundaries, and for maintenance of peace this was essential.⁷⁴ Baba Kharak Singh said, "I am a staunch advocate of Akhand Hindusthan.

70. Mitra's Register (1947), Vol. I. p. 53

71. Ibid

72. Ibid, p. 244; Campbell-Johnson, A., Mission with Mountbatten, pp. 66-67

73. Mitra's Register (1947), Vol. I, p. 59

74. The Tribune, 27-4-1947

Should, however, partition become inevitable and be unfortunately thrust upon us, I would plead for adequate safeguards and legitimate protection for the non-Muslim minorities living in the territories.⁷⁵

Mountbatten Plan -- Radcliffe Award

While Lord Mountbatten's plan conceded the demand for partition of the Punjab, the Akalis put forth a demand for a Sikh homeland. This chapter is the tragic climax of political cross-purposes, lack of realism and of the spirit of compromise, violence and counter-violence and a reign of terror that recalled the general slaughter ordered by Nadir Shah in Delhi.

A convention of Hindu and Sikh members of the Punjab Legislative Assembly, the Central Assembly and the Constituent Assembly was held in New Delhi on May 2 under the chairmanship of Gh. Lehari Singh, a former Congress Minister in the Punjab coalition cabinet. A draft memorandum on partition of the Punjab was prepared and submitted to the Congress working committee.⁷⁶ It said that in view of the Muslim League's insistence upon a division of India and the recent brutal happenings, the only solution of the political problems of the Punjab lay in an equitable division of the province assuring the non-Muslim population "such territories and assets as they are

75. Ganda Singh, A Diary of the Partition Days, Patiala (1960), p.21

76. Mitra's Register (1947), Vol. I, Pp. 63 and 245

entitled to according to their number and stake." The convention suggested that the bifurcation line should be drawn along the Chenab so as to include the divisions of Ambala, Jullundur and Lahore and the contiguous canal colony districts of Lyallpur or Montgomery. This would also preserve the homogeneity of the Sikh community, the great bulk of whose population is concentrated in this area.⁷⁷

The Akali leader, Master Tara Singh, liked the idea of partition. "The Sikhs would be glad," he said, commenting on the Congress resolution, "if the Muslim League accepted the principle to concede the Sikhs demand for forming districts into a separate province in which the Sikhs and Hindus were given as much land as they possess at present. We cannot tolerate division in which predominantly Sikh districts are partitioned."⁷⁸

As early as June 1946 Master Tara Singh had issued a 16-page "Charter of Slavery" against the Cabinet Mission proposals. "We escape out of this slavery only if we get one of the following, and in no other way:

Sikhs State in central, eastern and northern Punjab

or

division of Punjab along the Chenab to create a province in which no community will dominate and which the Sikhs can call their own and where they can have an effective share in the administration

77. Ibid; Bali, A.M., How It Can be Told, Akashwani Prakashan, Jullundur (1949), Pp. 54.55

78. The Tribune, 11-3-1947

or

substantial share (which in no case should be below 30 per cent in the legislature and the cabinet in the Punjab; weightage in the Central legislature and veto in Punjab and at the centre on Sikh questions such as is given to the Muslims on Muslim question." 79

Meanwhile the political situation worsened. Communal frenzy and bitterness increased and the machinery of the administration ground to a halt. The feeling grew not only in Congress circles that if the demand for Pakistan was not acceded to, India might be split into several Pakistans.⁸⁰ After consultations with the British Government, Lord Mountbatten formally announced on June 3 a plan for constitutional transfer of power from British to Indian hands. It provided for partition of India and of the provinces of the Punjab (opinion of Sikh leaders had already been ascertained and they had agreed to its division) and Bengal. The final boundaries were left to be determined by a boundary commission. The plan, inter alia, said that members of the two parts of each legislative assembly sitting separately will be empowered to vote whether the province should be partitioned. If a simple majority of either part decides in favour of Pakistan, division will take place and arrangements will be made accordingly. The plan also provided that before

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79. The Tribune, 11-6-1946. "Fight This Charter Of Slavery". Pamphlet by Master Tara Singh, extracts published in the Press.
80. Masani, R.P., Britain in India, Oxford University Press, Calcutta (1960), p. 251

the question of partition is decided, it is desirable that the representatives of each part should know in advance which constituent assembly the province as a whole would join in the event of the two parts deciding to remain united. Therefore, if any members of either legislative assembly so demands, there shall be held a meeting of all members other than European of the legislative assembly at which a decision will be taken on the issue as to which constituent assembly the province as a whole would join if it were decided by the two parts to remain united.⁸¹

The Congress working committee resolved to accept the Mountbatten plan.⁸² On behalf of the Sikhs, Baldev Singh accepted the principle of partition as laid down in the plan, but urged that care should be taken to meet their demands when framing the terms of reference for the proposed boundary commission.⁸³ He said that the plan was not a compromise. He preferred to call it a settlement. "It does not please everybody, not the Sikh community any way, but it is certainly something worth while. Let us take it at that."⁸⁴ In his broadcast on the plan, Lord Mountbatten said: "We have given careful consideration to the partition of the Sikhs. This valiant community forms about one-eighth of the population of the Punjab, but is so distributed that any partition of this province will

