

***Mountbatten to Nehru on the Bitter Reactions of Liaquat Ali and
Jinnah on the Accession of Kashmir to Indian Union***
Sardar Patel's Correspondence

NEW DELHI
2 November 1947

MY DEAR PRIME MINISTER,

Ismay¹ and I have been working most of the day trying to reconstitute as fairly as we possibly can the burden of our joint conversations with Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan and Mr. Jinnah; and we both think that the enclosed accounts are as fair as can be produced considering that no notes were taken at the time and the conversation with Mr. Jinnah alone lasted over 3 hours. I should be delighted for you to show these to the Deputy Prime Minister but would be grateful if you would not show them to anyone else without consulting me, because the whole basis of our talk was unauthorised and unofficial.

When we arrived there is no doubt that both Liaquat and Jinnah felt that from beginning to end this was a deliberate, long worked out, deep laid plot to secure Kashmir's permanent accession. We worked hard to dispel this illusion but do not guarantee we were successful. I enclose a very rough note as a possible basis for discussion after which I would suggest that you should draft a telegram to Liaquat sending your proposals for stopping this fighting. Perhaps you and the Deputy Prime Minister would stay back after the Defence Committee tomorrow morning to discuss it.

May I congratulate you on your broadcast which I have just read and which is admirable and in striking contrast to Mr. Jinnah's statement?

Yours very sincerely,
MOUNTBATTEN OF BURMA

The Hon'ble Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru

PS.: The enclosures referred to in the notes on the discussions are from my private files, but you of course are well aware of them.

M. of B.

ENCLOSURE

Note of a Talk with Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan at Lahore on 1 November 1947 Having made the excuse of Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan's illness to

¹ Lord Hasting Ismay, Chief of Staff to Lord Mountbatten, March-November 1947; Military Secretary to Lord Willington, 1931-33; Secretary, Committee of Imperial Defence, 1938.

enable me to take Pandit Nehru to Lahore for a Joint Defence Council meeting, I felt it was essential that part of the J.D.C. meeting should take place in Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan's presence. On arrival at Lahore, however, I discovered that he was still too ill to come to Government House. I therefore, got rid of 24 of the 26 items on the agenda with Mr. Nishtar as the Pakistan Government's representative, and then the whole J.D.C. moved down to the Pakistan Prime Minister's House and continued the meeting in his bedroom. Liaquat was sitting up with a rug round his knees still looking very ill.

After the two controversial items had been disposed of everyone left the room excepting Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan, Lord Ismay and myself.

I began by giving him the statement by the Indian Chiefs of Staff on the sequence of events in Kashmir (copy attached) which I took back from him after he had read it.

I then proceeded to explain the position as I saw it, beginning with the accession of Junagadh and going on through the whole history of the Kashmir situation.

As so much of this is the same as I was later to repeat to Mr. Jinnah, it is not recorded here at length.

The burden of Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan's contention was that the Maharaja had categorically refused any form of negotiations or even discussions with Pakistan and that he had brought a serious situation by allowing his Hindus and in particular his State forces, to massacre Muslims in the Poonch and Mirpur areas and across the border of Jammu. This had been more than the tribes could stand and this was the origin of their raid on Srinagar.

I asked him whether he expected us to believe that Afridis and Mahsuds could have come from beyond Peshawar in motor transport without the Government of Pakistan being at least aware of this. He did not deny knowledge of the movement but defended himself by saying that if they had made any attempt to interfere with the movement of tribes in their own buses, this would have precipitated trouble with the rest of the tribes on the Frontier.

I told him that my Government were quite sincere in their offer of a plebiscite, and showed him the draft formula which would also cover Junagadh.

Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan appeared to be very depressed and almost disinclined to make any further effort to avoid war. Lord Ismay and I did our best to cheer him up, the former pointing out that, if the leaders on either side abandoned hope of peace, all was indeed lost. As time was getting on and as Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan looked very tired, we said we would go back to lunch with Mr. Jinnah at Government House and after discussions with him, we would, if he wished, come back and continue our conversation with the Prime Minister. This he

gladly accepted and bade us a very friendly au revoir.

Note: Owing to the great length of the discussion with Mr. Jinnah time did not permit of our returning to see his Prime Minister, but we sent a message excusing ourselves.

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Note of a Discussion with Mr. Jinnah in the Presence of Lord Ismay at Government House, Lahore, 1 November 1947

INTRODUCTION

In the course of three and a half hours of the most arduous and concentrated conversation, Kashmir took up most of the time; Junagadh took next place and Hyderabad the least. We darted about between these three subjects as well as talking about the overall policy affecting States. I have divided this note into four parts, although this was not necessarily the order in which the subjects were discussed nor of course were all the remarks made consecutively.

