

**THE BRITISH OCCUPATION  
OF  
THE PANJAB**

**GANDA SINGH**

**SIKH HISTORY SOCIETY  
AMRITSAR-PATIALA**

**1955**

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**THE BRITISH OCCUPATION  
OF  
THE PANJAB**

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**1955**

**SIKH HISTORY SOCIETY PATIALA**

## PREFACE

This account of the British occupation of the Panjab was originally written as *Introduction to the Private Correspondence relating to the Anglo-Sikh Wars* published by the Sikh History Society. It has been off-printed for the convenience of such of the readers as find it difficult to go in for the larger volume. It has no pretensions to be a detailed history either of the Anglo-Sikh relations during the first half of the nineteenth century or of the so-called British conquest of the Panjab. It just gives in brief the political motives and secret plans which guided the expansion of the British empire to the north-western frontier of India and resulted in the annexation of the Panjab in 1849. It has been based exclusively on contemporary authorities supplemented by the private letters of the Governors-General and the Commander-in-Chief of India and of the Political Assistants addressed to Sir Frederick Currie as the British Resident at Lahore. This correspondence is an invaluable source of material for the history of the Panjab during the eventful years of 1846-49. Its value to the research student is greatly enhanced when he knows that the official despatches and records of the Government of India of those days are not very faithful and reliable. They do not always present a true picture of the British political transactions in this country, particularly in respect of their wars with, or conquests and annexations of, the Indian kingdoms. They were at times garbled and mutilated to suit the requirements of a particular plan or person, or were entirely suppressed or destroyed if they were unfavourable to the Government or highly placed officers. It is not proposed to enter into any discussion on this point here. The inquisitive reader is referred to a few examples quoted in the Preface of the *Private Correspondence relating to the Anglo-Sikh Wars*, pp. 8 to 10.

## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

The figures quoted in brackets as authorities, without giving the names of books, refer to the numbers of letters printed in the *Private Correspondence* and to pages thereof.

The writer shall find his labours fully repaid if this narrative helps his countrymen learn a lesson from the mistakes of the nineteenth century.

Patiala,  
April 4, 1955.

GANDA SINGH

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## **THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB**

The story of the British occupation of the Panjab is very tragic indeed. It was all prompted by selfish motives and the political necessity of having an effective control over the politics of Afghanistan with a view to keeping the French and Russians away from the borders of the Indian empire.

The imperialist and colonial ambitions of England have always had their worst rivals in France and Russia, and it was to guard against their designs, real or imaginary, that the English politicians not unoften tarnished the fair name of England with many an un-English act. The annexation of the Panjab was one such act whereby the young Maharaja Duleep Singh, the minor son of their friend and ally Maharaja Ranjit Singh, was cheated out of his kingdom.

### ***RISING POWER OF THE SIKHS AND THE BRITISH***

The Panjab first attracted the attention of the British politicals in 1771 when the rising power of the Sikhs came as a great relief to them. General Barker's observations were both historically and prophetically true when he said in his letter of August 19, 1771, addressed to Sardar Jhanda Singh Bhangi, that "it is clear that as long as the Khalsa army is on the watch, no one can march upon Hindustan unopposed." (CPC, iii. 868.) The Sikhs had proved themselves to be a strong check to the inroads and ambitions of Ahmad Shah Durrani in India. The great Afghan conqueror had for a quarter of a century made relentless efforts to annex the Panjab to his kingdom of Afghanistan, but the Sikhs stood up for the independence of their country, fought for every inch of her soil and were eventually successful in freeing her

## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

from his oppressive and irksome yoke. Thus was Hindustan secured by the Sikhs from western invasions. Undisturbed from the north-west with the Sikhs as sentinals, the country could prosper in peace. But the short-sightedness and petty jealousies of the Indian princes and people had opened the way for the British to gain a strong political hold on the country.

By the end of the eighteenth century, the East India Company of traders had imperceptibly assumed the role of empire-builders. The English were naturally jealous of the native princes who wished to strengthen and consolidate their own territories. Their desire for expansion and their increasing appetite for earth knew no bounds. Wherever they met with or apprehended resistance to their schemes, they brought into play all types of Machiavellian tactics to overcome it and gain their object.

The fear of an Afghan invasion in the closing years of the eighteenth century, and of the designs of Napoleon upon India in the beginning of the nineteenth, prompted the British to conciliate the Sikhs and their rising chief Ranjit Singh, who had then appeared on the stage of the Panjab as the Coming Man, having occupied Lahore in 1799. They needed his neutrality, and active friendship if possible, to use the Sikh territories as a buffer between India and Afghanistan. To open the way for friendly negotiations, the British Government sent an agent in the person of Munshi Yusaf Ali Khan to Sardar Ranjit Singh with a friendly letter and presents valued at ten thousand rupees. The agent was received by him with due honours, presented with a *khillat* and dismissed with suitable presents for the British authorities.

### TREATY OF 1806

Ranjit Singh refrained from joining Jaswant Rao Holkar against the British in 1805, and, along with Sardar Fateh Singh Ahluwalia of Kapurthala, entered into a treaty of



**MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH**

*Born :*  
Maghar 2, 1837 Bk.  
November 15, 1780 A.D.

*Died :*  
Asarh 15, 1896, Bk.  
June 27, 1839 A.D.

friendship and amity with them on January 1, 1806. It was agreed that, as long as the Sikh chieftains held no unfriendly connections with the enemies of the British, or committed no act of hostility, "the British armies shall never enter the territories of the said chieftains, nor will the British Government form any plans for the seizure or sequestration of their possessions or property." (*Appendix B, No. 1, pp. 470-71, 'Private correspondence relating to the Anglo-Sikh wars'*).

#### TREATY OF AMRITSAR, 1809

Ranjit Singh wished to consolidate the entire possessions of the Sikhs, both to the north and south of the Sutlej, into one strong empire of the Panjab. This was in no way against the treaty of 1806. Yet the British could not see him expand his sphere of political power and influence to the south of the Sutlej.

In 1805 the policy of the British in India was to consolidate their dominions to the east of the Jamuna and not to advance to the west of that river. This underwent a change with the changing trend of the Napoleonic war in Europe. The fears of a Franco-Russian alliance in 1807 for the subjugation of India set the British athinking and their military experts held that for defence purposes the Sutlej was a better frontier than the Jamuna. It was, therefore, decided by them to move forward their frontier to the bank of the Sutlej. This meant the extension of their political influence over the territories between the two rivers, dividing the Panjab into two by a thick political line. The chiefs of Patiala, Nabha, Jind and Kaithal, and other small states, whom Ranjit Singh sought to take into his sphere of unification, were encouraged in their request for British protection. And Mr. Charles T. Metcalfe was sent to Ranjit Singh to negotiate a treaty with him to put a stop to his further expansion to the south of the Sutlej.

Ranjit Singh, too, had evidently seen through the game. To him there appeared to be no danger to his country and people from a Franco-Russian invasion; he rather feared the establishment of British hegemony on his borders and re-

sented their interference in his relations with his own people to the south of the Sutlej. He was not, therefore, very enthusiastic about continuing negotiations with the British envoy, Mr. Metcalfe, who did not look with favour upon Ranjit Singh's fresh conquests south of the Sutlej under the plea of British protection promised to cis-Sutlej chiefs. Ranjit Singh at one stage suspended his negotiations with Metcalfe, crossed the river, seized Faridkot and Ambala, levied exactions in Malerkotla and Thanesar and entered into a symbolical brotherhood or alliance with the Raja of Patiala. Closer relations between the Sikhs of the north and the south of the Sutlej could not find favour with the British who, as foreigners, could only thrive on dissension and disunity in the country. To coerce Ranjit Singh into acceptance of the proposed treaty, they ordered a body of troops from across the Jamuna in January 1809 under the command of Sir David Ochterloney, who pushed on towards Ludhiana, prepared for hostilities.

Intelligence at this time arrived from Europe that Napoleon's designs upon India had received a set-back so as to render any defensive precautions on the Indian frontier unnecessary. The British no longer felt the necessity of a friendly alliance with Ranjit Singh. Their attitude, therefore, stiffened. In spite of the treaty of 1806, which explicitly laid down that the British would not form any plans for the sequestration of Ranjit Singh's possessions, they insisted upon the restoration of his latest conquests and the retention of British troops at Ludhiana. To make their plea of the promise of protection a reality, Sir David Ochterloney issued in the beginning of February 1809 a proclamation declaring that the Cis-Sutlej states were under British protection and that any aggression of the Chief of Lahore would be resisted with arms. (Cunningham, *History of the Sikhs*, 148-9.) This not only created a discord among the Sikh people and divided them into the Majha and Malwa factions—the latter falling into the lap of the British—and placed a British cantonment directly on the Panjab frontier, but also converted the Panjab into a buffer state to bear the brunt of a French or Russian attack.

Ranjit Singh was now helpless. He knew his limitations. He was not yet strong enough to go to war with the British who had the inexhaustible resources of India at their command. His own house was not yet in order. Only a small portion of the Panjab had been brought under his control, and that too had not been fully consolidated. It was also feared that at the time of an emergency the chiefs who had only partially accepted his suzerainty might rise in rebellion against him. There was yet another danger of the British extending offers of protection to his rival chiefs of Kasur, Jhang and Multan and entering into negotiations with the Afghan rulers of Peshawar and Kashmir.

Ranjit Singh was fully alive to the realities of the situation. An armed conflict with the British under these circumstances might have proved disastrous and deprived India of a bright chapter in its history and the Khalsa its crowning glory in the days to come. Like a practical statesman, therefore, he made the best of a bad bargain. He accepted the compromise and entered into the treaty of 1809 with the British. (*Appendix B, II. pp. 471-72, 'Private correspondence relating to the Anglo-Sikh wars'*).

### ***EFFECTS OF THE TREATY***

This treaty is known as the treaty of Amritsar and is considered to be a landmark in the history of the Panjab. With a friendly power to the north of the Sutlej, the only dangerous frontier of India, the British could successfully grapple with the Nepalese, the Pindaris, the Marathas and the Burmese. It limited the sphere of Ranjit Singh's territorial expansion to the south of the Sutlej beyond his acquisitions during his first conquests, and put an end to his intentions of consolidating the entire population of the Sikhs between the Jamuna and the Indus and knitting them together into one compact and homogeneous people. It stipulated that "perpetual friendship shall subsist between the British Government and the State of Lahore, . . . and the British Government will have no concern with the territories and subjects of the Rajah to the northward of the River Sutlej." And that "the Raja will never maintain in the territory occupied by

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him and his dependants on the left bank of the River Sutlej more troops than are necessary for the internal duties of that territory, nor commit or suffer any encroachments on the possessions or the rights of the chiefs in its vicinity."

The treaty was not, however, without its advantages for Ranjit Singh. It secured to him his eastern frontier, leaving him free to extend his conquests to the Afghan hills on the one hand and to the Himalayas on the other. He was able to conquer Kashmir and become the undisputed master of the northern Panjab. And towards the end of his life he could rightly boast of having created a strong and well organized kingdom of the Panjab out of the jarring and discordant elements of the Hindus, the Muslims and the Sikhs.

To the south of the Sutlej the treaty recognized Ranjit Singh's absolute authority and right over the territories of 45 parganahs held by him and his dependants with the only proviso that he would not maintain there more troops than were necessary for the internal duties. The British Government were to have no concern whatever with the subjects of Ranjit Singh or his dependants in this territory.

Having once signed the treaty of Amritsar, Ranjit Singh faithfully observed its terms and maintained friendship with the British through thick and thin. "To one friendship," says Joseph D. Cunningham, "the Maharaja remained ever constant, from one alliance he never sought to shake himself free. This was the friendly alliance with the British Government." At times temptations owing to British vulnerability made apparent by military reverses were too alluring to be resisted, and provocations from the British side for political interference in his affairs were too great to be tolerated. But true to the character of an unsophisticated Jat, Ranjit Singh stood by his commitments.

In the early stages of the Nepal War (1816-8) the British armies suffered some reverses. One of their generals, Gillespie, was killed and the myth of their invincibility was exploded. Again, in the first Burmese War their armies suffered heavily in the jungles of Burma and their prestige

## JEHAD AGAINST SIKHS

was at a low ebb. But Ranjit Singh would not take advantage of their adversities to assert his claims over his co-religionists to the south of the Sutlej, of which the British had deprived him. In 1820 the Bhonsle Raja of Nagpur appealed to him for help. Four years later the Nepal Government sought his co-operation in a defensive alliance. Next year the Raja of Bharatpur asked for help. But as he had entered into a *treaty of friendship* with the British, he rejected all these requests, remaining loyal to his plighted word.

The British on the other hand did not strictly abide by the terms of friendship. To them friendship was only a matter of expediency. Like all political opportunists, they were friends as long as it suited them. While they were engaged in consolidating their power in Hindustan, they kept up the show of friendship and were all courtesy and kindness to Ranjit Singh. But no sooner did they find themselves in about 1827 to be absolutely secure in their possessions as undisputed masters of the country, with their rights none to dispute and their might none to oppose, than they turned their attention to the north beyond the Sutlej, nay, even beyond the Indus.

### *DISTURBANCES IN THE PATHAN-LAND*

At this time occurred disturbances on the north-west frontier of the Panjab. One Sayyad Ahmad of Bareilly raised the standard of *jehad* against the Sikh rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh on December 21, 1826. He was a British subject and had organized a regular propaganda centre at Patna in Bengal. His followers were all collected and recruited from the British territories, and, according to Sir Charles Aitchison's *Lord Lawrence*, he had "agencies in different parts of India for the levy of money and supply of arms. . . . The imperial palace at Delhi, the minor Muhammadan princes and the great cities of Lucknow and Hyderabad supplied him with funds." (pp. 9-10.) All this was done not with the passive or secret connivance of the British Government, but with their official permission formally and regularly granted



## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

by the Lieutenant-Governor of the North Western Provinces of Agra and Oudh. Mirza Hairat Dehlvi tells us in the *Hayat-i-Taiyaba* that, in consultation with Maulana Shah Muhammad Ismail, Sayyad Ahmad informed the Lieutenant-Governor of North Western Provinces through Sheikh Ghulam Ali Reis of Allahabad that he was preparing for a *jehad* against the Sikhs and hoped that the British Government had no objection to it. The Lieutenant-Governor wrote to him in reply that as long as the peace of their territories was not disturbed, they had nothing to say, nor had they any objection to such preparations.

The above is self-explanatory. To grant official permission to British subjects for active, armed hostilities in the country of the friendly Maharaja Ranjit Singh, with men, money and arms collected from British territory, was certainly not a friendly act of the British, nor was it in keeping with the terms of the treaty of *friendship and amity* dated 25th of April, 1809, placing the State of Lahore 'on the footing of the most favoured powers.'

The *jehad* of the British subjects against Maharaja Ranjit Singh continued with full vigour for four and a half years, keeping the Sikh armies engaged and scattered on the Pathan frontier. The aim of the British encouragement to this crusade was obvious. The British were then free for fresh occupations. They evidently intended to see a storm raised on the Pathan border of the Panjab to instigate the unsuspecting Muslim population of the frontier against the Sikhs so that, if successful, it might spread eastward to the central Panjab and weaken the Lahore State, if not actually subvert it, and provide an opportunity for British intervention and occupation. At one stage the crusaders were successful in capturing the city of Peshawar from its Pathan Governor and making it a rendezvous of their power. But ultimately the Sikhs were victorious. And with the defeat and deaths of Sayyad Ahmad and Shah Ismail in the battle of Bala Kot on May 8, 1831, the *jehad* came to an end, and the Panjab heaved a sigh of relief.

*THE SINDH AFFAIR*

Ranjit Singh had intended to conquer Sindh and Baluchistan which lie to the west of the Indus. The country, along with the Panjab and Multan, and Peshawar and the Deras to the west of Indus, had once belonged to Ahmed Shah Durani and his descendants from whom it had been conquered by the Sikhs, the predecessors and ancestors of the Maharaja. "It was in the fitness of things," says Sayyad Abdul Qadir, "that he should get Sindh as well," as it would help him carry his frontier to the Arabian Sea from where he could establish contacts, political and commercial, with the outside world. But this could not find favour with his British friends who had their own designs upon Sindh and Baluchistan and wanted to extend their influence towards Afghanistan.

"From about the year 1829," says John M. Ludlow in *British India*, ii, 114, "great alarm began to be entertained in England at the progress of Russia towards the south-east. Much of this was owing to the efforts of a very singular man, of whom history will, perhaps, find it difficult to say whether he was the maddest among statesmen or the most statesman-like among madmen, Mr. David Urquhart, and perhaps not a little to his personal influence over King William IV. Hence the instructions which had been sent out from home to India, to extend British influence on the Indus; hence the treaties with the Ameers of Scinde . . ."

To forestall Ranjit Singh in the occupation of Sindh, the British deputed Lieutenant Alexander Burnes, charged with a friendly letter from the King of England, to go to Lahore by the Indus and the Sutlej with the present of five horses and an English coach. The secret object of the mission in travelling by the rivers passing through Sindh and forming the boundary of the Panjab, was that 'the authorities both in England and India contemplated that much information of a *political* and *geographical* nature might be acquired in such a journey.' He had received secret instructions at Bombay that 'the depth of water in the Indus, the direction and breadth of the stream, its facilities for steam navigation, the supply of fuel on its banks and the conditions of the princes and people

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who possess the country bordering it, are all points of the highest interest to Government.'

Burnes was received by the Maharaja in July 1831 with all cordiality and he left for Simla on August 21 to acquaint Lord Bentinck with the result of his mission.

"On the very day before His Highness arrived at Roopur," for the meeting with Lord Bentinck in the last days of October, 1831, says Henry T. Prinsep in his *Muha-Raja Runjeet Singh*, p. 168, "instructions had been issued to Lieutenant-Colonel Pottinger to prepare for a mission to Sindh with a view to the negotiation of a commercial treaty. . . . The object of entering upon this negotiation, at this particular juncture, was perhaps in some measure political," though the Governor-General was not prepared to acknowledge it as such, "and a commercial treaty, stipulating for the free navigation of the river [Indus], seemed to him the better form in which to open relations with the Governments and Chiefs who occupied its banks." After prolonged negotiations Pottinger was able to impose the will of the British Government upon the reluctant Amirs and the treaty of April 1832 was signed.

While, according to Joseph Cunningham, "the object of the Governor-General," in holding the meeting at Ropar, "was mainly to give to the world an impression of complete unanimity between the two States," efforts were made to keep the Maharaja in darkness about the mission of Henry Pottinger to the Amirs of Sindh.

The main aim of the British at this time was to encircle the territory of Ranjit Singh either by their own territory or by the territories of those who were subservient to their will so that they might conveniently walk into the Panjab whenever they chose to do so. The treaties for navigation or commerce were only a cover for political plans and introduction of troops and military officers. This is a secret open to all students of history. The Indus had never been closed and the countries on and beyond the Indus were always open to commerce. Commenting on the British commercial missions, Charles Masson tells us in his *Narrative of Various Journeys*

## THE SINDH AFFAIR

*in Balochistan, Afghanistan, the Panjab and Kalat, Vol. III, p. 432 :*

"The main, and great aim of government, is declared to be to open the Indus. Was the Indus ever closed, or farther closed than by its dangerous entrances and shallow depth of water? Another object was to open the countries on and beyond the Indus to commerce. Were they also ever closed? No such thing: they carried on an active, and increasing trade with India, and afforded markets for immense quantities of British manufactured goods. The governments of India and of England, as well as the public at large, were never amused and deceived by a greater fallacy than that of opening the Indus, as regarded commercial objects. The results of the policy concealed under this pretext have been the introduction of troops into the countries on and beyond the river, and of some half dozen steamers on the stream itself, employed for warlike objects, not for those of trade. There is, besides, great absurdity in commercial treaties with the states of Central Asia, simply because there is no occasion for them. From ancient and prescribed usage, moderate and fixed duties are levied; trade is perfectly free; no goods are prohibited and the more extensive the commerce carried on the greater advantage to the state. Where, then, the benefit of commercial treaties?"

The truth of Charles Masson's observations came to be verified later on by Lord Ellenborough's despatch of October, 1842, to the Queen, wherein he said :

"Lord Ellenborough looks forward to the Indus superseding the Ganges as the channel of communication with England, and to bringing European regiments and all military stores by that route to the North-Western Frontier." (*Appendix A, 11, p. 457, 'Private Correspondence relating to the Anglo-Sikh Wars'*).

The duplicity and intriguing nature of the British politicals in India had so shaken the faith of Ranjit Singh in their honesty and truthfulness that he was compelled to express his disgust openly to an old Christian missionary, Rev. Dr. Joseph Wolff, who was on a visit to Lahore in 1832. "You say," said Ranjit Singh, "you travel about for the sake of religion; why, then do you not preach to the English in Hindustan, who have no religion at all?" And it is remarkable that when Dr. Wolff, on arriving at Simla, informed Lord William Bentinck of this observation of Ranjit Singh, he said to Wolff, "this is alas! the opinion of all the natives all over India." And in reply to a question of Dr. Wolff, "How may one come nigh unto God?" which corresponded to the Christian

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enquiry "How may one be saved," the Maharaja politely, but humorously replied, "One can come nigh unto God by making an alliance with the British Government as I lately did with *Laard Nwab Sahib* (i.e., 'Governor-General') at Roopar." (*Travels and Adventures of the Rev. Joseph Wolff, D.D., LL.D.*, p. 375.)

### THE QUESTION OF SHIKARPUR

Finding his way to the conquest of Sindh blocked, Ranjit Singh turned his attention to the town of Shikarpur. The British could have no reasonable objection to his occupying it. It lay to the west of the Sutlej-Indus, and, according to the treaty of 1809, they had agreed not to interfere with his affairs in trans-Sutlej territories. The Maharaja had already crossed the river Indus and conquered Peshawar and the Deras—Dera Ismail Khan and Dera Ghazi Khan—and had established himself there. He had occupied the forts of Rohan and Ken and his supremacy over the Sindhian tribe of Muzaris had been virtually recognized. His intended occupation of Shikarpur was, therefore, in no way a departure from any terms of the treaties of friendship and amity with the British. But the British had their own eyes upon Sindh, including Shikarpur. "The views of the British authorities with regard to Sindh," says Cunningham, "were inevitably becoming political as well as commercial." "With regard to Ranjeet Singh," he continues, "the English rulers observed that they were bound by the strongest considerations of political interest to prevent the extension of the Sikh power along the course of the Indus, and that, although they would respect the acknowledged territories of the Maharaja, they desired that his existing relations of peace should not be disturbed; for, if war took place, the Indus would never be opened to commerce." And we know, as Charles Masson has told us, that the opening of the Indus was only a cover for the extension of British political influence to the borders of the Panjab and beyond. Against all rules of perpetual friendship and amity the British came and stood between Ranjit Singh and Shikarpur and told him that he could not be permitted to extend his power even along the western bank of Indus where

he already had his territories. The Maharaja stood aghast at this peculiar demand of the British. But they "would not listen to reason; nor did an appeal to the provisions of the thirty year old treaty of friendship have any effect upon them." Intoxicated with power, they appeared to be prepared for anything. "Ranjit Singh was urged by his chiefs not to yield to the demands of the English, for to their understanding it was not clear where such demands would stop." Raja Dhian Singh, his Prime Minister, was very angry and wished him to fight the English in defence of his rights. But Ranjit Singh was a far-sighted statesman. To him the British appeared to be provoking him to hostilities. Their hands were then free and they were ready to grapple with the Sikhs or the Afghans whosoever accepted the challenge. He refused to fall into their trap. He knew his limitations. His borders had been occupied by them both on the south and south-west. They were also then in correspondence with Amir Dost Muhammad Khan on the west. And the Amir was only looking for an opportunity to pounce upon Peshawar. He would readily join hands with the British in the case of hostilities. Surrounded on three sides by hostile enemies, with no friend on the fourth, Ranjit Singh did not wish to run the risk of a war with the British on several fronts. It is true that he had a formidable army and a strong park of artillery. But his resources were limited—less than 20 per cent of those of the British with the whole of Hindustan at their command. Ranjit Singh could expect no reinforcements from any quarter. The brave Telingas, the sturdy Marathas, the valiant Rajputs and the soldierly Jats and Ruhillas had all fallen one by one and lay prostrate before the British. They were all then at the beck and call of the *Ferrangis*, ready to fight for them against their countrymen. They had done so in the past. Ranjit Singh had seen them do it during his own life time. And, as subsequent history knows it, they did it again in 1843 when Sir Charles Napier occupied Sindh, and in 1845-46 when the last independent kingdom—the Panjab—was struggling for its life, pitched against the British with a powerful army and a formidable park of artillery. While the

## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

native soldiers from all over British India attacked the Panjab from without to enslave it for their foreign masters, Commander-in-Chief Tej Singh, an easterner from beyond the Jamuna in the service of the Panjab, turned a traitor and betrayed the cause of the Panjab from within.

Circumstanced in this wise, Ranjit Singh was left with the only alternative of giving up his claim to Shikarpur.

### *FEROZEPORE*

The British Government had by various acts of omission and commission recognized before 1835 the sovereignty of Maharaja Ranjit Singh over Ferozepore. But it was a place of great strategic importance, particularly in their plan of hemming in the territory of the Maharaja by erecting a ring of forts all along the Sikh frontier and of walking into the Panjab immediately after his death. "The capital of Lahore," wrote Murray, "is distant only 40 miles with a single river to cross, fordable for six months in the year. The fort of Ferozepore from every point of view, seems to be of highest importance to the British Government whether as a check on the growing ambition of Lahore or as a fort of consequence." "His [Ranjit Singh's] very existence is now precarious," said Dr. M'Gregor, "and may be extinguished by a repetition of paralysis. When such an event does occur, there will be plenty of bloodshed before the British can even reach Lahore. To prevent the chance of this, it appears advisable to have a force as near that capital as possible." (*History of the Sikhs*, i. 263.)

The British attitude towards Ferozepore, therefore, underwent a change. The city was occupied by them in 1835 upon the death, without heirs, of Sardarni Lachhman Kaur, and converted into a military cantonment in 1838.

### *INTERFERENCE IN PESHAWAR AFFAIR*

Amir Dost Muhammad Khan saw a ray of hope of recovering Peshawar from Ranjit Singh in the flames of the funeral pyre of Sardar Hari Singh on the battle-field of Jamrood, where that great general was killed on April 30, 1837. But

## FEROZEPORE AND PESHAWAR

the precipitate retreat of the Afghans on the arrival of Sikh reinforcements discouraged all his plans. The ever-watchful British now tried to exploit the situation to win over the Amir to their side. Ranjit Singh "had scarcely vindicated his supremacy on the frontier, by filling the valley of Peshawar with troops, when the English," according to Cunningham, "interfered to embitter the short remainder of his life and to set bounds to his ambition on the west, as they had already done on the east and south. . . . It was wished that Ranjit Singh should be content with his past achievements." "It was made known," Cunningham continues, "that the British rulers would be glad to be the means of negotiating a peace honourable to both parties, yet the scale was turned in favour of Afghans by simultaneous admission that Peshawar was a place to which Dost Mahomed could scarcely be expected to resign all claim." But, according to Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the issue had already been decided by the retreat of the Afghans from Jamrood. The Afghans had been defeated in their attempts to dislodge the Sikhs from Peshawar and its territories. Beyond the death of a brave General, killed in the field of battle, the Sikhs had suffered no material loss. They still held the field of battle and also the city and district of Peshawar. The Afghans were no longer in the field and had returned to their homes without achieving anything. The Sikhs on the other hand had then a much stronger hold on the Khyber, having laid the foundation of a regular fort at Jamrood at the mouth of the pass. And complete peace had been restored. With the liquidation of the Afghans and with the Sikhs in undisputed possession of Peshawar, there was no dispute to call for any negotiations of peace of which the British had offered to be the means. Ranjit Singh could not, therefore, entertain, much less accept, the offer of his friends.

### *HOSPITALITY ABUSED*

The marriage of the Maharaja's grandson Kanwar Nau-Nihal Singh was celebrated at Atari (in the district of Amritsar) on March 4, 1838. The Maharaja had invited Lord Auckland, the Governor-General of British India, Sir Henry



## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

Fane, the Commander-in-Chief of the British forces, and Sir Charles Metcalfe, the Governor of Agra, to be present on the occasion. The prince was wedded to a daughter of Sardar Sham Singh Atariwala. Of the English invitees Sir Henry Fane alone was able to attend. But instead of appreciating the friendship and hospitality of the Maharaja, he used this opportunity for collecting information from a military Commander's point of view with an eye to the conquest of the Panjab. "That able Commander," says Captain Cunningham, "was ever a careful observer of military means and of soldierly qualities; he formed an estimate of the force which would be required for the complete subjugation of the Panjab." (*History of the Sikhs*, 227.)

### THE TRIPARTITE TREATY

Failing to prevail upon Ranjit Singh regarding Peshawar, the British lost the good-will of Amir Dost Muhammad Khan whose preference to a Persian and Russian alliance was made a pretext for removing him from the throne of Kabul and placing the fugitive Shah Shujah on it. The British sought Ranjit Singh's co-operation in this venture and invited him to a triple alliance with Shah Shujah as the third party. Ranjit Singh could not be very enthusiastic about it. He could clearly see that the installation of the puppet Shah under the shadow of the British bayonets would not only place the British in supreme authority in Afghanistan but would also strengthen their chain of encirclement on the west and north-west of the Panjab. But when he learnt that they were determined to carry out their project even without him, he was judicious enough to change his attitude. He could not allow them to have the sole credit of making Shah Shujah the king of Afghanistan and use him later in their aggressive designs against the Panjab. He signed the Tripartite treaty of June 26, 1838, and co-operated with the British in placing the Shah once again on the throne of Afghanistan. At times he went beyond the terms of the treaty to comply with the wishes of the British agent Colonel Wade for men and munitions of war in spite of the occasional disagreement with his officers and grandson Kanwar Nau-Nihal Singh.

## THE SIKH POLICY OF FRIENDSHIP CONTINUED

After the death of the Maharaja on June 27, 1839, his son and successor Maharaja Kharak Singh followed the same policy and maintained the old friendly relations with the British. It was reported to him on July 23, that Diwan Sawan Mall of Multan had issued orders to his people not to sell any grain to British officers. (*The Panjab in 1839-40*, p. 101/334.) Evidently, the British were trying to purchase grain from his district without his permission and were causing some other annoyances. The Maharaja issued a letter to the Diwan on August 19, 1839, saying that "he and local officers should not object to the purchase being made by them. (*Ibid.*, 117/150.) When differences between General Ventura of the Sikh Service and Col. Wade of the East India Company were reported to the Maharaja, he "ordered him to be advised to make up matters with Col. Wade, if possible, otherwise to remain with Kanwar Nau-Nihal Singh. (*Ibid.* July 26, 1839. 107-8/349-50.)

Maharaja Ranjit Singh had not for obvious reasons, permitted the passage of the main British army of invasion through the Panjab on their way to Afghanistan. His own son Maharaja Kharak Singh, however, granted that permission at the time of their return, saving them a long circuitous journey and a considerable amount of money in expenses.

The courtiers represented to him on or about October 18-20, 1839, "that the passage of the British troops through the Punjab would be very expensive to the State, but the Maharaja said that the alliance between the two Governments admitted of such expenses." (*Ibid.* 145/301.)

According to the *Punjab Intelligence, Lahore*, dated 12th April, 1840, Sardar Lehna Singh represented to Kanwar Nau-Nihal Singh in darbar that the British Government had taken possession of the Kahloor territory on the left bank of the Sutlej and requested permission to annex the dominions on the right bank. "He was ordered to wait till the Vakeel has consulted the Political Agent at Ambala."

## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

All this was done in good faith by the Lahore Government in spite of very strong rumours and suspicions, then current among the people, that the British had administered some kind of poison to Maharaja Ranjit Singh mixed with liquor during the entertainments held in the Shalamar Garden at Lahore in honour of Lord Auckland in the last days of December, 1838.<sup>1</sup>

The intentions of the British regarding the Panjab on the other hand were as suspicious as ever and it was feared that they were strengthening the cantonment and fort of Ferozepore with some ulterior motives. Faqir Shah Din, the *Vakil* of the Lahore Government at Ferozepore, reported in the second week of July 1840 that "Captain Lawrence was engaged night and day in strengthening the fort and that guns were being provided for it. The Sardars suggested that it would be prudent to construct a fort at Kussoor [as a precautionary and defensive measure]. Fakeer Azeezodeen remarked that the British Government was a Government of strict good faith. Futteh Singh Maun replied that there was no doubt upon the subject, but it behoves every wise *Raj* to avoid being taken unawares." (*Ibid.* July 13, 1840; 231/554.)