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81. Banerjee, A.C., Making of The Indian Constitution, Vol. I, p.268
 82. Masani, R.P., Britain in India, p. 260
 83. Nitra's Register (1947), Vol. I, p. 83
 84. Ibid, p. 254; for its text see pp. 254-255

inevitably divide it. All of us who have the good of the Sikh community at heart are very sorry to think that partition of the Punjab, which the Sikhs themselves desire, cannot avoid splitting them to a greater or lesser extent. The exact degree of the split will be left to the boundary commission." ⁸⁵

Master Tara Singh declared that although the Mountbatten plan conceded the "principle of partition" of the Punjab, it was "unsatisfactory and disappointing" in several respects. There was no positive provision for giving the Sikhs a homeland and their deserved status or political power, nor had they been armed with ⁸⁶ means to safeguard their rights in constitution-making.

For the Sikhs the plan meant division. They knew it and accepted it. Moon avers that they had their own plans for meeting it. The hard choice before them had long been clear. They had to submit either to inclusion as a whole in Pakistan or to division between India and Pakistan through partition of the Punjab. They

85. Khushwant Singh, The Sikhs, p. 152. In a Press conference Lord Mountbatten referred to the subject again. He said: "I find that the Congress had put forward a resolution on the partition of the Punjab at the request of the Sikh community. I sent for a map and I was astounded to find that the plan which they had produced would divide the community into an almost two equal halves. So I spent a great deal of time finding out a solution which would keep the community together. I have not been able to see any solution. But whatever steps are taken are based on the Congress resolution on the subject which was passed at insistence of the Sikhs."

86. Nitra's Register (1947), Vol. I, p. 83

had chosen the latter.⁸⁷ They had long been thinking in terms of partition and the recent conduct of the Muslims had strengthened their preference for it. Inevitably by such partition they would be split and if the 'contiguous area' principle were to be rigidly applied all the canal colonies and about two million Sikhs would fall to Pakistan. But the Boundary Commission was also to take into account "other factors" and the Sikhs clung to the hope that on the strength of these "other factors" the boundary might be shifted westwards so that they would not be split too badly.⁸⁸ They were encouraged in this false hope by the utterances of some British politicians.⁸⁹

Some British officers explored the chances of a last minute rapprochement to prevent vivisection of the Punjab and of the Sikh population. A plan which was pursued with some assiduity emanated from the Muslim princely State of Bahawalpur. Penderel Moon of the Indian Civil Service, who was then Revenue and Public Works Minister at Bahawalpur, had some friends among Sikhs. Through Sant Singh, Prime Minister of the Sikh princely State of Nabha, he made approaches to Sikh leaders, including Master Tara Singh,

87. Moon, *Divide and Quit*, p. 69. Some of the Akalis had been canvassing the idea of an entirely separate Sikh State or Khalistan. Since they were not in an absolute majority in even a single district no one could take this idea seriously but in one guise or another it had some influence on Sikh thinking both in the coming months and years.

88. *Ibid.*, p. 69-70

89. *Ibid.*, p. 70

Baldev Singh and Giani Kartar Singh. Taking into confidence Mustaq Ahmad Gurmiani, Prime Minister of Bahawalpur, Moon offered to secure the Sikhs a separate unit of East Punjab with a position in Pakistan equal to that of any other unit, such as Sind or Western Punjab; special privileges for the Sikh minority in West Punjab and special privileges for the Sikhs in Pakistan as a whole.

The Sikhs were not prepared to consider any proposals for a settlement with the League. As Moon says in his book "Divide and Quit", the Sikh leaders he was scheduled to meet in Lahore failed to turn up at the appointed rendezvous. It was obvious that they were not interested and had other plans in mind. ⁹⁰

A joint conference of the Shiromani Akali Dal and the Panthic Pratinidhi Board held on June 12, 1947 disapproved of the scheme for division of India into two sovereign States. The only redeeming feature of the plan, according to the Sikhs, was the acceptance of the principle of partition of the Punjab. By the resolution the conference said: "The basis of the national division of the Punjab is, however, inequitable and unjust to the Sikhs. While the plan is designed to carve out a sovereign Muslim State to satisfy Muslim demand, it fails to provide for the Sikhs any portion of power or

status or any means for the protection of their interests in the constitution-making machinery.⁹¹ The resolution categorically stated that no partition of the Punjab which did not preserve the solidarity and integrity of the Sikh community would be acceptable to the Sikhs.⁹²

Giani Kartar Singh reiterated the necessity of a separate homeland for the Sikhs where they could develop their culture and preserve their entity. "We want our solidarity to be preserved at all costs. We do not want change of masters by passing under subjugation of either the Hindus or Muslims. We are determined to secure our homeland even if we have two big parties to face." He was sure that neither the Congress nor the Muslim League would disappoint the Sikhs as it was no use keeping a dissatisfied minority within the bounds of any country. Both the major communities, therefore, would strive for a satisfied Sikh community instead of keeping them "as a source of constant struggle or even war."⁹³ On June 21 the executive committee of the Central Akali Dal of Baba Kharak Singh met in Lahore and rejected the Mountbatten Plan.⁹⁴

According to the Mountbatten Plan, the members of the Punjab Legislative Assembly were asked to sit in two parts, one representing the Muslim majority districts and the other the rest of the province. Accordingly, the two sections met separately on June 23.

