

## Record of a conversation between Lord Ismay and Muhammad Ali Jinnah (Karachi, 3 October 1947)

**Caption:** On 3 October 1947, during a conversation between Lord Ismay, Chief of Staff to the British Viceroy of India Lord Mountbatten, and Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Governor-General of Pakistan, Jinnah particularly discusses the consequences of the partition of the British Indian Empire, which include population movements. Jinnah believes that the violent clashes between communities brought about by these movements are the fault of the Indian Government, Gandhi, the Sikhs and the British.

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TOP SECRET

RECORD OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN LORD ISMAI AND MR. JINNAH  
AT KILYCHI ON 3RD OCTOBER, 1947

GENERAL IMPRESSIONS

I had a two hours talk with Mr. Jinnah last night.

The general impressions he left as to his state of mind were:

- (a) That the Government of India have neither the wish nor the power to protect minorities or to stop the carnage.
- (b) That the Government of India, and also Mr. Gandhi, are determined on the destruction of Pakistan.
- (c) That, in view of (a) and (b) above, it is impossible to see how war, or something very like it, between the two countries can be avoided for much longer.
- (d) That I, and indeed most of my countrymen, are totally incapable of understanding the working of the Hindu mind, and that we are very gullible.

THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

2. At the outset of our talk, I asked Mr. Jinnah what he thought of the theory that the Hindu Mahasabha and the R.S.S., with the support of Sikh terrorist organisations, were out to overthrow the present Government of India. He replied that this was an ingenious fiction designed to magnify the difficulties, and excuse the impotence, of the Government of India. I asked whether he seriously doubted Nehru's sincerity and statesmanship, to which he replied that Nehru himself was a figurehead, vain, loquacious, unbalanced, unpractical, and that the real and almost absolute power lay with Patel, who was actively aided and abetted by Gandhi. [This was a "new one on me" and I tried it on Subrahmany this morning. He took the exactly opposite line, stating categorically that Nehru was Gandhi's favourite, and stood far higher in his estimation than Patel.]

MR. P. TEL

3. Mr. Jinnah went on to say that the Government of India would

certainly not fall unless Patel wished it. Patel had, so to speak, 75% of the total power of India in his hands, and could stop all the troubles in a week, if he were so minded, and if he were not so implacably anti-Islam. I intervened with the observation that Patel had made a very good speech at Amritsar a few days ago, only to be assured that Patel had made it with his tongue in his cheek, and had been at pains to introduce the astonishingly pernicious statement that "all Moslems must be cleared out of the E. Punjab". I suggested that surely this was a mis-quotation or at least taken out of its context. Was not Patel's meaning roughly this: "It is important for the sake of our own refugees in the W. Punjab that the Moslem refugees in the E. Punjab should be moved to Pakistan with the greatest possible speed and the greatest possible security". But Mr. Jinnah would have none of this!

#### GANDHI

4. He went on to dilate upon the wicked guile of Gandhi, who while outwardly preaching brotherly love and tolerance, was intent on destroying Pakistan. "In every one of his speeches", said Mr. Jinnah, "there is a drop of poison. You, of course, can't detect this poison, but the Hindus for whose edification it is instilled, have no difficulty in grasping his meaning: and nor do I, who know him inside out". I admitted with suitable modesty - that I myself had failed to detect those regular doses of poison: whereupon Mr. Gandhi's recent reference to war between India and Pakistan was trotted out three or four times, and I was reminded that some years ago Lord Halifax had described Gandhi as the "world's greatest bamboozler".

#### THE CABINET

5. To my question as to what he thought of the remainder of the Cabinet, other than Nehru and Patel, Mr. Jinnah went through them one by one. I cannot recall his descriptions, but broadly speaking they were all light weights who were either fools or crooks.

### THE SIKHS

6. Mr. Jinnah had a lot to say about the Sikhs, and was emphatic that it was they who were at the bottom of all the trouble. The movement could have been nipped in the bud if Mountbatten had not given way to Patel's persuasions and reversed the decision taken by all parties before the transfer of Power to round up all the ring leaders. The arrogance of the Sikhs was now overweening, and their armed strength considerable. But even so, the Government of India could easily suppress them, if they were so minded. But Patel would have none of this. Look what he had done in getting the order against kirpans prematurely cancelled.