The news reported to Maharaja Kharak Singh on July 5, 1840, tells us that Diwan Sawan Mall, the Governor of Multan, had commenced the construction of a small fort at Mithan Kot. This again was evidently a precautionary measure against the British advance from the side of Sindh. (*Ibid.* 22/533.)

With the death of Maharaja Kharak Singh on November 5, 1840, and his son and successor Kanwar Nau-Nihal Singh on the same day, came a temporary state of uncertainty when Maharani Chand Kaur held the reins of the kingdom from November 6, 1840, to January 17, 1841. She was succeeded by Maharaja Sher Singh, the second son of

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1. These rumours and suspicions have been referred to by Giani Gian Singh in his *Tawarikh Guru Khalsa*, part III, *Raj Khalsa*, 1st edition (1894), p. 982/448, and expressed very strongly by Jafar Beg in his *Baintan Sarkar Ranjit Singh Kian* (No. 7, 8, 9). Vide *The Panjabi Dunia*, Patiala, June 1952.

## SIKH CO-OPERATION IN AFGHAN WAR

Maharaja Ranjit Singh, on January 18. There was no change of policy in his relations with the British. He steadfastly adhered to the terms of the treaty of friendship and amity.

### CO-OPERATION IN THE AFGHAN WAR

"The ill-conducted attempt of the British upon Afghanistan" miserably failed for reasons which need not be narrated here, "and it deserved to fail," says Colonel Maleson in his *History of Afghanistan*. After two years of British occupation their envoy in Kabul was murdered on December 23, 1841, and their retreating army was worsted and massacred in the Afghan passes. A second British Army of Revenge then marched upon Afghanistan under the command of General Pollock, and Maharaja Sher Singh, true to the treaty of friendship, co-operated with them with not fewer than 15,000 men in April, 1842, in forcing open the Khyber Pass. In spite of occasional differences and disagreements between the officers of the two governments, mostly due to the overbearing attitude and suspicious nature of the British officers, Maharaja Sher Singh's contribution was fifty per cent more than double of his stipulated share. "The Sikhs were only bound to employ a contingent of 6,000 men," wrote Henry Lawrence to Mr. J. C. Marshman on April 11, 1842, but they did the work with not less than 15,000, leaving the stipulated number in position, and withdrawing the rest to Jamrood and Peshawar, where they remain ready to support those in the pass, if necessary." (*The Life of Henry Lawrence* by Edwardes and Merivale, i. 363.)

Without going into other details of the operations, it may be mentioned that at the entrance to the Khyber there were two branches, one seven miles long, the other fourteen—the two uniting at Ali Masjid. While General Pollock chose on April 5 the shorter route of Shadi Bagiari for himself, he assigned the longer one of the Jubha-ki defile to the Sikhs who had naturally to encounter greater obstacles. Through a very narrow entrance they carried the heights in good style and held the crests all night, moving up to join General Pollock next day at Lala Chand, one and a half miles east of

## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

Ali Masjid. The British, fighting only seven miles, arrived at Ali Masjid at 2 p.m. on the 6th, while the Sikhs fighting fourteen miles through a very much narrower defile came up, as they had started, an hour or two later. Yet they were accused, of course for political and selfish reasons, of "holding discreetly back." "What 'holding discreetly back' was there in this?" asks Major-General Sir Herbert Edwardes. (*Ibid.* i. 358.) "What would have been the condition of the British columns if the Sikh force had not made a diversion in their favour and drawn off large numbers of the enemy?" he asks again. Perhaps, another defeat and disaster. Not only this. General Pollock, the Commander of the force, conveniently omitted even the formal courtesy of making mention in his despatch of the 6th April of the part played by the Sikhs in so difficult an assault of the pass. Lord Ellenborough, the Governor-General, however, thus repaired the General's omission in his *Notification* of April 19, and said:

"The Governor-General deems it to be due to the troops of the Maharaja Sher Singh to express his entire satisfaction with their conduct as reported to him and to inform the army that the loss sustained by the Sikhs in the assault of the Pass which was forced by them is understood to have been equal to that sustained by the troops of Her Majesty and of the Government of India. The Governor-General has instructed his agent at the court of the Maharaja to offer his congratulations on this occasion, so honourable to the Sikh arms."

Writing to the Queen in England from Benares on April 21, Lord Ellenborough said:—

"The Sikh Army co-operated with that of India by a second pass leading to Ali Masjid, and there is no reason to doubt the good faith of the Sikh Government." (*Appendix A*, 7, p. 455, '*Private Correspondence relating to the Anglo-Sikh Wars*').

Later on June 31, a Sikh contingent of 5,000 men marched from Ali Masjid for Jalalabad under the command of General Gulab Singh Pohoovindia and arrived there on the 10th. A smaller detachment of theirs went up to Kabul, while others formed posts of communication at Neemla and Gandamak. But according to Henry Lawrence's letter of 16th September written from Kabul, the tide of prejudice in the British camp against the Sikhs was so strong that they were 'given very little opportunity of doing much.'

## BRITISH PLANS

Col. Richmond, who commanded the rear at Tazeen, felt it "just to notice the useful assistance afforded by the men of the Sikh contingent under Captain Lawrence," and General Pollock in his despatch of the 14th September honourably confirmed this testimony, saying:

"The Lahore contingent under the able direction of Captain Lawrence has invariably given the most cheerful assistance, dragging the guns, occupying the heights and covering the rearguard. While ascending the Huft Kohtal, and at Tezeen, their long jezails told effectively in keeping the ground. (*Life of Henry Lawrence*, Edwardes and Merivale, i. 407.)

But, O ingratitude, thy name was the British Government in India in the eighteen forties. While a Sikh army of 15,000 was fighting their battles in the blood-thirsty defiles of the Khyber Pass, and its detachments were cheerfully covering the rearguard of the second British Army in Afghanistan, occupying the difficult hill heights of their passage and dragging the guns for them, the British Government in India was assembling a third army of "reserve at Ferozepure on the frontier of the Panjab to keep the Sikhs in check"—prepared for hostilities and ready to march into the country of Maharaja Sher Singh, their faithful friend.

### PLANS FOR OCCUPYING THE PANJAB

Plans for the occupation of the Panjab, however, appear to have been made much earlier. In April-May, 1841, when the British had been in Afghanistan for some eighteen months, fully secure in the saddle, Mrs. Henry Lawrence had written to Mrs. Cameron from Subathoo on May 26, 1841.

"Wars, and rumours of wars, are on every side and there seems no doubt that next cold weather will decide the long suspended question of occupying the Punjaub; Henry, both in his Civil and Military capacity, will probably be called to take part in whatever goes on.

And again on June 5 :

"Nothing is yet promulgated; but H[enry] supposes the army for the Punjab will be divided into three columns—the main body accompanied by Mr. Clerk, our *Chief*, and the others by H. and Mr. Cunningham, an Officer of Engineers now acting at Ferozepoor." (*Edwardes and Merivale, Henry Lawrence*, i. 216-7.)

## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

In October 1841 the British proposed to march into the Panjab under the pretext of restoring peace and order. "The British Agent on the Sutlej had proposed," says John Ludlow (*British India*, ii. 141), "to march on Lahore with 12,000 men to restore order. The Calcutta papers teemed with plans for conquering the Punjab." And Henry Lawrence, then on sick-leave at Subathoo, in his letter to the Agent, Mr. George Clerk, dated the 29th October, 1841, offered his services for operations in the Panjab.

But then came a bolt from the blue and the British plans were shattered by the disaster in Afghanistan, and they were driven to the necessity of begging for Maharaja Sher Singh's help. "True to his word," says John Kaye, and true to the traditions of his father and brother, "the Maharaja at once despatched instructions to Goolab Singh to co-operate heartily and steadily with General Pollock and Captain Mackeson" in their expedition to Afghanistan.

### *EFFORTS TO SEDUCE THE PANJAB OFFICERS*

But the British politicals were blinded by self-interest. They were lost to all sense of honour and gratitude. While Maharaja Sher Singh was unreservedly extending his helping hand of friendship, with hearty and steady co-operation, they were planning to stab him in the back by corrupting his officers with alluring promises of territories sliced out of his kingdom and winning them over to their side against the interests of the Maharaja.

After his first interview on the other side of the Indus with Raja Gulab Singh, whom Maharaja Sher Singh had detailed for duty to help the British army proceeding to Afghanistan, it occurred to Henry Lawrence in January 1842, says his biographer, Major-General Sir Herbert Edwardes, that "a consideration should be offered to the [Dogra] Rajahs Dhyhan Singh and Goolab Singh, for their assistance, they alone in the Punjaub being now able to give aid." "We need such men as the Rajah and General Avitabile, and should bind them to us," said Lawrence, "by the only tie they recognise—self-interest." "The Rajahs, secured in their terri-

## SEDUCTION OF PANJAB OFFICERS

tory, even with additions, General Avitabile guaranteed our aid in retiring with his property, and any other sirdars aiding us cordially be specially and separately treated for," continued he. And at last, apparently on January 29, 1842, he proposed "that on the terms of efficient support we assist Raja Goolab Singh to get possession of the valley of Jellalabad and endeavour to make some arrangement to secure it and Peshawar to his family." (*Ibid.*, 326-7.)

This was the active beginning of the British intrigues in the Panjab in buying the chiefs of the State against its ruler who, on his part, was unsuspectingly helping them in good faith in their expedition to Afghanistan. This intrigue not only encouraged the Dogra brothers Raja Dhian Singh and Gulab Singh in the dismemberment of the Panjab kingdom but also in their treason for the subversion and liquidation of the ruling family. This also opened the way for secret British intrigues, later on, with the Poorbia soldier of fortune Sardar Tej Singh and Sardar Lal Singh of Rohtas who so treacherously betrayed the cause of the Panjab to the British in the first Anglo-Sikh war of 1845-46.

While Henry Lawrence proposed to buy off the Panjab chiefs, "Mr. Clerk [the political Agent on the Panjab frontier] repaired to Lahore to support 'the only man in the Punjaub, who really desired our success'—Maharaja Sher Singh himself—against his own Prime Minister." [*Ibid.*, 329.] This was an act of instigating the servants of the State against their sovereign and of setting the sovereign against his chiefs. And this may be said to be ultimately responsible for the murders of Maharaja Sher Singh and his young son Pratap Singh at the instigation of Dhian Singh, and of Dhian Singh himself at the hands of the Sandhanwalia Sardars.

### LORD AUCKLAND RECALLED

The war in Afghanistan was very unpopular both with the fair-minded people of England and the Board of Directors of the East India Company. It was an unholy creation of some ambitious and unscrupulous men who surrounded Lord Auckland. And in the words of John Ludlow, "a more shame-



## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

less outrage upon the laws of nations never was perpetrated." (ii. 118.) It not only lowered the military prestige of England but also humbled its people in the eyes of the world. Lord Auckland was, therefore, recalled and Lord Ellenborough was appointed to succeed him.

### EXPANSIONIST POLICY OF LORD ELLENBOROUGH

Ellenborough was no less a war-monger than his predecessor. His ambition, according to Lord Colchester, was to become a "great Military Statesman," and his great defect, according to Hugh Murray, was "his fondness for military display." He was a 'forward-policy' man and his desire for territorial expansion knew no limits. He was desired to follow a peaceful policy but was never free of war. He pushed on the war in China. Instead of withdrawing from interference with Afghanistan, he sanctioned Sir William Nott's *withdrawal* from Kandahar via Ghazni, Kabul and Peshawar, actually advancing into Afghanistan for some 500 miles. General Pollock's Army of Revenge forced its way through the Khyber Pass to Kabul and evacuated it in October-November, 1842. He took possession of Sindh and interfered in the affairs of Gwalior. He occupied the forts of the Raja of Jytpur in Bundelkhand and annexed the Sikh state of Kaithal.

All this was, evidently, done under a studied plan "to confiscate, . . . as opportunities may offer, the territories of the princes of India." "And in pursuance of the same policy, and by virtue of the same pretensions," says John Sullivan, "we have commenced upon the extirpation of a race of princes." The plea for it was that with added territories and revenues, "we shall be the richest power that ever existed in India." And the right for it was of "having the better sword."

### BRITISH PLAN FOR ATTACKING THE PANJAB

Regarding the Panjab, Lord Ellenborough continued the schemes of his predecessors to take possession of it as early as possible. Within a few days of his nomination as the Governor-General of India, he turned his active attention to preparing for a campaign against it. On the recommendation of Lord Fitzroy he took as one of his aides-de-camp Lieute-

## ELLENBOROUGH'S PREPARATIONS

nant (afterwards Sir Henry Marion) Durand of the Bengal Engineers and wrote to Field-Marshal the Duke of Wellington on October 15, 1841, saying, "I have requested Lord Fitzroy to employ him at once in obtaining all information he can with respect to the Punjab and making a memorandum upon the country for your consideration. I am most anxious to have your opinion as to the general principles upon which a campaign against that country should be conducted." Having sent Durand's Memoir to the Duke on October 22, he wrote to him four days later on October 26 :

"At present about 12,000 men are collected near Ferozepore to watch the Sikhs, and act if necessary.

What I desired, therefore, was your opinion, founded as far as it could be upon imperfect geographical information which could be given to you, as to best mode of attacking the Panjab."

### PREPARATIONS—PONTOONS

In addition to several measures suggested for military operations against the Panjab, when necessary, the Duke of Wellington desired Lord Ellenborough in his letter of April 2, 1842, to collect boats for the formation of a bridge on the Sutlej for the British Army to cross into the Panjab. Referring to an advanced position at Ranage pole (Rani ke Pul), the Duke said :

"This position would be an excellent one from which you could with facility move on an offensive plan. I would recommend you to add to the equipment of the army pontoons for the formation of a bridge. ... It might be desirable to pass the river on a defensive plan of operations at short notice and it would be desirable to avoid the delay of collecting boats to form a bridge."

### PESHAWAR

The Duke of Wellington was very anxious to have Peshawar in British possession in spite of its being the territory of the friendly State of the Sikhs. Writing to Lord Fitzgerald from London on April 6, 1842 (when the Sikhs were forcing open the most difficult defiles of the Khyber Pass for the British), he said :

"I am glad to see such good accounts of the Sikh Government. It must be very desirable to maintain its existence in the Punjab. But

## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

this I must say, if we are to maintain our positions in Afghanistan, we ought to have Peshawar, the Khyber Pass, Jellalabad and the passes between that post and Cabul."

And Peshawar belonged to the Sikh Government. It could not be had by the British without occupying a part of their territory. But they observed few scruples in the matter of territorial aggrandizement. They only believed in the right of their might. Lord Ellenborough, therefore, commenced his preparations in right earnest and informed the Duke on June 7, 1842 :

### *ASSEMBLING OF AN ARMY*

"I have, after communicating with the Commander-in-Chief, issued an order for the assembling of an army of reserve in the division of Sirhind (that is, either at Karnal or Ferozepore) in November. It will consist of twelve regiments of infantry, of which four will be European, or five regiments of regular cavalry (including the 16th Lancers) and of 2 regiments of irregular cavalry. There will be four troops of horse artillery and three batteries of foot artillery. The total force will be 15,000 men

### *JALALABAD*

Lord Ellenborough also encouraged the Lahore Government to occupy Jelalabad, when the British left it, with a view to placing the Sikhs between the Afghans and themselves, with the central Panjab at their mercy.

"We shall have placed," Lord Ellenborough continued, "an irreconcilable enemy to the Afghans between them and us, and hold that enemy to the Afghans, occupied as he must be in defending himself against them, in entire subjection to us by our position upon Sutlej, within a few marches of Amritsar and Lahore." "They will be obliged," he said on October 18, "to keep their principal force in that quarter, and Lahore and Amritsar will remain with insufficient garrison, within a few marches of the Sutlej, on which I shall in twelve days, at any time, be able to assemble three European and eleven native battalions, one European regiment or cavalry, two regiments of native cavalry and two of irregular cavalry and twenty-four guns.

## OCCUPATION OF SINDH

“The State of the Panjab is therefore under my foot.” (App. A., p. 457, ‘*Private correspondence relating to the Anglo-Sikh wars*’).

The Sikhs, however, did not embroil themselves with the Afghans in Jalalabad and escaped the trap laid for them by the British.

### BRITISH OCCUPATION OF SINDH

With the return of the British army from Afghanistan, Ellenborough was free to turn his attention to Sindh which was occupied by Sir Charles Napier in February-March 1843 in blatant violation of the treaties that the British Government in India had entered into with the Amirs.

“The real cause of this chastisement of the Amirs,” says John Kaye, “consisted in the chastisement which the British had received from the Afghans. It was deemed expedient at this stage of the great political journey to show that the British could beat some one, and so it was determined to beat the Ameers of Sindh, . . . A few more victories were required [after the reoccupation of Afghanistan] to re-establish our reputation and the Governor-General resolved that the Ameers . . . should be the victims of this generous policy.” (Cal. Rev., Vol. 1, 232; *Selec. from Cal. Rev.*, i. 70.)

An ex-Political in his *Dry Leaves from Young Egypt* tells us on the authority of a dozen men, some of them of high official rank—men whose integrity has never been called in question—“that the Amirs of Sindh were foully wronged, that their country was taken from them on false evidence. . . . We know it. We saw this wrong committed with our own eyes—we heard it with own ears—and what is more, can prove it.” (Preface, X-XI.) According to R. Bosworth Smith, the author of the *Life of Lord Lawrence*, “the annexation of Scinde remains, and will always remain, one of the deepest blots on our national escutcheon.” (i. 180.)

One object of the outrage upon Sindh was to take possession of the country on both sides of the Indus to be able to push up British and Indian regiments and military stores to the frontiers of the Panjab for operations against it from towards the south-west as well as from the south.

## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

### *THE SINDHIA OF GWALIOR*

After the Sindhians came the turn of Sindhia. The two had no affinity with each other beyond the names sounding alike. The Sindhias of Gwalior had always had a strong Maratha army, and Lord Ellenborough wanted "the disbandment and disarming of a disaffected portion of the Gwalior army," because "the existence of an army of such strength in that position must very seriously embarrass the disposition of troops we might be desirous of making to meet a coming danger from the Sutlej." Sindhia's dominions were, therefore, invaded and a new treaty was concluded by which Sindhia became a feudatory of the British Government.

### *THE ANNEXATION OF KAITHAL*

On the death on March 15, 1843, of Bhai Udai Singh, without leaving any male heir, the British Government occupied the Sikh State of Kaithal (38 miles west of Karnal) as a lapse to the paramount power. This was against all canons of law and justice. The term *lapse* could not in the first place be applied to Kaithal. The State had not been originally granted to its chief by the British. How could it then lapse or revert to them? Secondly, the right of adoption belonged by Hindu law to the issueless chief or his widow. This had been recognized by the British Government.

On a point being raised in 1825 as to a Prince's right of adoption to the prejudice of a collateral heir, the question was submitted to a tribunal of Pandits, and they having pronounced that the adoption of a son was valid against the claims of collateral heirs, the British government came to a formal resolution that :

"Sovereign Princes in their own right have, by Hindoo law, a right to adopt, in failure of heirs male of the body, to the exclusion of collateral heirs and that the British Government is bound to acknowledge the adoption, provided that it be regular and not in violation of the Hindu law."

"In accordance with this resolution, no less than fifteen instances of succession by adoption," says John Sullivan, "were recognized by the British Government between the years 1826

## KAITHAL

and 1848, seven of which were made by reigning princes, seven by the widows or mothers of the deceased princes and one by election of the leading chiefs of the principality." (*Are We Bound by Our Treaties*, 17-8.)

Not only this. According to the Sikh custom, a widow could succeed her husband. Maharani Chand Kaur of Lahore had held the reins of the kingdom of the Panjab in her own right and name for some time after the death in November 1840 of her husband Maharaja Kharak Singh. Similarly had Rani Lachhman Kaur held in her undisputed right the Cis-Sutlej Sikh State of Ferozepore up to 1835.

In spite of all this, the State of Kaithal was forcibly occupied by British troops and annexed to the British dominions in April 1843.

### BOGEY OF FRENCH INTRIGUES

The Duke of Wellington had at this time started, evidently with a view to prejudicing the minds of Englishmen against the Sikhs and preparing them for the news of the invasion of their country, the bogey of French intrigues with the Sikhs. Referring to the return from leave of General Ventura of the Sikh service from Europe to Lahore, the Duke wrote to Lord Ellenborough on February 4, 1843 :

"The French Government have always had connections with the Sikhs. An Italian Officer, who was heretofore in the service of Buona-parté, and has since been in the service of Runjeet Singh, but had returned to Europe, has within the last three months taken leave of Louis Phillppe previous to his return to Lahore. His course should be observed. The religion, the social state, and the politics of the Sikhs render them by far the most appropriate allies for the French of any in that part of Asia, and if once they could establish themselves on the Indus you would have them allied with the Sikhs, their officers in the Sikh army, the politics at Lahore under their direction.

"I strongly recommend to you, therefore, to watch carefully the mouth of the Indus." (Appendix A, 18/460, '*Private Correspondence relating to the Anglo-Sikh Wars*').

Lord Ellenborough caught the hint and established a friendly contact with General Ventura. After his return to the Panjab the General carried on correspondence with the British Governor-General and kept him informed of the political developments in the country. One should not be sur-

## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

prised if the General acted as a secret agent of the British in connection with Mr. Clerk's offer to help the Maharaja against his minister Dhian Singh.

### *THE MURDER OF MAHARAJA AND THE MINISTER*

Having now nothing else on his hands Lord Ellenborough turned all his attention and energies to creating such a position on the Panjab frontier, and also in the country itself, as to give him an easy pretext to move his armies into the Panjab.

As we have seen above, the English had set the Dogra brothers against the interests of Maharaja Sher Singh and had offered to help the Maharaja against his Prime Minister Dhian Singh. General Ventura also at this time appeared to be dancing to their tune. Things in Lahore began shaping themselves as desired and anticipated by the Political Agent at Ludhiana and the murder of Raja Dhian Singh seemed close at hand. According to Lord Ellenborough's letter of May 11, 1843,

"General Ventura is with the Maharajah Sher Singh and it is clear to me that, relying on his support, the Maharajah will take the first occasion of cutting off his Minister Dhian Singh. This Dhian Singh knows, and is prepared for. The break up of the Punjab will probably begin with murder."

At this time the Sandhanwalia Sardars Atar Singh and his nephew Ajit Singh came in their hands as ready tools. They had both fled to the British territory on January 18, 1841, immediately after Maharaja Sher Singh came to the throne. Ajit Singh had been to Calcutta to enlist the support of the British in their designs against the Maharaja. Mr. George Russel Clerk, the British Political Agent at Ludhiana, however, became actively interested in the Sandhanwalias in March-April 1843 and prevailed upon the Maharaja to permit them to return to the Panjab and restore to them their confiscated jagirs and property. This was done in early May 1843. Sardar Lehna Singh Sandhanwalia and Kehar Singh (son of Atar Singh) Sandhanwalia were set at liberty from imprisonment. They all fell an easy prey to intrigues for the murder of the Maharaja. The British politicals were, evi-



MAHARAJA SHER SINGH

(January 18, 1841, to September 15, 1843)

*Born :*  
December 4, 1807.

*Died :*  
Sept. 15, 1843.



## THE DOGRAS

dently, in the know of the details of this conspiracy. Writing to the Duke of Wellington from Calcutta on August 12, 1843, Lord Ellenborough said:

"The affairs of the Punjab will probably receive their *denouement* from the death of Sher Singh."

Again on September 20, 1843, he said:

"The Maharajah of Lahore is pulling his house down upon his head; the catastrophe was nearly taking place three weeks ago, but it is deferred."

The catastrophe took place on September 15, 1843, when Maharaja Sher Singh and his son Prince Partap Singh, as well as Prime Minister Dhian Singh, were murdered by the Sandhanwalia Sardars. The news must have been on its way when His Lordship wrote the above letter. It had to travel some eleven hundred miles with a halt at Ludhiana.

Referring to these murders at Lahore, the *British Friend of India*, published in London, wrote in December 1843:

"We have no proof that Company instigated all the king-killing which has been perpetrated in the Punjab since Runjeet died. . . . We must say we smell a rat."

The references and letters quoted above, which provide the proof, had not then come to light. The *Life of Henry Lawrence* by Sir Herbert Edwardes and Herman Merivale and the *History of Indian Administration of Lord Ellenborough* by Lord Colchester were published in 1872 and 1874 respectively.

### DIVISION OF THE COUNTRY—THE DOGRAS

The murders of the Maharaja, the heir apparent and the Prime Minister, raised the hopes of Lord Ellenborough for an early opportunity for the British to become the masters of the Panjab, either directly by occupation or indirectly through 'protection.' On the basis of a communication from General Ventura, a copy of which was sent to the Queen in England, His Lordship wrote to Her Majesty on October 20, 1843:

"...it is impossible not to perceive that the ultimate tendency of the late events at Lahore is, without any effort on our part, to bring the plains first, and at somewhat later period the hills, under our protection or control."

## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

Naturally the plains were the first to be occupied. In the hills there was Raja Gulab Singh with whom they were in secret alliance and who had been encouraged by them to strengthen himself there. The correspondence of Lord Ellenborough at this time was so diplomatically worded as to prepare the Home authorities for the eventual invasion and occupation of the plains of the Panjab and the transfer of the hills (of Jammu and Kashmir) to Gulab Singh. Writing to His Grace the Duke of Wellington on the same day, he entered into greater details and said:—

“Heera Singh [the son and successor of Dhian Singh] has no real authority. His best adviser has been Ventura, but he is threatened now. Gholab Singh remains in the Hills, either in sickness, in grief, or in policy. He is securing himself there. Heera Singh will probably soon fly to Jummo. Then a pure Sikh Government will be formed in the plains and a Rajpoot Government in the Hills, and Mooltan may perhaps break loose all connection with the Sikhs. Ventura anticipates a long anarchy, from which the only ultimate refuge will be in our protection. I agree with him. . . . The time cannot be very distant when the Punjab will fall into our management and the question will be what we shall do as respects the Hills. . . . I should tell you, however, that there is, as there long has been, a great disposition, even in quarters not military, to disturb the game.”

Did Lord Ellenborough refer in the last sentence above to some scrupulous and honest Englishmen whom he accused of *disturbing his game* by exposing his secret warlike preparations?

Lord Ellenborough again and again impressed both upon the Duke and the Queen the separateness of the hills from the plains of the Panjab so that he might have no difficulty with the authorities at home in his dividing the two as a result of his invasion of the country, and transferring the hills to a Rajput ruler. He informed the Duke on December 18:

“The territories of Runjeet Singh seem to be breaking into two parts, the Hills and the Plains and the latter must soon experience a new revolution.”

And he wrote to the Queen the next day, December 19 :

“The territories which formed the dominion of Runjeet Singh might be considered as already divided between the Sikhs of the plains and the Rajpoots of the hills.”

## THE DOGRAS

Lord Ellenborough gave the Home authorities a clear hint of the person on whom the Hills of the Panjab kingdom were to be bestowed. He was Gulab Singh, whom Henry Lawrence had selected as the person to be offered 'a consideration' for his assistance to the British. He was one of the two persons (the other being General Avitabile) who were needed the most by the British and were to be bound to them "by the only tie they recognize—self-interest." He and his brother Raja Dhian Singh, since murdered, were to be "secured in their territory, even with additions." Thus secretly encouraged by the British, Gulab Singh had availed himself of every opportunity to add to his power and resources in the hills. And Lord Ellenborough in his despatches made pointed references to his power and importance to bring him to the notice of the Home authorities for future use. As we have seen above, His Lordship had told His Grace on October 20, 1843, that "Gholab Singh remains in the Hills either in sickness, in grief, or in policy. He is securing himself there." On February 16, 1844, he wrote to the Queen:

"In the Hills, Raja Gholab Singh is extending his power with usual unscrupulous disregard of the rights of others and of the supremacy of the State he pretends to serve. This conduct, however, makes him very odious to the Sikhs at Lahore."

While Gulab Singh was strengthening himself in the hills, his nephew Raja Hira Singh, son of Raja Dhian Singh, was trying to have a strong hold on the plains. Duleep Singh, the new Maharaja, the youngest son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, was a young boy. Born on October 6-7, 1838, he was hardly five years old when he was raised to the throne. All power had therefore passed into the hands of the Minister Hira Singh who had an ambitious design to "eventually succeed to the throne of Ranjit Singh." "All these murders," says Alexander Gardner, "were brought about directly or indirectly by the Dogra brothers, Dhyan Singh and Gulab Singh, for the eventual aggrandizement of their family, in the person of Hira Singh." (*Memoirs*, p. 213.)

## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

Raja Gulab Singh helped his nephew keep firm in the saddle at Lahore, and at one time, at his earnest entreaty, "brought a large body of hillmen from Jummoo who for a time overawed the Khalsas." On his return to the hills, Gulab Singh carried off, 'with the connivance of his nephew, large sums of money from the treasury.'<sup>2</sup> This was not unusual with him. He had already helped himself to all the money and valuables belonging to Maharani Chand Kaur, and the accumulated treasure of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, in January 1841, when Sher Singh had come to the throne. Syad Muhammed Latif tells us in his *History of the Panjab*, pp. 506-7:

"Raja Gulab Singh carried away all the money and valuables belonging to the Maharani Chand Kaur under pretence of keeping it safely for her. The night after the treaty was signed, the Dogra forces vacated the fort. Raja Gulab Singh carried off the accumulated treasures of Ranjit Singh which were in the fort. Sixteen carts were filled with rupees and other silver coins, while 500 horsemen were each entrusted with a bag of gold mohurs, and his orderlies were also entrusted with jewellery and other valuable articles. The costly *pash-minas*, and rich wardrobes, and the best horses in Ranjit Singh's stables, were all purloined by Gulab Singh on the occasion of his evacuating Lahore."

And it was a part of this money that he paid to the British in his bargain for Jammu and Kashmir in 1846.

The overbearing attitude of the power-mad Hira Singh and the arrogance of his evil-genius Pandit Jalha soon alienated the sympathies of the Queen mother Maharani Jind Kaur, popularly known as Rani Jindan, and the leading Sikh Sardars. There was consequently a state of uncertainty and confusion in Lahore. Sardar Lehna Singh Majithia, instead of taking at this stage, in March 1844, some bold step in the interests of the kingdom, quitted the Panjab in disgust on the pretence of a pilgrimage.

### NO HOSTILITY FROM LAHORE

Throughout this time, Lord Ellenborough was steadily preparing for operations against the Panjab, while there was

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2. *History of the Punjab*, (W. H. Allen & Co.), ii. 289-90.

## DATE OF WAR FIXED

not the slightest indication of any hostility towards the British in the country. His Lordship himself acknowledged it more than once in his Home despatches. He wrote to the Duke on September 20, 1843:

"There does not seem to be any feeling against us. They are only quarrelling amongst themselves apparently; nor do I see the least show of hostility to us anywhere."

Two months later, on November 20, 1843, he wrote to the Queen in the same strain:

"The Sikh army, intent only on obtaining more pay, has remained tranquil, and no indication has been given of the least desire to provoke the resentment of the British Government."

He also said the same thing to the Duke in his despatch of the same date:

"There is no movement against us, nor is there any prospect of any, unless a complete break up should send plunderers against us."

This pacific appearance continued throughout the remaining period of his administration. "In the Punjab there is more of pacific appearance than at any time since the murder of Sher Singh," he wrote to the Duke on July 2, 1844. And writing to the Queen twelve days later, on July 14, he said:

"There is much less apprehension than there has been at any time since the death of the Maharaja Sher Singh that this tranquility will be disturbed on the side of the Punjab."

## DATE FIXED FOR OPERATIONS

Yet without any provocation or show of hostility from anywhere in the Panjab, Lord Ellenborough was eagerly looking forward to and preparing for marching his armies into the country. If he had not so far overrun and occupied the Panjab like Sindh, Gwalior, Kaithal and Jytpur, it was not because of any lack of will or determination on his part but because the army was not fully equipped and prepared, and because suitable officers for higher commands were not available. He was doing his best to equip and raise the army to the required standard. On his part, he had actually fixed a date—the 15th of November, 1845—on which he hoped to be ready for any operations in the Panjab.

## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

Writing to the Secret Committee under No. 12 G. G. (Home Department), on February 11, 1844, twenty-two months before the war, when there did 'not seem to be any feeling against' the British, he said:

8... "I must frankly confess, that when I look at the whole condition of our Army I had rather, if the contest cannot be further postponed, that it were *at least postponed to November 1845.*"

9... "Let our policy be what it may, the contest must come at last and the intervening time which may be given to us should be employed in unostentatious but vigilant preparation."

On February 15, he wrote to the Duke saying:

"I earnestly hope that we may not be obliged to cross the Sutlej in December next. *We shall not be ready so soon.* The army requires a great deal of setting up after five years of war. I am quietly doing what I can to strengthen and equip it. ... I know it [the war] would be of a protracted character. I should be obliged to remain at Lahore myself more than a year."