91. The Tribune, 13-6-1947

92. The Tribune, 13-6-1947

93. The Tribune, 17-6-1947

94. Mitra's Register (1947), Vol. I, p. 77

In the western Punjab section of the Assembly, Bhim Sen Sachkar, leader of the Congress party, and Sir Feroze Khan Noon, on behalf of the Muslim League, demanded a joint sitting of the Assembly.⁹⁵

In the eastern section, the Nawab of Mamdot, leader of the Muslim League, and Seth Sudarshan, deputy leader of the Congress party, demanded a joint meeting of the two sections of the Assembly.

Within 15 minutes, the joint session was arranged under the chairmanship of Diwan Bahadur S.P. Singha (the Speaker). The joint session voted by 91 votes to 77 for a separate Constituent

Assembly for Pakistan.⁹⁶ All the Muslim members including eight Unionists, one Anglo-Indian and one Christian, voted for Pakistan.

The 77 votes against Pakistan were all cast by Hindu and Sikh members. Legislators of the two sections met separately and decided by 50 votes to 22 for partition, while the western section opposed partition by 69 votes to 27.⁹⁷ Partition of the Punjab into eastern

and western Punjab was now only a matter of time.⁹⁸

95. Mitra's Register (1947), Vol. I, p. 268. Punjab legislature decides partition.

96. Ibid, p. 269

97. Ibid, p. 268

98. Banerjee, A.C., The Making of The Indian Constitution, Vol. I p. 439; Menon, V.P., Transfer of Power, p. 511. In para 8 of the Plan it was stated: "In the event of partition being decided upon, each part of the Legislative Assembly will, on behalf of the areas they represent, decide which of the alternatives in paragraph 4, i.e., (a) in the existing Constituent Assembly; or (b) in a new and separate Constituent Assembly consisting of the representatives of those areas which decide not to participate in the existing Constituent Assembly." Thus the eastern section decided to take part in the existing Constituent Assembly (Indian Union) and the

After the decision on partition of the Punjab by the Assembly, the three Unionist leaders, Ch. Suraj Mal, Rao Bahadur Mohan Singh and Ch. Prem Singh, announced their decision to dissolve the Unionist Party, the oldest parliamentary party in the Punjab, which had been founded by Sir Fazl-i-Hussain in 1923 and had ruled over the destinies of the province for a period longer than any other party in any other province of India.⁹⁹

To split the provinces of the Punjab and Bengal, two separate boundary commissions were constituted. Sir Cyril Radcliffe, an expert on arbitration, was appointed chairman of both. He had not been to India before. His absolute neutrality towards Indian political parties was cited, especially to the Sikhs, as his strongest credential for the momentous task entrusted to him. Sir Cyril arrived in Delhi on July 8. Sikh attention was now directed at securing from the Boundary Commission a favourable demarcation in the Punjab. The Sikhs started collecting data in support of their claim. Petitions were drafted. The eminent Sikhs lawyer of the Punjab High Court, Harnam Singh, took charge of the legal aspect of the case.

On August 15, 1947, India became a free country. Pakistan was born as an independent State. The same day, Sir Cyril Radcliffe

Western section opted for the new constituent assembly (Pakistan).

99. The Tribune, 24-6-1947. A Joint Statement issued by the three leaders on June 23, 1947, said: "After today's developments in the province when the two sections of the Assembly have decided to divide the Punjab and when our leader, Sir Khizar

left for home. The award he had given was announced two days later. The ominous storm which had been gathering since June 3 broke out with the award's proclamation. The brief spell of truce, loaded with apprehension, gave way to a period of violent fratricide. To carry the two-nation theory to its logical conclusion, the Muslim League embarked upon a plan of expulsion of Hindus and Sikhs from their newly constituted State. Large-scale assaults on the Hindu and Sikh population in Sheikhupura, Montgomery and other districts of West Punjab started on August 18, a day after the Boundary Award was made known. These were coupled with widespread arson, loot, rape and abduction of women, leading to a forced exodus of the minorities, unparalleled in the history of mankind.

Following partition the Muslim League ceased to exist in East Punjab and the Akali Dal in West Punjab. The 'new Punjab,' forming the border State of independent India, remained in ferment. Though the Congress dominated the political scene, the Akalis did not give up the pursuit of their aim. Prominent Akali leaders like Baldev Singh and Swaran Singh joined the Congress Government and Akali leadership remained in the hands of Master Tara Singh. Politics in both the countries took a different shape, the discussion of which is beyond the scope of this study.

Hyat Khan, has now definitely supported the League, we feel that the Unionist Party has ceased to exist from today. We served the Unionist Party loyally because we thought that in the unity of all sections of the people lay the salvation of our province. The Unionist Party is now dissolved for ever."