About four fifths of the Sikhs from W. Punjab had already crossed over to the E. Punjab. I questioned this and recalled the column of half a million or so that I had myself seen approaching Baloka Bridgehead, but Mr. Jinnah brushed this aside, by saying that two million were involved, and that over 1½ million had already come across. What were these people going to do? As he saw it, they could either go Delhi way or Lahore way, and he himself was pretty sure that they would choose the latter. It would be the Greek guerilla game over again, with India and the Sikh States playing Russia's part. These incursions across the Punjab frontier would set Pakistan a difficult problem, observing that they already had the N.W. Frontier of India to look after - a five crore commitment.

### N.W.F.P.

7. This brought Mr. Jinnah to the position on the N.W. Frontier. So far things had gone very well. There had been incipient trouble, but Cunningham had ably dealt with it: there had also been a little trouble in Baluchistan, but this too had been suppressed. All the tribes were for the moment pretty quiet, and the Enqir of Ipi, who was the only nuisance, was getting an old man. Eventually - say in four or five years - the N.W. Frontier was going to be a paying proposition. How, he did not explain. Meanwhile it was costing

4 - 5 crores a year. It was amazing that the Government of India did not realise that the North West Frontier was their frontier just as much as it was Pakistan's. If the Afghan Army and Air Force, backed up by the tribes, were to smash through the Pakistan forces, India would be in the gravest peril. While emphatically agreeing that the N.W. Frontier was essentially the joint responsibility of India and Pakistan, and earnestly hoping that this fundamental fact would be recognised when Pakistan and India were again on friendly terms, I felt it right to mention that the Afghan armed forces were pretty second rate. Mr. Jinnah did not dissent, but thought it highly probable that they would be heavily supported by Russia. Afghanistan's solitary vote against Pakistan joining UNO was significant that Russia put them up to it. How could the handful of Indian squadrons cope with a heavy Russian air attack? I thought it as well to hazard the personal view that if Russia took any overt action against India, Great Britain and the USA were not likely to stand idly by.

#### MR. JINNAH'S IMMEDIATE REQUIREMENTS

8. Towards the end of our talk, Mr. Jinnah asked me point blank why I was going to England. I replied that the intention was to give HMG a first hand account of what had happened, is happening and might happen in this sub-Continent. I added that the visit was being undertaken on my own suggestion, wholeheartedly endorsed by Lord Mountbatten, and NOT on the invitation of HMG in the UK. I then asked whether there was any message that he would like me to give to Mr. Attlee, hoping that this would draw him on the question of his recent appeal to all the Dominions. [It is extraordinary that he should have made no mention of this either during my previous eleven hours so called heart to heart talks with him - or on the present occasion]. But not a bit of it. He said that he wanted two things - a loan and military equipment. As to the first, he had only 20 crores to carry on with. It was therefore

essential for him to raise money somewhere. As the last recruit to the British Commonwealth of Nations, he would much prefer to get it from the senior partner. I said that finance was right outside my boat, and my understanding, but that I would of course deliver the message. Had he already made any approach in the matter? and what sort of figure had he in mind? On the first point he said 'No'. He would not like to put in a formal request unless he had good reason to believe that it would be granted. And on the second, he was equally vague. He said that he would like as much as the UK could afford.

This approach seemed to me so curious, that I wondered whether I had not misunderstood, and repeated both questions in different form. In addition, I asked whether he had consulted Sir Archibald Rowlands. His replies to the first two questions were the same as I have already recorded. He added that he had not yet spoken to Rowlands - or presumably Turner - but that he intended to do so.

9. On the question of equipment, Mr. Jinnah said that the Government of India, as represented by Patel, were determined that Pakistan should not have her share of reserve equipment in India, and he asked for my good offices. There ensued a conversation which showed that Mr. Jinnah knew ever less than I do about this technical business. I shall therefore make no attempt to record it. I ought to add however that earlier in the evening, Sir Archibald Rowlands had tackled me on the same subject, and had promised to send me a note on it to England. I for my part promised to take it up with the proper authorities both in England and on my return to Delhi.

10. Mr. Jinnah was as usual very friendly. He had got up a special dinner party for me, and kept me back talking for nearly two hours after his other guests had left. On saying goodbye he pressed me twice to be sure to stay with him on my way back to Delhi. But for all that I managed to elicit from him, I have come regretfully to the conclusion that he thinks me a rather nice silly ass.