Ellenborough was so sure of the means he was adopting for creating the war and of the efficiency of his secret agents and agents provocateur that he was able to give an assurance to Field-Marshal the Duke of Wellington of securing certain success beforehand.

"*Depend upon it I will not engage in such an operation hastily or unnecessarily, and I will do all I can beforehand to secure certain success if ever I should be obliged to undertake it.*"

The words "I will not engage in such an operation hastily" leave no doubt that the time for *engaging* in this operation was to be determined according to the convenience of Lord Ellenborough and his army. His next letter of April 20, 1844, in which he asks the Duke for eighteen months' time to prepare for the war is very significant. He says:

"I earnestly hope nothing may compel us to cross the Sutlej, and that we may have no attack to repel *till November 1845.* I shall then be prepared for anything. In the meantime we do all we can in a quiet way to strengthen ourselves. ...

"We are altogether very ill-provided with officers for the higher commands. The whole army requires a great deal of teaching, and I am satisfied the *eighteen months I ask* are not more than enough to make it what it ought to be."

## ATAR SINGH SANDHANWALIA

“Does it not show conclusively the deep scheme of the British in bringing on the war with the Sikhs?” asks Major Basu.

While describing his brisk preparations for the war, to be fought with the Sikhs nineteen months later, Lord Ellenborough wrote to the Duke in his letter of May 9, 1844:

“The destruction of Soocheyt Singh has had the effect of entirely separating the Hills, under Gholab Singh, from the Plains, still ruled in a manner by Heera Singh. *Everything is going on there as we could desire, if we looked forward to the ultimate possession of the Punjab. . . .*

“Sir Charles Napier will endeavour to raise two local battallions in Scinde, and he thinks he shall succeed.

“*In November 1845 the Army will be equal to any operation but I should be sorry to have it called into the field sooner.*”

The whole thing went on in the Panjab, evidently through agents provocateur, according to the schedule prescribed by Lord Ellenborough and his successor, and it was within a month of the date fixed by him that the war came on in the middle of December, 1845.

### ATAR SINGH SANDHANWALIA AFFAIR

There are strong reasons to suspect that Sardar Atar Singh Sandhanwalia's attempt to capture Lahore by a surprise in which the Sardar himself, Bhai Bir Singh, Prince Kashmira Singh, etc., were killed at Naurangabad on May 7, 1844, was instigated by the British Political Agent on the Panjab frontier. Sardar Atar Singh, as we know, was a brother of Sardar Lehna Singh and uncle of Sardar Ajit Singh Sandhanwalia who had murdered Maharaja Sher Singh, Prince Partap Singh and Raja Dhian Singh. After these murders Atar Singh had sought shelter in the British territory and had been living at Thanesar, between Karnal and Ambala. It was from Thanesar that he went to the Panjab with the permission of the British Political Agent who knew, as Lord Ellenborough admits, that the Sardar was going there with the object of acting against the Lahore Government. We give below an extract from the letter of His Lordship

## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

addressed to the Queen dated the 10th of June 1844 wherein he said:

"It is much to be regretted that Uttur Singh should have been permitted to move from Thanesir to the Sutlej with the known object of acting against the Lahore Government. This error of the British Agent renders it impossible to protest against the violation of the strict letter of the treaty which was committed by the Sikhs, whose troops were sent to the left bank to intercept Uttur Singh; and, under all the circumstances, it has been deemed expedient to make no representation upon the subject, but to allow the whole matter to be forgotten." (*Hist. of Ind. Adm. of Lord E.*, p. 129.)

### THE RECALL OF LORD ELLENBOROUGH

Having created dissension and disorder in the Panjab and assembled a large force on its borders Lord Ellenborough returned home disgusted at having lost the opportunity of planting the British flag on the fort of Lahore. He was recalled by the Directors of the East India Company because of his ultra-aggressive policy and arrogant disregard of the wishes of his masters.

"There can be no doubt," says Edward Thornton, "that Lord Ellenborough's Indian administration disappointed his friends. . . . He went to India the avowed champion of peace and was incessantly engaged in war. . . . The desire of military glory thenceforward supplanted every other feeling in his breast. . . . He might without dishonour have averted war in Sinde, and possibly have averted hostilities at Gwalior, but he did not. . . . War and preparation for war absorbed most of his hours." (*History of British Empire in India*, 2nd Edition (1859), p. 608.)

He had also Egypt on his programme of war and conquest. Charles Viscount Hardinge tells us in his father's biography that:

"It was a dream of Lord Ellenborough to bring about its [Egypt's] occupation by British troops; and there is a letter from him in existence in which he expresses the desire to have Sir. H. Hardinge as Commander-in-Chief in India, so that they might conjointly carry out such project." (*Viscount Hardinge*, p. 56-7.)

"His passion for military glory," says Nolan in his *History of India*, "offended the East India Company. Ever since





VISCOUNT (Sir Henry) HARDINGE  
Governor-General of India  
(July 1844, to Jan. 1848)

*Born :*  
March 30, 1785.

*Died :*  
September 24, 1856.

## SIR HENRY HARDINGE

the system sprung up of nominating a peer to the general government of India huge military enterprises had been carried on at a ruinous expense to the company. The English cabinet had a strong temptation to countenance Indian wars; they entailed no expense upon the English exchequer, gave immense patronage to the crown through the board of control and the governor-general afforded support to a large portion of the royal army, and increased the prestige of English power in Europe. Great was the indignation of the holders of Indian stock with the wars of Lord Ellenborough, all of which were rashly waged, and that in Scinde aggressively, rapaciously, and unrighteously to a degree revolting to the minds of peaceable and just English citizens." (*Div. IV, 644.*)

Much against the wishes of the Directors, says John Ludlow, . . . "He did but continue that unscrupulous policy which Lord Auckland's underlings forced upon the latter [Auckland]." (p. 135). "Lord Ellenborough and his military favourites, found or made for themselves new opportunities for victory." (p. 133.) In his dealings with the Court of Directors, he "thwarted and snubbed them in almost every conceivable way" and treated them as if they were his servants. Therefore, in spite of the opposition of the Board of Control and the protests and threats of the British cabinet, they exercised their prerogative and recalled him and appointed Sir Henry Hardinge in his place. Sir Henry arrived at Calcutta in the last week of July 1844.

### SIR HENRY HARDINGE

Sir Henry Hardinge was a great soldier, a veteran of the Peninsular war. His passion for military glory was as great as that of his predecessor. Both were close friends. Sir Henry was, in fact, a kinsman by marriage of Ellenborough. Both generally agreed in their political views. There was, therefore, not going to be any change of policy in India in spite of whatever instructions the Court of Directors might issue. Lord Ellenborough knew it. Writing to Major George Broadfoot, the would-be Political Agent on the Panjab frontier, His Lordship informed him on June 17, 1844:

## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

You will have heard that the Court of Directors have thought fit to recall me. My successor will carry out all my views. He is my most confidential friend, with whom I have communicated upon all public subjects for thirty years.

The only thing on which his views yet remained to be translated into action was the conquest and annexation of the Panjab which had been under discussion for some time both in England and India.<sup>3</sup> The ground had been prepared for it by Lord Ellenborough and his political agents both in the Panjab and in the British dominions. It was reserved for Sir Henry Hardinge to march into the Panjab after the *eighteen months asked for* by Ellenborough and fly the Union Jack on the fort of Lahore. "Without doubt," says his son and Private Secretary in India, "the selection of a distinguished soldier, who also possessed the experience of a cabinet minister, rather pointed to the anticipation of war." And the parting words of the Chairman of the Court of Directors, Captain Shepherd, addressed to Sir Henry Hardinge at a farewell banquet of the Court, June 1844, also conveyed a similar indication:

"It has always been the desire of the Court that the government of the East India Company should be eminently just, moderate and conciliatory; *but the supremacy of our power must be maintained when necessary by the force of our arms.*"

It may be safely said that in his subsequent policy towards the Panjab Sir Henry Hardinge carried out almost literally the views of his predecessor and the instructions of his masters.

On his arrival in India, "he found the attention of Lord Ellenborough had been turned seriously towards the North-Western Frontier; that all towns from Delhi to Karnal were filled with troops; that the Commander-in-Chief had already surveyed the whole extent of the Protected States with a view to make choice of Military positions, and that the ad-

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3. Sir Robert Peel referred to it indirectly in his letter of August 1, 1844, to Sir Henry Hardinge. *BRC.*, 682. Also see Murray, *Hist. of Br. India*, 692.

## HARDINGE'S PREPARATIONS

vanced posts of Ludhiana and Firozpur had been strengthened." (*Viscount Hardinge*, 74-5.)

### ADDITIONS TO THE ASSEMBLED FORCE

Sir Henry Hardinge, during the sixteen months that he had, considerably added to the strength of the army assembled on the Panjab frontier. As the following comparative table would show, the number of men was raised from 17,612 left by Lord Ellenborough to 40,523 and of guns from 66 to 94, exclusive of Hill stations.

Post	Strength as left by Lord Ellenborough		Strength at first breaking out of war		Increased preparation made by Lord Hardinge	
	Men	Guns	Men	Guns	Men	Guns
Firozpur ..	4596	12	10472	24	5876	12
Ludhiana ..	3030	12	7235	12	4205	0
Ambala ..	4113	24	12972	32	8859	8
Meerut ..	5873	18	9844	26	3971	8
Whole of frontier, exclusive of Hill Stations which remained the same ..	17612	66	40523	94	22911	28

"The above return, which was drawn up by the Governor-General at the time, speaks for itself. He landed in India in July, 1844. On the 23rd August of that year he addressed the Commander-in-Chief on the distribution of the force in Bengal. On the 8th September, five Native regiments were placed at the disposal of the Commander-in-Chief for distribution between Meerut and the frontier. On the 11th of the same month, confidential orders were sent for the construction of two barracks at Firozpur, to accommodate a regiment

## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

of European infantry and two batteries of artillery. The two European regiments at Sabathu and Kasauli were also added to the garrison. In January, 1845, the Bombay Government was requested to send up H.M.'s 14th Light Dragoon to the frontier, and batteries in the Sirhind Division were raised from 90 to 130 horses. As the result of these measures, the British force at and above Ambala was augmented from 13,600 men and 48 guns in January, 1844, to 32,500 men and 68 guns in December, 1845; while total force at and above Meerut, including Delhi and the Hill Stations, which had been only 24,000 men and 66 guns, now amounted to 45,500 men and 98 guns." (*Viscount Hardinge*, 76-7.)

### THE BRIDGE OF BOATS

Under instructions from the Duke of Wellington Lord Ellenborough had ordered the collection of pontoons at Ferozepore for transporting troops and military supplies and for the formation of a bridge over the Sutlej for the British army to cross into the Panjab when required.

Writing to the Duke from Calcutta on May 9, 1844, Lord Ellenborough said:

"I expect that by the end of December there will be on the Sutlej seventy boats of about thirty-five tons each, all exactly similar and each containing everything necessary for its equipment as a pontoon. These will bridge the Sutlej anywhere, and when not so used they will convey troops up and down, and save us an enormous charge for the hire of boats.

"Besides these, fifty-six pontoons will be ready for use in Scinde. All these are in hand at Bombay. We shall besides have, by the end of this year, I hope, two steamers drawing very little water on the Sutlej."

These fifty-six pontoons were brought up to Ferozepore by Hardinge's order. They were to form a part of the equipment of the assembling army. But their object was to be kept secret from the Lahore Government so that they might not have a cause for suspicion or complaint against the British. The Governor-General's Private Secretary, who was also his (Governor-General's) son, wrote in a confidential letter

## CHANGES AT LAHORE

to Major Broadfoot, the British Political Agent, on February 20, 1845:

"It is not desirable that the purpose to which these boats can be applied should unnecessarily transpire. ... But if any inquiry should be made hereafter, your answer will be that this flotilla of boats is not at present required on the lower Indus, that our commissariat arrangements do require the employment of boats between Ferozepore and Sukkur for the supply of the latter place with grain, and that these are purposely adapted for military as well as trading purposes and form part of our Military means and establishment on the Indus applicable to any purposes for which they may be required either on that river or on the Sutlej; to which you may add several iron steamers which it is convenient to the Government to employ on these rivers for the conveyance of troops, stores and supplies; and, of course, available for offensive as well as for defensive objects, not unnecessarily entering into these explanations, but stating the truth, if explanation be proper." (*Career of Major Broadfoot*, 284.)

### SUPPLY DEPOT AT BASIAN

While the British army was being assembled at different stations on the frontier, a supply depot was established at Basian, ten miles to the south-east of Jagraon and about four miles to the north-west of Raikot. This was purely a war measure. Otherwise, there was no sense in collecting supplies at a place which was neither a grain market nor the headquarters of the Political Agent with a military cantonment attached to it.

## CHANGES AT LAHORE

The unpopularity of Minister Hira Singh and his friend Pandit Jalha had reached its limit in December, 1844. They feared the Khalsa would no longer tolerate them. Therefore, they decided to fly away to the hills of Jammu with whatever remained of the royal treasure at Lahore. But they were intercepted within a few miles of Lahore on the morning of December 21, 1844, and were killed in the scuffle.

Raja Gulab Singh was invited to become the minister of the Lahore kingdom but he did not think it in his interest to accept the offer. Sardar Jawahar Singh, brother of the Queen-mother, was therefore nominated to this office. But he was not strong enough to check the conspiracies of Raja

## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

Gulab Singh whose agents, Mian Pirthi Singh and others, soon worked his ruin through the army. He was killed on September 21, 1845. There were now three candidates for ministership, Missars Tej Singh and Lal Singh and Raja Gulab Singh. The first was a Poorbia Brahmin from Ekri in the district of Meerut in the British dominions. He had come to the Panjab during the days of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and had gradually risen from a humble position to eminence. The second, Lal Singh, a Brahmin of Rohtas, had also been originally employed in a low capacity and had become a Sardar through the intrigues of Raja Dhian Singh. The third, as we know, was a Dogra Rajput of Jammoo. They were all men of power and influence and it was difficult for the Maharani to take a decision. The lots were, therefore, drawn by the young Maharaja and Lal Singh became the Prime Minister. But he was not very popular with the army. The Maharani, therefore, decided to take greater interest in the administration of the State. This happened towards the end of September, 1845.

### THE QUEEN-MOTHER

The Maharani Jind Kaur was recognized by her contemporaries as a person of outstanding accomplishment.

She was particularly skilful in the use of her pen. "The Rani," said the author of the *History of the Punjab* (1846), "was a person of some accomplishments for a Sikh lady, being skilful in the use of her pen, whereby, it is supposed, she was able to arrange and combine the means of Hira Singh's overthrow." (vol. ii. 311.) Writing to the Duke of Wellington on November 20, 1843, Lord Ellenborough had said :

"The mother of the boy Dhuleep Singh seems to be a woman of determined courage, and she is the only person, apparently at Lahore who has courage." (*App. A, 27, p. 464, 'Private Correspondence relating to the Anglo-Sikh Wars'*).

Lord Dalhousie, referred to her in January 1849, as "the only person having manly understanding in the Punjab," and insisted on keeping her in exile away from the Panjab and refused to allow her to return to her country.

**BROADFOOT BROUGHT TO THE PANJAB FRONTIER**

Sir Henry Hardinge wanted a more warlike diplomat to replace Col. Richmond as Political Agent on the Panjab frontier. Major George Broadfoot had applied for the job during the time of Lord Ellenborough. Having served in the Afghan war with Generals Sale and Pollock in the Khyber and beyond it, he knew of the warlike preparations against the Sikhs and wished to avail himself of the opportunity for greater honours and quicker rise in life. His plea was that his health had given way in the peaceful atmosphere of Tennaserim in Burma and could only improve in the field of action on the Panjab frontier. In his letter of December 13, 1843, from Mergui he had written to Lord Ellenborough :

"Rest, or a change to military service with the climate of northern India, would speedily restore me. ... Had my health not given way, I could not have ventured to make this request, greatly as Your Lordship knows I desire to serve again in the field, especially during Your Lordship's government. ... I could not recover if the the army were in the field and I an idler elsewhere."<sup>4</sup>

Broadfoot was known to be "too prone to war" and a favourite of Ellenborough. His Lordship wrote to him on February 1, 1844 :

"If there should be at any future time a prospect of our having more important operations to carry on, I will, if possible, have you with me."<sup>5</sup>

Before his departure from India Lord Ellenborough recommended Major Broadfoot to his friend and successor, Sir Henry Hardinge.

The preparations for military operations on the Sutlej were then in full swing. Sir Henry Hardinge, therefore, transferred Col. Richmond to Lucknow and brought Major Broadfoot to the Panjab frontier to see them through. The arrival of the new soldier-political at Ludhiana in October, 1844, added fresh vigour and speed to the assemblage of troops whose number, as we saw in the comparative table above,

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4. Broadfoot, 202-3.

5. *Ibid.* 202-3.



## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

gradually rose to over 40,500. "Boats for bridges, and regiments and guns, the provocatives to a war," says Hugh Murray, "were sufficiently numerous; but food and ammunition, and carriage and hospital stores, such as were necessary for a campaign," slowly pouring in from Delhi and Agra, added to the apprehensions of the Sikhs across the river.<sup>6</sup> "The Sikhs not un-naturally feared the aggression of their powerful neighbour and viewed with apprehension the British advance to the Sutlej," says Lt.-Col. R. G. Burton. "This advance," he continues, "had been carried out contrary to the policy of 1809. . . . Ludhiana had, indeed, been occupied . . . and Subathu garrison was the sole outpost of the advancing empire . . . in 1838. . . .; a reserve was posted at Ambala in 1842. The occupation of Sindh in the meantime threatened Sikh territory at Multan and a bridge of boats was thrown across the Sutlej near Ferozepore, while small steamers plied on the river. The Sikhs then had come to think their independence menaced and war inevitable."<sup>7</sup>

Major Broadfoot had come to the Panjab frontier for military service for reasons of health. The war with the Sikhs was to come soon after November, 1845, the date fixed for it by his patron Lord Ellenborough. As Agent to the Governor-General on the frontier, he was to see to it that everything came about according to the time-table, not very much beyond the eighteen months asked for by him.

### THREE ARCH-TRAITORS

But before the actual operations came on, Broadfoot was also 'beforehand to secure certain success' of which an assurance had been given to the Duke of Wellington. This could only be done if he had won over the high-ups and chiefs of the Lahore kingdom so that they danced to his tune when the time came for it. For this purpose Raja Gulab Singh, the Governor of Jammu, Missar Tej Singh, the Commander-in-Chief, and Missar Lal Singh, the Prime Minister of

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6. *History of British India*, 695.

7. *The First and Second Sikh Wars*, 9.



MAHARAJA GULAB SINGH

*Born :*  
**Katik 5, 1849 Bk.**  
October 18, 1792.

*Died :*  
**Sawan 25, 1914, Bk.**  
August 7, 1857.

Made Maharaja by the British  
March 16, 1846

## RAJA GULAB SINGH

Lahore, came in very handy and acted as the agents and spies of the British Government.

### RAJA GULAB SINGH

Raja Gulab Singh had already been won over with promises of territory in the hills. Like a brazen-faced traitor he had forgotten all the patronage and favours he had received from Maharaja Ranjit Singh and become an easy tool in the hands of the British for carrying out their designs on the Sikh Raj. As Henry Hardinge described him to Sir Charles Napier, "Gulab Singh was the most thorough ruffian that ever was created,—a villain from the kingdom down to a penny."<sup>8</sup>

"If a painter," wrote Henry Havelock in 1846, "sought to employ all the smooth cunning of Asiatic intrigue in one face, he would throw away his sketches as soon as he saw that of Gulab Singh, cease to draw on his imagination and limn the features of Rao Sahib, as the Lahore people call him, with fidelity."<sup>9</sup>

Encouraged by the British he had consolidated his power in the hills in the hope of carving out a principality for himself when they occupied the Panjab.

With the arrival of Major Broadfoot, who had been known to him since the Afghan War, Gulab Singh felt further encouraged in his intrigues with the British. In October 1844, he sent a complimentary letter to Broadfoot with a messenger who assured him of his master's devotion to the British and hoped to receive their help against the Lahore Darbar. He again sent a messenger to the Agent in January, 1845, to seek British protection on the strength of the service he had rendered during the Afghan War. In August of the same year he placed his own services and those of the other hill chiefs at the disposal of the British and offered to attack the Sikhs and to so divide the Lahore Government, the army and the people as to enable the British to march into the

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8. Ludlow, *British India*, ii. 145.

9. Forbes, *Havelock*, 71.

## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

Panjab and occupy its capital without firing a shot.<sup>10</sup> This last promise he fulfilled to its very letter and received from the British as a reward the kingdom of Jammu and Kashmir.

### SARDAR TEJ SINGH

Sardar (Missar) Tej Singh was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Panjab forces in September, 1845, when Lal Singh became the Prime Minister after the death of Sardar Jawahar Singh. He was not a son of the Panjab; he was neither loyal to her nor to his masters. He was a foreign adventurer. With his home and near relations in the British dominions at Ekri in the pargannah of Sardhana, in Meerut district, he easily became a willing tool in the hands of the British. A mere soldier of fortune, he was ready to do anything for the glittering gold. He entered into correspondence both with George Broadfoot, the Agent at Ludhiana, and Peter Nicholson, his Assistant at Ferozepore, and kept them informed of the movements at Lahore. It was due to his planned treachery that the British escaped a disaster at Ferozeshahr and were able to win the final victory at Sobraon.

### SARDAR LAL SINGH

Missar (Raja Sardar) Lal Singh, a Brahmin of Rohtas, was a chip of the same block. He and Sardar Tej Singh were

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10. See. Cons. (National Archives, Delhi) III, 115 of April 14, 1845, 46 of 25th October, 1845, and 215 of 26th December, 1846, quoted in Kumar's *Indian Administration Under Lord Hardinge (MS.)*, 209-10.

According to Gough and Innes in *The Sikhs and the Sikh Wars*, "Gholab Singh judiciously persuaded the soldiers to allow him to return to Jammu, from whence he sent offers to the British of co-operation to enable them to march on Lahore, if they would guarantee him the North Eastern Provinces as an independent ruler." (p. 59.)

Again, "Gholab Singh sent a messenger affirming positively that the Sikhs were determined on war and offering to throw in his lot with the British." (pp. 60-61.)

On the eve of the war, when the Lahore army was about to move to the Sutlej, "Gulab Singh," says Charles Viscount Hardinge, "was ready to treat, saying that he would carry out whatever orders might be given by the British Government. Bhai Ram Singh was also deputed by him to negotiate with the British." (*Viscount Hardinge*, 81.)

## BRITISH PROVOCATIONS

closely allied in their planned intrigues with the British in the first Anglo-Sikh War. Intriguing by nature, he had been picked by Raja Dhian Singh to be set up in opposition to Missar Beli Ram *Toshakhania*. After the death of his patron, he intrigued alternately with and against the Dogras, Gulab Singh and Hira Singh, and acquired considerable weight in the scale of rival parties. He became the prime minister of the kingdom after the death of Sardar Jawahar Singh and was won over by the British to assist them in their occupation of the Panjab. But not satisfied with the reward, he turned against them and their protege Gulab Singh, and was exiled and imprisoned in the territory of British India.

“Two more contemptible poltroons than the two generals of the Khalsa army—Lal Singh and Tej Singh, both Brahmans—never breathed,” says Alexander Gardner in his *Memoirs*, p. 263.

“Their desire,” in intriguing with the British, according to Cunningham, “was to be upheld as the ministers of a dependent kingdom by grateful conquerors, and they . . . assured the local British authorities of their secret and efficient good will.” (Murray, 697.)

### BRITISH PROVOCATIONS

(i) The assemblage of British troops on the Panjab frontier was the first indication of the unfriendly intentions of the British Government and was the earliest provocation to the Lahore Government to be prepared to meet the impending invasion of their country.

(ii) Added to this was the collection of pontoons near Ferozepore for a bridge-of-boats across the Sutlej for the troops to march into the Panjab.

(iii) The establishment of a grand supply depot at Basian near Raikot was an unmistakable sign of the readiness of the British to undertake the threatened operations at an early date.

“Thus boats for bridges, and regiments and guns—the *provocatives to a war*—were sufficiently numerous,” says

## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

Hugh Murray in his contemporary *History of British India*, (p. 695.) "Food and ammunition and carriage and hospital stores, such as were necessary for a campaign" soon poured in from Delhi and Agra to complete the preparations.

With the knowledge of the British policy of expansion in India, by which they had become masters of the country during the previous century, and having seen the unprovoked invasion of Afghanistan beyond the Indus, the unjust occupations of Sindh and Kaithal and the unwarranted interference in the affairs of Gwalior during the past five years, the only inference the Sikhs could draw from the assemblage of British troops, guns and provisions on their frontier was that the British meditated an early invasion and occupation of their country. There could be no greater provocation to them than this menace to their independence. But in spite of it the Sikhs maintained a complete restraint and order at Lahore and did not give the British the slightest cause for complaint.

Writing to Lord Ellenborough in England on January 23, 1845, Sir Henry Hardinge said :

"Even if we had a case for devouring our ally in adversity, we are not ready and could not be ready until the hot winds set in, and the Sutlej became a torrent. Moderation will do us no harm, if in the interval the hills and the plains weaken each other; but *on what plea could we attack the Punjab*, if this were the month of October and we had our army in readiness?

"Self-preservation may require the dispersion of this Sikh army, the baneful influence of such an example is the evil most to be dreaded, but exclusive of this case, *how are we to justify the seizure of our friend's territory who in our adversity assisted us to retrieve our affairs?*" (BRC., 868.)

The Sikhs continued to behave like friends up to the last. On October 23, 1845, just a month and a half before the war, Hardinge wrote to Ellenborough :

"The Punjab must however be Sikh or British. ... The delay is merely a postponement of the settlement of the question, at the same time *we must bear in mind that as yet no cause of war has been given.*" (BRC., 868.)

## BRITISH PROVOCATIONS

(iv) *Broadfoot interferes in Cis-Sutlej territories of the Panjab.*—Broadfoot had also evidently known that the Sikhs were not likely to give any cause for hostilities. A man of boundless ambition, he had come to the Panjab frontier for active military service. He could not be satisfied with that state of affairs. The Sikhs must be *provoked* to hostility, he thought. With that end in view, he started up machinations and began irritating them. He was personally hostile to them. According to George Campbell, “he had some differences with the Sikhs when he marched up to Afghanistan and he was not inclined to be conciliatory to the Lahore Durbar.” Against the terms and spirit of the treaty of 1809, Broadfoot started interfering with the Cis-Sutlej territories of the Lahore kingdom. He “not only acted,” says Campbell, “as if the Lahore territories, Cis-Sutlej, were entirely under his control, but, as I now learn for the first time from his biography, he seems to have set up a formal claim to such a control,<sup>11</sup> and asserted that this Lahore territory was just as much under his ‘jurisdiction,’ as he called it, as any of the small protected states . . . . His biographer says that the Government accepted this view but does not give the text of that acceptance. *I can only say that I cannot find a word in the treaties or agreements of any kind to support it, and in all my connection with the office never saw anything to justify it.* Broadfoot admitted that his immediate predecessor in the agency, Col. Richmond, had taken an opposite view.” (*Memoirs*, i. 75.)

Sir George Clerk, the predecessor of Col. Richmond, “when he heard what was going on, sent to the Governor-General a memorandum expressing strong views on the subject.” But Broadfoot had no respect for Clerk’s opinion. He

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11. “It has been said,” says Dr. W. L. M’Gregor, “that the cession of the Sikh States belonging to the Lahore government on the left or the British side of the Sutlej had been demanded and that such a proposition had given dire offence. If the proposal were really made, it might have been expected, that a force capable of taking possession of the States in question would have been in readiness in case of refusal.” (*History of the Sikhs*, ii. 253.)

## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

had come for war and war he must have at any cost. He adopted an 'arrogant and overbearing' attitude towards the officials of the Lahore Darbar who came for the internal administration of their Cis-Sutlej territories. As George Campbell writes in his *Memoirs*, i. 76,

Broadfoot "interfered more than we ever did in a protected State. He avowed that he had arranged to occupy the Lahore territory, Cis-Sutlej, in case anything should happen to Duleep Singh who was then ill. And he forbade the Durbar to send any troops over for any purpose whatever."

This is confirmed by Cunningham in the *History of the Sikhs* saying:

"One of Major Broadfoot's first acts was to declare the Cis-Sutlej possession of Lahore to be under British protection equally with Putteeala and other chiefs and also to be liable to escheat on the death or deposition of Maharaja Dalip Singh. This view was not formally announced to the Sikh Government, but it was notorious and Major Broadfoot acted on it when he proceeded to interfere authoritatively, and by a display of force in the affairs of the priest-like Sodhees of Anundpoor Makhawal." (pp. 295-96.)

It is not proposed to go into the details of British aggressions and interferences referred to above. One example would suffice.

One Lal Singh *Adalti*, a judge in Lahore service, crossed the river Sutlej at Talwandi in the Lahore territory for official duty. Broadfoot, who happened to be near, "roughly and very peremptorily ordered the Sikh party back over the river. Lall Singh, not willing to risk a collision, obeyed, returned to the river and embarked his men. But Broadfoot, not satisfied with this, followed them in person . . . insisted on capturing them. At least one shot was fired . . . The Sikh leaders were captured and detained. The shot then fired has been described as the first in the Sikh War." (Campbell, *Memoirs*, i. 76-7.)

This event has been described as follows by Robert N. Cust, the assistant and companion of Major Broadfoot:—

"Good Friday fell on March 21 [1845], and on the day following the news reached us at Zirah, on the high road between Ferozpur and Ludhianah, that a party of Sikhs had crossed the Satlaj at Talwandi, not far from us. We sent word to them to go quickly back; in the



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meantime we collected our forces; H.M. 62nd were encamped close to us, and on Easterday, 1845, as the Sikhs had not crossed back, we started at daylight with 160 infantry and 300 sabres. The sight was pretty one (I copy from my journal): 'Broadfoot and I rode in advance; on arriving at Talwandi we found that the party had retreated, but had refused to pay for the damage, which they had done; on this Broadfoot and I dashed on with the Cavalry. Arriving at the bank of the Satlaj we espied the party at some little distance attempting to cross the deep stream in boats; on we went and caught the last boatful which we knew by the standards to contain the Chief of the party, Bhai Bishan Singh; these we seized with their horses and camels; one man was shot in confusion. The scene was very pretty, just the junction of Beas and Satlaj."

"This was the first shot of the great Sikh War." (*Or. and Ling. Essays, part V, 43-4.*)

"The affair," says George Campbell, "gave rise to great irritation. Broadfoot seems to have felt that he could hardly justify the making prisoner of a Lahore judge on Lahore soil; he put it on the ground that in decamping they had not paid the villagers for the supplies they had and the damage they had done. He made them pay for that, and finally let them go. Even from his own point of view, viz., regarding the Lahore territory south of the river as a protected State, *such a proceeding was wholly unjustifiable*. In a petty matter of supplies we never should have dreamed of interfering between a Protected Chief and his subjects." (*Memoirs, 77.*)

(v) *Suchet Singh's Treasure*—Raja Suchet Singh, the youngest brother of the Dogras Dhian Singh and Gulab Singh, had secretly deposited at Ferozepore a large quantity of coin and bullion worth about fifteen lakhs of rupees. After his death the Lahore Government claimed the treasure both as escheated property of a feudatory without male heirs of his body and as the confiscated property of a rebel killed in arms against his sovereign. Legally and morally the treasure belonged to the Lahore kingdom. "Vattel lays it down," says Joseph Cunningham, in his *History of the Sikhs*, p. 279, "that a stranger's property remains a part of the aggregate wealth of his nation and the right to it is to be determined according to the laws of his own country. (Book II, Chapt. viii. Sects. 109 and 110.)

"The oriental customary laws with regard to the estates and property of Jagheerdars (feudal beneficiaries) may be

## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

seen in Bernier's *Travels* (i. 183-87). The right of the Government is full and it is based on the feeling or principle that a beneficiary has only the use during life of estates or offices, and that all he may have accumulated, through parsimony or oppression, is the property of the State. It may be difficult to decide between the people and an expelled sovereign, about his guilt or his tyranny, but there can be none in deciding between an allied State and its subject about treason or rebellion. Neither refugee traitors nor patriots are allowed to abuse their asylum by plotting against the Government which has cast them out and an extension of the principle would prevent desperate adventurers defrauding the State which has reared and heaped favours on them by removing their property previous to engaging in rash and criminal enterprises." (*Ibid.*, 279.)

But the British Government refused to hand over the treasure to the Lahore Government. This caused great irritation to the Sikhs, who made several demands for it. The British paid no attention to these. After the war, however, they were pleased to recognize the traitor Gulab Singh heir to the money to help him make payments to them for the territories of Jammu and Kashmir.

