

The partition of India and retributive genocide in the Punjab, 1946–47: means, methods, and purposes¹

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Labels

Genocide studies suffer from several defects that compromise the systematic study of its origins, the dynamic processes by which it is produced, contained, or prevented. These defects include excessive argument over labelling, a narrowed focus on uncovering previously unknown or little known sites of genocide, and forms of causal analysis that involve little more than heavy-handed laying of blame upon a particular or general source: the state, a leader, a whole people.

The argument over labelling is the most debilitating. It is really a struggle for territory, for the right to make a claim of utmost suffering and victimhood for a people or to extend the claim to encompass a wider range of sufferers. It is to that extent a political rather than a scientific struggle—for attention to one's cause—in which historians themselves become enmeshed.

The narrow focus on exposing to view particular sites of genocide previously neglected has merit and is necessary, but it often gives the appearance more of a prosecutor's amassing of evidence for a jury, in this case world opinion. Causal analyses that focus upon the German or Turkish state, Hitler or Pol Pot, the German people as a whole and their accomplice peoples in Eastern Europe, either narrow the gaze too finely or extend it too broadly. The same considerations apply to the arguments over the responsibilities of Roosevelt or Churchill for failing to prevent, to save, to destroy. Too often such analyses provide a halo over the head of the analyst who never asks himself or herself what, where, how he or she would have, could have behaved differently.

It is certainly necessary to strive for as accurate a determination of responsibilities as possible in each case, to distinguish among murderers, accomplices, and the merely silent observers or those who say they did not know. It is also appropriate to note the falsifications in speech and hypocritical acts in practice that are part of the process of producing violence. But there is a difference between establishing responsibility for a specific action or non-action—identifying it, delimiting it—and blaming. Although, of course, blame involves fixing responsibility, when it comes to broader social processes it does more in

practice: it frees others from responsibility. So, with regard to the assignment of responsibility, it is the task of scholarly observers to be precise and careful. In contrast, the assignment of blame is something rather to be observed as part of the process of the production of violence, which takes place after the fact and, insofar as it blames others, justifies the non-actions of those not blamed and frees from responsibility individuals, organizations, groups, even multitudes whose degrees of responsibility are thereby missed.

This article focuses on the great massacres that occurred in the huge territory of the Punjab which, in the time before the partition of India, encompassed the present-day federal states of Pakistan Punjab and Indian Punjab, as well as a number of then semi-autonomous princely states. As the violence extended more and more broadly and viciously in this site of political partition, the outgoing British authorities themselves, as will be shown below, struggled to define what was happening, what label to place upon it. Was what was happening simply a series of riots or massacres or a “communal war of secession?” The word genocide did not come to the minds of any observers at the time. Yet, there were substantial genocidal aspects to what finally developed.

Rather than attempt to define and label these great killings precisely, it is more helpful to think of forms of collective violence as placed along a continuum of overlapping categories that range from riots to pogroms, massacres to genocides. Not only do these categories overlap, but they masquerade for each other, hide behind each other. Pogroms planned and directed by states or political organizations are made to appear as spontaneous riots. So too are genocidal attacks on entire populations, including men, women, and children, made to appear “merely” as massacres perpetrated by enraged or pathological killers or gangs or centrally directed forces.

What gives the genocidal massacres in the Punjab their special character is that they were not ordered by a state, but they were also not merely or even at all spontaneous. There was organization and planning that has been largely ignored in the scanty literature on a subject of such enormous violence, but there were also local acts of violence carried out for a multiplicity of reasons and motives that were not genocidal in intent: loot, capture of property, abduction of women. Moreover, much of the larger scale violence was mutual. Grimshaw has captured it well in the term, “retributive genocide”—applied also to similar actions taking place elsewhere on the subcontinent at the time.² In several of these respects, the Punjab massacres precede and anticipate contemporary forms of genocide and “ethnic cleansing,” retributive and otherwise, most notably the Hutu–Tutsi killings in Rwanda and the massacres and forced migrations of peoples in ex-Yugoslavia: Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo. In reviewing the terms used to attach both responsibility and blame as these events transpired, one cannot help also but think of the mortal cycle of revenge and retribution in contemporary Israel and the occupied West Bank.

The purpose of this article is to examine the dynamic processes through which the genocidal massacres in the Punjab unfolded. To the extent possible, specific responsibilities have been noted, but the underlying argument herein is that

culpability became universal. Most important, however, an attempt has been made to specify the characteristics of the political and politicized communal situation in the Punjab before and during the massacres and to derive generalizations from them that may apply elsewhere. Unfortunately, genocide is a process that develops, that is not unique, that has not yet seen its end, and whose general aspects, therefore, must be unveiled.

Pakistan

For India's practising politicians, both Hindu and Muslim, the whole context of political choice kept changing during imperial rule as the British offered participation and control of patronage in newly-created institutions at different levels of the Raj, from the municipalities and district boards up through the provinces and ultimately to the central government itself. Each of the successive changes required dramatic new decisions, compromises, and pacts concerning which categories of people should be "represented," and in what proportions to their actual percentage of the population. These British-induced changes were preceded or disrupted by mass movements led by the Indian National Congress, and especially Gandhi, as well as demands made by Muslim League leaders, which also required decisions, compromises, and pacts between spokesmen for different categories of the population.

Historians of Muslim politics in north India have a list of significant dates and events that go back to 1857 or even earlier that represent steps on the road to Pakistan, opportunities lost for a Hindu-Muslim settlement, and the decisive moment or moments when Pakistan became inevitable. The further back the date is placed, the more likely it is that the historian providing the date accepts the view that there was an underlying problem or fault line of Hindu-Muslim relations running throughout the subcontinent that required a solution, failing which the creation of two separate nation-states, one predominantly Muslim, one Hindu, was inevitable. The later the date is placed, the more likely it is that the historian rejects the latter view and argues that the differences between Hindus and Muslims are modern political inventions—either of the British rulers or the Indian politicians—and that the creation of Pakistan was a consequence of political, not religious, struggles for power that could have been compromised. In this view, the fateful steps towards partition were all taken between 1937 and 1946.³

The last serious attempt in a long sequence of such attempts by Indian parties and British rulers to preserve the unity of India came in 1946 with the Cabinet Mission Plan brought to India by three British cabinet ministers. The failure of the Cabinet Mission Plan was followed by the replacement of the Governor General of India, Lord Wavell, by Mountbatten as the last Viceroy and Governor-General of India. Although Mountbatten was sent out with instructions to seek to resolve the differences among the two main contending parties in Indian politics, Congress and the Muslim League, while maintaining the unity of India, he determined very quickly after his arrival that the latter goal was

impossible. Mountbatten was sworn in on March 24, 1947. After intensive consultations with all the principal Indian political leaders, he decided with the agreement of all that the demand for Pakistan and the consequent partition of India could not be avoided. On June 2, 1947, Mountbatten presented a partition plan to the principal Indian leaders, which was accepted by all on June 3 and announced over All India Radio.

From this point, the principal historical issue has become why the mass migrations and the horrendous and atrocious violence that accompanied it occurred, and who was responsible for it. The kinds of answers given to these questions parallel those given to the broader question of why Pakistan and partition came about in the first place. Those who hold the view that there was a fundamental fault line of Hindu–Muslim relations in Indian society and politics also believe that the relations were fundamentally hostile and antagonistic and that the violence associated with partition was, therefore, as inevitable as the partition itself. Others argue again that specific leaders, groups, and parties were responsible for not anticipating or not preventing or failing to control or even contributing behind the scenes to the slaughter that occurred. Mountbatten is blamed for acting too quickly by pushing up the date for Indian and Pakistan independence from June 1948 to August 15, 1947, and failing to take necessary measures to preserve the peace that might have been possible had he been willing to stay the course longer. The three principal Indian leaders—Nehru, Patel, and Jinnah—and their subordinates are blamed for taking actions deliberately designed to provoke violence or, in the case of Nehru, that inadvertently precipitated violence. A third community—the Sikhs—and its leading political organization, the Akali Dal, and its leaders, particularly Master Tara Singh and Giani Kartar Singh, have come in for a very great share of the blame for the mass migrations and violence that occurred in its central locus, namely, the Punjab.

With all the political, historical, and polemical argument that has been waged on these issues and all the ink that has been spilt over it, it is a very puzzling and extremely regrettable matter that there has been so little significant, accurate, detailed reporting and accounting of precisely what happened: how the migrations and violence associated with partition did in fact happen and what were the feelings, attitudes, and consequences for the sufferers.⁴ Indeed, the time has almost passed when it is even possible to reconstruct adequately on the basis of oral reports of sufferers,⁵ eyewitness accounts, and police records what did happen and how it happened and what were the consequences. Fifty-four years after partition, the numbers of adult survivors and their memories are dying out. As for the police records, few have looked at them, while others have been denied access.⁶ Moreover, they are almost assuredly inadequate and highly falsified, for the guilt associated with the killings, looting, arson, and abetment of them was shared by many people at the time, including the police, who certainly filed numerous false reports to hide their misfeasance.

Among other things that make this lack of knowledge so regrettable is that, for those interested in the question of mass displacement of peoples in the

twentieth century, and its association with the formation of new states, the massacres and migrations in the Indian Punjab at the time of partition constitute one of the central events of the century, whose consequences have been far from worked out even now. So far, the most dramatic consequences have been three wars between India and Pakistan—in 1948, 1965, and 1971—of which the last involved a further disintegration of the former British Empire with the creation of a third new state, Bangladesh.

But there have also been internal consequences within both India and Pakistan that have continued to reverberate over the past five decades, including the 10-year insurrection in the Punjab on the part of Sikh militants against the Indian state in which some 25,000 lives were lost before it was brought to an end between 1991 and 1993; the ongoing insurrection in the Indian-held portion of the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir; and the persistence in Indian politics of Hindu–Muslim violence, in the form of riots, anti-Muslim pogroms and massacres. Violent conflicts that owe their origins to the partition of India are recurrent also in Pakistan’s major city of Karachi in the province of Sindh between Urdu-speaking refugees from India and their descendants, on the one hand, and Sindhis, Pathans, and other ethnic groups, on the other hand. There have been many other consequences that cast severe doubt upon the desirability of partition as a solution to politicized ethnic, religious, and communal differences, but the subject of this paper is neither the factors that led to the partition nor its later consequences, but what actually happened in the living–dying present of the partition–migration–killing months of 1946–47.