Part I: India's Policy towards States whose Accession Was in Dispute

I pointed out the similarity between the cases of Junagadh and Kashmir and suggested that plebiscites should be held under UNO as soon as conditions permitted. I told Mr. Jinnah that I had drafted out in the aeroplane a formula which I had not yet shown to my Government but to which I thought they might agree. This was the formula:'

"The Governments of India and Pakistan agree that, where the ruler of a State does not belong to the community to which the majority of his subjects belong, and where the State has not acceded to that Dominion whose majority community is the same as the State's, the question of whether the State should finally accede to one or the other of the Dominions should in all cases be decided by an impartial reference to the will of the people."

Mr. Jinnah's first observation was that it was redundant and undesirable to have a plebiscite when it was quite clear that States should go according to their majority population, and if we would give him the accession of Kashmir he would offer to urge the accession of Junagadh direct to India.

I told him that my Government would never agree to changing the accession of a State against the wishes of the ruler or the Government that made the accession unless a plebiscite showed that the particular accession was not favoured by the people.

Mr. Jinnah then went on to say that he could not accept a formula if it

was so drafted as to include Hyderabad, since he pointed out that Hyderabad did not wish to accede to either Dominion and he could not be a party to coercing them to accession.

I offered to put in some reference to States whose accession was in dispute "to try and get round the Hyderabad difficulty" and he said that he would give that his careful consideration if it was put to him. I then pointed out that he really could not expect a principle to be applied in the case of Kashmir if it was not applied in the case of Junagadh and Hyderabad, but that we naturally would not expect him to be a party to compulsory accession against the wishes of the Nizam.

Part II. Kashmir

I handed Mr. Jinnah a copy of the statement of events signed by the Indian Chiefs of Staff, which I had shown to Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan. He asked if he could keep it, but I made him return the original and gave him an unsigned copy. Although he expressed surprise at the remarkable speed at which we had been able to organise sending troops into Srinagar plain, he did not question the document or my statement.

Mr. Jinnah's principal complaint was that the Government of India had failed to give timely information to the Government of Pakistan about the action that they proposed to take in Kashmir.

I pointed out the speed at which events had moved. It was not until the evening of the 24th that reliable reports had been received of the tribal incursion, and it was not until the 25th that observers had been sent up to confirm these reports. Thus the decision to send in troops had not been taken until the 26th, by which date the Maharaja had announced his intention of acceding to India. There had not been a moment to lose. I added that I could not recall the exact time, but that it was my impression that Pandit Nehru had telegraphed to Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan on the 26th, immediately the decision to send in troops had been taken.

Mr. Jinnah complained that this information should have been sent much earlier—in fact on 24 October. "If," he said, "they had on that date telegraphed saying that a critical situation was reported to be developing in Kashmir and they had sent in observers to confirm these reports and suggested that Pakistan should co-operate in dealing with the situation, all the trouble would have been ended by now."

Lord Ismay agreed that the Government of Pakistan should have had the earliest possible notification. This was the first thing that had occurred to him on his return to Delhi from the United Kingdom, and, indeed, he was under the impression that it had been done. To the best of his recollection, Pandit Nehru had told him on the 28th that he had kept Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan in touch with what was happening all the

time. If this had not been done, the oversight must have been due to the pressure of events, and not because the Government of India had anything to hide. ,

Mr. Jinnah looked up his files and said that the telegram had arrived after the troops had landed, and that it did not contain any form of an appeal for co-operation between the two Dominions in this matter; it merely informed him of the accession and the landing of troops.

Continuing he said that the accession was not a bona fide one since it rested on "fraud and violence" and would never be accepted by Pakistan. I asked him to explain why he used the term "fraud," since the Maharaja was fully entitled, in accordance with Pakistan's own official statement, which I had just read over to him, to make such accession: It was therefore perfectly legal and valid.

Mr. Jinnah said that this accession was the end of a long intrigue and that it had been brought about by violence. I countered this by saying that I entirely agreed that the accession had been brought about by violence; I knew the Maharaja was most anxious to remain independent, and nothing but the terror of violence could have made him accede to either Dominion; since the violence had come from tribes for whom Pakistan was responsible, it was clear that he would have to accede to India to obtain help against the invader. Mr. Jinnah repeatedly made it clear that in his opinion it was India who had committed this violence by sending her troops into Srinagar; I countered as often with the above argument, thereby greatly enraging Mr. Jinnah at my apparent denseness.