(vi) *The Village of Moron*—A village named Moron in the Nabha territory had been given by Raja Jaswant Singh of Nabha in 1819 to Maharaja Ranjit Singh who, in turn, had bestowed it on one Sardar Dhanna Singh. Twenty-five years later, in 1843, Jaswant Singh's son Raja Devindar Singh became displeased with the Sardar and resumed the gift. Not only this. His soldiers wantonly plundered the property of the Sardar. This was absolutely illegal and high-handed. The gift had not been made to Sardar Dhanna Singh by Raja Devindar Singh to give him any right to resume it. It had been made by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the ruler of the Panjab. The Raja of Nabha had nothing to do with it. The British, whose protection the Raja of Nabha had accepted, however, upheld his action against the protests of the Lahore darbar, who naturally felt aggrieved. The Raja of Nabha, thus played, unsuspectingly or otherwise, the game of the British politicals in irritating

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and provoking the Lahore Darbar and its troops to come to an early decision of war with the British.

(vii) *Occupation of an island*—"The year before the war broke out," says Major G. Carmichael Smyth in his *History of the Reigning Family of Lahore* (1847), "we kept the island between Ferozepore and the Punjaub, *though it belonged to the Seiks*, owing to the deep water being between us and the island." "And I only ask, had *we* not departed from the rules of friendship first"?<sup>12</sup> And he quotes the following passage from Prinsep's *Runjeet Singh*, p. 203, in support of his opinion that the island belonged to the Sikhs and that its occupation by the British was *a breach* of the rules of friendship.

"Claims to islands in a river flowing between two manors, and to alluvions are determined by what is called *Kuch-much* or *Kishtee-bunna*, which practice or rule assigns the land to the proprietor of the bank, or main, upon which the alluvion is thrown, and from which the water has receded."

(viii) *British menace from Sindh side*—"Nor did the Sikhs seem to be menaced by their [British] allies on one [Sutlej] side only," says Cunningham. "In the summer of 1845 some horsemen from Mooltan crossed a few miles into the Sindh territory in pursuit of certain marauders. The boundary of the two provinces between the Indus and the hills is nowhere defined, and the object of the few troopers was evident; but the governor, Sir Charles Napier, immediately ordered the wing of a regiment to Kushmor, a few miles below Rojhan, to preserve the integrity of his frontier from violation. The Lahore authorities were indeed put upon their guard, but they did not admit the sufficiency of the reasons given, and they looked upon the prompt measure of the conqueror of Sindh as *one more proof of the desire to bring about a war with the Punjab*."<sup>13</sup>

(ix) *British Propaganda*—In addition to what Major Broadfoot was doing to provoke the Lahore government to

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12. *Introduction*, XXII.

13. *History of the Sikhs*, 297-298.

## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

hostilities and to plant agents provocateur in that country, the British officials and press had been carrying on propaganda against the Sikhs with a view to preparing the people of India and England to hear the news of an Anglo-Sikh war and covering up their warlike preparations. Major G. Carmichael Smyth says in his contemporary work entitled *The Reigning Family of Lahore*:

“With the Seiks for several years past, in fact ever since the death of Runjeet Sing, we have been playing the fable of the Shepherd Boy and the Wolf. The papers and the politicals had constantly been crying out “*The Seiks are coming!*” until at last we would not believe them.”

He also refers to a speech of Sir Charles Napier published in the *Delhi Gazette* stating that the British were going to war with the Sikhs and says:

“The Seiks had translations of Sir Charles Napier’s speech (as it appeared in the *Delhi Gazette*) stating that we are going to war with them.”<sup>14</sup>

This was enough to provoke them to warlike preparations for the defence of their country. And “it behoves every wise *Raj* to avoid being taken unawares,” said Sardar Fateh Singh Man.

(x) *Spies and Agents Provocateur*—An entry in the confidential Persian Office Diary of George Broadfoot at Ludhiana reads as follows:

*26th March, 1845.*

“Having been sent for, Genda Singh the *Mu’tamad* of the Raja of Nabha came to the presence of the Exalted Gentleman [Major George Broadfoot]. During the interview the *Sahib* said to him, ‘You go to Lahore as the *Mu’tamad* of the Raja, stay there and inform us in detail about the state of affairs there, spread hatred and discord in that State in whatever way it can be done and suggest the entry of the British Government [in the country], and also send us a genealogical table of the Sarkar of Lahore. The *Sarkar* [the British Government] shall bestow favours upon you and consider it as an act of great loyalty of the Raja of Nabha.’

“He [Genda Singh] wrote out the genealogical table, but he refused to go to Lahore and stay there. At last the Exalted Gentleman, being

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14. *Introduction*, XXII-XXIII.

## BRITISH PROVOCATIONS

very much displeased, wrote to the Raja of Nabha that Genda Singh had been dismissed with a robe. The Sahib complained against him for disobedience and desired him to be punished; and, informing him [the Raja] of the order issued and disobeyed, desired him [the Raja] to prepare for the purpose his [Genda Singh's] son, who is a shrewd person."

This was reported to the Government of Lahore by their *Vakil* at Ludhiana and they felt much disturbed over the secret activities of their British neighbours for the subversion of their state.

It may casually be mentioned here that the refusal of the Nabha *Mu'tamad* Genda Singh to act as a British spy and agent provocateur at Lahore was one of the causes of Major Broadfoot's displeasure towards Raja Devindar Singh of Nabha who was heavily fined, deposed and exiled by the British Government after the war.

(xi) *Seduction of Dewan Moolraj*—While Sir Charles Napier exhibited an attitude hostile to the State of the Panjab, of which Multan was a province, George Broadfoot, the Governor-General's Political Agent was tampering with the loyalty of its governor, Diwan Mulraj. According to Cunningham, "It was generally held by the English in India that Major Broadfoot's appointment greatly increased the probabilities of a war with the Sikhs; and the impression was equally strong, that had Mr. Clerk, for instance, remained as agent, there would have been no war. That Major Broadfoot was regarded as hostile to the Sikhs, may perhaps almost be gathered from his own letters. On the 19th March, 1845, he wrote that the governor of Mooltan had asked what course he, the governor, should pursue, if the Lahore troops marched against him, to enforce obedience to demands made. The question does not seem one which a recusant servant would put under ordinary circumstances to the preserver of friendship between his master and the English. Major Broadfoot, however, would appear to have recurred to the virtual overtures of Deewan Mool Raj, for on the 20th November, 1845, when he wrote to all authorities in any way connected with the Punjab, that the British Provinces were threatened with

## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

invasion, he told Sir Charles Napier, the complete soldier, armed at all points, that the governor of Mooltan would defend *Sindh* with his provincials against the Sikhs!—thus leading to the belief that he had succeeded in detaching the governor from his allegiance to Lahore.” (p. 297, footnote.)

(xii) *The Traitors at work*—“Several accounts agree,” says George Campbell, “that in the period immediately preceding the war when matters were becoming very serious and army had for the most part taken affairs into their own hands, they maintained for a while wonderful order at Lahore and through their *punches* exercised an almost puritanical discipline in the military republic. . . . The immediate collision was, however, I think hastened by imprudence on the part of the British Frontier Agent Major Broadfoot. I knew of some things done by him which it would be difficult to defend. But he paid the penalty by his death in the actions which followed.”<sup>15</sup>

A democratic revolution had come about in the Sikh army after the death of Sardar Jawahar Singh. Of this the new opportunist leaders of the Lahore Government, Tej Singh and Lal Singh, were very much afraid. Referring to this Sir Henry Hardinge wrote to the home authorities on September 30, 1845:

“Their personal interests endangered by the democratic revolution so successfully accomplished by the Sikh army may induce those chiefs to exert all their efforts to compel the British Government to interfere.”

“While they [the army] declared that they desired peace, there was a strong party clamorous for war.”

“The Chiefs Lal Singh and Tej Singh urged them on to war.”<sup>16</sup>

They were evidently doing this at the bidding of the British politicals. Both of them, had been won over by the British; they were at this time in correspondence with Major Broadfoot and his Assistant, Captain Nicholson, and were

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15. *Memoirs*, 72-3.

16. *Burton*, 12, 8, 10.

## BRITISH PROVOCATIONS

acting as their spies and agents provocateur at Lahore. It was in keeping with their assurances to the British that they were egging the army on to war.

The Queen-mother Maharani Jind Kaur was not in favour of war but "the advice of the Ranee and many of the Sardars was disregarded," says Dr. M'Gregor.<sup>17</sup> "The Sikh Sardars disapproved and objected," says General McLeod Innes in his *Sir Henry Lawrence*, "but they were patriotic and joined the Khalsa."

As there was all peace on the Lahore side and the Sikhs were not making any hostile movements against the British, Reynell Taylor wrote in the middle of September, 1845, that "there is no apparent likelihood of war;" and on September 19: "Everything looks peaceable."<sup>18</sup>

The Sikh army was, however, getting alert at this time. They were unsuspectingly taken in by the instigations of Lal Singh and Tej Singh. "They declared, however," wrote Major Broadfoot to the Secretary to the Government of India on September 26, "that they desired peace, but if the troops marched from our [British] stations to Ludhiana and Ferozepore they would march too; if not, that each power should keep its own territory in peace."<sup>19</sup>

But the British had by this time completed their preparations. The month of November, 1845, fixed for military operations by Lord Ellenborough and confirmed by Sir Henry Hardinge was coming to a close. The Governor-General was "prepared for anything;" and the British army of over 40,500 men assembled on and near the Panjab frontier "was equal to any operation." Raja Gulab Singh had fulfilled his promise "to divide the Lahore Government, the army and the people." The Sikhs had been sufficiently provoked and irritated. The Commander-in-Chief of India, Sir Hugh Gough, was already near the frontier with his headquarters at

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17. *History of the Sikhs*, ii. 39.

18. E. G. Parry, *Reynell Taylor*, 48.

19. Burton, *The First and Second Sikh Wars*, 13.

## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

Ambala. There was nothing more to be done than to give the Sikhs the final provocation by marching British troops to Ludhiana and Ferozepore so that they might as well march and cross the Sutlej to protect their territories south of that river.

### WITH THE KNOWLEDGE OF BROADFOOT

“Had the shrewd committees of the [Sikh] armies observed no military preparation on the part of the English,” says Cunningham, “they would not have heeded the insidious exhortations of such mercenary men as Lal Singh and Tej Singh,” who goaded them to move to the Sutlej evidently with the knowledge, if not under the instructions, of Major Broadfoot.<sup>20</sup> This view receives considerable strength from the letter of Captain Peter Nicholson, the Political Assistant at Ferozpoore, addressed to his chief Major Broadfoot on November 23, 1845:

“Knowing that the [Lahore] Durbar and our government were in friendly relation—at least, that I had never been told the contrary—and in spite of that relation finding the head of the Durbar [Prime Minister Lal Singh] consenting to a hostile march against its allies and those [Tej Singh and Gulab Singh] supposed to be friendly to us the most active in bringing that march about, *the doubt did occur to one* (not knowing anything of any cause of difference between the governments) *whether the Durbar might not be consenting to the march of the army against us with your knowledge....*”

### HARDINGE ORDERS THE MOVEMENT OF TROOPS

A close and critical study of the dates of the movements of British and Sikh troops from the middle of November to that of December, 1845, would reveal that the Sikhs decided to move their troops only when they learned that the Governor-General and the Commander-in-Chief were moving up to their frontier to direct the operations of war and when orders had been issued by the Governor-General “that the force should be held in readiness to move” at the shortest notice. The actual movement of British troops also took place a week be-

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20. *History of the Sikhs*, 300; *BRC.*, 872.



## MOVEMENT OF BRITISH TROOPS

fore the Sikhs crossed the Sutlej, and that too into their own territory and not into the British. As such, the Sikhs could neither be said to have violated the British frontier and to have invaded the British territory, nor to have broken any treaty or rules of friendship. Charles Macfarlane tells us in his *History of British India*, p. 592:

“Sir Henry Hardinge ... has explained his reasons for not ordering the Umballa force to take the field sooner than it did; he, however, had ordered, so early as the 20th November, that the force should be held in readiness to move, and it actually did march on the 11th of December, before the Sikh army had commenced crossing the Sutledge, which it did about six or seven miles from Ferozpur on the 12th December, but the passage of the artillery was not completed till the 16th December.”

In his despatch to the Secret Committee dated 31 December, 1845, the Governor-General Sir Henry Hardinge writes:

“The army had, however, been ordered to be in readiness to move at the shortest notice; and, on the 7th and 8th December, when I heard from Lahore that preparations were making at a large scale for artillery, stores and all the munitions of war, I wrote to the Commander-in-Chief, directing His Excellency, on the 11th to move up the force from Umballa, from Meerut and some other stations in the rear.

“Up to this time no infantry and artillery had been reported to have left Lahore, nor had a single Sikh soldier crossed the Sutledge. Nevertheless I considered it no longer to delay the forward movement of our troops....

“Up to the morning of the 12th, the information from Lahore had not materially varied but by the reports received on that day, the general aspect of affairs appeared more warlike. Still no Sikh aggression had been committed, and no artillery had moved down to the river.

“On the 13th I first received precise information that the Sikh army had crossed the Sutledge, and was concentrating in great force on the left bank of the river.

“The Umballa force at that time had been in movement three days. On this date I issued proclamation, a copy of which is enclosed.”

According to Robert Cust, who had accompanied the British force from Ambala, it had left that station on December 6 and had been in movement for a week when His Lordship issued the proclamation.

## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

Here one may pause to compare the patience and forbearance of the two Governments. Lord Ellenborough had been assembling a force on the Panjab frontier and collecting guns and other munitions of war at Ferozepore (within five miles of the Sikh territory) and other places for over two years, while plans for military invasion and occupation of the Panjab had been prepared in 1841 and were being discussed since his arrival in India. His successor Sir Henry Hardinge had gradually, during the past sixteen months, increased the military strength here from 17,612 to 40,523 men and from 66 guns to 94, with considerable additions to some of the near stations. The Sikhs patiently saw and bore all this, and made no active preparations or movements against the British beyond diplomatic protests. The British, on the other hand, could not tolerate even a fortnight of half-hearted preparations at Lahore, with *their own men* at the helm of affairs there. Not a single soldier had crossed the Sutlej up to December 11, 1845. Yet the Governor-General, on the advice of his too-prone-to-war Political Agent Major Broadfoot, who was eager to give the final provocation in response to the Sikh declaration, directed the Commander-in-Chief on the 6th to move up the force from Ambala, Meerut, etc., towards Ludhiana and Ferozepore. The Sikhs had declared that "they desired peace but if troops marched from our [British] stations to Ludhiana and Ferozepore, they would march too." Broadfoot would not lose any opportunity to bring things to a head. And Sir Henry Hardinge implicitly accepted the advice of his Political Agent and adviser in ordering the movement of British troops.<sup>21</sup> This was a severe challenge to the Sikhs' forbearance and national pride. Yet they kept calm and showed a wonderful spirit of self-control in face of grave provocation. They came, they crossed the river but they stayed in their own territory, without indulging in any aggressive or warlike activity.

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21. "In regard to the war...if it could at all be imputed to him that the war was unnecessarily hastened, it could only be said that he perhaps too implicitly accepted the assertions of his official representative and adviser on the frontier." (Campbell, *Memoirs*, 70.)

**HARDINGE'S PROCLAMATION**

Immediately on hearing that the Sikhs had crossed the river, but regardless of the fact that they were encamped in their own territory and had committed no act of aggression, the Governor-General issued his historic proclamation of December 13, 1845, declaring war on the Sikhs and confiscating and annexing to the British territories the coveted possessions of Maharaja Duleep Singh on the left bank of the Sutlej. The text of the proclamation is given in Appendix B, No. III, pp. 472-74, (*'Private correspondence relating to the Anglo-Sikh wars'*). In it the Governor-General makes the following assertion:

1. 'The British Government has ever been on terms of friendship with that of the Punjab.'
2. The conditions of the treaty of 1809 'have always been faithfully observed by the British Government.'
3. 'Friendly relations have been maintained with the successors of Maharaja Runjeet Singh by the British Government up to the present time.'
4. The British took 'precautionary measures for the protection of the British frontier,' their nature and cause having been fully explained to the Lahore Durbar.
5. 'Many most unfriendly proceedings on the part of the Durbar.'
6. 'Utmost forbearance' shown by the Governor-General.
7. Governor-General desired to see a strong Sikh Government in the Panjab.
8. The Sikh army marched from Lahore by the orders of the Durbar for the purpose of invading the British territory.
9. No reply was given to the British demand for explanation.
10. 'The Sikh army has now, without a shadow of provocation, invaded the British territories.'

**OBSERVATIONS ON THE PROCLAMATION**

In the light of unimpeachable contemporary evidence, it is difficult to endorse the statements and assertions of Sir Henry

## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

Hardinge that British Government had 'ever been on terms of friendship with the Panjab,' or that the conditions of the treaty of 1809 had 'always been faithfully observed by the British Government,' or that friendly relations had been maintained by them with the successors of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. British friendship had all along been a matter of political expediency. The British were friends as long as it suited them, but no sooner did their interests clash with those of their friends than they threw away all old friendly commitments to the winds and acted in a manner calculated to best serve their selfish ends, no matter how contrary it was to their moral and political obligations. Fearing a Franco-Russian invasion they sought the friendship of Ranjit Singh, but when their military and political experts held that the Sutlej was a better frontier than the Jamuna, they came up with a strong military force in 1809 to put a stop to his expansion and consolidation to the south of that river. They maintained a show of friendship while they were busy in other parts of India, but as soon as they were free they not only connived at but also actually encouraged British subjects to create and continue disturbances in the north-western districts of Ranjit Singh's Panjab. British interference in Sindh, Shikarpur and Ferozepur affairs was not at all a friendly gesture. Their offer to become the means of negotiations regarding Peshawar after the battle of Jamrud in 1837 was a hostile diplomatic move to make friends with the Afghan enemies of the Panjab. Sir Henry Fane's collection of information from a military commander's point of view, when he was invited to the Panjab by Maharaja Ranjit Singh on the occasion of his grandson's marriage, and forming an estimate of the force required for 'the complete subjugation of the Panjab' was a flagrant abuse of the hospitality of the unsuspecting Maharaja, and could not by any stretch of imagination be called an act of friendship.

It cannot be denied by any honest student of history, that after the death of the Maharaja, the British dream of conquering the Panjab had acquired clearer and more definite lineaments and that they had set in train an elaborate political

## HARDINGE'S PROCLAMATION

and diplomatic conspiracy for its realization. Memoranda and plans were drawn up; the country was surrounded on the south-west and north-west; armies were assembled on the Panjab frontier; guns, stores and other munitions were collected; officers of the Lahore Government were seduced and won over and spies and traitors were set to work to create conditions favourable to a successful occupation of the country; and yet Sir Henry Hardinge had the audacity to proclaim that he desired to see a strong Sikh Government in the Panjab and that utmost forbearance had been shown to the Sikhs.

The British demand for explanation from the Lahore Durbar for their military preparations at their capital was only a diplomatic move designed to counteract the charges levelled against them by the Lahore Government in respect of warlike preparations on the Panjab frontier, the assemblage of British troops and Broadfoot's unfriendly proceedings against them. It was only an apparent fulfilment of a diplomatic legality before breaking formal relations and starting the war. Otherwise, the Lahore Vakil, Rai Kishan Chand, had written to his Government for a reply and was waiting for it. But Broadfoot was in a hurry. Everything now being ready, he could not see the British declaration of war delayed. He gave the Sikh Vakil a few hours' notice and asked him, at the same time, to leave his camp. With the means of communication available in those days it was physically impossible for the reply to come within the prescribed time. Broadfoot could not have been ignorant of it. Evidently, he wished to break political relations with Lahore and used the failure of the Sikh reply as an excuse for it.

In face of the Governor-General's own repeated admission that no aggression was committed by the Sikhs up to December 12, 1845, a day before the issue of the proclamation, the talk of 'many most unfriendly proceedings on the part of the Durbar' or 'of precautionary measures for the protection of the British frontier' was meaningless and nothing more than a camouflage for their own schemes. That the Sikh

## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

army marched from Lahore to invade the British territory and that the 'Sikh army has now, without a shadow of provocation, invaded the British territories' were false allegations belied by facts.

The above observations are based on reliable contemporary evidence of the most competent authorities—men on the spot and directly connected with these affairs, the integrity and the veracity of whose statements have never been called in question. Robert N. Cust was the personal assistant of George Broadfoot in the Political Agency and was with him up to the last moment of lowering him into the grave on the battlefield of Ferozshah. His *Linguistic and Oriental Essays*, published in a series of volumes, contain a number of chapters and sections on the *History of the Conquest of the Panjab*, with particular reference to the first Anglo-Sikh war, of which he was an active eye-witness. Major G. Carmichael Smyth was an officer employed in the North-Western Agency and was a personal friend and admirer of Major Broadfoot to whose memory he has dedicated his book *A History of the Reigning Family of Lahore*, 1847. Mr. (later on Sir) George Campbell, a scholar and political observer of outstanding merit, was a civilian officer employed in the Cis-Sutlej territory in charge of the district of Kaithal. He spent a considerable portion of his official life in this area. His *Memoirs of My Indian Career* is a very valuable original source of historical material on Cis-Sutlej territories.

The mature opinions and observations of these British officers on the first Anglo-Sikh War, based on personal knowledge, have the weight of unchallengeable authority.

### WHO PROVOKED, AND WHO BROKE THE TREATY? — WHO WAS THE AGGRESSIVE INVADER?

G. Carmichael Smyth says:

"Regarding the Punjab war; I am neither of the opinion that the Seiks made an *unprovoked attack*, nor that we have acted towards them with *great forbearance*; ....if the Seiks were to be considered entirely an independent State in no way answerable to us, we should not have provoked them!—for to assert that the bridge of boats brought

## PROVOCATIONS BY BRITISH

from Bombay, was not a *causa belli*, but merely a defensive measure, is absurd; besides the Seiks had translations of Sir Charles Napier's speech (as it appeared in the *Delhi Gazette*,) stating that we were going to war with them; and as all European powers would have done under the circumstances, the Seiks thought it as well to be first in the field. Moreover they were not encamped in our territory, but their own.

"... and I only ask, had we not departed from the rules of friendship first? The year before the war broke out, we kept the island between Ferozepore and the Punjab, though it belonged to the Sikhs, owing to the deep water being between us and the island.

"... But if on the other hand the treaty of 1809 is said to have been binding between the two Governments, then the simple question is, who first departed from the rules of friendship? I am decidedly of the opinion that we did." (*Reigning Family of Lahore, XXI-XXIII.*)

Sir Henry Hardinge was himself not convinced of the justification of the war against the Sikhs up to December 18, 1845, the day of the battle of Mudki, five days after the issue of his proclamation. Robert N. Cust writes in his Journal:

"December 18th—...I rode behind the Governor General and we sat under a tree to await the infantry. The Governor General remarked: "Will the people of England consider this an actual invasion of our frontier and a justification of war?" (*Part V, 46-7.*)

Referring to a manuscript copy of his *A Chapter in the History of the Conquest of the Panjab*, he says:

"The transcript gives an account of the first *British invasion of the independent kingdom of the Panjab*, and the capture of Lahore. I had accompanied the army from Ambala, December 6, 1845, to the River Satlaj." (*Series V, 1041.*)

Looking at the dead body of his chief Major George Broadfoot before it was buried, Cust said:

"There lay he, the prime mover, by many considered the cause, of this war now commencing." (*Part V, 49.*)

Again, when he mentions the crossing of the Sutlej by the British army, he says:

"Tuesday, February 10th—The Governor General returned to Ferozepur to superintend the completion of the Bridge across the Satlaj, and the Reserve Force at Attari was ordered to cross that very night to the opposite bank, which action meant the 'Invasion of the Panjab.'"

According to George Campbell in his *Memoirs*:

## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

"The immediate collision was, however, I think hastened by imprudence on the part of British Frontier Agent, Major Broadfoot, I knew of some things done by him which it would be difficult to defend." (i. 73.)

"It is recorded in the annals of history, or what is called history, which will go down to posterity, that the Sikh army invaded British territory in pursuance of a determination to attack us. And most people will be very much surprised to hear that they did nothing of the kind. They made no attack on our outlying cantonments, nor set foot in our territory. What they did do was to cross the river and to entrench themselves in their own territory" (p. 78.)

### THE WAR, 1845-46

It is not proposed to give here details of the military operations of any of the battles. They are available in a large number of books on the subject, especially in *The War in India—The Despatches of Viscount Hardinge, Lord Gough and Harry Smith, 1846*; Gough and Innes' *The Sikhs and the Sikh Wars, 1897*; and Burton's *The First and Second Sikh Wars* (compiled for the General Staff, India), 1911. Here we will confine ourselves to political aspects and to secret methods employed by the British Indian Government to secure success in the war and to take possession of the Panjab.

### FEROZEPURE NOT ATTACKED BY TRAITORS

Immediately after the Sikh army had crossed the river Sutlej and were entrenching themselves in their own territory for defence against the advancing army of the British, the traitor Vizir Lal Singh, who had been for some time carrying on treasonable correspondence with the British Political Agent, wrote to Captain Peter Nicholson, the Assistant Agent at Ferozepur :

"I have crossed with the Sikh army. You know my friendship for the British. Tell me what to do."

Nicholson answered:

"Do not attack Ferozepore. Halt as many days as you can, and then march towards the Governor General."

Lal Singh did so and Ferozepore was saved. "Had he attacked, our garrison of 8000 men would have been destroyed and the victorious 60,000 would have fallen on Sir Henry



## FEROZEPURE NOT ATTACKED

Hardinge, who had then but 8,000. So utterly unprepared were we, that even this treachery of one of our enemies scarcely sufficed to save us." [Ludlow, *Br. India*, ii. 142.]

This has been substantially confirmed by Col. Mouton of the Sikh service in his *Rapport Sur Les Derniers Evènements du Panjab, Paris, 1846*, in which he says:

"Raja Lal Singh rushed up and robbed the ardour of Sikes a great deal by assuring them of the defection of 4 Indian battalions in the English army which would surely join them. Meanwhile he hastened to send an urgent message to Captain Nicholson, 'Charge d' affaires' at Ferozepour, telling him that it was without the order of his government that the army had crossed the river, and that the generals had been dragged against their wishes; that sixty thousand men were going to march on Ferozepour, which had not even six thousand to defend itself and ended by requesting the captain to advise him in the matter. Nicholson replied suggesting to Raja Lal Singh to detach from the army a corps of twenty five thousand men which he should bring to meet the Commander-in-Chief, who was arriving by the route of Ambala, and that probably these twenty five thousand men would be defeated—the rest of the army crossing the river in disorder."

"This treason saved the English from a sure defeat."<sup>22</sup>

To cover up his traitorous plan, Lal Singh made an excuse 'that he wanted to fight the commander-in-chief and considered any one else below his notice.'

"Had the Sikh leaders been as resolutely bent on the defeat and extermination of their opponents as the faithful Khalsa were, it may well be doubted," says Murray, "if all the heroism of this isolated division of the British army would have saved it from destruction." (*History of British India*, 700-01.)

### MUDKI—December 18, 1845

Acting on the advice of Captain Nicholson, Lal Singh waited for the British Commander-in-Chief Sir Hugh Gough to come up with his main army and then advanced with his full force to meet him with the sinister object that, as planned, 'the British might have a full and fair opportunity of destroy-

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22. Translated from French, p. 5.

## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

ing them.’<sup>23</sup> ‘Lal Singh headed the attack, but, in accordance with his original design, he involved them [his men] in an engagement and then left them to fight as their undirected valour might prompt.’<sup>24</sup> Deserted by their commander, the Sikh force was repulsed. “The first engagement at Mudki was won by the British,” says Pearson, “because Lal Singh, according to plan, took no interest in the battle after issuing the order to attack.”<sup>25</sup>

### *FIROZSHAHR—December 21, 1845*

At Firozshahr again Lal Singh commanded the Sikh force, assisted by Tej Singh. Evidently under the impression that with their *own men* on the other side, the British army would have an easy walk over, Sir Hugh Gough opened an attack on the Sikhs on the evening of December 21, 1845, just an hour before sunset. But the Sikhs stood manfully to their guns and poured so deadly a fire into the advancing division of Sir John Litler that they not only checked its progress but also sent the attackers reeling back with heavy loss. Great was the havoc and confusion caused in the British army, with the descending darkness of night, when Sir Harry Smith’s right was driven back by the Sikhs.

The stiff resistance offered by the Sikhs and the heavy loss suffered by the British were far beyond the calculations of Sir Henry Hardinge, and the English spent a very anxious night on the battlefield of Firozshahr. Despair hung over their camp. Some suggested a retreat on Ferozepur, while other counselled an unconditional surrender. In fact Captain Lumley, the officiating Adjutant General, issued a direct

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23. M’Gregor, ii. 81.

24. Cunningham, 306.

25. *Hero of Delhi*, 79.

“It was sufficiently certain and notorious at the time that Lal Singh was in communication with Capt. Nicholson, the British Agent at Ferozepore, but owing to the untimely death of that officer, the details of the overtures made and expectations held out cannot now be satisfactorily known.” (Cunningham, 304.)

## BATTLE OF FIROZSHAHR

order to Sir Harry Smith 'to collect every soldier and march direct to Ferozepore.'

But for the treachery of Lal Singh at night, and of Tej Singh the next morning, it was all up with the British, and, according to Robert Cust's following entry of December 22, 1845, in his journal, they were concerting measures to make an unconditional surrender to the Sikhs.

"December 22nd. News came from the Governor General that our attack of yesterday had failed, that affairs were desperate, that all state papers were to be destroyed, and that if the morning attack failed, all would be over; this was kept secret by Mr. Currie and we were concerting measures to make an unconditional surrender to save the wounded, the part of the news that grieved me the most." (*Linguistic and Oriental Essays*, VI, 48.)

This was, perhaps, for the first time in the history of their rule in India that the British thought of thus surrendering unconditionally to their enemies in the field of action. In spite of the great courage and coolness shown by the Governor-General and the Commander-in-chief on the battlefield of Ferozshahr, the position of the British was desperate, and Sir Henry himself feared a disaster on the following morning and was prepared for the worst. According to *The Career of Major Broadfoot* :

"In case of disaster, which was far from impossible, the Governor General sent orders to Mudki, where Mr. Currie was in charge of official papers of the Government of India, and Mr. Cust of the records of the Agency, for the destruction of all State papers. Sir Henry's son, Charles, who was his private secretary, being a civilian, was ordered off the field." (p. 395.)

General Sir Hope Grant says:

"Sir Henry Hardinge thought it was all up and gave his sword—a present from the Duke of Wellington and which once belonged to Napoleon—and his Star of the Bath to his son, with directions to proceed to Ferozepore remarking that 'if the day were lost, he must fall.'" (*Life*, ed. H. Knollys, p. 72.)

("Even in England the first news of actual victory," says Trotter, "was received by some of our leading statesmen with more of consternation than rejoicing. Peel himself was among the croakers at a council meeting in which the old Duke of

Wellington had been taking a somewhat listless part. At Peel's reference to our Pyrrhic victory and the perils which beset our Indian Empire, the old warrior flashed out: 'Make it a Victory; fire a salute, and ring the bells. Gough has lost a good many men; but what of that? You must lose officers and men if you have to fight a great battle. At Assaye I lost a third of my force.'") (*John Nicholson*, 55.)

"Had they [the Sikhs] advanced during the night," says William Edwards, "the result must have been very disastrous to us, as our European regiments were much reduced in number, and our ammunition, both for artillery and small arms, almost expended."<sup>26</sup>

"Perhaps neither the incapacity nor the treason of Lal Singh and Tej Singh," Cunningham truly observed, "were fully perceived or credited by the English chiefs, and hence the anxiety of the one on whom the maintenance of British dominion intact depended." (309 f.n.)

True to his arrangements with Captain Peter Nicholson, Lal Singh quietly disappeared from the field of action with most of his men and guns during the night when victory was within his grasp. Early in the morning of 22nd the remnants of his force were easily put to flight. Tej Singh then had a fresh reserve force under his command. With the approach of this second wing of the Sikh army, the wearied and famished English saw before them a desperate and a useless struggle. The zealous Sikh soldiers had urged upon Tej Singh to fall upon the English at day-break. But the traitor would not risk a victory for his troops, and being fully apprised that the British army was at his mercy, he fled away to oblige the friends he was in league with. Thus was the battle of Firozshahr finally lost by the Sikhs, and the British heaved a sigh of relief.

Soon after the battle, Tej Singh went to the British camp and had an interview with the Governor-General. No record is available of the secret talks between the two chiefs. Sir

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26. *Remin. of a Beng. Civ.*, 97.