Partition

In presenting the discussion of what actually happened and how it happened, this article will proceed from the general to the particular, from the national to the regional to the local to the individual. First to the question of the overall magnitude of the migrations and the casualties associated with them. It is possible to be more confident about the approximate size of the former than the latter. Most estimates of the numbers of people who crossed the boundaries between India and Pakistan in 1947 range between 10 and 12 million, which have led many commentators to describe the movement as the largest migration of its kind in world history to that point. It has proven much more difficult to arrive at a consensus figure on the numbers of persons who died as a consequence of violence that occurred during the impending partition, the partition itself, and after it in the misery of the refugee camps. Estimates range from around 200,000 at the low end to a million and a half at the high end. A consensus figure of 500,000 is often used, but the sources that are most likely closer to the truth give figures that range between 200,000 and 360,000 dead.⁷ The lower figures are certainly high enough to suggest the magnitude of the disaster when it is kept in mind that these were “peacetime” deaths, that is, there was no declared or even undeclared war between India and Pakistan in the

Punjab area where the migrations and violence mostly occurred, though war was imminent further north in Kashmir.

Second, it must be kept in mind that the migrations and the violence were regionally confined. They were not all-India phenomena, though there was a great fear at the time that all the Muslims of India, not just those in the Punjab, would begin to move from every point in the country to Pakistan. But it is also true that the violence and migrations were not confined only to the Punjab. There were riots in many parts of northern and western India, some of which led to migrations, and there were major disturbances in other regions than the Punjab, especially in Bengal.

There were several sites of extreme violence in 1946 and 1947 that were of a magnitude not witnessed before in communal riots that had occurred previously during British rule. Because there is some time as well as considerable spatial separation between several of the major outbursts of violence, many commentators have seen them as a kind of phased and escalating sequence of revenge and retaliation. Moreover, they are all perceived as subsets of a broader communal conflict between Hindus and Muslims over the future of the entire subcontinent. Both these points of view are distortions of what happened.

It is certainly the case that the partition of the Indian subcontinent into two separate sovereign states rather than one was a consequence of a long list of both deliberate actions and failures to compromise on the part of the three principal parties who created the political present of India and Pakistan, namely, the British authorities, the leaders of the Indian National Congress, and Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the leader of the Muslim League. In the course of their deliberate actions and failures, all three participated to a greater or lesser extent in the creation of a communal discourse of Hindu–Muslim relations characterized by difference, antagonism, and the potentiality and actuality of communal violence. Moreover, all three were responsible for deliberate or misplaced actions that contributed to the major occasions of violence that did occur before and after partition. Further, in the last days of the British Raj, it was not only the case that violence occurred as a consequence of partition, but *violence was a principal mechanism for creating the conditions for partition*.⁸ Violence instigated by the political leaders of the country was itself integral to the political process that everyone knew had been brought into play in the past and could always be brought into play when bargaining and compromise failed. It was also used before elections and influenced their results by contributing to the formation of communal identities and the consequent consolidation of the votes of Hindus and Muslims behind opposing political parties.

For example, serious rioting in Calcutta—a thousand miles from the major centres of violence that occurred later in the Punjab—at the end of November 1945 and the middle of February 1946 preceded the provincial elections held in Bengal in February. The Great Calcutta Killing of August 1946 was an immediate consequence of Jinnah's call for "direct action" for the achievement of Pakistan, which he certainly knew meant violence here and elsewhere in the country. The call for direct action followed the breakdown of

negotiations among the three principal parties over the Cabinet Mission Plan. The violence that followed in Calcutta occurred during the tenure of a Muslim League ministry in the province of Bengal, in which government ministers and Muslim League leaders were implicated.⁹ The Calcutta violence was mimicked in many other places in northern and western India thereafter and was the principal factor in winning finally the acceptance of the Congress and the British for the partition of the country and the creation of a Muslim-majority state of Pakistan.

In Punjab, which was to be the storm centre of partition, the 1946 elections failed to produce a majority for a single party in the provincial legislature, although the Muslim League emerged here as the largest single party. Efforts to form and maintain a coalition government in the province and the final breakdown in March 1947 of the coalition that was formed without the League's participation were accompanied by mass agitations that turned violent in the capital city of Lahore and in Multan and other towns in West Punjab. In the aftermath of killings of Sikhs and Hindus that occurred in Rawalpindi, Attock, and Multan districts, including massacres in "several villages,"¹⁰ the Sikh leaders and the Congress demanded the partition of the province.

Then, in a stance that many at the time considered foolish but all were soon to feel the consequences of, the Sikh political leaders made it clear that, though they themselves had demanded partition, they would not tolerate a division of the province that went against the interests of their community.¹¹ Herein lay the crux of the disaster that was to unfold, for there was in fact no possible division of the Punjab that could prevent the division of the Sikhs, and the loss of their rich agricultural land and of numerous shrines they considered sacred. Further, the Sikh leaders also made it clear, though all the other principal actors failed to take it seriously enough, that they anticipated an exchange of population on both sides of the border to be created between the West and East Punjab that was also to be the western border of India and Pakistan. Nor did the Sikh leaders hide the fact that they intended to bring this about by violent means, although they sometimes phrased their intentions vaguely and indirectly. In February 1967, however, Master Tara Singh, whom I interviewed then and who was the principal political leader of the Sikh community 20 years earlier, said to me in words I have never forgotten: "We took the decision to turn the Muslims out." By this, he meant the decision to attack violently the Muslim population in East Punjab to force them to migrate west so that the entire Sikh population in West Punjab would be able to migrate east to replace them and take their lands and property in exchange for what they would lose in the west.¹²

Punjab

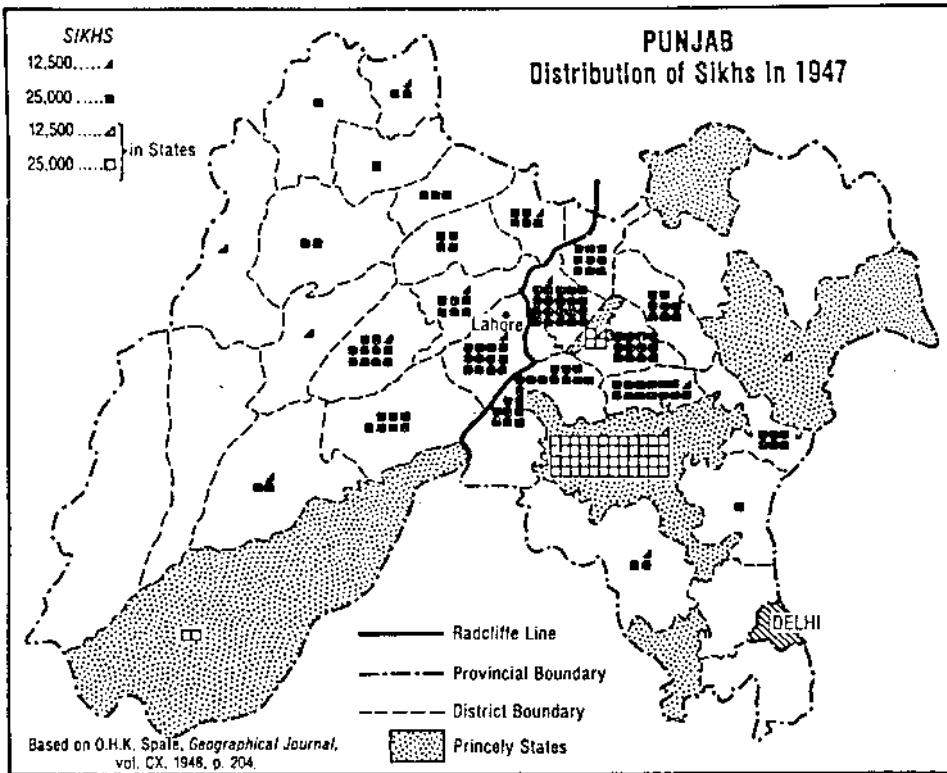
The discussion has slipped in the preceding section to the next, the regional level of focus on the partition and its consequences. Although, as noted above, the deliberate—masked and unmasked—political use of violence was used to press forward the Muslim League demand for partition of the subcontinent, once the

decision was made violence subsided in Bengal while it increased in Punjab. In other parts of India, particularly in the northern stretch of territory between what was to become West and East Pakistan, there was much localized violence that requires separate treatment. For the purposes of this article it is necessary to bring out only the critical difference between the timing and incidence of violence at the western and eastern boundary lines of the new states of India and Pakistan.

Through a series of decisions taken by the central government and in the provinces of Bengal and Punjab, it was agreed by all parties that not only would India as a whole be divided, but so would the former two provinces, each of which was divided roughly in half between its predominantly Muslim and predominantly Hindu populations, a situation that existed nowhere else in India. In Bengal, the Muslim population was predominant in the eastern districts, the Hindus in the western districts. When the decision to divide the province into Muslim-majority and Hindu-majority districts was made, it was obvious that Calcutta, the provincial capital and India's largest city, which was the most disputed site, would remain in India, in West Bengal. The violence that occurred in Bengal before the partition decisions served to consolidate Muslim sentiment behind the Pakistan demand and the Muslim League and to place the League in a controlling political position in the province. Once the decisions were made to partition the country as a whole, and Bengal as well, and once it was accepted that Calcutta could not be placed anywhere but in West Bengal, the demarcation of the boundaries between the two states was relatively simple. There was, therefore, no point in further large-scale violence nor any need or desire for cross-migrations that would be of no benefit to either side.

However, in the Punjab, the situation was entirely different. Here, there was a third community, the Sikhs, containing a majority nowhere, but dispersed heavily throughout the central portion of the Punjab in the districts through which the dividing line between West Punjab and East Punjab, India and Pakistan, must necessarily run (see Map 1). There was yet another feature of the Punjab that complicated matters and also played a part in the massacres that took place, namely, the interspersed among the districts directly ruled by the British of some 16 semi-autonomous states whose future was also being determined in separate negotiations at this time. These negotiations are of no concern here. What is relevant here is that it was reported, though never fully documented, that some of these states, ruled by Sikh princes, provided arms and safe haven for Sikh marauding bands roaming about the eastern Punjab districts massacring Muslims in order to impel the entire Muslim populations of those districts to flee to West Punjab/Pakistan. Three of the princely states, Patiala, Faridkot, and Nabha, have been repeatedly mentioned in this regard (see Map 2).