SUMMING UP

Political consciousness among the Sikhs in general came in the wake of Gurdwara Reform Movement, when the Akali Dal emerged as a para-military political organisation, with the specific purpose of bringing the shrines under the control of the Sikh community. The Akali movement was a mass movement unlike the earlier Sikh organisations which prospered only due to the patronage of the British rulers. In the twenties the Akali movement became a part of the nationalist movement launched by the Indian National Congress and, in return, received the blessings of Congress leadership in its objective. But throughout the Akali Dal was always careful to maintain its separate entity.

This dichotomy is all-pervasive in Akali politics. Wherever the Akali Party wanted to secure more privileges for the Sikh community it adopted its own methods to achieve them so much so whenever the party's interest clashed with the general interest of the country, it did not fight shy to press and fight for them. It had, in other words, no permanent alliances with any party, for, it had its own permanent interests to strive for. For instance although the Akalis co-operated with the Congress in boycotting the Simon Commission (1927); the moderates among them did not hesitate to submit a memorandum to the Commission demanding special rights for the Sikhs. Again, in 1930, there was a split in the Akali Party over the issue of co-operating with the Congress in the Civil Disobedience Movement,

when Baba Kharak Singh demanded the addition of the Sikh colour in the National Flag. But it sided with the Congress in rejecting the Communal Award (1932) not because it followed the Congress programme but because it considered the representation granted to the Sikhs under the Award insignificant.

In the beginning of the Second World War, like the Congress, the Akalis did not co-operate with the British. Later, they lent their wholehearted support to gain maximum concessions for recruitment of the Sikhs in the Army. The Akali Party not only supported the British in the war efforts but also joined hands with those whom it considered "enemies" only a few years earlier. The Akalis came to terms with the Unionist Party on the eve of the Quit India Movement in 1942 and joined the Muslim League Ministry in the North-West Frontier Province in 1943 utterly forgetful of their determined opposition to the League. Master Tara Singh went to the length of advocating loyalty to the British Government at public meetings. It was due to this vociferous expressions of loyalty that ^aSikh leader found a place in the expanded Executive Council of the Governor-General, and, the Sikh community was given representation at the Simla Conference called by Lord Wavell to consider his proposals for the establishment of an Interim Government at the Centre. Thus, the Akali Party in order to establish a separate entity of its own, like that of the Muslim League, played the role of a pressure group in Punjab politics.

Its dual role was bitterly criticised by the nationalists.

A veteran Congress leader, Duni Chand Ambalavi, was constrained to remark: "There is one party in the Punjab which always gained advantages through its connections with the Congress party but which betrayed it during 1942-45. I mean the Akali Party. This party and some of their notable leaders preached hatred against Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress and gained paltry advantages at the cost of honour and patriotism, at the hands of the Government and the authorities that were out to crush the Congress."¹

Even if a charitable view is taken of the above statement, one can hardly ignore the motives of Akali leaders. With the growing of popularity of the demand for Pakistan among Indian Muslims, the Akalis too began to look for some political arrangement that would secure a favourable political position for the Sikhs in their homeland. They advocated the Khalistan scheme in 1940, the Azad Punjab scheme in 1942, a separate Sikh State in 1944 and demanded a homeland for the Sikhs in 1946 on the ground that the Sikhs constituted a separate social, religious and political entity.

Having achieved political influence in the Punjab through its double-dealings, double-standards, and double-talk the Akali Party played a vital role in the formation of the coalition Government in the Punjab in 1946. It joined the Congress and the Unionists when it could not extract concessions from the Muslim League. This provoked Nehru

1. Duni Chand, Congress Service Series: Events of 1937 to 1946. (1946) Bhargava Fine Art Printing Works, Indore, p. 3

to accuse Master Tara Singh of "sitting at one and the same time on about fifteen stools."²

The Mountbatten Plan was welcomed by Akali leaders in the hope that they would be getting something in the deal but they started condemning it when they found it unfavourable to them. The Akalis thought that they could get a better deal from the Congress which was bigger and stronger and with which their affinities were closer. Out of sheer frustration, the Akali Party reconciled itself to the partition of the Punjab demanding that the demarcation line between India and Pakistan should be so drawn to include a large part of the community in India. But when partition took place, they again adopted an attitude and used language that could justifiably be interpreted as a fresh demand for a separate Sikh State.

The emotional intensity with which the Akali party launched various morehas intermittently to achieve Punjabi Suba is understandable in the background of pre-1947 activities of the party aimed at establishing a separate entity of the Sikhs religiously and politically. When the Akalis realised that their demand for a separate theocratic Sikh State would not fructify in secular India, they asked for a separate Punjabi Suba on the basis of Punjabi Language arguing that it was "the only way to preserve the language, culture and religion of the Sikh."³ But it must be said to their credit even during their

2. The Times of India, 8-4-1946

3. The Spokesman V No.34, 7-8-1955; 3

hectic nationalistic activities, the Akalis never lost sight of their own parochial interests.

This is, in fact, a brief historical study of the birth and growth of the Akali Party in the Punjab up to 1947, the days when India was a subject country, to the birth of two new nations living on the same sub-continent.