## XMAS PROCLAMATION

Henry Hardinge is said to have refused to enter into any negotiation until the British troops occupied the capital of the Sikh kingdom. This Tej Singh apparently promised to bring about.<sup>27</sup>

### PROCLAMATION OF THE XMAS DAY, 1845

To outdo his officers, Broadfoot and Nicholson, who had bought over traitorous courtiers like Lal Singh and Tej Singh, the Governor General, with a view to inducing wholesale defections and enticing away the Poorbias from the Sikh army, issued the following proclamation on December 25, 1845, the Christmas day, offering to deserters assurance of present reward and future pension and, above all, an *immediate decision of any law suits in which they might be involved in British provinces.*

### PROCLAMATION IN HINDUSTANI

“Whereas the English Government is anxious to reward the bravery and fidelity of the Poorbeas, by raising a Regiment of them—it is hereby proclaimed, that any non-commissioned officer or soldier of the Lahore Government who shall present himself before His Excellency the Governor General, shall be immediately rewarded with the accustomed liberality, and shall have the benefit of invalid pension; and, if engaged in a law suit in a British Court of Justice, his case shall be immediately decided before any other. In fact, every opportunity of favour and cherishment shall at all times be kept in sight by the Government. However, it is reported that Tej Singh has given out, that if any sepoy of the Lahore army go over for service to the English Government, the officers of this Government will cut off their noses and ears and kill them. This is altogether an infamous falsehood—for the customs of this Government were never of such a description, and never will be—therefore let such a falsehood not enter their head; but let them feel assured that if they come here they will be well rewarded.”

(A True Translation)

H. MARSH, Bt. Captain,  
*Interpreter and Quarter Master, 3rd Cavalry.*

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27. *His. of Panj.* (Allen & Co.), ii. 344.

*BADDOWAL—January 21, 1846*

There was now a lull for full one month. Evidently the traitors had conspired with the British to give the latter time for further preparations. Sir Hugh Gough was not then in a 'position to assume the offensive until reinforced with fresh troops, guns, and ammunition. Practically all ammunition had been expended, and the troops were exhausted.' Tej Singh and Lal Singh knew it, but they would not do anything to worry the British in their difficult situation. At this time Sardar Ranjodh Singh Majithia,<sup>28</sup> loyal to the Sikh Standard, crossed the Sutlej and, with the help of Sardar Ajit Singh of Ladwa, burnt a portion of the cantonment of Ludhiana. While Sir Harry Smith was proceeding to relieve Ludhiana, he was surprised and worsted by the Sardars at Baddowal with a heavy loss of life, baggage and hospital stores which fell into the hands of the Sikhs. The situation was, however, saved, to some extent, by the timely assistance of Brigadier Cureton.

*ALIWAL—January 28, 1846*

Sir Harry Smith was, eventually, able to retrieve his position and regain his reputation when, a week later, on January 28, he is said to have inflicted a 'crushing defeat' upon Sardar Ranjodh Singh. The fact is that no battle worth the name was fought at Aliwal. It was only a small scrimmage. But some thing was required to be done for Harry Smith to cover his loss of reputation at Baddowal. An old companion of Sir Henry Hardinge, he was a veteran of the Peninsular War and had taken part in the battle of Waterloo. Fullest scope was, therefore, allowed to the fertile imagination of the author of the official despatch to magnify and enlarge this insignificant scrimmage into a great battle.

According to Dr. Andrew Adams:

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28. "Ranjodh Singh was, if anything, superior to the other leaders of the Sikh army, if leaders they can be called... but he was no traitor. He had no confidential agents in the British camp as Raja Lal Singh had, nor did he, like the Raja, pray for and labour for the triumph of the English."—*Panjab Chiefs*, (1865), 88.

## ALIWAL AND SOBRAON

"Much has been said of Aliwal, but candid witnesses give a far different account from that written at the time.

"I wandered over the field with one who had been present at the engagement; he assured me, and his testimony has been corroborated by many others, that a fruitful imagination was at work when the official account was drawn up. His words were:—

"'Aliwal was the *battle of the despatch*, for none of us knew we had fought a battle until the particulars appeared in a document, which did *more* than justice to every one concerned.'

"But the public gulped it down, and, like many of our Indian battles and Indian blunders, the final issue of the struggle disarmed criticism.

"As an Irishman would say, 'We gained a disadvantage at Budiwal,' by the baggage of the army falling into the hands of the enemy; *that* no exaggeration could well turn into a victory; but shortly afterwards, a few shots, and the charge of a squadron or two in pursuit of a host of retreating Sikhs, were magnified into a grand combat, and thus the plain of Aliwal has been recorded as the scene of one of India's Marathons." (*Wanderings of a Naturalist in India*, 60-1.)

### SOBRAON—February 10, 1846

Sobraon was the last battle of the first Anglo-Sikh war. Treasonable treachery of their Dogra and Poorbia agents was made full use of by the British in securing success not only in the field of battle but also in taking possession of the capital of the Panjab. Lal Singh had played a leading part in the battles of Mudki and Firozshahr. It was now the turn of Tej Singh and Gulab Singh.

During the cessation of hostilities, the clever opportunist Gulab Singh appeared on the scene, ostensibly on behalf of the Lahore Darbar, and entered into negotiations with the British. Sir Henry Hardinge welcomed these. He knew he could not immediately annex the Panjab to British dominions. According to Cunningham:

"The English, therefore, intimated to Golab Singh their readiness to acknowledge a Sikh sovereignty at Lahore after the army should have been disbanded; but the Raja declared his inability to deal with the troops...the speedy dictation of a treaty under the walls of Lahore was essential to the British reputation; and the views of the either party were in some sort met by an understanding that the Sikh army should be attacked by the English, and that when beaten it should be openly abandoned by its own government; and further that

## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

the passage of the Sutlej should be unopposed and the road to the capital laid open to the victors. Under such circumstances of discreet policy and shameless treason was the battle of Sobraon fought." (p. 321.)<sup>29</sup>

"The conditional terms of a negotiation thus mutually agreed upon by belligerent leaders, preparatory to once more appealing to the arbitration of battle, are probably unparalleled in the history of ancient or modern warfare. They suffice, however, to show the singular footing on which our vast Eastern empire rests." (Murray, *History of British India*, 713.)

These treasonable negotiations and secret understanding with the British took place in the first week of February, 1846, when the Governor-General was encamped at Ferozepore waiting for the arrival of his heavy guns. They began pouring in on the 7th February. The same day, says William Edwards, "emissaries from Rajah Lal Singh arrived [in British camp] and gave us valuable information respecting the enemy's position."<sup>30</sup> This, for all practical purposes, meant handing over to the enemy the Sikh plan of war. Could treachery go further? And how could the Sikhs hope for any success in war with such traitors as their commanders?

Not only this. Gulab Singh went a step further than Tej Singh and Lal Singh. He would not send rations and supplies to the army. Living upon parched gram and raw carrots for three days, the soldiers sent a deputation to Lahore to wait upon the Queen-mother. In answer to complaints of great hardship to which the army was then exposed, she said that Gulab Singh had forwarded vast supplies. "No, he has not," roared the deputation; "we know the old fox; he has not sent breakfast for a bird (*chiria ki haziri*)." At last the deputation said, "Give us powder and shot." At this the Rani flung a woman's garment at them and shouted: "Wear that, you cowards! I will go in trousers and fight myself." After a moment's pause, during which the deputation stood stunned, a unanimous shout arose, "Dalip Singh Maharaja, we will go and die for his kingdom and the Khalsaji!" The deputation dispersed and

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29. cf. Adams, *Epi. of Ang. Ind. Hist.*, 208.

30. *Rem. of a Bengal Civn.*, 99.



## BATTLE OF SOBRAON

returned to Sobraon to rejoin the army. "The courage and intuition displayed by this extraordinary woman under such critical circumstances," says Colonel Alexander Gardner of the Sikh service, popularly known as *Gardauna Sahib*, "filled us all with as much amazement as admiration." (*Memoirs*, 272-73.)

Gulab Singh "persuaded the Durbar," says William Edwards, "to allow him to garrison the fortress at Lahore with these [his] men, while the Sikhs then occupying it were ordered to proceed to join their brethren on the Sutlej.... Gulab Singh urged the army not to attempt attacking the British until he joined them, and this he evaded on one pretext or another, knowing full well that in due time the British would attack and capture the position at Sobraon."<sup>31</sup>

February 10, 1846, was the day fixed by the British for the battle of Sobraon. Tej Singh and Lal Singh knew it. It was, perhaps, done with their consultation. At this time Sardar Sham Singh Atariwala had joined the Sikh camp with a desperate determination to win or die. Tej Singh felt nervous lest Sham Singh's patriotism and bravery should upset their treacherous plans. He counselled him to fly with him on the first attack of the British the following morning. Sham Singh refused with scorn, on which, as Griffin tells us, Tej Singh angrily said, "If you are so brave, you had better take your oath about it, for I know and believe you will come with me after all." Sardar Sham Singh called for a *Granth* (the Sikh Bible) and solemnly swore that should the Sikhs be defeated he would never leave the trenches alive.<sup>32</sup> And he faithfully stood by his oath.

Early next morning the British took the offensive. When the fighting was at its thickest and three successive British attacks had been repulsed, Tej Singh and Lal Singh, in fulfilment of their understanding with the British, fled from the field deserting their troops to be destroyed by the enemy.

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31. *Reminiscences*, 104.

32. *Panjab Chiefs* (1865), 63-64.

Assailed on all sides and deserted by the commander-in-chief, with no hope of reinforcements, the grey old warrior Sham Singh, clad in white and riding a white mare, called upon his few devoted followers to rush to the front to stem the tide of the advancing Farangis. Fighting valiantly at the head of his men, he met with a hero's death—a true martyr to his country's independence. His body riddled with seven bullets lay covered by a thick heap of his dead and dying countrymen. Thus saw the battlefield of Sobraon the basest treachery of the opportunists on the one hand and the shining heroism of noble patriots on the other.<sup>33</sup>

Soon after Tej Singh had found his way down to and across the bridge on the Sutlej, followed by fifteen or twenty horsemen in waiting upon him, "he ordered up eight or ten guns and had them pointed on the bridge as if ready to beat it to pieces or to oppose the passage of the defeated army."<sup>34</sup> The bridge was then, 'by previous consent' with the enemy, broken down by Lal Singh and Tej Singh, to effect, as far as possible, the annihilation of the Sikh army.<sup>35</sup>

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33. "Tij Sinh, it is true, filled up the measure of his treachery by taking to flight, and... sinking a boat in the middle of the bridge of communication.

"Then the venerable Sham Sinh prepared to fulfil his vow. Clothing himself in white garments of martyrdom, and encouraging all around him to fight for the guru, he animated the defence with a new impulse until he fell at last, on a heap of his dead and dying countrymen." (Adams, *Ep. of Ang. Ind. Hist.*, 211.)

34. Smyth, *Reigning Family*, 183-84.

35. "The Sikhs made a gallant and desperate resistanse but were driven towards the river and their bridge of boats which, as soon as the action had become general, their leaders Rajah Lall Singh and Tej Singh, had, by previous consent, broken down, taking the precaution first to retire across it themselves their object being to effect, as soon as possible, annihilation of the feared and detested army." (Edwards, *Rem. of Beng. Civn.*, 100.)

"The Sikh troops, basely betrayed by their leaders, who had come—so it was said, and not without some appearance of truth—to a secret understanding with us, fought like heroes." (Smith, *Life of Lord Lawrence*, i. 188.)

## BRITISH OCCUPY LAHORE

"A British defeat," says Hesketh Pearson, "was again turned into a victory by the convenient flight of Tej Singh who damaged the bridge of boats over the Sutlej on his way and so helped to drown a large number of his countrymen."<sup>36</sup>

### THE BRITISH OCCUPY LAHORE

The same night, February 10-11, 1846, the reserve British force at Atari near Ferozepore was ordered to cross the Sutlej to the opposite bank, which action, according to Robert Cust, meant the "Invasion of the Panjab." In fact the Panjab had been invaded by the British on December 13, 1845, when the Governor-General declared war on the Sikhs and proclaimed the confiscation of the territories of Maharaja Duleep Singh to the south of the Sutlej. The Sikhs, as we knew, had up to that time committed no act of aggression against the British and were encamped in their own territories, watching the assemblage of British troops on their frontier and preparing to meet the obvious danger of the British invasion of the Panjab.

According to the secret understanding with the Governor-General, no opposition was offered to the British troops marching upon the Sikh capital. On February 20, the British army arrived at Lahore, and two days later a portion of the royal citadel was garrisoned by English regiments.

### TREATY OF LAHORE, March 9, 1846

On the 9th of March was signed the treaty of Lahore imposed by the British upon the young Maharaja Duleep Singh, aged seven years and a half. The text of the treaty is given in Appendix B, No. V, pp. 475-80. By this treaty

1. (a) the British annexed the Jullundur Doab to their dominions ;
- (b) in lieu of part payment of the expenses of war, they took possession of the entire hill country between the Beas and the Indus, to be alienated to Gulab Singh in independent sovereignty to be recognised by Maharaja Duleep Singh ;

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36. *The Hero of Delhi*, 80.

## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

- (c) 50 lakhs of rupees were to be paid to the British on or before the ratification of the treaty.
2. The Sikh army was to be reduced to 25 battalions of infantry (800 each) and 12,000 cavalry;
  3. all guns used in war were to be surrendered to the British;
  4. British troops were to be allowed free passage through the Panjab when necessary.

### *TREATY of March 11, 1846*

On the third day, March 11, 1846, was another agreement dictated to the Lahore Darbar, ostensibly at their solicitation, to lay a stronger hold on the country. For the terms of the agreement, see Appendix B, No. VI, pp. 480-82. It provided that :

1. an adequate British force shall be stationed at Lahore for a period of one year, with full possession of the fort and the city;
2. the British Government shall respect the bonafide rights of the Jagirdars in the Lahore territories; and
3. the British Government shall be at liberty to retain any part of the state property in the forts in the ceded territories, paying for it at a fair valuation.

In addition to the Maharaja, who was only a helpless child of seven years and a half, both of these treaties were signed by seven chiefs, the first of whom, Bhai Ram, Singh, had been an agent of Raja Gulab Singh in his negotiations with the British, and the next two were the notorious Lal Singh and Tej Singh. The British recognized the two arch-traitors as chief men of the State, and invested them with responsibility and authority in the Panjab. The other four were associated with them to keep up the appearance of the representative character of the signatories.

### *JAMMU AND KASHMIRE GIVEN TO RAJA GULAB SINGH*

On March 15, 1846, Gulab Singh was formally invested with the title of *Maharajah*. "And by a very questionable

policy which had been arranged beforehand," says the biographer of Lord Lawrence, "and which has brought woes innumerable on the unhappy Kashmiries ever since, we handed it [the hill country of Jammu and Kashmir] over to the Dogra Rajpoot Golab Singh, who paid us down at once in hard cash which he had stolen from the Lahore Durbar. He was an unscrupulous villain, but an able ruler, amenable to our influence . . . to aid us in checking any further ebullition of Khalsa fury." (p. 189.)

This was done by the treaty of March 16, 1846, concluded between the British Government and Maharaja Gulab Singh who was recognized as a separate sovereign in reward of his services to the British. "The transaction scarcely seems worthy of the British name and greatness," says Cunningham, "and the objections become stronger when it is considered that Golab Singh had agreed to pay sixty-eight lakhs of rupees (£680,000), as a fine to his paramount, before the war broke out, and that the custom of the East as well as of the West requires the feudatory to aid his lord in foreign war and domestic strife. Golab Singh ought thus to have paid the deficient million of money as a Lahore subject, instead of being put in possession of the Lahore provinces as an independent prince." (p. 332.)

Lord Ellenborough, like many others, 'questioned the policy of rewarding what he termed Ghulab Singh's treachery to the Lahore state,' and he was told in reply:

"When the invasion took place, he remained at Jammu and took no part against us, and tendered his allegiance on condition of being confirmed in the possession of his own territories....

"Were we to be deterred from doing... what had been previously determined upon...?

"He had been told by Major Lawrence on the 3rd of February [1846] in a written document that we appreciated his wisdom in not having taken up arms against us, and that his interests would be taken into consideration"... (*Hardinge*, 135-36.)

Henry Lawrence who had been mostly responsible for the negotiations with Raja Gulab Singh from the very beginning and had secured to him the territories of Jammu and Kashmir

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was grieved to hear of his dissatisfaction expressed in several of his *parwanas*. In one of these he said, "If I am to have only the Kohistan, then I shall have nothing but stones and trees." Lawrence wrote to him on April 11, 1846:

"I am grieved that such complaints as I have alluded to should have been uttered, for it seemed to me and to all India, and will doubtless appear to all in England, that your Highness had cause only of thankfulness, in that you had received much in return for very little; and I, in belief of your wisdom and forethought, was a party to the above arrangement." (*Life of Sir Henry Lawrence*, 62-3.)

The grant of Jammu and Kashmir was welcomed both by Lal Singh and Tej Singh because it removed from the field of Lahore politics one of their most serious rivals. Lal Singh was raised to his old office of chief ministership, while Tej Singh was the next man to him. "These ready instruments of our policy" and "the betrayers of their country," wrote Sir Claud Wade, "were not representing the nation." Yet it suited the British authorities to place them in privileged positions.

The elevation of Gulab Singh to sovereignty, however, excited the ambition of Sardar Tej Singh who, perhaps, thought that, owing to greater services rendered to the British during the war, he had a stronger claim to a similar reward. Knowing his own wealth and being fully persuaded of the potency of gold, he offered a sum of twenty-five lakhs of rupees to the British for a princely crown with some other slice of the Sikh territory to rule over. Sir Henry Hardinge was then in the capital of the kingdom. He no longer felt the necessity of making any more bargains of this type. Tej Singh was, therefore, chid for his presumptuousness. He must have then realized that the British had not come to the Panjab for giving away in charity or reward the country which they had long set their hearts upon for the extension of their Indian empire to the borders of Sindh and Afghanistan.

### ANNEXATION DIFFICULT

Sir Henry Hardinge had made up his mind to annex the Panjab. "In anticipation of the annexation, on which he had determined, Sir Henry Hardinge," says Bosworth Smith, "had written sometime before to Thomason, the distinguished

## LAL SINGH EXILED

Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West Provinces, asking him to send up John Lawrence for a high executive appointment in the Cis-Sutlej States which had been already annexed." On his arrival, however, he was appointed Commissioner of the newly annexed Jullundur Doab.

The wholesale annexation of the Panjab was not found to be easy. The large force required to garrison it was not available. The Sikhs, though defeated, were yet strong enough to rise and strike for their independence. It was necessary, therefore, to weaken 'this warlike republic' before it could be converted into a British province.<sup>37</sup> The alienation of Jammu and Kashmir and the annexation of all territories up to the river Beas on the borders of the British possessions were carried out with the same object in view. John Lawrence went a step further. He would reduce the Sikh Sardars to mere peasants and tillers of land. "Why not let them gradually fall in, and let the descendants of these conquerors return to the plough whence their fathers came?" he wrote to Frederick Currie on October 17, 1846.

### *RAJA LAL SINGH EXILED—December 1846*

When installed as chief minister of the Panjab, Raja Lal Singh changed his attitude towards the transfer of Kashmir to Gulab Singh and instigated its governor, Sheikh Imam-ud-Din, not to hand over the valley to the new Maharaja. Henry Lawrence had himself to proceed with troops to dislodge the Sheikh and install the Dogra. Imam-ud-Din submitted to Lawrence proofs that he had acted under the Raja's instructions. Lal Singh was tried in open court at Lahore, found unanimously guilty on December 4, and was immediately exiled to the British territories with forfeiture of his jagirs.

37. "I shall demand one million and a half in money as compensation; and if I can arrange to make Ghulab Singh and the Hill tribes independent, including Kashmir, I shall have weakened this warlike republic. Its army must be disbanded and re-organised. The number of artillery must be limited."—Sir Henry Hardinge's letter from Kasur, dated February 1846. (*Hardinge*, 123-4.)

## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

### TREATY OF BHAROWAL—December 16, 1846

It had been stipulated in Article 1 of the Agreement of March 11, 1846 (Appendix B, No. VI, p. 480) that "the British force left at Lahore till the close of the current year, A.D. 1846 . . . shall not be retained at Lahore beyond the expiration of the year." The Lahore Darbar, therefore, had begun to concert measures for the new arrangement to be made for the government of the country after the British force had been withdrawn. This was against the real intentions and plans of Sir Henry Hardinge who wished to maintain a strong British force in the Panjab and hold the country in a tight grip. The Queen-mother Maharani Jind Kaur was also in favour of the retention of British troops under the terms of the then existing treaty that "the British Government will not exercise any interference in the internal administration of the Lahore State—but in all cases or questions which may be referred to the British Government, the Governor-General will give the aid of his advice for the furtherance of the interests of the Lahore Government."

But she was soon disillusioned about the intentions of the Governor-General who aimed at giving to the British Resident at Lahore "unlimited authority in all the matters of internal administration and external relations," which, for all practical purposes, meant the end of the independence of the Panjab. There was, therefore, a marked change in the attitude of the Maharani and the chiefs of the Darbar. According to Henry Lawrence's report to the Government, dated December 17, 1846:

"During the last day or two her whole energies have been devoted to an endeavour to win over the Sirdars of high and low degree, and unite them all together in a scheme of independent government of which she herself was to be the head. In this her chief aid and counsellor had ostensibly been Dewan Dena Natta, ever ill-disposed to the English, and now probably contemplating with alarm the possibility of our becoming the guardians of the young Maharaja." (*Life of Sir Henry Lawrence*, ii. 85-86.)

But Sir Henry Hardinge was determined to assume full powers to place his Resident on the footing of a Lieutenant-Governor of a British province.





MAHARANI JIND KAUR

Born, 1817

Died at Kensington in England  
August 1, 1863.

## TREATY OF BHAROWAL

The Durbar was not willing to agree to the new arrangements contemplated by the British Government. Sir Henry wrote on December 10, 1846:

"The coyness of the Durbar and the Sirdars is very natural, but it is very important that the proposal should originate with them, and in any document proceeding from them this admission must be stated in clear and unqualified terms, our reluctance to undertake a heavy responsibility must be set forth." (Pr. Cor., 13|12-3.)

The Governor-General would not go about his plans in a straight-forward manner, making the proposal to the Lahore Darbar himself for the retention of British troops in the Panjab and for unlimited control over the country. He wanted to show that he was reluctantly agreeing to the new arrangement at the express request of the Lahore Durbar. The Durbar, however, could not easily be brought round to making the request. Sir Henry, therefore, desired his Secretary, Frederick Currie, on the 12th to

"Persevere in your line of making the Sikh Durbar propose the condition or rather their readiness to assent to any conditions imposed as the price of the continuance of our support. In the preamble of the supplementary Arts., this solicitation must clearly be their act." (Pr. Cor., 14|15.)

In the Queen-mother the Governor-General and his political Agent at Lahore saw a wide-awake and strong opponent to their plans and intrigues. Sir Henry Hardinge had, therefore, written to Currie from his camp at the bridge across the Beas on December 7, 1846, that "in any agreement made for continuing the occupation of Lahore, her deprivation of power is an indispensable condition." On the 10th he had questioned the right of the Maharani to be the Regent of her son Maharaja Duleep Singh. "I am not aware", he said, "by what formal proceedings the Ranee became Regent—I presume by the unquestioned and natural position in which she stood as the mother and the guardian of the Prince." He suggested:

"If the Sardars and influential chiefs, and especially the Attareewala family, urge the B. Govt. to be guardian of the Maharaja during his minority, the Ranee's power will cease silently and quietly, the admission being recorded that the Br. Govt., as the guardian of the Boy and administering the affairs of the State, is to exercise all the

## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

functions and possess all the powers of the Regent acting on behalf of the Prince." (Pr. Cor., 13|13.)

To win the assent and adhesion of the chiefs to the conditions to be imposed on the Government of the Panjab, Sir Henry Hardinge guaranteed to the Chiefs and Sardars the continuance of their *Jagirs* and wrote to Currie on December 14, from Camp Bhyrowal:

"The guarantee to the chiefs of their Jagheers by British occupation must, I should think, be powerful stimulus to ensure their adhesion to the conditions imposed." (Pr. Cor., 15|16.)

This, coupled with the fear instilled in their minds by the banishment of Raja Lal Singh during the previous week as punishment for his opposition to the British plans, had the desired effect on some of the Sardars. To make a show to the Darbar that the British troops garrisoned at Lahore were on the move, Sir Henry Hardinge had on the 12th issued instructions for certain pretended movements. "My object", said he, "is to give the Lahore Durbar a hint that the garrison is on the move. . . If this hint should be unnecessary by the temper of the Chiefs to assent to our views, it will not be made." (Pr. Cor., 14-15/15-16.)

In the meantime some of the Sardars had yielded to the pressure of Henry Lawrence and Frederick Currie. Sardar Sher Singh Atariwala had been put in charge of the royal palace in the fort of Lahore. Sardar Tej Singh, who had been made a *Raja* by the British, was their own man. They, like other friends of the *Farangis*, did not support the proposal of the Maharani being placed at the head of the State, while Diwan Dina Nath, who continued to be loyal to his country and sovereign, favoured the elimination of British control. There was a sharp division between the two groups. Apparently, as a compromise, it was agreed to ask the Governor-General to permit the Agent with two battalions to continue for some months, and a letter to that effect was written on behalf of Maharaja Duleep Singh to Frederick Currie, Secretary to the Government of India, then at Lahore, on Maghar 30, 1903 Bikrami, corresponding to December 14, 1846.

## TREATY OF BHAROWAL

Sir Henry Hardinge was much upset to hear of the above from Frederick Currie and replied to him the same evening, December 14, at 5 p.m., saying:

"It is my positive determination not to employ a British garrison in carrying on a native administration in the Panjab . . .

"The proposal made of the aid of two Regts. of Inf., one of Cav. and one Battery or Artillery *is so absurd that I consider it as equivalent to a desire to undertake the management of their own affairs, without our intervention.* . . .

"I am the best judge of what force I consider it prudent to retain at Lahore, and you may rest their rejection of my conditions on the preliminary question of the number of troops for the occupation." (Pr. Cor., 16|17-8.)

With a strong British force at Lahore the Governor-General was then in a position to dictate his terms to the Lahore Darbar. Armed with the positive determination and views of Sir Henry Hardinge, Frederick Currie held a conference of the chiefs and sardars of the state on the morning of December 15, 1846, and read out to them a paper which contained "the only conditions" which the Governor-General proposed to be imposed on the Lahore Government.

Without much discussion all agreed. Dissident voice there was none to be. The assent of the leading chiefs and sardars had previously been manoeuvred. If there were any opposition to come, it was from the Regent, the Queen-mother, Maharani Jind Kaur. But she had been studiously ignored in the matter of consultations and negotiations which were to shape the future of her son Maharaja Duleep Singh and the Government of Lahore. Diwan Dina Nath at one stage proposed adjournment of the conference in order that they might take the opinion of the Maharani, but Fred. Currie informed him that "the Governor-General was not asking the opinion of the Queen-mother but of the Sardars and Pillars of the State." This stern and strong hint from the Secretary to the Government of British India was enough to indicate to the assembled chiefs and sardars the attitude of the British and to silence the dissentient voice. And thus was the *Treaty of Bhyrowal* concluded and signed on the following day, December 16, 1846.

THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB  
*EFFECTS OF THE TREATY OF BHAROWAL*

The treaty of Bharowal gave to the British Resident at Lahore "full authority to direct and control all matters in every Department of the state," which he was to exercise through an efficient establishment of British assistants. The Council of Regency, nominated by the British Government and composed of men selected by the British Resident himself, with their own man Sardar Tej Singh at its head, was nothing but a set of puppets removable at pleasure, and maintained to do his bidding. No change could be made in the personnel of the Council without the consent of the British Resident who was to have "full authority to direct and control the duties of every department" of administration conducted by them.

For the declared object of preserving the peace of the country, the Government of India were to maintain a British force of such strength and numbers and in such places as they might think fit, with liberty to occupy with British soldiers any fort or military post. The Panjab Government were to pay twenty-two lakhs of rupees per annum for the maintenance of this force and to meet the expenses incurred by the British Government.

The Queen-mother was to be given an annual pension of one lakh and fifty thousand rupees.

This treaty was to have effect during the minority of Maharaja Duleep Singh and was to terminate on his attaining the age of sixteen years on September 4, 1854.

Thus the British Resident, for all practical purposes, became the real ruler—an all-powerful king of the Panjab. The Council of Regency were only executive officers to carry out his orders. Henry Lawrence, the Agent to the Governor-General, was appointed the first Resident.

In the words of the Governor-General:

"The Treaty gives to the Government of India, as represented at Lahore by its Resident, full power to direct and control all matters in every department of the State....It is politic that the Resident should carry the Council with him, the members of which are however

## TEJ SINGH MADE RAJA

entirely under his control and guidance, he can change them and appoint others, and *in military affairs his power is as unlimited as in the civil administration*; he can withdraw Sikh garrisons, replacing them by British troops in any and every part of the Panjab."

It was not merely the unlimited political power that was conferred upon the British by the treaty, but, according to the construction put upon it by the Governor-General, it also made him the sole guardian of the person and property of the infant Maharaja Duleep Singh. And he was soon exercising the functions of the guardian and appealing to the treaty as his warrant for the assumption of this role.

Thus the British took upon themselves the entire responsibility of running the administration of the Panjab and maintaining peace in the country during the minority of the Maharaja. And in the words of Sir Herbert Edwardes, "the beginning of the year 1847 thus found Henry Lawrence in peaceful possession of viceregal authority over the province."

The treaty of Bharowal was so humiliating to the Darbar and the people of the country, and was forced on them in such a way as to give an impression of imperious high-handedness calculated to irritate and provoke them to hostilities. Writing to Sir Henry Hardinge on April 29, 1847, Henry Lawrence observed, "the national independence of the Sikh character may dictate an attempt to escape from under foreign yoke; for however benevolent be our motive and conciliating demeanour, a British army cannot garrison Lahore, and the fiat of a British functionary cannot supersede that of the Durbar throughout the land without our presence being considered a burden and a yoke." (BRC., 888.)

## SARDAR TEJ SINGH MADE A RAJA

After the banishment of Lal Singh from the Panjab, Sardar Tej Singh was the chief henchman of the British. He had rendered signal service to them during the war, and was now the right-hand man and the chief adviser of Henry Lawrence. In recognition of his services Lawrence wished to confer upon him the title of *Raja*. The 7th of August, 1847, was fixed for the ceremony to be performed in the *Takhtgah*, the throne-hall, in the fort at Lahore. All went off well on the occasion

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except that the young prince, Maharaja Duleep Singh, "with a spirit which is worthy of all praise," says John Sullivan, "flatly refused to be the medium of conferring the title of *Rajah* upon the Sirdar Tej Singh, whom all Lahore abhorred as a traitor." When Henry Lawrence failed to persuade him to make the saffron mark or *tika* on the forehead of Tej Singh, and Sardar Sher Singh Atariwala leant forward to request the Maharaja to comply, he folded his arms and shrank back into his chair with a determination considered foreign to both his age and otherwise gentle disposition. The Resident then called upon Bhai Nidhan Singh, a member of the Council of Regency, to officiate for the purpose and the ceremony was thus gone through, without the *contretemps* being observed by most of the chiefs and sardars present.

Henry Lawrence, just before the ceremony, had casually observed to his assistants, and Brigadier Campbell, "that His Highness evinced more intelligence than most English children of equal age would do."

### THE QUEEN-MOTHER MAHARANI JIND KAUR IMPRISONED IN THE FORT OF SHEIKHUPURA

Henry Lawrence held the Queen-mother responsible for the Maharaja's refusal to put the *tika* or *tilak* on Tej Singh's forehead. The Maharani, of course, knew that Tej Singh was being created a *Raja* by the Resident for his services to the British and treachery to the kingdom of Lahore. She could certainly not, therefore, allow such a traitor to be anointed by her son whose cause he had so basely deserted and betrayed. Raja Tej Singh's patron, Henry Lawrence, was at this time acting as his guardian-angel. He interpreted the Maharaja's refusal as an affront to the British Government and, in exercise of his unlimited powers, ordered the Queen-mother to be immediately confined to the Samman tower of the Lahore fort, from where she wrote a stirring letter of protest to Henry Lawrence. (*Vide* App. C, First Letter, pp. 488-90.)