To settle the matter of the dividing lines between India and Pakistan in the west and the east, two boundary commissions were appointed with different Indian personnel, but with the same British chairman, Sir Cyril Radcliffe.¹³ Since there was never any possibility of the members of either boundary commission reaching an agreed solution, it was settled at the outset that the actual decisions,

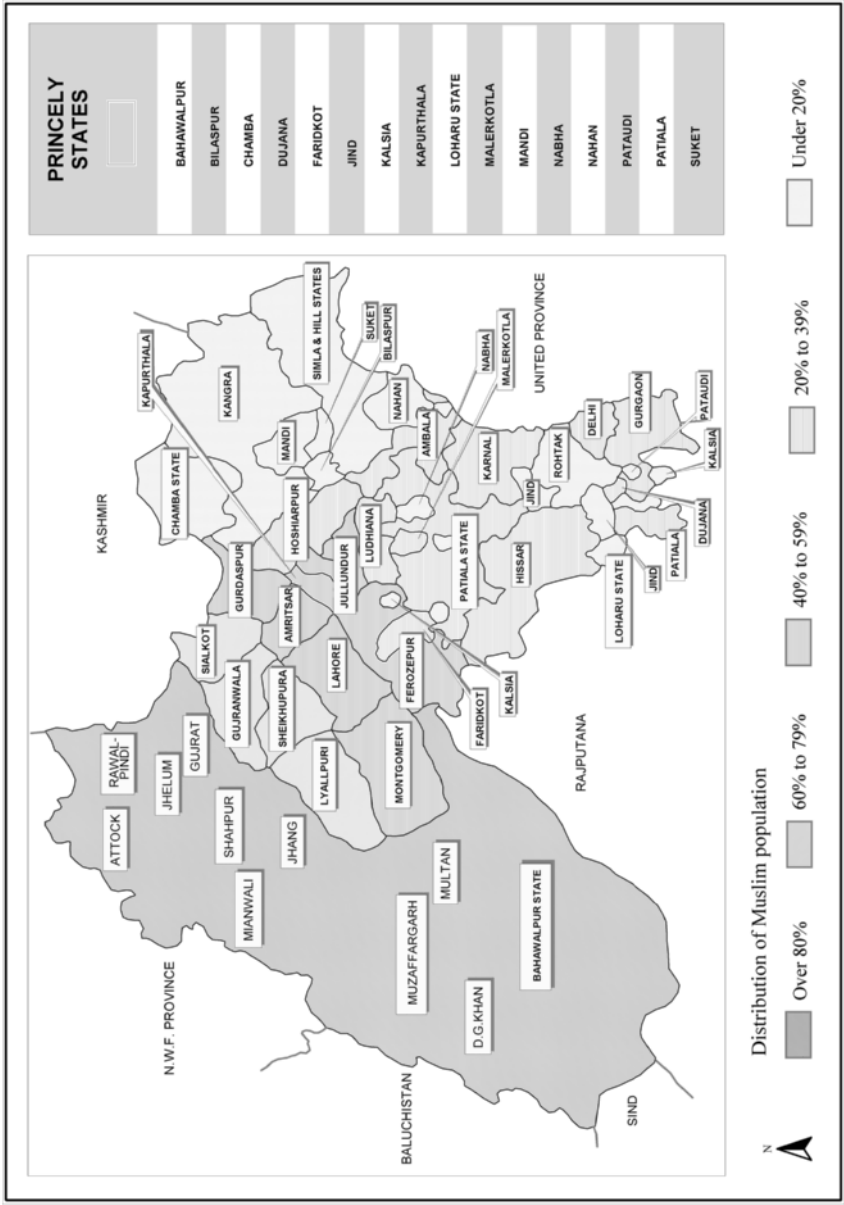


Map 1. Punjab: Sikhs and the Radcliffe Line, 1947.

called awards, in both cases would be made by Radcliffe alone after hearing the points of view of all sides on all relevant matters. The charge to the commissions, in effect to Radcliffe, was to demarcate the boundaries in conformity with two principles, namely, the separation of Muslim majority from non-Muslim majority areas in such a manner that no large tract of land would remain in which a majority of one community would be under the domination of the other community in either India or Pakistan. Second, the areas demarcated as Muslim or non-Muslim majority must be contiguous. A third, but clearly subsidiary option was given to the commissions to consider “other factors” in demarcating the boundaries.

The charge to the commissions, therefore, recognized only two categories: Muslims and non-Muslims. In the Punjab, Sikhs were lumped together with all other non-Muslims. Their fate was left to be considered among the “other factors” along with such matters—also related to the future of the Sikhs—as the disposition of the world’s largest irrigation canal system that, like the Sikhs themselves, criss-crossed any conceivable boundary (based on the primary factor of communal majorities) between West and East Punjab.

That the primary criterion for the assignment of a district to either side was



Map 2. Distribution of the Muslim Population in Pre-Partition Punjab

Source: Adapted from Satya M. Rai, *Partition of the Punjab: A Study of its Effects on the Politics and Administration of the Punjab (i) 1947-56* (Bombay, Asia, 1965), p. 44.

to be the existence of a Muslim or non-Muslim majority was clear from the outset, though numerous attempts were made to obfuscate it, especially from the Hindu and Sikh sides. In fact, the boundary commissions began with what was called a “notional” division between West and East Punjab, based solely on the district population figures from the 1941 census. In the end, despite some heroic efforts on the part of the Hindu and Sikh sides to have numerous “other factors” considered than the majority population of a district, Radcliffe divided only two districts: Gurdaspur and Lahore (see Map 2). In both these cases also, the basic principle of division was the fact that, in subdivisions of these districts, known as tahsils, the communal distribution of the population was different from that in the district as a whole. That is, in the larger portion of Gurdaspur district and the smaller portion of Lahore district awarded to India, there were in fact non-Muslim majorities. Since the non-Muslim majorities were in tahsils bordering non-Muslim majority districts, the other defining principle of contiguity was not violated.

It would be tedious, excessively time-consuming, and unnecessary to go into further details concerning the arguments and counter-arguments on both sides for and against the ultimate award in the Punjab. What is most important for the purposes at hand is to demonstrate its consequences for the displacement and exchange of populations that occurred and how it occurred. Throughout the weeks preceding the award, Sikh leaders made it clear that they would resort to violence if the award went against the interests of their community as they saw it. They stressed three matters in particular: the solidarity and integrity of the Sikh community, the retention of Sikh-owned land in the rich agricultural tracts that their ancestors had settled, and the retention in the part of Punjab to be awarded to India of their most important gurdwaras and shrines. If all their arguments had been taken seriously, most of the Punjab districts, including some of the overwhelmingly Muslim ones, would have had to have been awarded to India. However, they offered a sub-optimal solution from their point of view, namely, the award to India of most of the central Punjab districts, which would mean that at least two-thirds of the Sikh population would be in districts assigned to India, which would also contain most of their irrigated colony lands and the important gurdwara of Nankana Sahib, where the first Sikh guru is said to be buried.

Since even these demands would have been quite inconsistent with the basic principles set for the partition division and would have likely led to war between India and Pakistan, there was never any real question that they would be accepted. Although the Sikh leaders continued apparently to clutch at straws in the hope that somehow their demands would be conceded, they also prepared for violence and exchange of population, which they had also been demanding. Although not all the violence that occurred in the East Punjab can be attributed to the Sikhs, there is no doubt that a very large part of it was the result of deliberate actions on the part of Sikh gangs, instigated by their leaders, supported by some of the Sikh princely states and Sikh military, ex-military, and civilian officers, many of whom provided arms to the raiders.¹⁴ In the event,

largely but not exclusively as a consequence of their efforts, the entire Muslim population of the eastern Punjab districts migrated to West Punjab and the entire Sikh and Hindu populations moved to East Punjab in the midst of widespread intimidation, terror, violence, abduction, rape, and murder. For the Sikh leaders, this meant that, in the face of all obstacles in their way, they succeeded in achieving their principal objective of the moment, namely, maintaining the solidarity and unity of their community by regrouping its entire population into a more compact area that included several districts where they were now in a majority. Since there were no Muslims left, they were now a majority in relation to a Hindu minority in such districts, but this introduces a new tale that cannot be told here.

It was noted above that violence was a principal mechanism for creating the conditions for partition. The second principal conclusion concerning the relationship between violence, partition, and displacement of peoples is that *the deliberate use of violence was a principal mechanism in changing the terms of partition by forcing the displacement of peoples in such a way as to carry the implications of partition itself to its logical conclusion, namely, the concentration of all peoples defined in categorical terms as belonging to particular religious groups on opposite sides of the partition line.* A third conclusion may be stated in general terms as a hypothesis to be tested in consideration of all other major cases of displacement of peoples in the past century, namely, that *the definition of peoples in categorical terms, whether by religion, race, language, or any other cultural marker, inevitably disregards the legitimate claims and aspirations of those persons and groups who do not fit the prevailing categories.* When such a group is sufficiently large, internally cohesive, militant, and has access to arms, violence is highly likely, if not sure to result. A fourth conclusion is that a situation of this type is especially dangerous when the group left out is *interspersed* among the groups on whose behalf the partition is made.

Displacement

Now to proceed to a third level, below the regional, to the scenes of violence themselves in the districts, towns, and villages of the Punjab and other parts of north India. While central place has been given herein to the activities of Sikh groups at the regional level, it must be stressed that they were far from alone in engaging in deliberate acts of violence, massacre, rape, and abduction to force the migration of peoples from one side of the new border to the other. Such acts were carried out extensively also by Muslim groups and gangs in West Punjab who attacked Hindus and Sikhs and, though much less is known about it, by Hindu groups and gangs in East Punjab who, like the Sikh gangs, attacked the Muslim population in East Punjab to compel its movement west.

How was it done? And how far were the activities of the violent groups and gangs part of a general plan to induce migration for political purposes? Although there is strong evidence that there was a general plan instigated by Sikh political leaders, it is probable, if not certain, that much of the violence and other abuses

committed had other, more limited motives. Indeed, it is generally the case—and this is a fifth conclusion—that *a very large portion of the offences committed on the violent occasions that are classified as arising from communal, religious, nationalist, and racial antagonisms between peoples display local and personal motives that have little or nothing to do with the categorical explanations applied to them.* This point has been argued and demonstrated elsewhere.¹⁵ The argument has recently been applied also to the Punjab partition riots by Jalal, who argues that much of the violence committed by “gangs representing majorities against minorities” defined in communal terms actually reflected “battles for control in urban and rural localities that were as vital to them personally as they were to the purported interests of their respective communities.”¹⁶ In other words, such actions arose from mixed motives at the least, if not from entirely local and personal ones. The definition of the situation as a war between whole communities provided a cover, an excuse, and a legitimation for a multiplicity of other interests to come into play and to use violent means that would not in normal times be available to them to achieve their goals.