The Akali Party has now entered a new phase under new leadership. With the formation of the Punjabi Suba based on language in 1966, the Akali Party has emerged as a political power in the new State in the General Elections of 1967 under the new leadership of Sant Fateh Singh, a convert from Islam, and his associates. It has formed the Government in co-operation with all non-Congress political parties, including the Jana Sengh, once its "arch enemy". In short, having suffered the pangs of birth and turbulent adolescence, the Akali Party has come of age and may now be a helpful factor in the growth of healthy political traditions in the country.

APPENDIX ISeventeen Demands of Central Sikh League

(Reported In The Tribune, 27-3-1931)

1. The Sikhs are anxious to secure a national government and are, therefore, opposed to any communal majority by statute or any reservation of seats by law for a majority community.

2. The Sikhs occupy an unrivalled position in the Punjab as is reflected by the sacrifices in the defense of India and in the national movements and their state in the province. They, therefore, demand 30 per cent representation in the Punjab legislature and administration.

3. The Sikh community should have a one-third share in the Punjab Cabinet and Public Service Commission.

4. If no arrangement is reached on the above basis, the boundaries of the Punjab may be so altered by transferring the predominantly Mohammedan areas to the Frontier Province as to produce communal balance. In this reconstituted Punjab there should be joint electorates with no reservation of seats.

5. If neither of the above alternative is acceptable the Punjab may be administered by the newly constituted responsible Central Government till a mutual agreement of the communal question is arrived at.

6. Punjabi should be the official language of the province. It should be optional for the Sikhs and others to use the Gurmukhi script. If they so desire.

7. The Sikhs should be given 5 per cent of the total number of seats reserved for British India in each of the Upper and Lower Houses (of the Central legislature).

8. There should always be at least one Sikh in the Central Cabinet.

9. In case any army council is constituted the Sikhs should be adequately represented on it.

10. The Sikhs have always had a special connection with the army and, therefore, the same proportion of the Sikhs should be maintained in the army as before the war.

11. The Sikhs should have effective representation in all India services and should be represented on the Central Public Service Commission.

12. All residuary powers should rest in the Central Government.

13. The Central Government should have special powers to protect the minorities.

14. The Sikhs should have the same weightage in other provinces as is accorded to other minorities.

15. The Provincial and Central Governments should declare religious neutrality and while maintaining the existing religious endowments, should not create new ones.

16. The State should provide for the teaching of the Gurmukhi script where a certain fixed number of scholars is forthcoming.

17. Any safeguards guaranteed in the Constitution for the Sikhs should not be rescinded or modified without their express consent.

APPENDIX IIAkali Party's Election Manifesto

(Reported In The Tribune, 20-6-1936)

1. The Party will fight for the attainment of complete independence for the country and will co-operate with those politically advanced parties whose programme and ideals approximate to those of its own.
2. It will offer strong opposition to the Communal Award; and strive to replace it by a joint and national solution.
3. It will work for the repeal of all repressive laws.
4. It will oppose all measures, legislative and Executive, which are opposed to the best interests of the country.
5. It will work for the release of all political prisoners and detenues.
6. It will work for the removal of untouchability.
7. It will work for the uplift of the masses and the depressed and backward classes.
8. It will fight for the declaration of fundamental rights granting full freedom for the profession, practice and propagation of religion with due regard to public morality.
9. It will work for the relief of Rural Indebtedness.
10. It will impose more taxes on the rich for the benefit of the poor sections of the country.
11. It will work for the assessment of land revenue on income tax basis.

12. It will oppose the formation of a Ministry by those parties which do not agree to amend the Communal Award and replace it by a joint and National Solution and will work for abrogation of the constitution embodied in the Government of India Act, 1935 being unacceptable to the Sikhs the Akali Party would work for its amendment and replacement by a new constitution acceptable to the people of India.

13. It will work for the Indianisation of the Army.

14. It will protect and safeguard all legitimate rights and interests of Sikhs.

15. It will work to secure full freedom for Sikhs to carry or possess Kirpans.

16. It will oppose tooth and nail all attempts on the part of Muslims throughout India to regain possession of Shahid Ganj.

17. It will work for the amendment of the Sikh Gurdwaras Act, 1925, in accordance with the wishes of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee.

18. It will try that the water rate (Abiana) is reduced.

19. It will work for the removal of unemployment by encouraging industries and all Swadeshi enterprises.

APPENDIX IIIPopulation of The Punjab (Census 1941) Showing The Percentage
Of The Various Communities