In this letter Maharani Jind Kaur challenged the bonafides of the British Resident and accused him of malfeasance in condemning her to public disgrace and imprisonment with-

out any judicial or other enquiry, and without producing any documentary or other evidence or proving any allegations against her. She said that she had trusted the *Sahib* and that her trust had been betrayed. She called for an enquiry and appealed for justice, but she was denied both. She complained of the non-payment of her allowance of one *lakh* and fifty thousand rupees as laid down in the Treaty of Bharowal and told him that she had been reduced to the necessity of selling her ornaments to meet her expenses. "Even food and water are not allowed to come in," she said. She protested against the rudeness and misbehaviour of Bishan Singh and Gulab Singh, men appointed by the Resident to accompany the Maharaja to Shalamar Garden, and felt concerned about his safety in consequence of their frightening attitude towards him. The words, "What shall I do if something happened to him through fright," were indicative of the feelings of the mother for her young son. She clearly foresaw in this affair the ultimate intentions of the British Government when she said, "Why do you take possession of the kingdom by underhand means? Why don't you do it openly?" There was not the least doubt in her mind that three or four traitors were dancing to the tune of the Resident and working the ruin of the independent *Raj* of the Panjab. She at the end said, "Preserve three or four traitors and put the whole of the Panjab to the sword at their bidding."

Henry Lawrence could no longer tolerate the presence of the Maharani in Lahore. Her influence with the people, her shrewd understanding of local politics and secret British plans, her skilfulness in the use of her pen, her amazing ability 'to act with energy and spirit', and, above all, her intense patriotism were qualities which, in the eyes of the British, constituted grave menace to their authority in the Panjab. To give her an ill name before removing her from Lahore, she was accused, merely on presumption, of cognizance of a conspiracy for the murder of Tej Singh. But in the absence of any positive proof against her, it was not deemed expedient by the Governor-General to act against her on that ground. He, however, met the wishes of the Resident by authorizing



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him to remove the Maharani from Lahore on political grounds.<sup>38</sup>

On the morning of August 19, 1847, the young Maharaja was sent away to the Shalamar Garden at a distance of about three miles from the palace in the fort. Between 8 and 9 p.m. the Maharani was removed from Lahore under a strong military escort and was incarcerated in the fort of Sheikhpura in the early hours of Friday, August 20, 1847.

The removal and imprisonment of the Queen-mother not only gave the British an opportunity to educate and mould the young Maharaja in their own way, but also gave the Resident a much stronger hold over the Council of Regency, whose members were too frightened to challenge his will in the future.

In the letters addressed to the Acting Resident, Mr. John Lawrence, from the fort of Sheikhpura (App. C, pp. 490-93), she referred to the helpless plight of the Maharaja at Lahore and expressed her grief and indignation at having been separated from her son. "It is a matter of sorrow," she wrote to the Resident, "that you did not weigh things before accusing me. You have exiled me on the instigation of traitors. . . The treatment that you have given to me is not given even to murderers."

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38. "Herewith are enclosed translations of the depositions taken in the case [of the Preyma conspiracy]. They are very unconnected, and afford no conclusive evidence against even the Maharani." *Resident to the Secretary with the G.G.*, August 9, 1847

"...would not amount to proof that the Maharani was actually a party in this conspiracy." (*Remarks on the case by Mr. John Lawrence.*)

"It would not be advisable, however, in his Lordship's opinion, to found any formal proceedings against Her Highness, such as sending her out of the Punjab, on depositions which, on the whole, are not sufficiently conclusive against her. . . .

"There is, . . . in the Governor General's opinion, a sufficient justification, on political grounds, for separating the Prince from his mother at the present moment." (*Secretary with G.G. to the Resident at Lahore*, August 16, 1847.)

## QUEEN-MOTHER IMPRISONED

Referring to the proclamation issued by the Resident on August 20, 1847, the day following her removal from Lahore, she said:

"How far you look to the welfare of the Maharaja is now well known all over the world. Weeping, he was torn away from his mother and taken to Shalamar Garden, while the mother was dragged out by her hair. Well has the friendship been repaid. ...

"You had been kept for the protection of our honour and dignity. But the traitors have deprived us of these also. Whatever you have done has earned a 'good' name for you! I have lost my dignity and you have lost regard for your word."

### ENQUIRY AND JUSTICE REFUSED

Finding herself helpless and seeing no prospect of either an enquiry of the allegations against her or of justice at the hands of the British politicals in the Panjab, she sent an agent, Sardar Jiwan Singh, to represent her case to the Governor-General at Calcutta. He seems to have arrived there in December, 1847, and submitted a representation to the Secretary to the Government of India on January 2, 1848, complaining of the "cruel and unworthy treatment under which she now suffers; to demand of British justice a full and impartial investigation of the charges (but imperfectly known even to herself) under which she has, by British authority, been condemned to incarceration; and request that the restraint to which she may be subjected, pending that investigation, may be such as becomes the widow of one Sovereign Prince and the mother of another; such as is compatible with the safety of her person and such as will not deprive her of that intercourse with her friends and advisers which is necessary for bringing the truth of her cause to light."

But the Governor-General declined to recognize Jiwan Singh as her *Vakeel* and directed "that all her communications must be made through the Resident." This amounted to complete denial of justice to the Maharanee, contended Sardar Jiwan Singh, and he appealed to the Secretary to the Government of India on February 23, 1848, for modification of the Governor-General's resolution.

"The confinement in which the Ranee is now kept, is of the most close and rigid description. She is shut up in the fort of Sheikhpura,

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formerly used as a gaol for common felons, under the custody of those Sirdars from whose dangerous machinations against her own life, and that of her son, she first solicited the protection of a British force stationed at Lahore; all intercourse with her friends and advisers or even with the ministers of her religion, is strictly prohibited, and the only attendants allowed her are a few female servants, not of her own selection, but appointed by her keepers. So penal is the nature of the treatment she undergoes, that she is not allowed even the privilege of choosing her own diet.

\* \* \* \*

"The friends of the Ranee now in Lahore, are so much intimidated that they dare not call the attention of the Resident to the hardships which she suffers.

\* \* \* \*

"And, on the same behalf, I further request that the Resident at Lahore be directed to institute an investigation into the charges under which the Ranee has been imprisoned, and to take down, and transmit to his Lordship in Council, the evidence of all witnesses which may be produced, in support, or in rebuttal, of the accusation. His Lordship, in directing such investigation, will, no doubt, order that, under all precautions which may appear to him prudent, or necessary to prevent an abuse of the privileges, the Ranee shall be allowed such intercourse with her friends and advisers as will enable her to plead her cause effectually."

But all this was of no avail. The Government did not find it safe, for political reasons, to institute an enquiry which might have resulted in establishing her innocence and led to an exposure of the intentions and policies of the British. As early as August 9, 1847, the Resident at Lahore, when recommending "her expulsion from the Punjab for ever," had written to the Secretary with the Governor-General, "I do not disguise for myself, nor do I wish the Governor-General to be ignorant of the fact, that the Maharanee is the only effective enemy to our policy that I know of in the country."

### *MAHARANI EXILED FROM THE PANJAB*

To add to her misfortunes came the Multan rebellion which began with an attack on Mr. P. A. Vans Agnew and Lieut. William Anderson at Multan on April 19, 1848. Here again the hidden hand of the Maharani, closely imprisoned in

the fort of Sheikhupura, was supposed to have been working, although there was nothing to prove it. "There is no proof," writes the Resident to the Secretary to the Government of India on May 16, 1848, "though there is some ground for suspicion that the Maharanee was the instigator of the late violence in Mooltan; but it is certain that, at this moment, the eyes of Diwan Moolraj, of the whole Sikh army and military population, are directed to the Maharanee as the rallying point of their rebellion or disaffection. Her removal from the Panjab is called for by justice, and policy, and there is no time for us to hesitate about doing what may appear necessary to punish state offenders, whatever may be their rank and station, and to vindicate the honour and position of the British Government."

The logic of calling a person 'State offender' when 'there is no proof' of his or her offence was only understood by the astute contrivers of British policy. The Maharanee was removed from the fort of Sheikhupura on the afternoon of May 15, 1848, to spend the remainder of her life in exile far away from the land of her birth and the kingdom of her son—the Panjab—which was taken possession of by the British within ten months of her deportation.

#### PANJAB NOT INTENDED TO BE INDEPENDENT AGAIN

Though the formality of annexing the Panjab was reserved for his successor, Sir Henry Hardinge had, during his own regime, succeeded in making the British the *de facto* overlords of the country. The treaties of Lahore, March 1846, and of Bharowal, December 1846, were so worded as to reduce the State of the Panjab to a subject province. What could not be openly accomplished with the force of arms was brought about by the soldier-diplomat by a clause or two inserted in the treaty. The Maharaja was left with no power and the Darbar, the chiefs and officers, with no authority for independent action. On October 23, 1847, Sir Henry Hardinge wrote to Henry Lawrence to conduct the affairs of the Panjab, taking it for granted that it was not intended to be an independent State again. He said:

## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

"In all our measures taken during the minority we must bear in mind that by the Treaty of Lahore, March 1846, the Punjaub never was intended to be an independent State. By the clause I added, the chief of the State can neither make war or peace, or exchange or sell an acre of territory or admit of a European officer, or refuse us a thoroughfare through his territories, or, in fact, perform any act without our permission. In fact the native Prince is in fetters, and under our protection, and must do our bidding." (*Edwardes and Merivale*, ii. 100-1.)

### LORD DALHOUSIE AND SIR FREDERICK CURRIE

Lord Dalhousie arrived at Calcutta as the new Governor-General of India on January 12, 1848, and Lord Hardinge sailed for England on the 18th, accompanied by Henry Lawrence who was going home on sick-leave. Frederick Currie was appointed to take Lawrence's place as British Resident at Lahore.

Lord Dalhousie was a young and vigorous man, very ambitious to win distinction for himself. Frederick Currie was exactly the man required by him to create opportunities for the realization of his personal and political aspirations. He was an out and out annexationist and his views regarding the future of the kingdom of the Panjab were well known. As early as January 19, 1845, eleven months before the first war broke out, he had, as Secretary to the Government of India, (Foreign Department), written to the famous war-monger, Major George Broadfoot, the British Political Agent on the Panjab frontier:

"It would be madness in us to think of expending blood and treasure to bolster up the puppet Duleep Singh, or to set up such a government as could be formed out of the elements that now exist at Lahore which must owe its continuance henceforth to our power alone. ...

"I imagine we shall be forced across the Sutlege sooner or later, and you will see that we are sending up troops to be ready for whatever may turn up. We must not have a Mahommedan power on this side the Attock. The Rajpoots of the hills could not hold the Panjab; and if it can't be Sikh, it must, I suppose, be British." (*Broadfoot*, 269-70.)

Such were the views of the person who was appointed Resident at Lahore with "full authority to direct and control all matters in every department of the State . . . with the Bri-



**MARQUESS OF DALHOUSIE**  
Governor-General of India  
(Jan. 1848, to Feb. 1856)

*Born :*  
April 22, 1812

*Died :*  
December 19, 1860

## RESIGNATION OF MOOLRAJ

tish force of such strength and numbers and in such positions as the Governor-General may think fit . . . at liberty to occupy with British Soldiers any fort or military post in the Lahore territories." The Governor-General was a new man. He had no previous knowledge of the Panjab and its people. He was to be guided in his plans and policies by the British Resident at Lahore. The determined views of the Resident on the Panjab that 'if it can't be Sikh, it must . . . be British' coincided with Lord Dalhousie's ambitious ideas. Having served as Foreign Secretary to the Government of India from 1842 to 1847, during which period a number of independent States had been taken possession of, Currie had become an expert in planning provocations and hostilities with a view to ultimate occupation of Indian territories. The practical experience he had gained in the political schools of Auckland and Hardinge proved very useful to him in the Panjab.

### *THE RESIGNATION OF MOOLRAJ ACCEPTED*

A succession fee of 30 lakhs of rupees had been demanded from Moolraj on the death of his father Sawan Mall, the Governor of Multan, and on the arrival of the British in the Panjab in 1846, troops were sent under the command of Wazir Lal Singh's brother, Bhagwan Singh, to coerce him to pay. The troops were defeated. The district of Jhang was, however, wrested from Moolraj and transferred to Bhagwan Singh. The British Resident confirmed Moolraj in the Government of Multan and proposed to increase the amount of revenue from Rs. 19,71,500 to 25 lakhs at a first renewal and Rs. 30 lakhs at a second, as according to Henry Elliott's *Note on the Revenue and Resources of the Panjab*, of December 1, 1847, his tribute was "a very light one."

Diwan Moolraj, however, felt it otherwise, and, apparently, on getting an inkling of the proposed increase in his tribute, came to Lahore in December, 1847. John Lawrence was then acting as Resident for his brother Henry, who had left the Panjab for British India to proceed on leave. It appears that with the demand of a succession fee, the loss of a district, the call for rendering old accounts and other vexations to which

he was subjected, Moolraj's position had become so intolerable that he was compelled to resign his charge on December 18. John Lawrence, however, dissuaded him from this step. Although, in that moment of vexation, Moolraj persisted in his determination, he returned to Multan, requesting the Resident "to keep his resignation a profound secret from the Darbar." To this John Lawrence consented and it was understood that Moolraj would retain his government for another year.

The situation underwent a complete change with the arrival on March 6, 1848, of the new Resident, Frederick Currie. Currie had evidently been sent to Lahore with some new plans and fresh instructions by the Government of India. Writing to his brother Henry, sometimes in January or early February, 1848, John Lawrence said:

"Government has just written to me to do nothing about Multan till Currie comes. Thus six weeks are lost. In two months I would have assessed all Multan."

"Had John Lawrence been allowed to have his way in the matter," says Bosworth Smith, "he would have sent Arthur Cocks to Mooltan in January and the Second Sikh War, with its unaccountable blunderings and Cadmean victories, might possibly, have never taken place at all."<sup>39</sup>

But Currie had not been sent with peaceable intention. "He was perhaps appointed to the Residency at Lahore," says Major Basu, "to provoke the Sikhs to hostilities and thus hasten the annexation of the Panjab."

Immediately on his arrival at Lahore, Currie sought to replace Moolraj with a number of British officers. Elliot in his *Note* had compared Multan with the British Division of Benares, together with three districts of Allahabad, with a

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39. Bosworth Smith, *Lord Lawrence*, i. 246.

John Lawrence in his letter of December 27, 1847, addressed to Henry Elliot, proposed "to depute two assistants, one of whom to be permanently located in Multan and have the charge of the province. A Sikh should accompany, to command the troops under him."



## MULTAN TROUBLE BEGINS

view to introducing their own system of administration and had recommended for its civil control,

- 2 Commissioners,
- 7 Judges and
- 9 Collectors.

These functionaries were, of course, to be all British, directly under the control of the Resident with full authority to interfere in and direct the duties of every department. The governor's plight under the contemplated arrangements could better be imagined than described. Therefore, when Currie exhumed the resignation of Moolraj, which John Lawrence had promised to bury deep as a profound secret, he was left with no alternative but to ask to be relieved of his charge.

"Moolraj," according to J. C. Marshman, "had always been regarded by the British authorities, and particularly by Mr. John Lawrence, as a fair specimen of an Asiatic ruler, and Mr. Agnew remarked, on his arrival, that the quiet aspect of Multan had not belied the accounts which he had heard of its excellent order and arrangement." (*Cal. Rev.*, Dec. 1843, p. 241; BRC, 803.)

But unmindful of the promise of John Lawrence, and of the 'excellent order and arrangement' at Multan, the resignation of Moolraj was accepted, and a new Governor, Sardar Kahn Singh Man, accompanied by two British officers, Mr. P. A. Vans Agnew and Lt. W. A. Anderson, was sent to take his place. General Kahn Singh, said Mr. Currie in his letter of April 6, 1848, to Henry Elliot, "will be almost nominal and the administration will be really conducted by the British Agent [Mr. Agnew], though in the name and through the instrumentality of the General and his subordinates."

### **THE BEGINNING OF THE TROUBLE AT MULTAN**

The British officers and Sardar Kahn Singh arrived at Multan on April 18, 1848. The fort was quietly handed over to them by Moolraj on the following morning, the 19th, when his men were withdrawn and replaced by Gurkha soldiers of the Lahore regiment. Moolraj, the British officers and the new governor were coming out of the Sikki [?] Gate

and were about to cross the bridge over the fort ditch, when events took an unfortunate turn. According to poet Sobha of Multan, in his *Multan di Var*, the horse of Moolraj was pushing forward at a quicker pace when the Englishman (Mr. Agnew) raised his whip and it took to gallop. A soldier struck the Englishman with a spear and escaped.<sup>40</sup> Gian Singh tells us that the horse of Mr. Agnew kicked Sepoy Amir Chand who struck Mr. Agnew with a spear and threw him off his horse.<sup>41</sup> The accounts of the incident in the depositions of witnesses examined during the trial of Moolraj vary considerably and are so conflicting that it is extremely difficult to get at the truth. According to the statement of Ibrahim Khan, who was a servant of Lieut. Anderson, "A sepoy of Mool Raj's was sitting in the first gate. Mr. Agnew was then on horse back, and Keshowram, the peon, who was following him, gave the man a push and said, 'why do you not get up and make a salute when a Sardar is passing?'—whereupon the sepoy started up and made a thrust at Mr. Agnew with a small spear which had been lying by his side."<sup>42</sup>

It is not improbable that seeing the horse of Moolraj going ahead, Mr. Agnew struck his own with his whip which might have also hit Amir Chand standing nearby, or his startled horse might have kicked Amir Chand who, in quick return, in a bewildered state of mind, struck Mr. Agnew with a spear, in trying, perhaps, to hit his horse. He then quietly disappeared from the scene by jumping into the ditch.

Sardar Kahn Singh, who was with Mr. Agnew, immediately jumped off his horse and protected him from further injury. He mounted him on an elephant and took him to their camp at the Idgah. Seeing the Political Agent wounded, Moolraj spurred his horse and returned to his residence. At the same time Lieut. Anderson too galloped off, but he was pursued by some horsemen and wounded severely. Moolraj

40. *Prachin Jang Name*, 267-68.

41. *Tawarikh Guru Khalsa*, 1st edition (1894), part III, 1039 (505).

42. No. 2301-02, week ending Dec. 30, 1848, *Punjab Govt. Rec.* quoted by J. Mahajan.

## ATTITUDE OF CURRIE

and Ram Rang, a relative of his, made several efforts to go to the Idgah to see the wounded British officers, but his excited troops would not permit them to do so. They, in fact, wounded Ram Rang and fired a couple of shots on the messengers sent by Mr. Agnew. The insurgents then called a council of their chiefs. The Mohammadans swore on the Quran and the Sikhs on the *Granth* to stand by Mulraj and invested him with leadership of the revolt by fastening on his wrist a *kangna*, or bracelet, of war. As a contemporary balladist Hakim Chand tells us, the mother of Mulraj played a great part in persuading him by taunts and curses to accept the leadership of the insurgents. All this took place on April 19, 1848. On the 20th morning, messengers from Mr. Agnew to endeavour to stop the cannonade on the Idgah from guns near the fort and the *Ām-Khās* were repelled by the insurgents. The fire from Multan side was answered by the Lahore guns, as a result of which the son of a Mazhabi Sikh was killed. This became the ultimate cause of the murder of the Englishmen.

Towards the evening it was arranged with a deputation from Mr. Agnew that 'the whole of the Lahore force should leave the Multan territory and that the cattle plundered from the Lahore army should be restored to enable them to march off.' At this time, a number of Lahore troops deserted their camp and joined the Multan insurgents. This encouraged an angry crowd, irritated by the death of the Mazhabi boy, to rush upon the Idgah Camp and murder Agnew and Anderson. Thus did Moolraj, driven by circumstances rather than acting on his volition, come to be placed at the head of the revolt of Multan.

### CHANGE IN CURRIE'S ATTITUDE.

According to the treaty of Bharowal, the British were responsible for 'the preservation of the peace of the country'. Frederick Currie, the Resident at Lahore, received on April 21, Mr. Agnew's letter giving the first information of the happenings of the 19th and decided to send help at once. But a couple of days later, when the news of the murder of the British officers and of the desertion of their escort reached

## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

Lahore, he changed his mind. He saw in it an opportunity which could be exploited for the annexation of the Panjab. The approaching hot weather was, therefore, used as an excuse, first by the Resident and then by the Commander-in-Chief and the Governor-General, for not sending British troops to Multan for the suppression of the revolt. Their real object, of course, was to allow the trouble to spread to warrant the despatch of big British armies under the command of Major-Generals and of the Commander-in-Chief himself, and to give it the appearance of a general war, with the usual sequel of honours, titles, promotions, allowances and prize money. The people of India, and of England, would in the meantime forget about the obligations and responsibilities of the British under the treaty and would be prepared to hear the news of the extinction of the independent *Raj* of the Panjab.

### PROMPTNESS OF EDWARDES

A copy of the message of Mr. Agnew dated April 19 addressed to Frederick Currie had also been sent to General Cortlandt of the Sikh service and Lieut. Edwardes, Assistant Political Agent, at Bannu. Edwardes received the message at Dera Fateh Khan on April 22, and, within two days, he made the necessary preparations, raised new levies from the border tribes, called Cortlandt from Bannu, and crossed the Indus on the 24th. But as Moolraj's brother Sham Singh had advanced as far as Leiah to oppose him, he crossed back to the right bank. He did not of course sit idle. He took possession of Dera Ghazi Khan and raised fresh troops for the coming struggle. He urged the Resident to quick action to confine Moolraj to the fort of Multan. The Nawab of Bahawalpur, was, in the meantime, persuaded to cross the river Sutlej with a view to advancing on Multan and co-operating with Edwardes, who had crossed the Indus on June 14 and the Chanab four days later. The opposition of the Multan troops was brushed aside in the battle of Kineyri, and by the end of June Edwardes had reached Surajkund, about four miles to the south of the town and fort of Multan. Here he was joined by the Lahore troops, about 4000 strong, under the

## POLICY OF DELAY

command of Sheik Imam-ud-Din, Jawahar Mall and Raja Sher Singh. No British troops were sent along with them. Pressed hard by Edwardes, Currie had sent General Whish who arrived at Multan on September 3.

### POLICY OF DELAY

By this time the revolt had spread to some of the north western parts of the Panjab as well. Sardar Chatar Singh Atariwala, the governor of Hazara, was, by the misbehaviour of his British adviser Captain James Abbott, compelled to take a hostile attitude. There were also revolts in Bannu and Peshawar. The banishment of the Queen-mother, Maharani Jind Kaur, from the Panjab added fuel to the fire. Finding the honour of his family at stake, Raja Sher Singh also left the British side. This was all the result of the deliberate delay in sending British troops to Multan.

Lieut.-General J. J. McLeod Innes tells us in his *Sir Henry Lawrence* :

"Such steps were thus deliberately avoided as might have crushed the outbreak at its start, as Henry Lawrence had done with the Kashmir attempt. Obviously the outbreak was assumed to be a premeditated Sikh movement, putting aside all idea of the continuance of a friendly Panjab. And the Government practically elected to run the risk—many held it to be the certainty—of the flame of insurrection spreading over the Province; of rousing afresh that spirit in the Khalsa. ...

"Many held it to be so obvious that there could be no other result, that they refused to believe that the coming struggle was not deliberately desired and determined by the Commander-in-Chief and the Government." (p. 98-9.)

Writing to his father, Harry Lumsden said on May 3, 1848,

"We are not to do anything against Multan till after the rains which I consider is a great mistake, ... should the people once take it into their heads that we cannot act in the hot weather, we shall soon have lots of summer campaigns." (*Lumsden*, 50-1.)

"It is difficult, also," says Sir William Hunter, "to refrain from censure of the inability to move which the Commander-in-Chief betrayed during that period, in spite of the two great camps of nine thousand men apiece at Lahore and Ferozepure—camps standing in readiness to march at a day's notice." (*Marquess of Dalhousie*, 74.)

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A small force sent to Multan immediately after the murder of Agnew and Anderson would have settled the whole affair easily and quickly. This would also have served as a check on future risings in the country. The man on the spot, Herbert Edwardes, was urging upon the British Resident and, through him, upon the Commander-in-Chief and the Governor-General, to rush troops to Multan. Writing to Major Wm. Hodson on May 24, 1848, Edwardes expressed his conviction that Sir Frederick Currie had "made a mistake beyond all present calculation in yielding to the Commanders-in-Chief's wish to postpone hostilities for five months. Postpone a rebellion! Was ever such a thing heard of in any Government?...

"Give me two of all these prophesied brigades, and Bahawal Khan, and I will fight the campaign for you while you are preparing behind *tatties* in Lahore... Action, action, action! Promptitude! These are the watchwords which constitute *ikbal* (prestige), and not the pussillanimous prudence and calculating indignation... Clearly you are under the thumb of some awful traitor whose interest it is to keep you in dark." (*Hodson*, 71-3.)

But action and promptitude were not at this time in keeping with the strategy of either Frederick Currie or his Chief, the Governor-General. "The preservation of the peace of the country" was the responsibility of the British Government who, according to the Treaty of March 16, 1846, received twenty-two lakhs of rupees from the Lahore Government. But they had never meant to abide by their obligations. Instead of suppressing this small localized revolt, if revolt it could be called, the Governor-General wanted it to be given the appearance of a prolonged war, spread all over the country. He also wanted to make out that the rebellion was led not only by a non-Sikh civilian far away from the capital but also by some leading Sikh Sardar, a kinsman of the Maharaja. At the same time he wished to see the final battle fought either near the capital or on the way to it, so that the dust flying from the hoofs of the Sikh cavalry could blind the vision of the unsuspecting people and the critical politicians of England.

## POLICY OF DELAY

"There can be no doubt," says Major General Innes, "that he [Henry Lawrence] felt it to be certain that for every British soldier whose life would have been risked by an immediate hot weather movement against Mulraj, tens or fifties would be lost in the war that was sure to ensue, and, in his heart, he thought with others, though he could not say so openly, that a sweeping war in the following winter and the conquest of the Panjab formed the *real aim* of new rule [of Lord Dalhousie] in India." (*Sir Henry Lawrence*, 73.)

Herbert Edwardes, however, did say so openly in his letter of May 24, 1848, to Major Hodson, the Political Assistant of the British Resident.

"You express a hope in your letter that the British Government will act *for itself*, and *not prop up a fallen dynasty*. In other words, you hope we shall seize the opportunity to annex the Panjab. In this I cannot agree with you, for I think, for all that has yet happened, it would be both unjust and inexpedient. The treaty we made with the Sikh Government and people cannot be forfeited by the treachery of a Gorkha regiment in *Multan*, the rebellion of a discharged *kardar* or the treasonable intrigues of the queen-mother, who has no connection with the Sikh Government of her son." (*Hodson*, 73.)

The secret intentions and plans of the British Government to put an end to the independent *Raj* of the Panjab and annex it to the British dominions had leaked out and had reached not only the camp of Raja Sher Singh, who was helping Edwardes against Moolraj, but also several other parts of the country, with the result that people's minds were very much agitated about the future of their land. Referring to this, Herbert Edwardes wrote to Currie at Lahore on June 29, 1848, "I am afraid considerable mischief has been done by an *idea of annexation getting abroad*." "It is my opinion," he said, "that you are certainly running a great and unnecessary risk in waiting for the cold weather, and giving the Sikh army the temptation to rise, when by a mere march the rebellion would now be settled." (p. 226.) He repeated the same opinion eleven days later saying, "I think it will be most culpable supineness if we allow a rebellion, which may be settled by a brigade or two, to rise again into a meet foe for the British army." (*Pr. Cor.*, p. 231.)

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The excuse of hot weather was meaningless. No government ever postpones the suppression of a rebellion for reasons of weather. The mutiny of 1857 began on May 10, just when the Indian summer is at its worst. Was the despatch of troops to different centres of the Mutiny postponed for a more comfortable season? According to European officers at Multan, the weather was quite pleasant. Writing to Currie, Edward Lake said on August 14, 1848, "As for the weather, nothing can be more agreeable and pleasant than it is now. The nights are really quite cold and the days are not disagreeable." (p. 395.) "The weather is very pleasant and cool. The thermometer never above 100 and fine cool breeze at night," said Robert Napier on August 15. (p. 340.) On August 29, the same gentleman wrote to the Resident at Lahore, "the force here seems to be in good health and spirits. I have found the climate very pleasant, cool nights, no such warm days as we had at Lahore. My health and strength are much improved from that at Lahore." (p. 346.)

In point of fact, the conquest and the annexation of the Panjab having been decided upon, the senior officers of the army wished to use the Multan affair as an opportunity for honours and rewards for services in a protracted war, in cold and comfortable weather, brought to a victorious close with themselves in command of divisions and brigades. Says Herbert Edwardes:

"Napier does not state Lord Gough's reasons for still deferring operations, nor can I conceive any, for I hold his Lordship to be superior to the selfish wish which the regular army may be supposed to entertain for an easy campaign in comfortable weather, against a place sufficiently weak to give them trouble, and sufficiently distinguished to entitle them to C. B.ships, mural medals, and six months' batta." (Edwardes to Currie, July 10, 1848, p. 231.)

"Three months later, on or about October 6, he says the same thing a little bluntly:

"I fancy the dodge is that all these senior officers want to come marching up themselves at the end of Brigades and Divisions and don't care two brass farthings whether Whish is able or unable to maintain his position." (p. 287.)



There was nothing very unnatural in such a wish lurking in the minds of the officers to whom there appeared no chance in the near future for military honours after the conquest of the last independent kingdom of the Panjab in India.

*THE BANISHMENT OF THE MAHARANI*

The banishment of the Queen-mother Maharani Jind Kaur from the Panjab not only gave to the people an indication of the impending occupation of the Panjab by the British but also disturbed the minds of the Sikh soldiers in the camp of Raja Sher Singh at Multan, where he had gone on behalf of the Council of Regency, at the desire of the British Resident, to help Lieut. Edwardes suppress the rebellion of Moolraj.

It is true that the Maharani was opposed to the interference of the British in the internal administration of the Lahore kingdom as visualized in the treaty of Bharowal. But she had done nothing criminal to deserve imprisonment or exile. She had asked for an open enquiry, but none was held. "A formal trial of Maharajah's widow would be most unpopular and hurtful to the feelings of the people," said the British Resident. "This regard for 'the feelings of the people' was all a pretext," says John Sullivan. "No formal trial was necessary," he continues, "all that was required was, that the charges against her should have been communicated to her in writing, and that she should have been called upon to give a written answer to them; but no such fair dealing was dreamt of by British authorities." "A cart-load of assertions, and a good deal of abuse, was allowed to stand in the place of proof." "And it was determined to banish, imprison and plunder her without any trial at all!" (*Koh-i-Noor*, 59-60.)

During her imprisonment and exile, the Maharani was subjected to a most humiliating treatment—so disgraceful that it moved Amir Dost Muhammad of Afghanistan to protest against it saying that "such treatment is objectionable to all creeds, and both high and low prefer death." (*Punjab Papers*, 1847-49, p. 512.)

"Is it surprising that this treatment of 'the mother of their sovereign, and of the widow of Runjeet Singh, should have

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exasperated the people' ?" asks John Sullivan. But that is what the British evidently wanted. They wished the rebellion of Multan to assume the appearance of a popular rising to give them the pretext of occupying the country. But meeting with little success in this object, the British Resident and his Political Assistants resorted to other stratagems and tactics.

### *SARDAR CHATAR SINGH'S REQUEST*

While the Resident ordered the Corps of the Guides to take possession of the fort of Gobindgarh at Amritsar (occupied on July 29, 1848) and sent out detachments of troops to the eastern districts in search of political suspects, his assistant Captain James Abbott instigated the Muslims of Hazara against Sardar Chatar Singh Atariwala, the Sikh governor of the place. Technically Abbott was only an adviser to the Governor on behalf of the Resident, but he soon assumed the airs of a super-governor and started interfering in matters which were strictly outside the scope of his powers and responsibility. But he had a purpose in this. He was goading a leading Sardar of the State, the would be father-in-law of the young Maharaja, into rebellion. So far the trouble had been confined to the non-Sikh governor of a far flung Muslim district in the south-western corner of the kingdom, far away from the capital and from the centre of the Sikh population. It could be called a popular rising against the British only if all sections of population and leading chiefs of the country took part in it. This is what Abbott was trying to bring about in the north-west.

Sardar Chatar Singh was very popular with people of all classes and he would have been an automatic choice of the chiefs of the State for the position of Prime Minister if the British had not nominated their own favourite to this office. The only other Sardar who enjoyed such universal esteem was Sardar Lehna Singh Majithia. This is confirmed by no less an authority than John Lawrence. Writing to his brother Henry on August 28, 1846 (when John was acting as Resident at Lahore), he said, "I think he [Minister Lal Singh] will be assassinated some day, and perhaps this would be the best

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thing that could happen for the Punjab, for the chiefs would then set up Sirdar Lena Singh or Chutter Sing." (Smith, 218.)