The means used included arson, loot, murder, rape, and abduction. Arson, for example, was used to great effect by Muslim gangs in the Muslim-majority city of Lahore and the non-Muslim majority city of Amritsar. Governor Evan Jenkins reported to Mountbatten on May 31, 1947 that his administration had been “defeated by incendiarism” in both these cities. Although there had also been stabbings, there had been “practically no rioting,” the absence of which indicated secretive pre-planning with the deliberate intention to force Hindus and Sikhs from their homes and properties. Jenkins went so far as to compare the situation he faced in these two cities to the problems “in London during the fire blitz.”¹⁷

Looting soon became a virtually universal feature of the attacks by Muslims on non-Muslims in the West Punjab districts, in which it could not be said whether the reasons were communal or pecuniary or both. All that is certain is that the communal situation made such looting inevitable and acceptable to nearly everyone except the victims.

Raiding that turned into a kind of communal warfare also took place over large areas. Jenkins again reported on June 1, 1947 that, in Gurgaon district in southeastern Punjab, “raiding and counter raiding by Meos [a Muslim tribe] and Hindus” was going on in an area of “about 800 square miles” during which “at least 50 villages” had been destroyed.¹⁸ A month later, in one of the most contested areas of the central Punjab, the districts of Gurdaspur, Hoshiarpur, and Jullundur, Jenkins reported that raids had been made on Muslim villages in attacks that he thought had been committed by Sikhs. He referred as well to “various villages in the Lahore district [that] are disturbed.” He also reported that a train had “been held up” in Gurdaspur and that “a regular communal riot” had occurred “at Garhshankar, a small town in the Hoshiarpur district.” In all these rural attacks, Jenkins thought that “the aggressors” had been Sikhs. He remarked further that he had “the impression that [the Sikhs] have made certain preparations, some of which are now being disclosed prematurely.” Sikhs were in

possession of bombs and firearms, of which a stock of the former apparently exploded by mistake “in one of the buildings attached to the Tarn Taran Gurdwara,”¹⁹ one of the most important of the Sikh gurdwaras.

It is evident that there were a number of different kinds of actions taking place in the above districts: outright communal warfare between particular Hindu and Muslim castes and tribes involving armed raids by groups from both sides on the villages of the other side; one-sided aggressive raids by Sikhs deliberately aimed at forcing the Muslims out; and, in one town, what Jenkins calls “a regular communal riot.” The latter term is generally used in South Asia to describe violent urban engagements between large crowds of persons from opposing religious communities, Hindu–Muslim or Muslim–Sikh. It is also clear from Jenkins’ account that he believed that Sikhs were acting deliberately according to a plan, which had been “disclosed prematurely” by the inadvertent explosion of bombs in a gurdwara and that these attacks were early signs of many more to come. He was, of course, right.

Jenkins also referred to the holding up of a train, but he does not say what happened in this particular case. However, the holding up of trains and the massacre of all those from the opposite community of the gangs that held them up was soon to become the virtual hallmark of the partition violence. Indeed, a day later, Mountbatten was informed by telephone from Abbott that there had been “four attacks on, or attempts to interfere with, trains in the past two or three days.”²⁰

It is itself a matter of great interest that, in the circumstances prevailing in the Punjab in the months before and after partition, there was a great variety of types of violent and other appalling actions that cannot easily be summed up under any single rubric. In such circumstances, precise and accurate information becomes difficult for the authorities to obtain and, in most cases, is not available at all. Any summary description of them, therefore, is bound to simplify events and diffuse responsibility.

Is there any progression in a situation of violent displacement of peoples of the type under discussion in this article? Jenkins thought there was in the Punjab. In an August 4 memorandum to Mountbatten, he divided the violence that had occurred since March into “three main phases.” In the first phase, as he saw it, from March 4 to March 20, the violence began with rioting in Lahore City, extended then to several of the other cities in West Punjab, was followed by “rural massacres” in several districts involving heavy casualties and “much burning.” By March 21, he reported “that order had been restored everywhere.”

In the second phase, between March 21 and May 9, the progression was from “minor incidents in many districts” to “serious rioting and burning in Amritsar 11–13 April with some repercussion in Lahore,” then undefined “trouble” in “a small town in Gurgaon district, followed by the first outbreak along the Mewat in the same district.” Thus, a breather in which order is restored followed by “minor incidents” then “serious rioting and burning” then an “outbreak” of the widespread violence mentioned before between the Muslim Meos and Hindus. In both phases, it should be noted that the disorders extended over a very wide area.

Moreover, it is impossible that they were all coordinated, but neither is it possible to believe that they were either spontaneous or mere expressions of mass frenzy. It yet remains for serious research to be done on these incidents to uncover what happened and how in each case on which such information might be found in archives and retrospective interviews.²¹

Now to turn to Jenkins' third phase, from "10 May onwards." Here Jenkins uses a summary term to describe what is now happening, namely, "the communal 'war of succession'." Once again, it all begins in the most precious, contested, central Punjab cities of Lahore and Amritsar with "incendiarism, stabbing, and bombing." Then come "serious incidents reported from various districts, particularly Gujranwal and Hoshiarpur." Then "village raiding begins, especially in the central Punjab districts of Amritsar, Lahore, Ferozepore, Jullundur, and Hoshiarpur." Finally, a "revival" of the "disturbances in Gurgaon with 140 villages burnt and very heavy casualties."²² In this final phase, Jenkins also notes that "urban rioting" was "almost unknown." Why?

Urban collective violence that takes the form called rioting is normal, "peacetime" violence that presumes the existence of relatively stable, recognized authority. A riot takes place either between two groups—religious, racial, or other—or between one group and the police. When the police, acting on their own or with the complicity of higher authority, act against one group a riot becomes a pogrom or a massacre. In either case, authority continues to exist, whether it acts effectively or ineffectively, restores order impartially or restores order after acting on behalf of one group and against another. In a communal war of succession, there is no authority, though there may be a government, as there was in both parts of Punjab before and after the British left. There being no authority, there is no need for mere rioting.

But what does Jenkins mean by using the term communal war of succession? The succession was already determined by the partition plan. Muslims were to predominate in West Punjab and non-Muslims in East Punjab. So, it was not just a war to determine who was to rule. It was a war to determine which communities were to occupy the newly defined space and in what proportions. We have seen above that this was the primary issue for the Sikhs: regroupment to provide for themselves territories in which they would be concentrated and, where possible, in a majority in what Sikh leaders then and since have continued to describe as a "homeland" of their own. Their actions, therefore, are clear and understandable, however outrageously and viciously executed.

The leaders of the new governments-to-be in India and Pakistan had both proclaimed that the minorities would be safe and protected in their existing places and should not move. But authority had already disintegrated or become partial as a consequence of their own inability to agree on almost all practical matters and of their own deliberate actions to instigate violence. The standard explanation for the spread of collective private violence throughout most of the districts of Punjab is that a cycle of revenge and retaliation had set in wherein Sikhs and Hindus in central and eastern Punjab reacted in a "communal frenzy" against Muslim attacks on Sikhs and Hindus in western Punjab and vice versa.

This explanation cannot stand against the evidence of organization, preplanning, calculation, the acting out of local conflicts, and the pursuit of loot and women. To the extent that there was a communal war of succession—and the evidence suggests that Jenkins was correct to use this term as an encompassing aspect of the third phase—it was a war for the monopolistic enjoyment of power and privilege on the part of Muslim organizations in West Punjab and Hindus in East Punjab and for the pursuit of a politically effective concentration of their numbers on the part of Sikh organizations and leaders. But even during this phase, it is evident that most of the raiders were making use of the war to act with impunity for their own personal and local ends.

As the date of partition neared, moreover, the agents of state authority, the police and soldiery became “unsteady” and gave clear indication of their intention to desert from one side to the other depending on their communal affiliation. Jenkins complained throughout that the amount of force available to him was inadequate for the troubles anticipated and the troubles that came. While the police and army became increasingly unreliable, the need for the “use of force on massive scale” to deal effectively with widespread “rural raiding” became clear. But neither adequate nor reliable force was now available.²³

On the other hand, the gangs that were operating in the countryside were both “well armed and well led,”²⁴ in some cases “by retired army officers,”²⁵ of whom there was an ample supply in this area of India that provided a substantial and heavily Sikh component to the British armed forces in World War II. Several of the political organizations also had paramilitary formations, whose activities have not been at all adequately documented during these times. The RSS, the leading organization of militant Hinduism then and now, was said to have more than 58,000 members, the National Guards formed by the Muslim League leaders 39,000, and the Sikh Akali Fauj [Force/Army] 8,000 members.²⁶ In addition, available throughout the countryside in the districts with Sikh populations were Sikh paramilitary formations known as *jathas*. These units were by their nature decentralized, associated with the gurdwaras and with the Akali Dal, which in turn controlled the committee, known as the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabhandak Committee (SGPC), whose function was to oversee the gurdwaras. These jathas normally engaged in a variety of activities on behalf of their local Sikh communities, including everything from religious preaching to political mobilization to “defence.” Further, while all Sikhs are enjoined to carry a steel weapon with them at all times, the *jathedars* (jatha members) usually wear rather impressive long swords. It is certain that these jathas were active in the violence during partition.²⁷ Since they were also semi-official Sikh groupings, it is extremely likely that their actions, however decentralized their organization, were to some extent coordinated and that they could have been stopped by a firm statement of the leadership of the Akali Dal and/or the SGPC.

All these paramilitary organizations, however, acted as if lacking any central command. Even Jenkins thought there was no set of leaders whose arrest and detention might have broken lines of communication and reduced the level of violence. Although he was convinced that “Tara Singh and his associates” were

themselves engaged in instigating, planning, and encouraging particular acts of violence, he thought that village raiding—this most troublesome and virtually impossible form of violence to control—was “not specifically directed” by them, but was “undoubtedly the result of their general propaganda.”²⁸ Another way of putting the matter is that there was no clear chain of command between political leaders and rural gangs, but that speeches and statements were made and signals were given by known political leaders that deliberately encouraged and sanctioned violence, both of the jathas and unknown “gangs.”

Moreover, it was assumed that, if all the principal leaders made statements to signal that the time had come to stop the violence, it would have some effect. In fact, Mountbatten pressed the leaders of the three communities during the deliberations of the Boundary Commission to issue a joint statement that minorities on both sides of the borders, however they were drawn, would be protected and that they, the leaders, would accept whatever award was made by the commission and that their communities should also accept the award. Although a press note was issued on July 24 to that effect on the part of the two future governments of India and Pakistan,²⁹ it rang hollow,³⁰ especially since the Sikh leaders continued to reiterate that they would not accept an unjust award. Since any award under the terms given to the Commission could only be perceived by the Sikhs as unjust, this in itself was a call to violence. Ultimately, after most of the forced migrations had been set in motion by rural violence, Tara Singh was persuaded to make a statement calling for the end of attacks by Sikh jathas operating from and returning to the sanctuaries of the princely states on westward-moving trains.³¹ That it proved impossible to obtain satisfactory and timely statements from the principal leaders of the main contending parties appealing for the avoidance of violence surely indicates a degree of complicity in the violence that did take place, but it does not imply that it could have been thus avoided completely or brought to a quick end nor that all or most of the local violence was politically motivated.