Division or District	Area Sq. M.	Total Popu- lation	Hindus	Muslims	Christians	Sikhs	Others
WESTERN PUNJAB							
Amritsar	5,213	10,06,709	6,52,676 (64.83)	2,85,208 (28.33)	1,292 (0.13)	60,731 (6.03)	6,802 (0.67)
Lyallpur	2,246	9,56,399	7,80,474 (81.61)	1,66,569 (17.42)	1,043 (0.11)	1,466 (0.15)	6,847 (0.71)
Rawalpindi	2,234	8,51,458	5,60,498 (65.85)	2,85,992 (33.56)	1,673 (0.20)	637 (0.07)	2,658 (0.31)
Faisalabad	3,126	9,94,575	6,66,036 (66.97)	3,04,346 (30.68)	1,249 (0.13)	19,887 (2.00)	3,057 (0.30)
Sheikhpura	1,851	8,47,745	4,10,333 (48.40)	2,68,999 (31.73)	6,065 (0.71)	1,56,543 (18.46)	5,805 (0.68)
Other	80	38,576	29,466 (76.38)	7,022 (18.20)	934 (2.42)	1,032 (2.67)	122 (0.32)
Total	14,750	46,95,462	30,99,483 (66.01)	13,18,136 (28.07)	12,256 (0.26)	2,40,296 (5.12)	25,291 (0.54)
EASTERN PUNJAB							
Delhi	9,979	8,99,377	8,38,479 (93.23)	43,249 (4.81)	788 (0.09)	4,809 (0.53)	12,052 (1.34)
Shiarpur	2,195	11,70,323	4,68,225 (40.01)	3,80,759 (32.53)	6,165 (0.53)	1,98,194 (16.94)	1,16,980 (9.99)
Ludhiana	1,334	11,27,190	1,98,160 (17.59)	5,09,804 (45.23)	6,233 (0.55)	2,98,741 (26.50)	1,14,252 (10.13)
Patna	1,339	8,18,615	1,66,678 (20.36)	3,02,482 (36.95)	1,913 (0.23)	3,41,175 (41.68)	6,367 (0.78)
Rozapur	4,085	14,23,076	2,79,260 (19.62)	6,41,448 (45.07)	12,607 (0.89)	4,79,486 (33.69)	10,275 (0.72)
Total	18,992	54,38,581	19,50,802 (35.87)	18,77,742 (34.53)	27,706 (0.51)	13,22,405 (24.31)	2,59,926 (4.78)

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
LAHORE DIVISION							
Amritsar	1572	14,13,876	2,16,778 (15.33)	6,57,695 (46.52)	25,973 (1.84)	5,10,845 (36.13)	2,585 (0.18)
Lahore	2,595	16,95,375	2,84,351 (16.77)	10,27,772 (60.62)	70,147 (4.14)	310,646 (18.32)	2,459 (0.15)
Murdaspur	1,846	11,53,511	2,83,192 (24.55)	5,89,923 (51.14)	51,522 (4.47)	2,21,261 (19.18)	7,613 (0.66)
Mialkot	1,576	11,90,497	2,31,114 (19.41)	7,39,218 (62.09)	75,831 (6.37)	1,39,409 (11.71)	4,925 (0.41)
Mujranwalla	2,311	9,12,234	1,07,887 (11.83)	6,42,706 (70.45)	60,829 (6.67)	99,139 (10.87)	1,673 (0.18)
Shekhupura	2,303	8,52,508	77,740 (9.12)	5,42,344 (63.62)	60,054 (7.04)	1,60,706 (18.85)	11,664 (1.37)
Total	12,203	72,18,001	12,01,062 (16.64)	41,99,658 (58.18)	3,44,356 (4.77)	14,42,006 (19.98)	30,919 (0.43)
PANALPINDI DIVISION							
Bujarat	2,266	11,04,952	84,643 (7.66)	9,45,609 (85.58)	4,449 (0.40)	70,233 (6.36)	18 (0.00)
Bhahpur	4,770	9,98,921	1,00,708 (10.08)	8,35,918 (83.68)	12,770 (1.28)	48,046 (4.80)	1,479 (0.15)
Chelum	2,774	6,29,658	40,879 (6.49)	5,63,033 (89.42)	893 (0.14)	24,680 (3.92)	873 (0.02)
Kawalpindi	2,022	7,85,231	82,463 (10.50)	6,28,193 (80.00)	9,014 (1.15)	64,127 (8.17)	1,434 (0.18)
Attock	4,148	6,75,875	43,190 (6.39)	6,11,128 (90.42)	1,392 (0.21)	20,120 (2.97)	45 (0.01)
Hianwali	5,401	5,06,321	62,787 (12.40)	4,36,260 (86.16)	358 (0.07)	6,865 (1.36)	51 (0.01)
Total	21,361	47,00,958	4,14,670 (8.82)	40,20,141 (85.52)	28,876 (0.61)	2,34,071 (4.98)	3,200 (0.07)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
MULTAN DIVISION								
Montgomery	4,204	13,29,103	1,91,182 (14.38)	9,18,564 (69.11)	24,432 (1.84)	1,75,064 (13.17)	19,861 (1.49)	
Faisalpur	3,522	13,96,305	1,62,295 (11.62)	8,77,518 (62.85)	51,948 (3.72)	2,62,737 (18.82)	41,807 (2.99)	
Lahore	3,415	8,21,631	1,29,791 (15.80)	6,78,736 (82.61)	763 (0.09)	12,238 (1.49)	103 (0.01)	
Multan	5,653	14,84,333	2,42,987 (16.37)	11,57,911 (78.01)	14,290 (0.96)	61,628 (4.15)	7,517 (0.51)	
Razafargarh	5,605	7,12,849	90,547 (12.70)	6,16,074 (86.42)	227 (0.03)	5,882 (0.82)	119 (0.02)	
Sera Ghazikhan	9,364	5,81,350	67,393 (11.59)	5,12,678 (88.19)	87 (0.01)	1,072 (0.18)	120 (0.02)	
Saloch Trans Frontier Tract	-	40,246	160 (0.39)	40,084 (99.60)	-	2 (0.0)	-	
Total	31,763	63,65,817	8,84,355 (13.89)	48,01,565 (75.43)	91,747 (1.44)	5,18,623 (8.15)	69,527 (1.09)	
Total of the Province	99,099	2,84,18,819	75,50,372 (26.57)	1,62,17,242 (57.06)	5,04,941 (1.78)	37,57,401 (13.22)	3,88,863 (1.37)	