Since the British Government had decided upon pulling down the structure of the independent kingdom of the Panjab Sardar Chatar Singh, whose daughter had been engaged to Maharaja Duleep Singh, could not be allowed by them to gather greater strength by the proposed matrimonial alliance of the House of Atari with the Royal family. The changed attitude of Abbott was a clear indication to the Sardar of the intentions of the British and his mind was filled with anxiety for the future of the State and of his own family. He, therefore, asked the British Resident to fix a date for the wedding of his daughter to the Maharaja. This was what the Resident least desired. He delayed and evaded the matter. This only confirmed Sardar Chatar Singh's doubts. The Sardar, therefore, wrote to his son Raja Sher Singh at Multan for consultation. In the course of his private interview with Lieutenant Herbert Edwardes on the evening of July 27, 1848, the Raja impressed upon him the urgency and seriousness of the question. The Jats, and especially the Sikh Jats of the Panjab, are very sensitive and touchy in respect of the marriage of their sisters and daughters. The marriage of a daughter is considered to be the sacred responsibility of the father, who wishes to see it performed before he dies. Lieutenant Edwardes in his official letter of July 28, 1848, from Camp Tibee, near Multan, conveyed the following substance of his talk with Raja Sher Singh regarding the wishes of his father Chatar Singh:

"Two things remain for him to do in this world, one to perform the prescribed round of pilgrimage, and the other to celebrate the marriage of his daughter. The latter duty he considers to have the first call upon him, but the event is dependent upon the wishes of the British Government. If it is not your intention that the nuptials of the Maharajah should be celebrated some time within the next twelve months, the Sardar would wish to be allowed to lay aside his duties of his Hazara Government, and proceed on pilgrimage for two years; if, on the contrary, the marriage is to take place this year, the Sardar would suggest that, with your sanction, the Durbar should appoint astrologers on the part of the Maharajah to fix an auspicious month and day...

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"The above is the substance of the Raja's conversation and he earnestly requested me to procure him an answer from you within ten days." (*Punjab Papers*, 1847-9, p. 270-71.)

There was nothing strange in the wishes of Sardar Chatar Singh to proceed on pilgrimage or to celebrate the marriage of his daughter at an early date. He was an old man and his anxiety, especially in the matter of his daughter's marriage, was understandable.

### EDWARDES SNUBBED BY LORD DALHOUSIE

As the secret intention of the British Government to annex the Panjab as a result of the rebellion had leaked out, Lieutenant Edwardes thought that the request of Sardar Chatar Singh might be a feeler to get at the truth about it. He, therefore, said:

"The request seems strange at the present moment. The secret motives of men are difficult to divine; but there can be no question that an opinion has gone very prevalently abroad, and been carefully disseminated by the evil disposed, that the British meditate declaring the Punjab forfeited by the recent troubles and misconduct of the troops."

Edwardes therefore suggested that:

"it would, I think, be a wise and timely measure to give such assurance of British good faith, and intention to adhere to the Treaty, as would be involved in authoritative preparations for providing the young prince with a Queen. It would, no doubt, settle men's minds greatly." (*Ibid.*, 271.)

Little did Edwardes know that his superiors, the Governor-General and the Resident, could not, in view of their ultimate objective, be persuaded to give any such public assurance of British good faith. Lord Dalhousie was upset to read the above suggestion and, among other things, wrote to Sir Frederick Currie on August 22, 1848: "It would be a friendly act if you or some of his well-wishers would point out to him that for an assistant to the Resident to transmit to his Government a *volunteer* opinion that they would be guilty of breach of faith if they adopt a particular policy, which the Government of India, Her Majesty's Ministers, and the Secret Cee., all contemplate as probable, is hardly discreet, quite unbecoming and altogether unnecessary . . . I don't intend to

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take any notice of this and mention it privately to you because I wish well to Mr. Edwardes." (No. 56, p. 89). Edwardes felt cut up at these remarks of the Governor-General and wrote to Currie on September 10:

"In taxing me with indiscreet, unbecoming and unnecessary conduct in describing as *breach of faith* a policy which the powers that be contemplated adopting, His Lordship presupposes that I was privy to their design, whereas I have had no knowledge of Lord Dalhousie's opinions since his resumption of the Government, than those of the Emperor of China.

"It would be gross insolence indeed were I to animadvert upon any policy which the G. G. had openly espoused, and declared wise and honest. Whatever I might think of the integrity or nullity of the Treaty, I should certainly not be so hardy as to say it was unbroken, should Lord D. assert it to be broken.

"You may believe me when I say that my opinion came involuntarily from my heart to my pen." (209/267-8.)

### *SHER SINGH DECIDES TO JOIN HIS FATHER*

Sir Frederick Currie was also of the same opinion as Lord Dalhousie in respect of the future of the Panjab. He had, therefore, given a very stiff and evasive reply to Lieutt. Edwardes on August 3, regarding the Maharaja's nuptials, saying, "nothing can be done in this case without the concurrence and approbation of the Resident." (*Pb. P.*, 271.) Sardar Chatar Singh and Raja Sher Singh, father and son, were both greatly disappointed at the British attitude and saw in it the doom not only of their proposal but also of the kingdom of the Panjab. The British intentions were now well known, and had upset the Sikh soldiers who were deserting the camp of Raja Sher Singh in large numbers and were going over to Moolraj.

Raja Sher Singh, who had so far been under the impression that he was fighting in defence of the State of the Panjab, was himself shaken in his faith. At this time, the second week of September 1848, came the disturbing news from the north that his father Sardar Chatar Singh had been compelled by the British Political Assistant, Captain Abbott, to give up the governorship of Hazara and move towards the north-west. Raja Sher Singh was then left with no alternative but to leave

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the British and join his father and fight for the defence of his country and the honour of his family.

Raja Sher Singh was one of the staunchest friends of the British and had given them no chance to doubt his fidelity. He had withstood all temptations to desert them at Multan when Edwardes was almost all alone, with no immediate prospect of the British army coming to his aid. He had taken part in the fight against the troops of Multan, stood in the way of the Charyari troops going over to Moolraj (190/244), enfiladed Moolraj's positions on September 1, 1848 (205/263), made a severe attack on him (281/348), and was prepared to pitch into his father (206/264), and had actually blown from his own gun one Sujan Singh who was said to be 'the ring-leader in the disaffection of the Raja's camp.' (194/250, 332/400.) He had incurred the displeasure of the *Panth* for the sake of the British and estranged himself from his own people. Herbert Edwardes, who was the man on the spot, had full faith in him up to the last.

There should have been something very extraordinary to drive such a man to rebellion. Writing to Sir Frederick Currie on September 22, Robert Napier said, "I think however that the time of Sher Singh's defection must have been decided by some important intelligence he may have received from the north." (289/356.) In addition to the disturbing intelligence from his father in the north, he was, evidently, disillusioned about the good faith of the British.

### ABBOTT PERSECUTES SARDAR CHATAR SINGH

To turn to Hazara. Captain Abbott was a man "of a very ready disposition," says Currie, "to believe the reports that are brought to him of conspiracies, plots, and treasons—a suspicion of every body, far or near, even of his own servants, and a conviction of the infallibility of his conclusions, which is not shaken by finding, time after time, that they are not verified." "It is very much to be regretted that Captain Abbott has, for the last three months, resided at such a distance from the Nazim and has been thus shut from all personal communication from him . . . , [otherwise] I am sure this state

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of things would never have arisen." (*Punjab Papers*, Resident to G.G., August 15, 1848, pp. 285-86.)

"The constant suspicion with which Captain Abbott regarded Sirdar Chuttur Singh, seems to have, not unnaturally, estranged that chief from him," wrote the Resident to G.G. on August 12. (*Ibid.*, 279.)

"It is a pity to say," wrote Edwardes to Currie on July 31, 1848, "so brave and chivalrous a man as Abbott turning Quixote with a fevered imagination, and seeing giants in every wind-mill." (192/247.)

Abbott levelled a false charge against Sardar Chatar Singh that he "is at the head of a conspiracy for the expulsion of the English from the Punjab and was about to head a crusade against the British forces at Lahore." This, according to the Resident's opinion, conveyed to the Governor-General in his official despatch of August 12, 1848, "is altogether incredible."

But Abbott did something worse. He excited the religious sentiments of the Muslim population and, promising them an opportunity of revenge, called upon them to harass and drive out the Sikh governor. Abbott wrote to the Resident on August 19:

"I, on my part, assembled the chiefs of Hazara; explained what had happened, and called upon them, by the memory of their murdered parents, friends and relatives, to rise, and aid me in destroying the Sikh forces in detail. I issued purwannas to this effect throughout the land and marched to a strong position." (*Punjab Papers*, 311.)

According to a Muslim correspondent of Sir Charles Napier, 'Captain Abbott wrote to the Hazarees, that if they will drive Chuttur Singh out, three years' revenue should be remitted.' (*Chas. Napier*, iv. 129.)

On August 6, 1848, the Hazara Muslims "assembled in great numbers and surrounded the town of Haripur" where the Governor lived. In self-defence, Sardar Chatar Singh directed the Lahore troops, "stationed in the town for its protection, to bring their guns, and encamp in the open space,

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under the protection of the guns from the fort." Commandant Canora, an American artillery officer in the Sikh service, who was evidently in league with Captain Abbott, "refused to obey the Sardar's orders, unless backed by Captain Abbott. The Sirdar repeated his orders, saying that Captain Abbott could not know the peril they were in, from the threatened attack of the armed population, who would easily seize guns where they were, and that he would take the responsibility of the movement on himself. The *Commedan* refused obedience; and placing himself between his two guns, which he had loaded with grape, threatened to fire on any one that approached him." (Resident to G.G., August 12, 1848, *Punjab Papers*, 279-80.)

Sardar Chatar Singh was thus left with the only alternative of asking the Colonel of the infantry to enforce his orders. At this, Canora ordered one of his havildars to fire upon the infantry. Upon the Havildar's refusal to do so, Canora attacked him and cut him down on the spot. He then applied the match himself, but the gun missed fire. Canora then whipped out his pistol, and shot down two Sikh officers. The Sardar then "repeated his orders to the Colonel, and the *Commedan* [Canora] was shot with musketry and the guns brought to the place appointed by the artillerymen." (*Ibid.*, August 15, 1848, p. 287.)

The conduct of Commandant Canora was a great military crime and deserved the punishment that he received. But Captain Abbott made political capital out of it. He called Canora's death "an atrocious deed," and "a cold-blooded murder," and accused the Sardar of having previously "determined upon the murder" of the Commandant as a link in the chain of his supposed conspiracy with members of the Lahore Darbar.

The Resident, Sir Frederick Currie, did not agree with Captain Abbott in his opinions and accusations and wrote to him on August 19, 1848:

"I cannot at all agree with you as to the character you assign to this transaction. Sirdar Chuttur Singh was the Governor of the province, military and civil, and the officers of the Sikh army were



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bound to obey him, the responsibility for his orders resting with him. Taking the worst possible view of the case, I know not how you can characterize it as a 'cold-blooded murder.'" (*Punjab-Papers*, 313.)

Again, on August 24, he said:

"I have given you no authority to raise levies, and organize paid bands of soldiers, to meet an emergency, of the occurrence of which I have always been somewhat sceptical... You have judged of the purposes, and feelings, and fidelity, of the Nazim and the troops, from the reports of spies and informers, very probably interested in misrepresenting the real state of affairs." (*Ibid.*, 316.)

Writing on August 8, to the Secretary to the Government of India, the Resident said:

"I hope, and I think, that Captain Abbott is wrong in his opinion as to the treachery of the Chiefs, and of the complicity of Sirdar Chuttur Singh Attareewalla, the Nazim of Hazara." (*Ibid.*, p. 274.)<sup>43</sup>

On August 15, the Resident wrote to the Commander-in-Chief:

"It will be seen that Lieutenant Nicholson, judging from the result of enquiries made on the spot, and without any knowledge of my views, has come to the same conclusion as myself, relative to the origin of the outbreak, viz., that Sirdar Chuttur Sing adopted the course he has pursued under the impression of alarm, distrust and suspicion, as to Captain Abbott's purpose in raising the Mahomedan population. ...

"There is no sign, hitherto, anywhere, of the conspiracy or combination among the chiefs, or any parties, at Lahore, as believed by Captain Abbott, or of any complicity on the part of any one connected with the Durbar in the present outbreak." (*Ibid.*, 286-87.)

Sir Frederick Currie was fully convinced that the initiative in the Hazara affair was taken by Captain Abbott and that the Sardar or his troops had done nothing until Haripur was surrounded and threatened by the armed Muslim population instigated by him. The Resident wrote to Captain Nicholson on August 19, 1848:

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43. "I entirely disbelieve Abbott's news that the disaffection and signs of conspiracy which the Sikh Army has shown at its several stations, is organized by the Sikh aristocracy and is assisted by the King of Cashmere." (Lieut. Edwardes to Resident, August 10, 1848, *Punjab Papers*, p. 276.)

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"But we must bear in mind that, whatever may have been supposed to have been the purpose of the Pukli brigade and the Sirdar, no overt act was committed by either, until the brigade was surrounded in Gahundia, and Hurripur was threatened by the Mahomedan tribes, of whose purpose no notice had been given, by Captain Abbott, to Sirdar Chuttur Singh, the Governor of the Province. The initiative was clearly taken by Captain Abbott."<sup>44</sup> (*Ibid.*, 312.)

### SARDAR CHATAR SINGH'S LAST STEP

Getting an inkling of the storm being deliberately raised around him by Captain Abbott, Sardar Chatar Singh had evidently made up his mind to resign his government of Hazara and to get away from the Panjab on the excuse of a pilgrimage. Before he did so, he wished to know if the Resident would agree to the celebration of the Maharaja's marriage to his daughter. Towards the end of July 1848, he had written to his eldest son Raja Sher Singh asking him to secure, through his friend Lieutenant Edwardes, an early answer from the Resident. Currie was the last man to give a clear answer, particularly when the Government of Lord Dalhousie had set in motion a conspiracy for the annexation of the Panjab. Edwardes, as we know, received an undeserved snub from Lord Dalhousie in this bargain.

Abbott, on the other hand, would not let an opportunity of his own military and political glory slip out of his hands. He had, therefore, hastened to lay a trap for Sardar Chatar Singh before any reply could be received from the Resident.

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44. Captain Abbott was known for his suspicious and injudicious nature. The Resident at Lahore [Henry Lawrence] had in his official despatch of August 2, 1847, reported to the Governor-General that "Captain Abbott... is too apt some times to take gloomy view of questions. I think that he has unwittingly done Dewan Jowala Sahae injustice." (*Punjab Papers*, 30.)

Similarly, Resident Currie wrote to the Government of India on September 5, 1848, about Captain Abbott, who had accused Sardar Jhanda Singh of disobedience and mutiny:

"I explained to Captain Abbot, that if Sirdar Jhunda Sing's disaffection rested on the facts he had mentioned, it was without due foundation; for that Sirdar had, closely and scrupulously, obeyed my orders in every step he had taken after leaving Hazara." (*Ibid.*, 328.)

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This resulted in the death of Commandant Canora and led to further complications.

Although the Resident did not agree with Captain Abbott's opinions or concur with his activities against Sardar Chatar Singh, he did nothing to remove him from his post or prevent him from pursuing his hostile designs. On the other hand, he approved of his subsequent measures and allowed the affair to assume an awkward turn, and confirmed and ratified Captain Nicholason's suggestion of punishing the Sardar with forfeiture of his government and *Jagirs*. Surrounded by blood-thirsty Hazaras and persecuted by Abbott himself, and having no hope of justice and succour from the Resident, who would not give him the permission even to resign his post and proceed on pilgrimage, Sardar Chatar Singh wrote to his son Raja Sher Singh, about the 23rd of August, "complaining bitterly of Abbott, whose suspicions and treachery (*Munsoobah*) had driven him to adopt military measures to guard his life and honour." (201/58.) This was followed by further similar communications calling upon the Raja to join him in defending the honour of his family and the independence of his country. At last, on September 13, 1848, Raja Sher Singh decided to throw in his lot with his injured father and went over to Moolraj on the following day, September 14.

### *SHER SINGH MARCHES AWAY*

Sher Singh was sadly disappointed at the suspicious attitude of Moolraj who looked upon his movements with distrust and refused him admission into the fort of Multan. He was also deserted by his two colleagues Sardar Atar Singh Kalianwala and Sardar Shamsheer Singh Sandhanwalia. Moolraj's suspicions were deepened by a chit addressed to Raja Sher Singh by Herbert Edwardes and intended to fall into the hands of Moolraj through a spy named Bhamboo. In disgust Sher Singh marched away from Multan on October 9 to join his father.

Immediately after his departure from the British camp at Multan, Raja Sher Singh Atariwala issued the following manifesto on September 15, 1848:

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"It is well known to all the inhabitants of the Punjab, to the whole of the Sikhs, to those who have been cherished by the Khalsajee, and, in fact, to the world at large, with what oppression, tyranny and undue violence, the feringees have treated the widow of the great Maharajah Runjeet Singh, now in bliss, and what cruelty they have shown towards the people of the country.

"In the first place, they have broken the treaty, by imprisoning and sending away to Hindustan the Maharanee, the mother of the people. Secondly the race of the Sikhs, the children of the Maharajah (Runjeet Singh), have suffered so much from their tyranny. ...By the direction of the holy Gooroo, Raja Sher Singh and others, with their valiant troops, have joined the trusty and faithful Dewan Moolraj, on the part of Maharajah Duleep Singh, with a view to eradicate and expell the tyrannous and crafty feringees. The Khalsajee must, now, act with all their heart and soul. ..." (*Punjab Papers*, 362.)

This had a fairly encouraging response from the old soldiers who flocked to Sher Singh's standard at Jhang and other places on his northward journey.

Sardar Chatar Singh, in the meantime, had left Hazara and moved towards Hassan Abdal and Attock. This encouraged revolts at Bannu and Peshawar on October 20 and 24. Sardar Chatar Singh entered Peshawar on October 31, and in the end of November moved down to Attock which fell to him on January 3, 1849. He was now free to reinforce the army of Raja Sher Singh on the Jhelum. But fate willed it otherwise. He was still on his way when the battle of Chelianwala took place (January 13). He could only take part in the final struggle at Gujrat (February 21, 1849) which sealed the fate of the State of the Panjab and converted it into a province of the British Indian empire.

### THE LONG LOOKED FOR CRISIS

The Hazara affair, into which a leading Sardar of the Panjab, Chatar Singh Atariwala, had been dragged, followed by his son Raja Sher Singh, provided Lord Dalhousie with the long looked for *cause belli*, however feeble. This the Resident had been trying to bring about by his delaying tactics during the summer season. The disaffection having spread wide enough and the cold season being at hand, Lord Dalhousie decided to move to the north and joyfully announced in his high-flown rhetoric at a public banquet at

## NO DECLARATION OF WAR

Barrackpore (Calcutta) on October 5: "Unwarned by precedents, uninfluenced by example, the Sikh nation had called for war, and on my word, Sirs, they shall have it with a vengeance." Three days later, on October 8, he wrote to Sir Frederick Currie at Lahore:

"The rebellion of Raja Sher Singh, followed by his army, the rebellion of S. Chuttur Singh with the Durbar army under his command, the state of the troops and of the Sikh population everywhere, have brought matters to *that crisis I have for months been looking for*, and we are now not on the eve but in the midst of war with the Sikh nation and the kingdom of the Punjab.

"The result of this mad movement to the people and the dynasty of the Sikhs can be no longer matter of discussion or of doubt.

"... I *have drawn the sword, and have thrown away the scabbard*, both in relation to the war immediately before us, and to the stern policy which that war must precede and establish." (64/100.)

## NO DECLARATION OF WAR

The British Resident at Lahore was a good deal puzzled on receipt of the Governor-General's official letter No. 376 of October 3, 1848, saying in paragraph 5 that "the Governor-General in Council considers the State of Lahore to be, to all intents and purposes, directly at war with the British Government." He wrote to His Lordship in a private letter on October 12:

"Now if that be the case, I with my assistants, am in an anomalous position, as superintending and aiding the administration of the Lahore State; and if I were to withdraw from the Government and to declare the Treaty violated and all amicable relations between the two States at end, we should have the whole country up at once as one man to destroy us, if possible. There is no doubt that all, with a very few exceptions, are, at this time, chiefs, army and people, inimical, aye hostile, to us in their hearts, and desire to get rid of us."

Currie also at the same time pointed out that although, for all practical purposes, Maharaja Duleep Singh had been reduced to a nonentity by the treaty of March 16, 1846, "yet he has been recognized as the nominal and *de jure* sovereign by them and this Government [with the British Resident as the *de facto* ruler] is still carried on in his name." He, therefore, suggested that:

## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

"This declaration [regarding the State of Lahore being 'directly at war with the British Government'] should not be made till the Commander-in-Chief is in a commanding attitude at Lahore. ... I think the declaration to be made by the Government should be to the purport... setting forth that the British Government will now occupy the Punjab Province, ... that all consideration will be paid to the interests of the Maharaja Duleep Singh who, from his tender years, cannot be held personally responsible for the misconduct of the Lahore State....

"I think in the first instance nothing more explicit of the Government intentions need be proclaimed, and that this proclamation should not be made till we are in circumstances to follow it up. ... I think we may quietly annex the Punjab districts to the British Provinces, making a suitable provision for the state and comfort of Maharaja Duleep Singh." (65/103-105.)

Referring to the same paragraph No. 5 of the Government letter No. 376 of October 3, mentioned above, Sir Frederick Currie wrote in the same strain to the Commander-in-Chief in his private and *confidential* letter of October 13, saying:

"Now we are not in a position for me to make known to the State of Lahore the opinion of the British Government. As at present, I and my assistants and the British garrison, are here for the purpose of aiding by superintendence, advice and protection, the maintenance of the Lahore State and its administration. We cannot continue to protect and maintain a state which we declare to be at war with us; and we are not in that commanding or strong position here which would enable us to take the steps, which a declaration would render necessary." (66/108.)

Lord Dalhousie, however, was not the person to worry himself about the propriety of political conduct, international ethics, or the rules of war. He, therefore, wrote to the Resident at Lahore on October 16:

"I think you had very much better remain at Lahore. You are there not only a representative of the B. Govt. but a sort of impersonation of it; and anomalous as your position necessarily is at present, I think you should by all means continue there, rather than go on with C.-in-C." (68/111.)

On the 18th he wrote:

"I have already said to you that as our resolve is now taken, no compromises should now take place and as little reference to the future condition of the state of Lahore to be made as possible, until

## BRITISH ARMY COMES

the Government of India shall declare publicly its intentions." (69/112.)

Again on November 3, he said:

"I am sorry you should have felt any perplexity in consequence of the passage in the letter No. 376 to which you advert. ...

"You have taken a perfectly correct view of the line of policy to be observed at present and have rightly concluded that the intentions of the Government, whatever they may be, should not be declared until the preparations of the C.-in-C. are completed. ...

"In the interval the position of yourself and your assistants must necessarily remain anomalous, as indeed it has long been. ...

"The subsequent destiny of the Sikh dynasty and Sikh nation will be pronounced upon when the objects, above mentioned [of 'defeating, disarming and crushing all forces' of the Sikhs] are accomplished." (71/115-16.)

It is something unique in history that without issuing a declaration of war, the Panjab State was considered 'directly at war' by the British, while its own officers were controlling and directing, with full and final authority, all matters in every department of that State, its ruler, a minor, being, by treaty, their ward.

### *BRITISH ARMY MOVES INTO THE PANJAB*

The season and circumstances having become favourable for 'war' in the Panjab, the Commander-in-Chief moved down from his headquarters at Simla in the third week of October; and, true to the predictions of Herbert Edwardes, senior officers of the army, Brigadiers and Major-Generals, also came leisurely 'marching up themselves at the head of Brigades and Divisions.' The grand army of the Panjab was constituted and assembled at Ferozepore early in November 1848; and, with it, the Commander-in-Chief, Lord Hugh Gough, crossed the Sutlej on November 9, arriving at Lahore on the 13th. After three days' halt at the Sikh capital, he marched on (November 16) to the Chenab, on the right bank of which Raja Sher Singh was then encamped, waiting for the Bannu troops.

In the absence of any declaration by the British Government, 'it was not till after leaving Lahore that he [Lord Gough]

## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

knew the definite decision of the Governor-General that the war was to be against, and not in support of, the Durbar.' "I do not know," he wrote on November 15, "whether we are at peace or war, or who it is we are fighting for."<sup>45</sup>

The Commander-in-Chief came up to the advanced brigades at Nawala near Ramnagar on the 21st, and at once ordered Brigadiers Campbell and Cureton to drive the Sikhs from their post on the left bank and capture their guns, if any. But the Sikhs, with their main troops and guns, had crossed to their camp on the opposite bank before the British troops arrived. In the consequent scrimmage that followed with some small parties (November 22, 1848), the attackers suffered a heavy loss of life. Among those killed were Brigadier-General Cureton and Lieutenant-Colonel Havelock. "It served no useful purpose," says Lieutenant-Colonel Burton.<sup>46</sup> A division of the British army then crossed the Chenab at Wazirabad to contact Raja Sher Singh, who gave them a surprise at Sadullapur on December 3, 1848. He, however, withdrew to fall back to a stronger position on the Jhelum where the battle of Chelianwala was fought on January 13, 1849, between Raja Sher Singh and Lord Hugh Gough.

### *THE BATTLE OF CHELIANWALA—January 13, 1849*

Sher Singh had made excellent strategic arrangements. "It is impossible not to admire," says Adams, "the military capacity which the Sikh leader displayed in all his movements and the skill with which he chose and fortified his ground."<sup>47</sup> And without coming to grips with Raja Sher Singh—and only hearing the reports of the movements and tenacity of the Sikh army, of which he had a good deal of experience during the first war with them—the British Commander-in-Chief felt nervous and stuck for over five weeks to his camp, about ten

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45. *Life and Campaigns of Hugh, Viscount Gough*, ii, 178. Cf. Gough to Currie, 31st Oct., 1848. "Up to this time he [the Governor-General] has never distinctly stated to me that we are at war with the Punjab." (159/203.)

46. *The First and Second Sikh Wars*, 84.

47. *Epi. Anglo-Ind. Hist.*, 225.



## CHELIANWALA

miles from the Sikh army. It was a period of inaction on both sides. Raja Sher Singh was waiting for his father who was delayed at Peshawar and later at Attock. The last place fell to him as late as January 3, 1849. According to Burton (p. 91), "Lord Gough", who had been preparing for this 'war' for over eight months, "was himself of opinion that he was not strong enough, and that it would be best to await the fall of Multan, which would release the troops there engaged, before attacking the Sikhs." The news of the fall of Attock was received on January 10, and on that day Major Mackeson, the Governor-General's Political Agent with the Commander-in-Chief, urged him to attack Sher Singh before he was reinforced by his father. On the morning of the 13th, Lord Gough moved up to attack the Sikhs and was received with artillery fire at about 2 p.m.

Chelianwala was one of the hardest fought battles. So close was the contest that each side claimed victory. "But the advantages gained were altogether on the part of the Sikhs," says Nolan. More than once the British troops were hurled back in confusion with heavy loss and Brigadier Pope's cavalry was put to flight in a manner that made him, like a bad workman, quarrel with his tools.<sup>48</sup> The British loss amounted to over two thousand men, six guns and several stands of colours.

There was a feeling of consternation, both in British India and in England, over the battle of Chelianwala which was considered to be a disaster worse than that in Afghanistan. "Chillianwala was not a victory," says Adams. "When the news of Chillianwalla reached England, the nation was stricken with profound emotion. A long series of military successes had ill fitted it to hear with composure of British guns and

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48. "His defence was that he did his best to rally his men in vain, that they were generally light small men, mounted upon light small horses; whereas the cavalry immediately opposed to them were not only much more numerous, but cuirassiers, powerful heavy men, with long superior swords, and admirably mounted. The Colonel complained of bad manufacture of English weapons, which bent against the swords or cuirasses of the Sikh cavalry." (Nolan, *History of Br. Empire, Division IV*, 661-2.)

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British standards taken, of British cavalry flying before the enemy, and of a British army scarcely able by the most desperate exertions to snatch a victory from a wild Indian people. It was felt that our fame and influence in India had undergone a heavy blow; and the disaster was attributed very generally to the blunders of the Commander-in-Chief."<sup>49</sup> *The Times of London* woefully declared that "Lord Gough was playing with the lives of our soldiers." Sir John Hobhouse, the President of the Board of Directors, observed on March 7, 1849, "The disaster has thrown the successes into the shade and the impression made upon the public mind is stronger than that caused by the Kabul massacre. The result has been that, in eight-and-forty hours after the arrival of the mail, it was determined to send Sir Charles Napier to command the Indian army."<sup>50</sup> Even the eighty-year old Duke of Wellington offered to go out to India to fight against the Sikhs, if Napier hesitated. He said to the latter, "If you do not go, I must."

The battle of Chelianwala paralysed Lord Gough, and Lord Dalhousie lost his confidence in him. Writing to Brigadier Mountain on February 13, 1849, he said:

"I have been made more anxious today than I have yet been by receiving a letter from the C.-in-C. in which he appears to me to shew that he has lost almost all feeling of confidence in himself.

"I trust to the army, to you and such as you, to make an effective job of your next action.

"No British army ever fought a *Great* battle with less odds or with greater appliances and means of victory." (127/168.)

To Sir John Hobhouse he wrote on February 21:

"If he [Lord Gough] disregards in his obstinacy these means again, if he again fights an incomplete action with terrible carnage as before, you must expect to hear of my taking a strong step; he shall not remain in command of that army in the field."<sup>51</sup>

In the meantime Multan had fallen and Moolraj had surrendered to General Whish on January 22; and the situation

49. *Ep. of Anglo-Ind. Hist.*, 228-29.

50. Rait, *Life of Lord Dalhousie*, i. 211.

51. Rait, i. 211-13.

## MOOLRAJ SURRENDERS

was saved for Lord Gough by the battle of Gujrat, February 21, which recorded an overwhelming victory for him.

### *SURRENDER OF MOOLRAJ—January 22, 1848*

The first siege of Multan had been raised after the defection of Raja Sher Singh in September, 1848. Lord Dalhousie was not in favour of forcing immediate fall of Multan. He wished to prolong the affair for some months so that he could have 'a perfect right' to occupy the country after the British army had been called up to take the field against Moolraj. (50/72.) "Whatever turns up, give no terms to Moolraj," wrote Lord Dalhousie to Frederick Currie on May 17, 1848, (46/58.) He became very stiff in his attitude and, writing eleven days later in his private letter of May 28, he said:

"I regret to be obliged to add that I altogether dissent from the opinion you have expressed to Lt. Edwardes that he has done quite right in the negotiations he has entered into with the Dewan Moolraj with a view to induce that rebel to surrender himself and to come in.

"I object altogether to Lieut. Edwardes having taken upon himself to enter into any such negotiation...committing his Government ...and in all probability *seriously embarrassing its future proceedings...*

"If, however, the Dewan Moolraj should still be in rebellion when this letter and the accompanying despatch reach you, I have to request that no terms whatever shall be made with this man...In the meantime *no anxiety should be shewn to settle matters by negotiation. ...*

"In the event of any sudden conclusion of this insurrection being brought to pass, I request that you will not enter into any negotiation with the Durbar and decide on anything regarding the reparations to be made to the British Government." (47/59-61.)

Lord Dalhousie was, however, very glad to receive the Resident's letter of June 6, saying that nothing had come of Lieutt. Edwardes' negotiations. "I have been heartily glad to perceive," said His Lordship on June 27, "that nothing has come of Lieutt. Edwardes' communication with Moolraj through Mustapha Khan, and consequently no harm has been done. . . . If the Diwan's cause should melt in the air, or if *Lieutt. Edwardes and the Nawab of Bahawalpore should*

## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

*with their troops beat him or catch him, it will make the Government and all of us look rather small.*" (49/66-67.)

"If the British army should be required to take the field against the Dewan Moolraj," wrote Dalhousie to Currie on July 13, "our right to do what we please with the Punjab will be beyond cavil or dispute. ... Suppose that either from fear of Lt. Edwardes' army or from internal dissensions the fort of Multan should fall and the insurgent force should disperse, our policy would be greatly more doubtful and perplexing. ... At present the State of Lahore is a flagrant offender. ... But if the Dewan's force shall now surrender or fly, they surrender to or fly before General Cortlandt's and Lt. Edwardes *commanding the troops of the Darbar*, in which case the Durbar will have obeyed our call and will have acted against the rebel to his end.

"...The Durbar will contend that General Cortlandt's are their troops, the new Pathan levies are made in their name, enlisted under their colors and paid with their money. And if there was any ambiguity about it, Lt. Edwardes in his letter of 21st had effectually removed it, for he has there officially informed the Bahawalpore General that the two corps are fighting for the Maharaja, for the restoration of Maharaja's rights and that the guns captured from the rebels belong neither to him, nor to the British, but to the Maharaja." (50/74-5.)