Massacre and retributive genocide

Now to look more closely at the forms of violence, their ostensible purposes, and their effects upon those affected. The most dramatic form of violence was massacre, the attack by huge crowds upon villages, trains, refugee camps, and long files of migrants moving from one side of the Punjab to the other, in which large numbers of people were killed, including both men and women, children and old people. A few days before independence and partition, it was reported from the Punjab that “the disturbances are producing an average daily killing of about 100 people with occasional large raids in which 70 to 80 people are killed at one fell swoop.”³² However, massacres of much larger numbers were common even in villages with relatively small populations. Nor are the numbers of killed at all exact. Recorded figures estimated from eyewitness accounts are rounded off approximations: 4,000 killed in a village or small town here, 3,500 at a railway station there, and so forth.³³

In the conventional accounts of the partition violence, these massacres formed a chain of “revenge and retaliation,” presumed to be for its own sake.³⁴ Such a view leaves virtually all important questions unanswered, including the obviously critical ones of how the first link in the chain is forged and how the last is broken. However, this view has an important function in the sustaining of violence. It is a view that serves violence. Moreover, the first link in the imputed chain almost always differs, depending on the side that gives the account.

Insofar as Punjab is concerned, for Sikhs and Hindus, especially the former, the massacres of Sikhs and Hindus in Rawalpindi district³⁵ and in other parts of the far western Punjab in Rawalpindi Division (administrative unit comprising several districts) in March 1947 was the first link in the chain for which vengeance was required and was taken, especially in August and September, in the days before and the weeks after the partition award. But it has been already argued, and there is further evidence on the matter, that Sikh leaders were not moved only or even primarily by the desire for revenge and retaliation, but by a conscious political motivation to regroup and consolidate the community. Thus, Jenkins records interviews held on July 11, 1947 with Jathedar Mohan Singh and Sardar Harnam Singh, following upon an interview the previous day with Giani Kartar Singh, in which the Rawalpindi massacre of Sikhs figured, but which now counted only as a useful precedent in the Sikh leaders’ minds for what needed to be done. Since, they argued, the Sikhs had already been driven out of Rawalpindi Division, leaving their land and property behind, and since the Sikhs could not countenance remaining under Muslim rule in Pakistan, there was only one possible solution.

The only solution was a very substantial exchange of population. If this did not occur, the Sikhs would be driven to facilitate it by a massacre of Muslims in the Eastern Punjab. The Muslims had already got rid of Sikhs in the Rawalpindi Division and much land and property there could be made available to Muslims from the East Punjab. Conversely the Sikhs could get rid of Muslims in the East in the same way and invite Sikhs from the West to take their places.

Jenkins noted further that “their plan was to act in a big way immediately after the transfer of power.”³⁶ In short, the Sikhs would massacre the Muslims in the East in the same way that Sikhs had been massacred in the West and land and property would then be exchanged as well as population. And so it was. In this case, moreover, it is clear that emotions of the moment did not lead to immediate “revenge and retaliation” since “there was comparative peace for several months” after the killings of Sikhs in Rawalpindi district.³⁷ But, trouble from the Sikh side began on a relatively small scale two weeks before the boundary award. The British repeatedly affirmed in one way or another that Sikhs were acting as a community, evidently to a purpose, and presumably with some coordination, as in the following report on August 1.

There is going to be trouble with the Sikhs. When, and how bad, the Governor cannot yet say. Raids on Muslim villages have begun in Amritsar and Lahore district and along the Jullundur Hoshiarpur border, and there have been four attacks on, or attempts to interfere

with, trains in the past two or three days. Muslim casualties in Amritsar Rural area alone since night of 30th/31st July are 23 killed, including 3 women and 2 children, and 30 wounded.³⁸

In this report, it is “the Sikhs” as a community who are acting. Village raids have begun. More action is to come. Muslims are being targeted for slaughter.

Jenkins remarked on August 4 that the “urban slaughter was without precedent” even in the first phase of violence in the Punjab and that “the rural massacres were new.”³⁹ These massacres appear in lists and documents on the printed page as nothing but events and statistics, with some expressions to suggest the enormity and viciousness of the carnage, such as “unprecedented,” “slaughter,” “outrages,” “gruesome,” and the like. How far should one go in describing these events and for what purpose? Butalia has sought to individualize these killings through interviews 40 and 50 years after the facts with persons who witnessed them and who did some killing of their own. One favourable reviewer of her book remarked about it that the individuals whose accounts are presented “pass before us in an endless procession of misery and distress ... Each emerges as a complex human being, far removed from the mere statistical data to which he or she had been reduced in the dusty pages of the official reports of the partition.”⁴⁰ But what do we gain or learn from such accounts? One cannot be sure, but some of the values to be gained and the lessons to be learned from them may be suggested, all of which, however, appear ambiguous.

First, one may suggest that reducing the killings to lists of statistics and describing them as links in a chain of retaliation and revenge is dehumanizing while individualizing them exposes precisely their effects, makes them real, causes revulsion in our hearts and minds that may contribute to the advancement of the cause of human rights. But things are not so simple, for her accounts—confirmed by the few other reports available to us on these matters—reveal a different kind of “chain,” one of complicity in violence that blurs the boundaries between killers and their victims. It appears that untold numbers of women and children were “saved” by their own fathers and brothers by being slaughtered to prevent their capture, abduction, rape, and conversion during these raids. One Mangal Singh, for example, during an attack upon his village cut off the heads of 17 women and children in his own family one by one in full view of all members of the family, though he and his son ultimately escaped, reached safety in India, and fostered new families.⁴¹ In this and other families also, women marched to the village wells one by one and threw themselves in to avoid capture by suicide. In other cases, villagers built huge bonfires put to the same purpose.

They [the villagers under attack] collected about fifty quintals [5,000 pounds] of firewood in the center of the village and they built a huge fire and in that they threw all the children. Their own children. Some children escaped earlier on, otherwise all the other children who were in the village at that time, burned themselves. This they did with the motive that they escaped being forcibly converted by the Muslims. They did not want them to be converted so they burned them. The parents threw in their own sons, and even then the parents also burnt themselves in the same fire. They said that we won’t disgrace our own village.⁴²

All these persons are considered not victims of violence, but martyrs in their community. In Mangal Singh's village and in other known cases, the Sikh community, in the last case the Hindus. But the complicity in violence does not end here, for the tales of their martyrdom are recited every year in the gurdwaras visited by the survivors, thus keeping alive memories that may in turn rekindle a desire to "seek revenge for the loss of their relatives and homes 50 years ago."⁴³ Indeed, such preserved memories do in fact serve the purpose in countless communal riots that have occurred in India since independence of justifying for Hindus and the police the killing of Muslims, seen in categorical terms as lovers of Pakistan who should go to Pakistan like those who did so in 1947.

There is another question that emerges when the killings are individualized. Does it matter to know how people were killed? The few accounts available that tell us make grim reading.⁴⁴ Though some guns and bombs were available, the predominant methods used were cutting and axing of people to bits or burning them alive.⁴⁵ Those cut and axed were thrown into canals or wells, the bodies of those burned alive left to smoulder in the ruins of their homes and huts. Babies were split apart by the legs and impaled on spears. Groups of people of both sexes and all ages were tied together and set on fire to burn to death slowly while the perpetrators and those in hiding could hear their moans, groans, and shrieks.

For what purpose were such methods used? Communal hatred fuelling mass frenzy is a common answer, but equally likely are the availability of only certain types of methods and weapons, the rush that comes to some people by acts of brutality and killing, and the exercise of total power over the lives of others. But perhaps the most important point to make is that all sides used the same methods. The available records make it clear enough that Muslims and Sikhs both did so, but there is a myth that persists up to the present that Hindus had more difficulty in perpetrating such acts. The non-availability to scholars in India of records and documents that would prove otherwise has helped to perpetuate what is certainly a myth.

The fact that persons from all sides engaged in acts of violence and brutality, participated in killings and massacres, leads to the possible conclusion, unacceptable to many people, that no one group is to blame. The "revenge and retaliation" point of view denies that possibility by explaining the violence coming from one's own side as understandable, even justified by the actions of the other. However, for those who refuse to accept such denial, the sombre conclusion presents itself that violence and brutality are part of human nature, that we all share in its occurrence, if not in action, then in thought, feeling, and speech. Resistance to this conclusion takes a nearly universal form in all accounts of the partition violence and most accounts of the major riots that have occurred in India since then. It is to counter the glaring instances of human viciousness portrayed in these accounts with counterexamples of human compassion that crossed communal boundaries in which persons from one community concealed or otherwise protected their neighbours. From such counterexamples spring hope and inspiration.

But such hopes are chimeras. They seek to deny what does not in any case exist—namely, a common human nature⁴⁶ that encompasses violence in us all—with the claim that there are good and bad amongst us. The latter, of course, is true, but there is also good and bad within us all by all prevailing moral standards. The problem with dealing in this way with the discomfort that arises from confronting violence of the sort that pervaded the Punjab in 1947 is its reductionist character, reducing the multiplicity of sources, uses, motives, and purposes of violence to a single source: the nature of man. In a word, it is one of the many devices by which we avoid, diffuse, and displace blame.

A further question concerns the relationship between violence and political authority. There was certainly a breakdown of political authority in the Punjab that made possible the commission of such large scale and widespread atrocities. Such a connection often allows scholarly and other observers of violence to argue that, in ethnically/religiously/communally divided societies, a strong state is a prerequisite for the maintenance of civil order. Some go so far as to argue that states such as the Soviet Union or Yugoslavia at least prevented pogroms against Jews—in the case of the Soviet Union—and the interethnic warfare that has followed upon the disintegration of both states. This argument, however, falls to the ground when confronted with the realities of the massacres in Punjab, namely, the extensive, active complicity of the authorities and the agents of state force in the massacres. For, it is not true that authority broke down completely in the Punjab.⁴⁷ Rather, authority and state power divided and acted in a malignly hostile manner. Of course, the leaders of these new states did not condone the violence, but their subordinates were able to do so with impunity.

One example will illustrate the point here concerning the relationship between authority and supposedly spontaneous mass violence even in a time of apparent anarchy.