MUSLIM AND NON-MUSLIM MAJORITY DISTRICTS OF THE PUNJAB**Muslim Majority Districts**

Lahore Division	21,381	47,00,958	4,14,670 (8.82)	40,20,141 (85.52)	28,876 (0.61)	2,34,071 (4.98)	3,200 (0.07)
Multan Division	31,763	63,65,817	8,84,355 (13.89)	48,01,565 (75.43)	91,747 (1.44)	5,18,623 (8.15)	69,527 (1.09)
Lahore Division (Excluding Faisalpur)	10,630	58,04,125	9,84,284 (16.96)	35,41,963 (61.02)	3,18,383 (5.49)	9,31,161 (16.04)	28,334 (0.49)

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Total	63,774	1,68,70,900	22,83,309 (13.53)	1,23,63,669 (73.29)	4,39,006 (2.60)	16,83,855 (9.98)	1,01,061 (0.60)

Non-Muslim Majority Districts

Abala Division	14,750	46,95,462	30,99,483 (66.01)	13,18,136 (28.07)	12,256 (0.26)	2,40,296 (5.12)	25,291 (0.54)
Ballundur Division	18,992	54,38,581	19,50,802 (35.87)	18,77,742 (34.53)	27,706 (0.51)	13,22,405 (24.31)	2,59,926 (4.78)
Prithvi District	1,572	14,13,876	2,16,778 (15.33)	6,57,695 (46.52)	2,5973 (1.87)	5,10,845 (36.13)	2,585 (0.18)
Total	35,314	1,15,47,919	52,67,063 (45.6)	38,53,573 (33.35)	65,935 (0.57)	20,73,546 (17.96)	2,87,802 (2.49)

Total Non-Muslims

Rawalpindi Division	6,80,817 (14.48)
Rawalpur Division	15,64,252 (24.57)
Shahjahanpur Division including Prithvi	22,62,162 (38.98)
Total	45,07,231 (26.71)
Abala Division	33,77,326 (71.93)
Ballundur Division	35,60,839 (65.47)
Prithvi District	7,56,181 (53.48)
Total	76,94,346 (66.60)

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APPENDIX IVSikh Memorandum To The Cabinet Mission (1946)

The following is the text of the memorandum submitted by Master Tara Singh to the Cabinet Mission:-

The position of the minorities has changed since the Cripps Mission. As conceded by Major Attlee, Indians cannot be made responsible for governing themselves and at the same time power retained in the hands of an authority outside India for intervention on behalf of such minorities for ensuring their proper treatment by the majority. This makes it all the more necessary for the Sikhs to safeguard in the constitution itself their political status in the future policy of the country.

The draft declaration provides for the right of non-accession of provinces. The Sikhs make it plain that they are opposed to any possible partition of India as envisaged in the draft declaration. As stated above, the Sikhs form a compact cultural nationality of about six millions. They further maintained that, judged by any defunction or test, the Punjab is not only homeland, but their holy land. They were the last rulers of the Punjab and before the advent of the British they enjoyed in the Punjab independent economic and political status which had gradually deteriorated under British rule.

They wish, however, to point out that, with the inauguration of Provincial Autonomy on the basis of the communal Award, they have been reduced to a state of complete helplessness. If the

existing provincial political set up is continued, the transference of power to the people would perpetuate the coercion of the Sikhs under what in practice has come to be the Muslim rule. That set up is unjust to the Sikhs. Its working has meant Muslim communal rule in the Punjab which has almost exasperated the Sikhs to the point of revolutionary protest. The intervention of war conditions along has been responsible for the Sikhs acquiescing temporarily in this communal tyranny. They cannot be expected to submit to it as a permanent arrangement in any new scheme of Indian Polity.

Akali Demands

The statutory Muslim majority in the legislature of the Province must go and the position of the Sikhs must be strengthened by increased representation there in so as to ensure to the Sikhs an effective voice in the administration of the country.

In the alternative, out of the existing province of the Punjab a new province may be carved out as an additional provincial unit in the united India of the future in such a way that all important Sikh gurdwaras and shrines may be included in it as also a substantial majority of the Sikhs population in the existing province of the Punjab.