From this point, he went on to say that the Government of India authorities had encouraged the Kashmir Government to massacre Muslims in the Poonch and Mirpur areas. I repudiated this as obvious nonsense. He then said, "Very well, it was the Congress party that did it." I pointed that if there had been any such massacre by Hindus in the Poonch area (which I did not deny) this had been done entirely by Kashmir Hindus and could hardly have been done with the object of inciting the tribes to invade Kashmir and come so close to capturing Srinagar, merely to afford the Maharaja an excuse for acceding to India for the purpose of obtaining help.

I then explained to Mr. Jinnah, at some length, the policy which I had consistently pursued in regard to Kashmir, namely, trying to persuade the Maharaja to institute progressive government, ascertain the will of the people and then accede to the Dominion of the people's choice before 15 August. I recounted how I had tried to persuade H.H. to do this during my visit to Kashmir in July, and how I had told him my views privately whilst driving in the car with him; but that when I had wished to have a formal meeting with him in the presence of his Prime Minister and my Private Secretary (Sir George Abell) on the last day of

my visit, he had pleaded illness and gone to bed to avoid the meeting. On leaving Srinagar, I had instructed the Resident (Colonel Webb) to continue to give the Maharaja this advice officially; and finally Lord Ismay had gone up at the end of August with instructions to advise the Maharaja to hurry up and ascertain the will of the people. But the Maharaja had invariably avoided the issue, and had always turned the conversation to lighter topics.

Mr. Jinnah paid a handsome tribute to the correctness of my policy and admitted that it was I who had put the ex Premier of Kashmir (Pandit Kak) in touch with him when he came to Delhi.

Mr. Jinnah next referred to the statement which he had issued to the Press that day (copy attached) and enlarged on his difficulties in not being able to have any reasonable conversation; either personally or through representatives, with the Maharaja or even with his Prime Minister; and that, not only had the Maharaja brought his troubles upon himself by this attitude, but had greatly aggravated them by the massacres to which he had incited his Dogras against innocent Muslims. He said that even today at Jammu 90,000 Muslims were in danger of being massacred.

I told Mr. Jinnah that Pandit Nehru had expressed horror at the massacres that had taken place and had issued stringent orders that everything possible was to be done to stop them. Only the night before I had supplemented those instructions myself through an Indian Brigadier who had just returned from Kashmir and who fully agreed with the necessity for stopping any further killing of Muslims.

I informed Mr. Jinnah that we already had a Brigade Group of 2,000 men in Srinagar; that a 4th Battalion would be flown in that day, and a 4th Battalion within the next two days. I said that we should have no difficulty in holding Srinagar and that the prospect of the tribes entering the city in any force was now considered remote.

Lord Ismay suggested that the main thing was to stop the fighting; and he asked Mr. Jinnah how he proposed that this should be done.

Mr. Jinnah said that both sides should withdraw at once. He emphasised that the withdrawal must be simultaneous. When I asked him how the tribesmen were to be called off, he said that all he had to do was to give them an order to come out and to warn them that if they did not comply, he would send large forces along their lines of communication. In fact, if I was prepared to fly to Srinagar with him, he would guarantee that the business would be settled within 24 hours.

I expressed mild astonishment at the degree of control that he appeared to exercise over the raiders.

I asked him how he proposed that we should withdraw our forces, observing that India's forces were on the outskirts of Srinagar in a

defensive role; all the tribes had to do was to stop attacking. I also pointed out that we could not possibly afford aeroplanes to fly the Indian troops back. Lord Ismay suggested that they should march back via Banihal Pass.

I asked Mr. Jinnah why he objected so strongly to a plebiscite, and he said he did so because with the troops of the Indian Dominion in military occupation of Kashmir and with the National Conference under Sheikh Abdullah in power, such propaganda and pressure could be brought to bear that the average Muslim would never have the courage to vote for Pakistan.

I suggested that we might invite UNO to undertake the plebiscite and send observers and organisers in advance to ensure that the necessary atmosphere was created for a free and impartial plebiscite. I reiterated that the last thing my Government wished was to obtain a false result by a fraudulent plebiscite.

Mr. Jinnah repeated that he and I were the only two who could organise a plebiscite and said that we should do it together. Lord Ismay and I went to great trouble to explain that I was a constitutional Governor-General and a Britisher, and that even if my Government would trust me sufficiently to see this through, I was sure that Mr. Attlee would not give his consent.

Mr. Jinnah complained bitterly that after the extremely generous gesture on the part of the Government of India in accepting his invitation to come to discussions at Lahore, the illness of one man should have prevented some other Minister from coming to conduct the negotiations; why, for example, could Sardar Patel not have come? It was a matter of the greatest urgency to get together on this problem, and he asked me how soon Pandit Nehru could come to Lahore.