Upto [sic] August 10, Mr. Said Zaman held the office of Deputy Commissioner [of Montgomery District] and till then the district remained peaceful. According to general opinion, his impartiality and firmness kept the unruly elements in check. He was succeeded by Raja Hassan Akhtar, an avowed Muslim Leaguer, whose arrival appeared to encourage the Muslim gangsters. ... On the night of August 19, two Muslims, walking in the street during curfew hours, were fatally shot by Sikh soldiers on patrol duty. ... A Hindu Magistrate, posted at Montgomery, at the time, attended a meeting in the Deputy Commissioner's room on August 24. The Deputy Commissioner openly said that all Sikhs must be shot or killed at sight and that the Hindus could, for the time being, be spared. Some Muslim refugees from East Punjab had, by now, arrived in Montgomery, and they were located in a camp near the railway station. Their presence made it impossible for any non-Muslim to reach the railway station with any degree of safety.⁴⁸

Assuming for the sake of argument the accuracy of this report—which, of course, cannot be proven since neither the governments of India nor Pakistan has released the records to contemporary scholars—there are three points to note here. First, impartial authority did exist even in the central districts of the Punjab up to the eve of the boundary award and those who exercised it could be effective to a degree in maintaining civil order. Second, the impartial deputy

commissioner (district magistrate) was replaced by a politically biased magistrate, said to be a known supporter of the Muslim League, which then encouraged “the Muslim gangsters.” He soon demonstrated his partiality by reacting to the killing by Sikh soldiers of two Muslims disobeying curfew orders. He, in effect, then declared war on the Sikh community as a whole, calling for the murder of their members. Third, the presence of Muslim refugees from East Punjab, presumed to be eager for “revenge and retaliation” at a camp near the railway station left the Sikhs with no possible exit. While it is certain, therefore, that the conditions of the transfer of power from the British in Punjab made it impossible to maintain civil order, it is equally clear that what authority did exist often acted to make matters worse.

Now to consider the matter of spontaneity and mass frenzy as the sources of the attacks of persons from one community upon another as opposed to preplanned and organized attacks. Herein lies one of the most serious forms of obfuscation of this type of violence. Its very character is such as to make meaningless such distinctions. There can be no massacre from the side of the populace without both planning and enthusiasm. Massacres by the authorities require only planning and discipline, but popular participation requires enthusiasm, however it is encouraged. To call such enthusiasm induced by rumour, imminent danger, deep-seated prejudice, or any other such precipitants “spontaneous” is also to justify it and to relocate blame from the actual perpetrators onto an objectified, frenzied mass of nameless people.

The ordinary people, however, return the trick. Thus, the person who gave the account of the deliberate burning to death of all the children in the village cannot, of course, blame himself/herself or his/her relations for this tragedy. “It was just the politics of the leaders that led to the riots and violence, which led to calamities and to partition.”⁴⁹ All the children of the village were burned to death, except those who had escaped earlier, in order to prevent their forced conversion to Islam and to avoid disgracing the village, but the fault lay with the politicians. Moreover, the action was deliberate, hardly spontaneous. It is not imaginable that parents throw their children in the flames to an unspeakable death spontaneously. So, even though the actions are deliberate, the fault lies elsewhere.

Further, it is an aspect of the political game, engaged in by the preeminent leaders and highest authorities, to insist that the actions of persons from one’s own community were spontaneous, while those from the other side were preplanned. A fine example is provided by a letter from Liaquat Ali Khan, Jinnah’s principal lieutenant and soon to be prime minister of Pakistan, to Mountbatten on May 31, 1947. He wrote after visiting the district of Gurgaon where the widespread communal warfare between Hindu and Muslim castes/tribes was in progress to say that the situation there was “not merely a spontaneous flare-up of communal feelings in this part of the country, but a planned, pre-meditated and well organised attack that has been launched with the object of completely suppressing the Muslim community of Meos numbering about one million and forming a more or less compact Muslim belt in a

predominantly Hindu area.” He adduced much evidence on the basis of the information he had gathered to support his argument, including the usual pinpointing of a precise moment for the beginning of “the present trouble” in “a treacherous attack by Hindu Jats on a Muslim village.” He made many suggestions for controlling the situation, concluding with the dire warning that “an attack on a minority on such a big and organised scale in the neighbourhood of India’s capital may have most unfortunate repercussions in remoter parts of the country, if it is not promptly checked.”⁵⁰ Those “repercussions,” of course, occurred on a massive scale during the prime ministership of Liaquat Ali Khan, who proved no better at preventing them than the British or Indian authorities.

But what did the murderers think they were doing? How did they justify their actions? There is the testimony of the villagers who performed or witnessed the acts of cutting off the heads of their children or consigning them to the flames and the killing of their women or the latter’s suicides. Their explanation of their actions is, moreover, understandable if not excusable. They acted to save their honour, the reputation of their families and that of their villages—though the last is a bit strange since they were about to leave their villages forever—and to prevent forced conversion of their children to another religion. Can one think of any hidden motives in such actions?

However, what were the justifications, motivations, purposes of the attacking killers? We have so far examined in detail only three: the forced expulsion of the opposed communities on both sides of the new boundary to establish a Muslim state free of troublesome minorities, on the one hand, and a consolidation and regroupment of the Sikh community, on the other hand, and revenge and retaliation on all sides. But, it has been argued above in connection with these justifications that they can in no way be accepted at face value. Justifications for the infliction of pain and sorrow on oneself, even by such heinous acts as the destruction of one’s own children, ring more true than those provided for the infliction of pain and sorrow on others.

Boundaries

Another common metaphor for a succession of riotous events, is the term “wave,” something that washes over a large territory. This metaphor is even vaguer than that of the chain. A wave swells up from below, reaches a crescendo, then dwindles to calm waters, which then recede. “Starting in August 1946 India suffered an unprecedented wave of communal violence for nearly a year.” The beginning point in this account is August 1946, the end point “the Punjab carnage of March 1947.” What swells up is “inflamed communal passion,” the “common factor” in all the violence, but “intimately connected with developments in institutional politics centring on the Pakistan movement.”⁵¹ From this point of view, then, the massacres beginning in August 1947 must constitute a new wave.

Das’ account of the 1946 wave of riots that, in his mind, also extend to March

1947 in the Punjab, encompasses a considerable array of motives, purposes, and meanings. Ultimately, however, he gives central place to both organization and political inspiration as the increasingly critical aspects of the violence. Recent work on the Punjab, however, has tended more in the opposite direction. While acknowledging that communal and political factors were important, these works argue that the focus on them has ignored a multiplicity of others that were involved. Jalal emphasizes the “localised and personalised nature of the battle for social space” in the towns and villages of Punjab, which took place under the cover of the apparently communal and religious character of the overall conflict.⁵² The struggle over territory in the Punjab as a whole was mirrored at the local level in “strategies to appropriate the property of neighbours.”⁵³ Likewise, the women of the opposite side were also appropriated. Many women were raped on the site of the attacks, then killed. However, to an extent that appears from the limited available evidence to have been very great indeed, a huge number of the younger and most appealing women were abducted, often passed among the abductors for their enjoyment, but also taken possession of by particular men who ultimately married them after their conversion. Jalal argues that women were “the main victims” of the partition violence,⁵⁴ a view well supported also by the accounts provided in Butalia’s work. Moreover, the women were often twice and thrice victimized: first, by their abduction; second, by their “recovery” after partition against their will in many cases; third, by the rejection and loss of their children born after their abduction but before their recovery by their original families.⁵⁵

The rape and abduction of women constitute a dishonouring of the male members of the community and of the community as a whole. In many societies, women are also seen as more traditional, conservative, religious than their men and thereby as upholders of the fundamental values of the community. Thus, conversion of women to another religion is also a threat to the community as a whole.

But there is yet something more involved. Women are boundary markers. They are more vulnerable and potentially more accessible than men. They are also coveted by men irrespective of the boundaries.⁵⁶ Faith crumbles before the perceived charms of women seen as beautiful, with whom an illicit and concealed relationship across boundaries poses no—or at least manageable—moral issues for the men so involved. However, for continued acceptance of the male as well as children born of the relationship in the man’s own community, an open liaison requires the conversion and marriage of the woman.

Those men who killed their own women—wives, sisters, and daughters—saved their honour and that of their community, but they also prevented boundary crossing. The greatest trespass of honour and boundary is the birth of children to the abducted woman, inevitable in a traditional society where birth control does not exist. When an abducted woman is found and “recovered,” her newly born children are rejected. What is rejected is the visible stain on both the woman and the man, the evidence both of the handling of the woman by another man, thereby dishonouring the husband, and of the crossing of the boundary. The

child is rejected also because, simply, it is not one's own, but another's, rejected by the community for the same reason.

Why then did the men want to bring back into their families the women who had been abducted?⁵⁷ Persuasion from their wives, the mothers of the abducted girls? Their own feelings of love and loss? Recovery somehow of one's honour demonstrated by the ability at last to perform the man's duty of protecting his daughter? Idle hope that the women had been merely abducted and not violated? Re-creation of the boundary between one's community and the other? Probably some combination of such feelings were involved in each case, but, the women remained polluted even when readmitted into their families and communities.⁵⁸ They would not be considered acceptable marriage partners even after giving up the children to whom they had given birth.

Abduction and forcible conversion of women occurred in both the divided territories, that is, in Bengal as well as Punjab, two quite different cultures despite the fact that the predominant religious communities in both were Hindu and Muslim. Moreover, it appears from available accounts in both territories that the rape, abduction, conversion and marriage of abducted women were phenomena rarely witnessed in the more ordinary communal riots of the past.⁵⁹ Why now and not earlier? I believe it is not merely a matter of dishonouring, but of boundary crossing and defiling, which became important when it was clear that territorial boundaries between communities were to be drawn. Women are simultaneously critical and incidental. Through women, men multiply their race, increase their numbers. They are, in this way critical. But they are also incidental. They may be captured and put to good use, unlike men of the other community, who represent a physical danger and, even when converted, are distrusted and not fully accepted.

Fictions

The partition decision was based on the fiction that there were only two categories of the population of 400 million Indians whose interests were to be considered: Muslims and non-Muslims. In practice, as we have seen, the Sikhs made a most effective claim for being considered a third party, indeed a decisive third party. Scant consideration, however, was given to ascertaining the desires of the other non-Muslims living on both sides of the notional boundary, who had neither sufficient numbers, cohesion, determination, or collective will to do anything to deny their categorical consignment into one or the other two categories. These groups included Christians, Scheduled Castes,⁶⁰ Mazhabi and Ramdasia Sikhs, and Ahmadiyyas. Representations on behalf of these groups were presented before the Punjab Boundary Commission. All those who claimed to speak for all the groups except the Ahmadiyyas declared their wish to be included with all non-Muslims in demarcating the boundaries, though in all cases also, their populations would be divided. The spokesmen for the Ahmadiyyas chose to identify and join with the Muslims and with Pakistan.