The Sikh cannot, however, blind themselves to the fact that the Muslims have declared that they are a separate nation as distinct from the Sikhs, the Hindus and other, and that on that basis they are entitled to Pakistan, we have already expressed unequivocally our opposition to the establishment of such a state. In view of the rumours that are current we are obliged to take note of the possibi-

lity of the cabinet mission giving serious consideration to the Muslim league claim.

Before the Mission arrives at the decision on this question we would emphasise that the Sikhs have as good a claim for the establishment of a separate sovereign Sikh state as the Muslims for Pakistan and that the Mission should not concede the claim for Pakistan without conceding at the same time the claim for a separate state made on behalf of the Sikhs. The Sikhs are in favour of a single constitution-making body in which they should be represented as already indicative above.

In case the Mission should think of taking into serious consideration the proposal that has been made for two constitution making bodies, one for Pakistan and the other for the rest of India, we wish, in the light of what has been said by us above, to make our position clear that there should be a separate constitution making body also for the Sikh State.

Sources: Mitra's Registrar (1946), Vol. I, Pp. 200-201;
Banerjee, A.C., Cabinet Mission, A. Mukherjee & Co.,
Calcutta (1946), Pp. 88-89

APPENDIX V**Correspondence Between Master Tara Singh and the Secretary of State
Of India**

Master Tara Singh's letter dated May 25, 1946: "Since the British Cabinet Mission recommendations for the future constitution of India have been published, a wave of rejection, resentment and indignation has run throughout the Sikh community. The reasons are quite obvious. The Sikhs have been entirely thrown at the mercy of the Muslims. Group 'B' comprises Punjab, the North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan and the representation given to each community will be Muslims 23, Hindus 9 and Sikhs 4. Can anybody expect from this Assembly, constituted as it is, any consideration or justice for the Sikhs? The Cabinet Mission recognises the genuine and acute anxiety among the Sikhs lest they should find themselves subjected to a perpetual Muslim majority rule. If the British Government is not aware of Sikh feelings, the Sikhs will have to resort to some measures to convince everybody of the Sikh anxiety in case they are subject to perpetual Muslim domination. The Cabinet Mission has not only put under Muslim domination the non-Muslim areas of the Punjab and Bengal but the whole province of Assam where the non-Muslims are in an overwhelming majority. This has been evidently done to placate the Muslims. If the first consideration of the Cabinet Mission's recommendation is to be shown to the Sikhs? But it appears that Sikhs have been studiously debarred from having any effective influence in the province a group or general

union. I refer to Section 15(ii) and Section 19 (vii) in which it has been definitely provided that the majority of both Hindus and Muslims is necessary for certain purposes. The Sikhs are entirely ignored, though they are as much concerned as the other communities.

This is how I read the recommendation of the Cabinet Mission, but as the issues are very grave and momentous, the Sikhs representatives assembled here today to consider the situation created have advised me to seek clarification from you and find out if there is any hope of such amendments as may save the Sikhs from perpetual domination.

So I put three questions:

1. What is the significance of recognising the Sikhs as one of the main communities?
2. Suppose the majority of Section B frames a constitution under Section 19 (V) but the Sikh members do not agree, does it mean a deadlock or does the opposition of the Sikh members mean simply dissociation?
3. Is there any hope of obtaining for the Sikhs the same right as is given to the Muslims and the Hindus under Section 15 (ii) and 19 (iii)?"

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Letter from the Secretary of State to Master Tara Singh, dated June 11, 1946: "Thank you for your letter of May 25.

The anxieties of the Sikhs were kept permanently in mind when we were drafting the Cabinet Mission statement, and I can

certainly claim that of the various alternatives open to us the best one from the Sikh point of view was chosen. You will, I am sure, admit that, if India had been divided into two sovereign States or if Punjab was partitioned, either of these decisions would have been far less acceptable to Sikhs than the one which was actually reached.

I have considered carefully the detailed points you have raised at the end of your letter. I fear the mission cannot issue any addition to, or interpretation of, the statement. There is, however, no intention whatever to prejudice the position of the Sikhs in Punjab or in the north-west group, nor do I think their position has been prejudiced, for, it is inconceivable that either the Constituent Assembly or any future Government of Punjab will overlook the special place of the Sikhs in the province. The estimate of the importance of your community would never depend on the number of seats that you hold in the Constituent Assembly. The Viceroy has told me that he will be glad, in view of the anxieties you have expressed on behalf of your community, to discuss the position of the Sikhs specially with the leaders of the main parties when the Constituent Assembly has been formed. He hopes he may be able to persuade them, if persuasion is needed, that the interests of the Sikhs should on no account be overlooked.

If you and Sardar Baldev Singh would care to see the Cabinet Mission and the Viceroy in the first week of June, we shall be glad to see you." (Sources: P. Sitaramayya, The History of The Indian

National Congress, Vol. II, p. ccii; Mitra's Register (1946), Vol. I, Pp. 202-203.

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to the Present Editor

1. Sir Pendeel Moon, C/o Ministry of Finance, Benin, Nigeria, dated 15-1-1964
2. Dr. Rajendra Prasad, dated 25-2-1963
3. Sardar Mangal Singh, Ludhiana, dated 31-3-1966