I countered by saying that it was now his turn to come to Delhi since I had come to Lahore, and I invited him cordially to stay as my guest, when I would take him to see Pandit Nehru in his bedroom.

He said that this was impossible. I pointed out that I had been to see Pandit Nehru personally in his bedroom and that I had now been to see his Prime Minister in his bedroom, and that I failed to see what was improper in this suggestion. He assured me that it was not a question of going to anybody's bedroom, but that he was so busy he simply had no time to leave Lahore while his Prime Minister was on the sick list.

I asked him afterwards if there was any single problem more serious or urgent than Kashmir. I pointed out that when one was so busy one had to arrange work in order of priority. If he admitted that Kashmir was top priority, then all other work should stand aside for it and he should come to Delhi at once. He said he regretted that this was

impossible, for the whole burden of events was on his shoulders at Lahore. I explained that he need only be gone for a day and that I was anxious to return his hospitality. He said, "I would gladly come a hundred times to visit you; I just cannot manage it while my Prime Minister is ill." I asked him to come as soon as his Prime Minister was well enough to travel, and he said, "We shall have to see."

Lord Ismay pointed out that the best way to stand well in world opinion was for him now to come and return my visit and discuss Kashmir with Pandit Nehru. Mr. Jinnah said that he had lost interest in what the world thought of him since the British Commonwealth had let him down when he had asked them to come to the rescue of Pakistan. I ended the meeting, as I had started it, by making it quite clear that I had come unbriefed and unauthorised to discuss Kashmir, since I had not had a chance of seeing Pandit Nehru after he had informed me he would be unable to accompany me. I told him I was speaking not as Governor-General of India but as the ex-Viceroy who had been responsible for partition and was anxious to see that it did not result in any harm coming to the two Dominions. He said he quite saw this but hoped that I would be able to discuss the various proposals which we had been talking about with Pandit Nehru and send him a firm telegram. I undertook to convey this message to Pandit Nehru.

Round about 5 p.m. it was obvious that we were going to be too late to go and see Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan again, so Lord Ismay left the room to telephone our apologies to him. I took the opportunity of Lord Ismay's absence to 'tell off' Mr. Jinnah. I told him that I considered it was unstatesmanlike, inept and bad mannered for him to issue a statement which directly accused the Government of India of "fraud and violence" in Kashmir a few hours before he expected the Prime Minister of India to come and discuss this very question in a friendly manner; and that had he been feeling well enough to come, such a studied and ill-timed insult would have been enough to send his temperature up again. I finally pointed out that Pakistan was in my opinion in a much weaker position than India, not only from the obvious military point of view, but I was sure, the world would think they were the wrong; and that this form of abuse before a discussion commenced could only put Pakistan even deeper in the wrong.

At the end Mr. Jinnah became extremely pessimistic and said it was quite clear that the Dominion of India was out to throttle and choke Dominion of Pakistan at birth, and that if they continued with their oppression there would be nothing for it but to face the consequences. However depressing the prospect might be, he was not afraid; for the situation was already so bad that there was little that could happen to make it worse.

I pointed out that war, whilst admittedly very harmful for India, would

be completely disastrous for Pakistan and himself. Lord Ismay tried to cheer him up out of his depression but I fear he was not very successful. However, we parted on good terms.

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Suggested Proposals to Pakistan Government to Form the Basis of Discussion

1. It is of paramount importance, not only to the Government of India, Pakistan and Kashmir, but also to the cause of world peace, that the fighting in Kashmir should cease at the earliest possible moment.
2. The best, if not the only, hope of achieving this object is a very early meeting between accredited representatives of the two countries.
3. The Government of India, for their part, have no desire to maintain troops in Kashmir, once the valley is safe from attack and law and order have been restored. They are therefore prepared to give an undertaking to withdraw their troops immediately after the raiders have left the country and returned to their homes.
4. It is the sincere desire of the Government of India that a plebiscite should be held in Kashmir at the earliest possible date and in the fairest possible way. They suggest that the UNO might be asked to provide supervisors for this plebiscite, and they are prepared to agree that a joint India-Pakistan force should hold the ring while the plebiscite is being held.
5. The Government of India suggest that both Governments should agree on the form of the public announcement to be made in regard to the procedure for accession of those States in which this matter is in dispute. A draft is attached as a basis of discussion.
6. They suggest that the above proposals should be the subject of a roundtable discussion at the earliest possible date.