Yet, all these groups are socially and religiously marginal to both the Muslim

and Hindu religious communities. They are all also in one way or another discriminated against, despised, and rejected by orthodox Muslims and caste Hindus (that is, all those not classed as low castes/"untouchables"/Harijans/Scheduled Castes). Persons from all these groups also either consider themselves entirely separate from Muslims or Hindus, or have a very low degree of identification with either. Yet, both sides, particularly the "secular" India side, wanted their numbers to be counted on their side. In some cases, the persons who spoke on behalf of these groups before the Boundary Commission were not even members of the groups on whose behalf they claimed to speak. In other cases, it is obvious that they were show boys speaking for the Indian National Congress or the Muslim League rather than for their own group.

Further, for the Sikh spokesmen, who counted the low caste Mazabhis—a marginal group between Sikhs and Hindus, in fact—as part of their own total, all other marginal persons not included within the Sikh community were considered non-persons. This became clear in the testimony given by Sardar Harnam Singh before the Punjab Boundary Commission on behalf of the claim for the Sikhs to demarcate the central Punjab districts as a Sikh "homeland," even though Muslims were in a substantial majority therein. Their argument was that, in these districts, only the Sikhs were the true "sons of the soil," that is, peasant proprietors—or, at least, occupancy tenants, "rooted in the soil of the districts." Never mind that they themselves or their parents or grandparents had come from other districts and had, in many cases, been given lands to cultivate with irrigation. Most of the Muslims, it was argued, were a population of "fakirs, beggars, weavers, herdsmen, cobblers, *kumhars* or potters, *musallis* [rat catchers], carpenters, oilmen, bards, barbers, blacksmiths, washer men, butchers and *mirasis* [singers and dancers], people who are described in the settlement reports [British reports on the settlement of the land revenue of a district] as landless people and menials."⁶¹ Many of these people had "come from abroad [meaning other districts] for labour, for work and they may work and go away when they find things unsuitable for them."⁶² They were "birds of passage," not, like the Sikh landholders "the trees and plants of this soil." These persons, it was argued, should not be counted in the total Muslim population. In other words, they were non-persons. Leaving out these non-persons, the Muslims in the districts whose census population in 1941 constituted a majority in all of them, would be reduced to a minority.

On the other hand, if these persons were to be counted rather than discounted, the Sikhs could still be granted the central districts as their "homeland" through an exchange of population. In other words, the non-persons among the Muslims in these districts could be exchanged with the Scheduled Caste non-persons from the western Punjab districts for the sake of preserving the claimed Sikh homeland. For a parallel to this shameless argument, one needs to go back to the Constitution of the United States in 1789 where the Southern states were allowed to count their slaves as part of their total population for purposes of representation in the Congress,⁶³ but these Negro slaves were, of course, not to be allowed to vote. In the Sikh claim, such non-persons of the other community were not

to be counted at all or were to be traded for others from the other side to perform the same menial tasks on their behalf. Since the Muslims would not accede to this reasonable demand of the Sikhs for their own homeland, the only alternative became what Sardar Harnam Singh had declaimed as “unthinkable,” namely the movement of the Sikh sons of the soil themselves to the eastern Punjab districts and the forced expulsion of not just the Muslim menials from those districts, but every last man, woman, and child.

At the same time, it appears from limited evidence that persons from some of these marginal groups escaped the violence among the three main warring groups of Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs. One case discovered by Butalia is especially revealing in this regard and adds the only touch of humour and lightness that I have found in all that has been written about the horrors of partition. It is the case of some young girls from the Scheduled Castes who were ignored in the attack by Muslims upon Hindus in a village in West Punjab. During the days of fighting and after the Hindus had been expelled, these young girls went about the vacated houses and collected what was for them a vast amount of loot that filled an entire room: food, cooking utensils, items of clothing, and other everyday things that they would normally either not have at all or have only meagerly. In short, they had a wonderful time in the midst of the bloodshed.

Further, it is obvious that Butalia sympathizes with these young girls—who were old women when she interviewed them—and does not condemn their actions. Neither do the women themselves have an ounce of regret for what they did then. It is likely that most readers will feel the same way, as I myself did when I read their account.

Feelings and sentiments apart, the central point here is that the actions of these girls mock the very categories that were created by Indian nationalists and Muslim separatists to define their new nations and to justify the violence they brought down upon their peoples. But, India and Pakistan are hardly unique examples of the mockery of categorical designation of peoples as a basis for the creation and consolidation of states. Indeed, if there is a place in which advocates of human rights should stand in this new century, it is rigorously against every leader and every group of people—political, ethnic, religious, and whatever—that claims exclusive rights to territory on behalf of an entire category of people.

Notes and References

1. This article is a revised version of a paper initially prepared for the conference on War, Famine and Forced Migrations: Social Engineering and Collective Violence in Today's World, Cortona (Italy), May 26–27, 2000 sponsored by the Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli in cooperation with the Refugee Studies Centre, Oxford. It was revised on August 12, 2000.
2. Allen D. Grimshaw, “Genocide and democide,” in *Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace, and Conflict*, Volume 2 (San Diego: Academic Press, 1999), p 58.
3. Many examples of this point of view could be cited. Among the most clearly articulated is Mushirul Hasan, *Legacy of a Divided Nation: India's Muslims Since Independence* (Boulder, CO: 1997); see especially pp 55–56.

4. Among the very few worthwhile books is the superb account of Penderel Moon, *Divide and Quit: An Eyewitness Account of the Partition of India*, new edition (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998). Other useful accounts include the highly biased work of Gopal Das Khosla, *Stern Reckoning: A Survey of the Events Leading Up To and Following the Partition of India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989, originally published in 1949); Robert S. Corruccini and Samvit Kaul, *Halla: Demographic Consequences of the Partition of the Punjab, 1947* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1990) and Suranjan Das, *Communal Riots in Bengal 1905–1947* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991). There is also a fictionalized account in the stories of Saadat Hassan Manto, *Mottled Dawn: Fifty Sketches and Stories of Partition* (New Delhi: Penguin, 1997). For a useful survey of fictionalized accounts of the partition and its consequences, see Ian Talbot, “Literature and the human drama of the 1947 partition,” *South Asia*, Vol xviii, Special Issue, 1995, pp 37–56. See also Ian Talbot, *Freedom’s Cry: The Popular Dimension in the Pakistan Movement and Partition Experience in North-West India* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1996), which contains a rare discussion in Chapter V, including autobiographical accounts of refugees from East Punjab, of the massacres that occurred as they fled to Pakistan. The absence until very recently—and even now the very meagre presence—of serious research on what happened during the partition is regrettable also from another point of view. It has meant that the partition exists as a disastrous (for the Indian side) disjuncture in the arrival of the Indian state on the world scene and, on the Pakistan side, as a regrettable but necessary catastrophe that made possible the creation of the Pakistan state. But the sharpness and horrific character of the partition has made it appear as a kind of terrible accident that cannot be fit into the perceptions of the people of India and Pakistan concerning their past and future. Historians have at the same time failed to provide a narrative of the history of these two new states into which the partition can be fit. On these points, see Gyanendra Pandey, “In defence of the fragment: writing about Hindu–Muslim riots in India today,” *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol xxvi, Nos 11 and 12, March 1991, pp 559–572; and David Gilmartin, “Partition, Pakistan, and South Asian history: in search of a narrative,” *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol lvii, No 4, November 1998, pp 1068–1095.
5. In the latter category, there is one outstanding work by Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Violence: Voices from the Partition of India* (New Delhi: Viking Penguin, 1998).
6. Das, *op cit*, has looked at the Bengal records. Ayesha Jalal has made use of the Lahore records in “Nation, reason [sic] and religion: Punjab’s role in the partition of India,” *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol xxxiii, No 32, August 8, 1998, pp 2,183–2,190; however, at least one Western scholar was denied access to these records and told by a responsible authority in Lahore that they did not exist; personal communication. Swarna Aiyar has made excellent use of the railway police and other civilian and military intelligence records in the India Office Library; see her “‘August anarchy’: the partition massacres in Punjab, 1947,” *South Asia*, Vol xviii, Special Issue, 1995, pp 13–36.
7. For example, Corruccini and Kaul, *op cit*, p 37, who estimate a maximum of 400,000 deaths, but with an enormous margin of error, namely, plus or minus 100,000.
8. “The communal venom that had seeped into the minds of all the communities, got expression in large-scale arson, murder of innocent men, women and children, looting, forcible conversions and abduction of women. These events left no doubt in the minds of the people that the establishment of a separate Muslim State was the only alternative.” Satya M. Rai, *Partition of the Punjab: A Study of Its Effects on the Politics and Administration of the Punjab (I) 1947–56* (Bombay: Asia, 1965), p 47.
9. For these reasons, Khosla argues, “It was ... in Calcutta, and Calcutta alone, that so much violence and hooliganism were displayed on Direct Action Day”; Khosla, *op cit*, p 49.
10. Kirpal Singh, “Introduction,” in Kirpal Singh, ed., *Select Documents on Partition of Punjab ...* (Delhi: National Book Shop, 1991), p xxi.
11. Tan Tai Yong has argued that the Sikhs and their principal political leaders and organizations, notably the Akali Dal and Master Tara Singh, followed a consistent line of opposition to the Pakistan demand up to this point and only now resigned themselves to the inevitable. His account suggests continuity in the Sikh political position designed to protect their position and their bargaining power in the midst of a rapidly changing political context. Yet, even Yong remarks that, by accepting the partition of India and the Punjab, the Sikhs had “painted themselves into a corner”; see “Prelude to partition: Sikh responses to the demand for Pakistan, 1940–47,” *International Journal of Punjab Studies*, Vol I, No 2, July–December 1994, pp 167–196, citation from p 190. Yong’s argument is an extension of an earlier analysis that he cites by Indu Banga, “The crisis of Sikh politics (1940–1947),” in Joseph T. O’Connell, Milton Israel and Willard G. Oxtoby, eds, *Sikh History and Religion in the Twentieth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Centre for South Asian Studies, 1988), pp 233–255.
12. Yong, *op cit*, argues forcefully and more clearly than most who have written on the subject that the Sikh role in the violence associated with the partition of the Punjab was central. He opens his article with the statement that “the Sikhs, enraged that the Punjab would be partitioned and half of it given to the newly created state of Pakistan, reacted with unbridled fury and plunged the province into a state of carnage and

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- destruction.” He argues further that this destruction was planned, organized, and coordinated by the Sikh leaders and concludes by saying that “the Sikhs took the final initiative that was to result in the communal violence of 1947”; citation from pp 167 and 191.
13. On the workings of the boundary commission, see especially, Tan Tai Young, “ ‘Sir Cyril goes to India’: partition, boundary-making and disruption in the Punjab,” *International Journal of Punjab Studies*, Vol IV, No 1, January–June 1997, pp 1–20.
 14. Nor were Sikh leaders at all subtle in declaring their aims in advance. For example, Mountbatten wrote in his personal report dated July 18, 1947 that “the Sikhs have warned Jenkins through Giani Kartar Singh that they will have to take violent action if they are not satisfied by the Boundary Commission’s award. They said openly that they proposed to sabotage communications, canal systems, headworks, etc.” As will be shown below, they also openly declared that massacres of Muslims would be required to force the Muslims out of East Punjab to facilitate exchange of population. In fact, there was not much damage to communications, canal systems, and headworks during the partition violence; they were much better protected than the population. For the best, indeed the only, serious scholarly analysis of the organized Sikh attacks during the partition massacres in Punjab, see Aiyar, op cit. Moon put the matter bluntly a few years later: “The determination of the Sikhs to preserve their cohesion was the root cause of the violent exchange of population which took place.” Moon, op cit, p 280.
 15. Paul R. Brass, “Introduction: discourses of ethnicity, communalism, and violence,” in Paul R. Brass, ed., *Riots and Pogroms* (New York: New York University, 1996); and *Theft of an Idol: Text and Context in the Representation of Collective Violence* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).
 16. Jalal, op cit, p 2, 188.
 17. From document #12: May 31, 1947 (Jenkins to Mountbatten), in Nicholas Mansergh, ed., *The Transfer of Power, 1942–7*, Vol XI: *The Mountbatten Viceroyalty: Announcement and Reception of the 3 June Plan, 31 May–July 1947* (London: HMSO, 1982) [hereafter Mansergh, XI], pp 23–27. It is curious that, in these last mentioned raids, Jenkins does not specify whether or not the raiders were Hindus, Sikhs, or both.
 18. Footnote reference to “a situation report” by Jenkins on his visit to Gurgaon in #16, Mountbatten to Liaquat Ali Khan, June 1, 1947, in Mansergh, XI, p 31.
 19. Document #292, July 30, 1947 (Jenkins to Mountbatten) in Mansergh, XII, pp 425–427.
 20. Document #306, August 1, 1947 (telephone message from Abbott) in Mansergh, XII, p 459.
 21. A rare and exemplary piece of research has been done on the violence between Meos and Hindus by Shail Mayaram, *Resisting Regimes: Myth, Memory and the Shaping of a Muslim Identity* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), in which the author presents strong evidence that what occurred in the princely states of Alwar and Bharatpur and in the adjacent Punjab district of Gurgaon, where the Meos were widely distributed, was nothing less than genocide against the Meos.
 22. Document #337: August 4, 1947 (Jenkins to Mountbatten; enclosure [memorandum]) in Mansergh, XII, p 516.
 23. Document #382: August 8, 1947 (Jenkins to Mountbatten) in Mansergh, XII, pp 583–584.
 24. Document #432: August 11, 1947 (note by Major General D. C. Hawthorn) in Mansergh, XII, p 667.
 25. Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj, 1849–1947* (Riverdale, MD: The Riverdale Company, 1988), p 228. Aiyar also notes the extensive involvement of former Indian National Army men (Indian soldiers in the British army in World War II, captured by the Japanese, who formed a deserter army to fight against the British) and even of “regular Indian Army officers on leave”; Aiyar, op cit, p 32.
 26. Talbot, op cit, 1988, p 233.
 27. See also Aiyar, op cit, pp 28–30 and 34.
 28. Document #403, August 9, 1947 (Jenkins to Mountbatten) in Mansergh, XII, p 636. However, Captain Savage had reported in an interview with Mountbatten, Jinnah, Liaquat Ali Khan, and Sardar Patel four days earlier that he had been informed that Master Tara Singh himself had told his fellows that there was a plan to blow up a train, called “the Pakistan Special with remote control firing apparatus and after wrecking the Special, set it on fire, and shoot the occupants.” Tara Singh’s plans or knowledge of them also included one to assassinate Jinnah; document #345: August 5, 1947 (record of interview between Mountbatten, Jinnah, Liaquat, Patel, and Captain Savage) in Mansergh, XII, p 557. Two days later, a Pakistan special train did run over a mine and two persons were killed as a consequence of the explosion; document #418: August 10, 1947 (note by Major General D. C. Hawthorn) in Mansergh, XII, p 648. This could, of course, have been a coincidence, but there can hardly be any doubt that Sikh groups did target trains moving to Pakistan with Muslim occupants, whom they also massacred when they could.
 29. Document #224, July 24, 1947 (Mountbatten to Listowel) in Mansergh, XII, p 326.
 30. Jenkins, as usual, was bluntly on the mark in a response to criticisms from all sides (Congress, Muslim League, and Sikh) that he was not doing enough to stop the violence: “The critics,” he remarked, “are themselves participants in the events which they profess to deplore”; document #337: August 4, 1947 (Jenkins to Mountbatten; enclosure [memorandum]) in Mansergh, XII, p 512. He had earlier also expressed

- his scorn for press statements by political leaders against the violence, saying that the “real remedy is active intervention by political leaders not by Press Statements but by contacts which they unquestionably possess with violent elements.” Document #327, June 24, 1947 (Jenkins to Mountbatten), in Mansergh, XI, p 606. Talbot also notes that Mountbatten could persuade the Muslim League and Congress members of his Interim Government to agree to call on “the local community and political leaders to help restore order” only with great difficulty for they did not like the implication “that their supporters were at least partially responsible for the violence”; Talbot, op cit, 1988, p 229.
31. Ibid, p 234. Talbot gives no date for this statement, but implies that such appeals made by Sikh leaders were ineffective.
 32. Document #432: August 11, 1947 (note by Major General D. C. Hawthorn), in Mansergh, XII, p 667.
 33. Village- and site-wise figures for the West Punjab districts may be found in Khosla, op cit, pp 320–349; this biased volume provides no figures for the East Punjab districts, though the author was an Indian civil servant and should have had easier access to Indian records and reports. Instead, his book focuses mostly and his statistics entirely on the massacres perpetrated by Muslims in West Punjab upon Hindus and Sikhs.
 34. For example, Talbot, op cit, 1988, p 225 remarks that the massacre of the Sikhs in West Punjab in March 1947, “set off a chain reaction of retaliatory killings.”
 35. Punjab government figures released on July 26, 1947 gave the figures of persons killed in Rawalpindi District as 2,263 non-Muslims and 38 Muslims; Khosla, op cit, p 112.
 36. Document #67: July 11, 1947 (record of interview between Jenkins and Jathedar Mohan Singh and Sardar Harnam Singh) in Mansergh, XII, p 103.
 37. Khosla, op cit, p 112.
 38. Document #306: August 1, 1947 (telephone message from Abbott), in Mansergh, XII, p 459.
 39. Document #337: August 4, 1947 (Jenkins to Mountbatten; enclosure [memorandum]) in Mansergh, XII, p 516.
 40. Sumanta Banerjee, “ ‘The partition and its survivors’; review of *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* by Urvashi Butalia; Viking Penguin India, New Delhi, 1998,” *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol xxxviii, No 39, September 26, 1998, p 2,518.
 41. Ibid, p 2,518.
 42. Corruccini and Kaul, op cit, p 62 (Survivor Account #2).
 43. Banerjee, op cit, p 2,520.
 44. Though one should never forget that what appears gruesome to most people is titillating to some, probably a not insignificant proportion of any populace.
 45. Many such accounts may be found in Corruccini, Khosla, and Butalia.
 46. As Bhalla puts it, “... there was violence of such fiendishness that each reminder of it still comes as a shock to our decencies and still violates our sense of a common humanity”; Alok Bhalla, “Memory, history and fictional representations of the partition,” *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol xxxiv, No 44, October 30–November 5, 1999, p 3,120. My point is that there is no such thing as “a common humanity.” Belief in it, however noble and inspiring, is misguided.
 47. Aiyar has noted that “at no time [before, during, and after the massacres] was there a complete collapse of either the colonial state or the successor states”; Aiyar, op cit, p 35.
 48. Khosla, op cit, pp 161–162.
 49. Corruccini and Kaul, op cit, p 63 (Account #3).
 50. Document #11, May 31, 1947 (Liaquat Ali Khan to Mountbatten) in Mansergh, XII, pp 20–22.
 51. Das, op cit, p 161; this author later mixes the metaphor and refers to the “wave of communal violence” in several Bengal districts that followed the August 1946 Calcutta riot as “partly ... a chain reaction” (p 189).
 52. Jalal, op cit, pp 2,187–2,188.
 53. Ibid, p 2,188.
 54. Ibid, p 2,190.
 55. A general account is provided in Andrew Major, “ ‘The chief sufferers’; abduction of women during the partition of the Punjab,” *South Asia*, Vol xviii, Special Issue, 1995, pp 57–72.
 56. Jalal makes a similar point: “All said and done, the commonality of masculinity was stronger than the bond of religion. Men of all three communities delighted in their momentary sense of power over vulnerable women ... Gender eroded the barriers that religion had been forced to create. ... Alas, Punjab had betrayed its patriarchal [sic] bent more decisively than the affective affinities of religious community.” Jalal, op cit, p 2,190.
 57. It is possible that many men did not seek the return of abducted women, though it is equally unlikely that we will ever know what proportion of families whose wives or daughters were abducted asked or did not ask to have them recovered. Jalal remarks that “some women must undoubtedly have been abducted” in the Bihar massacres of 1946, but she imagines that “almost all of them were recovered, there were hardly

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any conversions and when, after the return of peace, an announcement was made inviting the Muslims to give names of abducted women, no names were mentioned"; Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p 84. That no names were given does not prove there were no abductions.

58. Banerjee, op cit, p 2,519; Butalia, op cit, p 196.
59. For Bengal, see Das, op cit, pp 179 and 196–198.
60. Scheduled Castes is the official term in India for those castes of low status formerly called "untouchables."
61. "Arguments of the Sikhs," presented by Sardar Harnam Singh, in Mian Muhammad Sadullah *et al.*, eds, *The Partition of the Punjab 1947: A Compilation of Official Documents*, Vol II (Lahore: National Documentation Centre, 1983), p 125.
62. *Ibid*, p 130.
63. Article 1, section two allowed the states to count three-fifths of their slave population as part of their population base for determining their quantum of representation in the House of Representatives.