It was, evidently, for these reasons that Lord Dalhousie objected to Lieutt. Edwardes' negotiations with Moolraj and was opposed to early termination of the Multan insurrection which he wanted to use as an excuse for the movement of British troops into the Panjab for its conquest. Edwardes was ignorant of these hidden intentions and secret designs of the Governor-General, and "felt keenly the most unkind and unjust reproach of Lord Dalhousie." "I asked and expected nothing for it [his conscientious service at Multan]," he wrote to Currie on June 29, 1848, "but I certainly did not expect to be insulted, and the cold heartless sneer penned by his Lordship under a *Punkah* in his palace 1000 koss from dangers, through which I am struggling, has made a deep and lasting impression upon my mind. He may command my services to their fraction, but to his censure and praise I feel indifferent for the future." (182/224-25.)

Under pressure from Herbert Edwardes, the Resident sent General Whish to Multan. On the twelfth day of his arrival Raja Sher Singh left the British camp (September 14), and

## DALHOUSIE SNUBS HENRY

Whish had to raise the siege (September 16), which could not be effectively resumed for several weeks for want of reinforcements. The long-expected Bombay column arrived on December 22 and the suburbs of the town were occupied (December 27, 28 and 29). On the 30th Moolraj's principal magazine in the citadel containing some 400,000 lbs. of gun-powder was blown up by a shell from one of Whish's mortars. The city was carried by an assault on January 2, 1849. Moolraj was now helpless. Without gun-powder, he could not hold out much longer. He, therefore, opened negotiations with the besiegers.

At this time Sir Henry Lawrence returned to India and arrived at Multan. He halted there for two or three days and left for Lahore on January 8. 'Lord Dalhousie had heard—it is not known from whom—that Sir Henry—so much given to theatrical exhibitions!—had contemplated some 'pretty stage effect' of his own at Multan, including a personal surrender of Mulraj to himself.' His Lordship, therefore, wrote to him:

"There are strong rumours current that if you should arrive anywhere near Multan before the operations against that fortress are renewed and completed, the Dewan Mulraj means to surrender himself to you. I have no doubt whatever that you would not receive him, or act in any public capacity whatever, at present. . . . I have to inform you that I will grant no terms to Mulraj, nor listen to any proposal but unconditional surrender." (*Sir Henry Lawrence*, 160-7.)

Similar instructions had also been sent to General Whish who refused to entertain any negotiations or grant any terms. With no other alternative open to him, Moolraj surrendered unconditionally on January 22, 1849.

## LORD DALHOUSIE SNUBS HENRY LAWRENCE

Sir Henry Lawrence took charge of his office as Resident on February 1, 1849, and prepared, by Lord Dalhousie's wish, a draft of proclamation to be issued after the final defeat of the Sikhs. It was couched in a language in keeping with the practice, policy and tone of Sir Henry Hardinge's days. Dalhousie could not tolerate to see a document addressed to a fallen foe worded in a temperate language of friendliness and sympathy. Unmindful of the feelings of his veteran subordi-

nate, just returned to his duties in the Panjab, Lord Dalhousie disapproved of it, on February 1, in a most harsh and unbecoming language.<sup>52</sup>

It appears that his Lordship wished to impress upon Henry Lawrence, in the very beginning, that his government had decided upon the occupation of the Panjab and would brook no opposition from any quarter. 'Unjust' or 'impolitic', he had decided upon it, and he must see it through. Fairplay and political morality had no place in the Indian policy of Lord Dalhousie.

Henry Lawrence, however, replied on February 5 to Lord Dalhousie's severe letter of disapproval with dignity and reiterated his views in the following terms:

"I feel grateful for the kindness and unreservedness with which your Lordship has honoured me, and beg to repeat the assurance that as long as I am your agent, you will find me act with faithfulness and without reserve. My own opinion, as more than once expressed in writing to your Lordship, is against annexation. I did think it unjust; I now think it impolitic. It is quite possible I may be prejudiced and blinded, but I have thought over the subject long and carefully."<sup>53</sup>

*THE BATTLE OF GUJRAT—February 21, 1849*

Sardar Chatar Singh at last joined Raja Sher Singh at Chelianwala on January 16. His plan was to provoke Lord Gough by warlike movements and to draw him out of his strong position. But in the absence of any move on the part of the British C.-in-C., he set out for the Chenab on February 13.

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52. His biographer, R. S. Rait, tries to justify the harshness of Lord Dalhousie saying:

"Sir Henry Lawrence...prepared a proclamation intended to be thrown out as an olive branch to the Sikh insurgents. It has been shown...that Henry Lawrence had taken decided line during his absence in London. Hobhouse had repeated to the Governor-General Lawrence's impression that the danger in the Panjab was exaggerated, that Multan would be captured without difficulty and the spread of the rebellion be stopped. It was as notorious that the Resident opposed annexation as it is that Lord Dalhousie saw no other alternative." (*Life of Lord Dalhousie*, i. 213.)

53. Edwardes & Merivale, ii, 123-5; Innes, *Sir Henry Lawrence*, 109-11; Rait, i. 214-16.

## FINAL TRANSACTION

His objective was either to check Whish's force coming from Multan or to move upon Lahore. But Whish had already placed his guards on the fords. The only alternative left for the Sikh force was to march to Gujrat where it was met by the British for a final struggle on February 21, 1849. Here the Atariwalas were defeated, and the Panjab passed into the British possession for the next ninety-eight years.

Sardars Chatar Singh and Sher Singh surrendered at Hurmuk to General Gilbert on March 10; and, four days later, on the 14th, at Rawalpindi, the Sikh soldiers, with tears in their eyes, kissed their swords and laid them down never to see them again, exclaiming, with choked throats: *Ajj Ranjit Singh mar gaya*—"Today is Ranjit Singh dead!"

### *THE FINAL TRANSACTION—March 29, 1849*

The British Resident, Sir Henry Lawrence, was strongly opposed to the annexation of the country. Lord Dalhousie, therefore, selected his Foreign Secretary Henry M. Elliot as his agent for the final transaction. Under instructions from his Lordship Mr. Elliot saw the members of the Council of Regency privately, in the first instance, and made it clear to them, on March 28, "that any reluctance on their part would be a great mistake, that the Maharaja as well as themselves would be sufferers from it, that the decision of the Governor-General would in any case be carried out, the only difference being that if they with the Maharaja gave their formal assent, the advantageous position they then held would be guaranteed to them, while, if they refused, they would lose everything which the British Government chose to resume."

With British troops in complete occupation of the Panjab, the members of Regency had no choice but to helplessly sign the fatal document which put an end to the independence of the Panjab. It was then for the first time that they realized that the British Government had, throughout the past year, been acting in violation of the treaty of December 16, 1846, which provided for the protection of the Maharajah and the preservation of the peace of the country...during the minority of His Highness the Maharaja Duleep Singh up to the

## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

4th of September, 1854. (App. B, No. VII, pp. 482-85.) Sir Frederick Currie had proclaimed to the people of the Panjab on November 18, 1848, soon after the arrival of the C.in-C. with his army at Lahore, that British army "has entered the Lahore territories, not as an enemy to the constituted Government, but to restore order and obedience," but it had proved a meaningless declaration. It was intended only to serve as a camouflage for the hidden intentions of Lord Dalhousie. The Lahore Darbar had placed all its available troops and resources at the disposal of the British Resident for the suppression of the Multan rebellion and had been, throughout, under the impression that the British army had been called in "for the preservation of the peace of the country", "and to restore order and obedience," in fulfilment of the terms of the treaty of Bharowal, December 16, 1846, and of the proclamation of November 18, 1848. They were completely disillusioned when they discovered that the British force had in fact entered the Panjab as an army of occupation to usurp her independence.

Early in the morning of March 29, 1849, a darbar was held at the palace in the Lahore fort and the Maharaja was, under compulsion, called upon to affix his signature to the document of terms drawn up by the British robbing him of his crown and kingdom. (App. B, No. VIII, pp. 486-7.)

### *PROCLAMATION OF MARCH 29, 1849*

This done, Henry Elliot read aloud the proclamation issued by Lord Dalhousie to justify his policy and action. But it was a most artful piece of speciosity full of misleading and wrongful statements. It said:

"The British have faithfully kept their word and have scrupulously observed every obligation which the treaties imposed upon them.

"But the Sikh people and their Chiefs have, on their part, grossly and faithlessly violated the promises by which they were bound.

"Of their annual tribute no portion whatever has at any time been paid and large loans advanced to them by the Government of India have never been repaid. ...

"Finally, the army of the state, and the whole Sikh people, joined by many of the Sirdars in the Punjab, who signed the treaties, and



led by a member of the Regency itself have risen in arms against us and have waged a fierce and bloody war, for the proclaimed purpose of destroying the British and their power."<sup>54</sup>

### **BRITISH RESIDENT—THE DE FACTO RULER**

It is true that the British Government scrupulously observed the terms of the treaties which either tightened their hold over the Panjab or weakened the State and its army and the chiefs. By the treaties of March 8 and 11, 1846, they had taken possession of the richest districts of the Panjab to the south and north of the Sutlej, had transferred the hill territories to their friend Raja Gulab Singh and carried away a large number of Sikh guns. They had disbanded a large portion of the Sikh army and so reduced its strength as to render it absolutely helpless even for the purposes of internal peace and order. The Panjab troops had been removed from within the city of Lahore, and the British force placed in full possession of the fort and the city, with the Maharaja and the Queen-mother at their mercy.

There were only two terms in these treaties which to some extent went in favour of the kingdom of the Panjab. By Article 15 of the Treaty of March 9, 1846, the British had promised that "the British Government will not exercise any interference in the internal administration of the Lahore State," and Article 1 of March 11, 1846, had laid down that "the [British] force shall not be detained at Lahore beyond the expiration of the current year." But the British Government abided by neither of these conditions. They not only interfered in every department of administration of the kingdom but also exercised full control over it. They retained, in violation of the treaty of March 11, their troops in the Panjab beyond the expiration of the time limit (1846) and towards the end of the year manipulated things in such a way as to create an opportunity to add to their force and impose the most humiliating treaty of Bharowal (December 16, 1846) upon the Panjab. This treaty, as we saw in the foregoing

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54. Arnold, *Dalhousie's Administration*, 202-4; Latif, *History of the Panjab*, 572-3.

## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

pages, gave to the British Government, through its representative, the Resident, "full authority to direct and control all matters in every Department of the State." (Art. 2.) The Lahore Darbar could make no changes in the mode and details of administration nor in the persons nominated by the British Government to the Council of Regency who were to act under the control and guidance of the British Resident. (Art. 4-6.) A British force of such strength and numbers and in such positions as the Governor-General thought fit remained at Lahore and had the liberty to occupy any fort or military post in the Lahore territories. (Arts. 7 and 8.) Thus the British became the virtual rulers of the Panjab. The chiefs and Sardars of the Council of Regency were nothing more than executive officers to carry out the orders of the British Resident.

Armed with these powers, the British Resident assumed complete control of the civil and military administration of the Panjab through a batch of British political assistants and a strong British force occupying the town and fort of the capital. The Maharaja was a virtual prisoner in the hands of the British. All state orders, or official *parwanas*, whether relating to policy or details of administration, were issued, with or without the seal of the Maharaja and/or of a member of Regency, only under the orders and with the approval of the Resident. John Kaye tells us in his *Sepoy War*, Vol. 1, p. 6, that when Prime Minister Lal Singh was disgraced and ordered to be removed from the Panjab (December 4, 1846), the Maharaja's seal was taken possession of by the Resident, who thenceforth used it in whatever way he wished. The henchmen of the British were honoured with titles and grants. The queen-mother, Maharani Jind Kaur, who tried to bring the chiefs and sardars of the State together for maintaining the independence of the country, was, by the orders of the Resident, and with the approval of the Governor-General, disgraced, imprisoned and exiled. Political suspects were hanged under his instructions. The governors of provinces were removed and appointed at will; and Sikh forts were occupied with British troops whenever and wherever the Resident

wished. The Resident remained in the capital of the Panjab, undisturbed, throughout the rebellion; his orders were fully and faithfully obeyed by the officers of the Lahore Darbar who gave to him fullest co-operation in the suppression of the rebellion.

*FULL CO-OPERATION OF THE LAHORE DARBAR*

The evidence of the *Akhbar-i-Darbar-i-Lahore* and the *Akhbar-i-Multan* quoted below from a paper published in the *Proceedings of the Indian Historical Records Commission* (1944 Udaipur Session), Vol. xxi, pp. 43-46, conclusively proves that the Lahore Darbar remained scrupulously faithful to the terms of the treaties entered into with the British Government and that "up to the eve of the annexation, it was under the impression that the British troops were engaged at Multan and other places in the suppression of the rebellion of Diwan Mulraj and others on their behalf in the performance of their duty for the 'preservation of the peace of the country' 'during the minority of His Highness Maharaja Duleep Singh' as agreed upon in articles 7, 8 and 11 of the treaty of December, 1846 and for which an annual amount of 22 lakhs of rupees was paid to them according to article 9."

It says that:

"It was in obedience to his [Resident's] orders that the Lahore Darbar issued instructions on August 23, 1848, for the recall of Sardar Chatar Singh Atariwala, the governor of Hazara, and his son Sardar Avtar Singh, and for the appointment of Sardar Jhanda Singh to officiate in his place in accordance with the wishes and advice (*bamutabiq marzi-o-salah*) of Captains Abbott and Nicholson, with instructions to Col. Bhup Singh, Col. Bahadur Singh, Col. Budh Singh, Babu Pandey, Col. Nur-ud-Din, General Sultan Mahmud and other military officers 'to be faithful and obedient to the aforesaid *sahibs*.'" (*Akh. Lah.*, August 23-25, 1848.)

"As desired by the Resident, the Lahore Darbar issued parwanas to their military and civil officers to send reinforcements to Herbert Edwardes at Multan and to pay the salaries of the men under his command. (*Akh. Lah.*, 28. 8. 1848.)

"Throughout the period, the Darbar kept the Resident fully informed of the happenings at Multan, Hazara and other places. The Lahore chief Raja Tej Singh regularly sought his advice and acted upon it. The other members of the Council also occasionally saw him and assured him of

## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

their faithful adherence to their engagements with the British, kept him in touch with the political situation in the country and suggested to him measures for the suppression of the rising.

"As desired by the Resident, the various Sikh forts, including the fort of Govindgarh at Amritsar, were evacuated by the soldiers of the Darbar and made over to the British to be occupied and held by their troops.

"Diwan Mulraj and, later on, Sardar Chatar Singh and his sons Sardar Avtar Singh and Raja Sher Singh, and their friends like Sardar Lal Singh Muraria, Surat Singh Majithia, etc., who had taken up arms against the British in the Panjab, were looked down upon and declared as *mufsids*, or mischief-makers; their houses were searched by the officials of the Darbar and their property confiscated to the state. (*Akh. Lah.*, Oct., 1-3, 4-9, 1848; and also *ibid.*, Nov. 1, 1848, for other confiscations.) A *parwana* was issued on November 1, to General Cortlandt of the Sikh service, then commanding a section of the Lahore troops at Multan against Mulraj, to send in the names of all those Sikhs who had gone over to the rebels, so that their houses and property might be confiscated.

"At the suggestion of the Darbar, the Resident appointed two of his Assistant Political Officers to take charge of the *ilaqas* and *jagirs* of the recalcitrant Sardars of Gujranwala, Ranghar-Nangal and Murara, and administer them according to the wishes of their chief. (*Akh. Lah.*, Oct. 4-9, 13-15, 1848.) One of these officers, on arrival at Ranghar-Nangal, set fire to the houses of the Sardars. (Oct. 13-15, 1848.)

"Rewards in cash and kind were granted by the Darbar, on the recommendations of the British Resident to civil and military officers, and subordinates and other ranks, for services rendered by them in the cause of the British. (*Akh. Lah.*, Dec. 12, 1848.)

"Food and fodder were regularly supplied by the servants of the Darbar to the British regiments moving from their cantonments into the Punjab for the suppression of the disturbances in the country. (*Akh. Lah.*, Oct. 21-24, 1848.) The Darbar and their agents advanced money to the British officers, like John Nicholson and others, whenever they stood in need of it, for the expenses of the detachments and men placed under their command. (*Akh.*, Oct. 30, 1848.)

"The bodyguard of Maharajah Duleep Singh consisted of a cavalry regiment of the East India Company which formed a part of the British garrison of Lahore. (*Akh. Lah.*, Oct. 30, 1848.)

"The Lahore Darbar ordered Sardar Gulab Singh, son of the 'rebel' Sardar Chatar Singh, to convey personally to his father a copy of the Governor-General Lord Dalhousie's letter saying that if any harm came to the lives of the British officers in Peshawar and

## DARBAR'S CO-OPERATION

Hazara, it would be avenged with the blood of the sons of the Sardar, one of whom, the above Sardar Gulab Singh, was then in Lahore. (Nov., 1848.)

"Under the orders of the Resident it was proclaimed by beat of drum in the city of Lahore on November 1, 1848, that all the Sikh employees of the Lahore kingdom, and of the chiefs residing in the capital, should obtain passes signed by Captain Bowring; these passes they were always to carry with them, as without them they would not be permitted to enter the city or reside therein.

"On the arrival of the British Commander-in-Chief at Lahore on November 13, 1848, Maharajah Duleep Singh and the Chiefs of the Lahore Darbar received him with all the usual friendly formalities and presents, and fired a salute of 17 guns in his honour. In the course of conversation, Sir Hugh Gough told the Resident that their object was the protection and management (*hifazit-o-bandobast*) of the kingdom of the Maharajah, in addition to the encouragement of his friends and supporters and the suppression of the rebels. (*Akh.*, Nov. 13, 1848.)

"On November 15, the Lahore Darbar, as desired by the Resident, ordered two of its officials, Sardar Boor Singh and Diwan Kishan Lal, to accompany the Commander-in-Chief and his force to Ram Nagar (against Raja Sher Singh), to look after their comforts and supply them with food and fodder. (*Akh.*, Nov., 16-17, 1848.)

"On the 27th of November, 1848, after Sher Singh's two documents (letters addressed to the G.G.) had been received and discussed with the members of the Darbar, the Resident ordered Sardar Atar Singh Kalianwala, Khalifa Nur-ur-Din, Diwan Ajudhia Prasad and Wazir Nihal Singh to remain with the Maharaja throughout day and night. This order was literally obeyed by these officials of the State. (*Akh. Lah.*, Nov. 27, 1848.)

"As desired by the Resident, the Lahore Darbar fired 21 guns to celebrate the victory of Multan, and issued orders to Faqir Shamas-ud-Din, the commander of the Gobindgarh fort at Amritsar, to do the same. Khalifa Nur-ud-Din was sent to convey to the Resident congratulations on behalf of the Darbar (January 25, 1849)."

In the light of the above it is obvious what a travesty of facts the British proclamation of March 29, 1849, accusing the Sikhs of non-co-operation and violating the treaty-promises, was. It was, in fact, the British—the Governor General and the Resident—who faithlessly and blatantly violated the promise by which they were bound to preserve the peace of the

country and protect the Maharaja.<sup>55</sup> They deliberately and studiedly avoided suppression of the rebellion in time to create a pretext for the annexation of the country and usurped the kingdom of Duleep Singh who was under their protection.<sup>56</sup>

*PAYMENTS BY THE LAHORE DARBAR*

It is a gross misrepresentation of truth to say that no portion of the annual tribute was paid by the Lahore Darbar. It is contradicted by the report, dated February 23, 1848, of the Resident himself, to the Governor-General, wherein he says: "*The Durbar have paid into this treasury gold to the value of Rupees 13,56,837-0-6 . . . .* By this payment they have reduced their debt to the British Government from upwards of forty lakhs of rupees to less than twenty seven." (*Punjab Papers*, 110-111.)

If the state was not in a position to make the payment in full, it was no fault of the Council of Regency. They had no power left in their hands. The British Resident was the real ruler. He had effected reforms of customs and land-tax which involved a sacrifice of some fifteen lakhs of rupees of annual revenue. On the other hand, he had increased the expenditure of the State in several ways not fully favoured by the Council. "There was neither evasion nor violation," says Major Evans Bell in his *Retrospects and Prospects of Indian Policy*, p. 167. "The only cause of the subsidy having fallen into arrears," he continues, "was that the Resident, in the

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55. Referring to the promises broken by the British, Lutfullah in his *Autobiography* mentions the observations of Mir Nur Muhammad during his talk with Captain Eastwick, saying: "Mir Nur Mohamed first observed in Biluchi, to his two colleagues 'cursed be he who puts reliance upon the promises of the Feringees,' and then addressing himself seriously to the British representative, he spoke thus in Persian: 'Your treaties, I believe, are changeable at your pleasure and convenience; is this the way to treat your friends and benefactors?'" (pp. 204-6; BRC, 817.)

56. "By the well-founded report, which Edwardes tells us prevailed, that it was our settled determination to make these outbreaks the pretext for the confiscation of the Punjab." (Sullivan, *Koh-i-Noor*, 62.)

## PANJAB ARMY AND PEOPLE

plenitude of his powers, had thought fit to lessen the receipts of the State and to divert the expenditure into other channels." These measures were "entirely the Resident's work, approved by the Governor-General, reluctantly accepted by the Durbar." (Cf. Sullivan, *Koh-i-Noor*, 62.)

### RISING OF THE ARMY AND PEOPLE ?

As regards the army of the State and the whole Sikh people rising in arms for the destruction of the British and their power, it may be stated that only a small fraction of the army deserted to Mulraj and to the Atariwala Sardars in the far-flung south-western and north-western Muslim populated districts of the State. Even there, the troops commanded by General Cortlandt, Sardar Fateh Singh, Missar Sahib Dyal, Diwan Jawahar Mull, Shaikh Imam-ud-Din, Sardar Jhanda Singh, Colonel Bhup Singh, Col. Bahadur Singh, Col. Budh Singh, Babu Pandey, Col. Nur-ud-Din, General Sultan Mahmood, and other military officers remained faithful and obedient to Lieutenants Edwardes and Lake and Captains Abbott and Nicholson in accordance with the orders of the Lahore Darbar. As late as November 15, when the British Commander-in-Chief, Lord Gough, had entered the Panjab territories and was encamped at the capital of the state, the Lahore Darbar, as desired by the British Resident, ordered two of its chief officers, Sardar Boor Singh and Diwan Kishan Lal, to accompany and guide the Commander-in-Chief and his force to Ram Nagar (against Raja Sher Singh), to look after their comforts and supply them with food and fodder.

There was no rising either of the army or the people in the central Sikh districts of the State; not a single British officer was attacked or molested. The British Resident continued to stay at the capital of the kingdom, issuing orders to the Council of Regency, the Darbar, and receiving their fullest co-operation. Only one member of the Regency, out of eight, had joined the rebels and another was only *suspected*. The remaining six were perfectly faithful and obedient. In addition to the great majority of the army who took no part in the revolt, "at least 20,000 subjects of the Lahore State," ac-

## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

According to Major Bell, "enrolled in its service, fought on the side of the Government, and assisted in suppressing the rebellion," not knowing that at the end of it their country would be annexed and permanently occupied by the British Government. They had trusted the good faith of the British Government and relied upon the treaty of December 16, 1846, which was to 'have effect during the minority of His Highness Maharajah Dulleep Singh, and . . . cease and terminate on His Highness attaining the full age of sixteen years, or on the 4th September, 1854.' But five years and a half before the due date, when their ward, the Maharaja, was yet a minor, being only eleven years of age, Lord Dalhousie broke his faith and cheated him out of his kingdom.

### TREATIES VIOLATED BY THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT

John Sullivan says: "Though the State of Lahore had remained faithful to its engagements with the British Government, that Government had violated its own engagements with the Lahore state." (*Koh-i-Noor*, 66.)

"Having conducted the administration of the Lahore State," says Major Bell, "for two years and three months, . . . by means of his own Agent and his own nominees, in the name of his Ward and Ally, the Maharajah, under a treaty which he up-holds and enforces to the last—he [Lord Dalhousie] turns round, when the rebellion is over, declares the Treaty to have been violated, and therefore null and void, and explains that the successful campaign, ostensibly carried on for the suppression of a rebellion against the Government of Maharajah Duleep Singh, really constituted a war against the Maharajah and the State of Lahore, by which the British Government has 'conquered' the Punjab." (*Retros. and Pros. of Ind. Policy*, 157-8.) But "during the period prescribed by the treaty for the Maharajah's minority, no crisis, no second struggle, could absolve the British Government from the obligations of Guardianship and management, so long as it professed to fulfil those duties, and was able to do so without interruption." (*Ibid.*, 152-3.) Lord Dalhousie has, as such, "violated Treaties, abused a sacred trust . . . and [made] an





MAHARAJA DULEEP SINGH

*Born :*

Bhadon 23, 1895 Bk.  
September 6, 1838 A.D.

*Died :*

October 22, 1893.

Deposed by the British  
March 29, 1849

## BRITISH VIOLATED TREATIES

acquisition as unjust as it was imprudent. . . . This, I believe, will be the verdict of posterity and history, upon the transactions which have just passed under our review." (*Ibid.*, 179.)

"This is perhaps the first instance on record in which a guardian has visited his own misdeeds upon his ward," says John Sullivan. "The British Government was the self-constituted guardian of the Rajah, and the regent of his kingdom; a rebellion was provoked by the agents of the guardian, it was acknowledged by the guardian to be a rebellion against the government of his ward, and the guardian punished that ward by confiscating his dominions and his diamonds to his own use!" (*Are we Bound by our Treaties*, 52.)

"The duty of a Lord Paramount is to protect, and we assume this title with a view to destroy. We are bound by treaties to 'protect' the states, which we are now employed in annihilating. (p. 54.)

"The verdict against us must be, that in matters Oriental this nation has no conscience."<sup>57</sup> (*Ibid.*, 78.)

According to John M. Ludlow:

"Dhuleep Sing was an infant; his minority was only to end in 1854. We were his declared protectors. On our last advance into his country, we had proclaimed (18th Nov., 1848) that we came to punish insurgents, and to put down 'all armed opposition to constituted authority.' We fulfilled that pledge by annexing his whole country within six months. . . . In other words, we 'protected' our ward by taking his whole territory from him. . . . But having once recognised and undertaken to protect Dhuleep Sing, it was a mockery to punish him for the faults of his subjects. As between us and him, in putting down insurrection, we were simply fulfilling our duty towards him. No such act on the part of his subjects could give us any title against him. Fancy, if you can, a widow lady with a houseful of mutinous servants, who turn out and attack the police. The police knock them on the head, walk into the house and kindly volunteer to protect the mistress against any violence on their part. A quarrel again breaks

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57. "The confiscation of the Punjab is a thing done," says John Sullivan, "and if I could make it transparent as the sun, that the act was a wanton violation of the most solemn duties which we had imposed upon ourselves, it would not be undone; still it may be useful for the purposes of history and of morality to trace the steps by which the acquisition was made." (*Koh-i-Noor*, 69.)

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out, the truncheons are again successful, and the inspector now politely informs the lady that her house and the estate on which it stands are no longer her own, but will be retained in fee simple by the police; that, on turning out, she will receive an annuity, equal to about one and six pence in the pound of her rental; and that she must hand over for the use of the chief commissioner her best diamond necklace. Is this an exaggerated version of our conduct towards that innocent boy Dhuleep Sing, now grown into a Christian gentleman?" (*British India*, ii. 166-7.)

Lord Dalhousie, perhaps, never realized to what a pitiable condition he had reduced a ten-year old innocent fatherless boy, Maharaja Duleep Singh, forcibly separated from his mother at the age of nine and heartlessly driven out of his kingdom, until, with the death of his wife, his own children were rendered motherless, though not fatherless and homeless. Writing to Col. Mountain in the last week of June, 1853, after the death of Lady Dalhousie on the 13th, he said:

"God, and those on whom he places it, alone can tell how heavy it is and how hard to bear this burden and every circumstance both to me and to her poor children that could sharpen the anguish of such a lash has been added. I try to submit and I hope I may.

"God's ways are not as our ways. It is no right of ours to enquire his reasons. If we had such right, I should be quick to admit that he had abundant cause, if it seemed to him good, to inflict this punishment and chastisement upon me." (134/172.)

### *SUGGESTIONS REGARDING PATIALA AND JIND*

Annexation, on every possible opportunity, of every Indian state in the midst of British territories was the policy of Lord Dalhousie. "I cannot conceive it possible," wrote he in 1848, "for anyone to dispute the policy of taking advantage of any just opportunity for consolidating the territories that already belong to us, by taking possession of states which may lapse in the midst of them." "I take this fitting opportunity of recording," he wrote again, "my strong and deliberate opinion that in the exercise of a wise and sound policy, the British Government is bound not to put aside or to neglect such rightful opportunities of acquiring territories, or revenue, as may from time to time present themselves." These were the pronouncements of policy made by Lord Dalhousie during the first year of his office. Encouraged by these pronounce-

## SUPPRESSION OF PEOPLE PLANNED

ments, Robert Napier, very subtly suggested the inclusion of the Protected Sikh States, and of Patiala, in the annexation and occupation plan of the Government. Writing to the Resident on October 6, 1848, he said:

"I hear rumours of excitement in the *Protected States* and of Patiala, but hope they are not true. The fort of Bahadurgarh may be a temptation, as every fort is to an oriental." (295/363.)

John M. Ludlow in his *British India* has also the following quotation making a similar suggestion:

"The 'petty intervening Principalities' of Patiala and Jheend are surely, in the midst of the present mutiny, a very effective 'source of strength for adding to the resources of the public treasury!' (Vol. ii, 156.)

But somehow or other these States escaped Lord Dalhousie's attentions.

## SUPPRESSION OF THE LEADING PEOPLE

The wholesale suppression of the leading people of the Panjab was a necessary corollary of the annexation of the State by Lord Dalhousie.

In his letter of October 3, 1848, Robert Napier had written to Sir Frederick Currie, "I think we ought, if we take the Punjab, to reduce entirely the aristocracy. The people without heads are nothing." (294/361.) "There never can be easy guarantee for the tranquility of India," wrote Lord Dalhousie in his despatch addressed to the Court of Directors, "until we shall have effected the entire subjection of the Sikh people and destroyed its power as an independent nation." "When I am fairly convinced that the safety of our own State requires us to enforce subjection of the Sikh nation," he continued, "I cannot abandon that necessary measure because the effectual subjection of that nation involves in itself the deposition of their Prince." To Lord Dalhousie, reference to Maharaja Duleep Singh as an innocent minor ward of the British government, was born of 'a feeling of misplaced and untimed compassion for the fate of a child.' (Arnold, *Dalhousie's Administration*, i. 205-19; Hunter, *Marquess of Dalhousie*, 81-83.)

## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

'Lord Dalhousie was not content with disarming the people,' writes William Hunter, 'he determined that the chiefs and fief-holders of the Punjab should be effectively deprived of the power of doing mischief. . . . Lord Dalhousie resolved . . . to destroy the status of the class . . . [and] insisted upon the absolute dismemberment of the Sikh confederacy.' (*Dalhousie*, 98-100.) To the utter disappointment of Sir Henry, John Lawrence agreed with the policy of Lord Dalhousie who selected the latter to carry it out and appointed him the Chief Commissioner of the Panjab while the former was transferred to Rajputana. Not long afterwards, men who had been generals and colonels in the Sikh army, as well as those who had held high civil positions in the State before annexation, were seen reduced to most difficult straits.

### ULTIMATE OBJECT ATTAINED BY THE BRITISH

While the Panjab lost her independence and her people were forced, like others, to be helpless subjects and impoverished mercenary soldiers of the British in India, the British were able to push forward the boundaries of their empire to the natural frontiers of the Pathan mountains in the north-west and to the farthest ranges of the Himalayas in the north. "The addition of this territory (over fifteen thousand square miles) brought us to the natural boundary of India, the hills beyond the Indus," says George Campbell in the *Modern India*. "Our next neighbour is now Afghanistan, a hill country of small resources and of little *aggressive* military power." (p. 147-148.)

"We now only require Cashmere and the Jammoo hills to round off our dominions in this quarter, and they must be ours", said R. W. Bingham in his *General Gilbert's Raid to the Khyber*, 1850. "When his [Gulab Singh's] dominions lapse to us (which they to a certainty will do), we shall have, to the North and North-west, one of the most magnificent boundaries which an empire could desire." (p. 113.) The occupation of Jammu and Kashmir was planned, some years later, by a scheme of colonization of the valley by some three million Englishmen to be imported from England or by Anglo-

## ULTIMATE OBJECT GAINED

Indian settlers from the Eastern provinces. But it was given up as politically dangerous to the British power and supremacy in India, as it was feared that, like the early English colonists of America, these Englishmen might in due course of time become rivals to the British trade in this country, and might in their new adopted homeland strive, like the Americans, for political freedom from under the yoke of England.

The annexation of the Panjab had an economic aspect too. The cotton of the Panjab was one of the chief attractions to the British who foresaw in the land of the five rivers a favourable market for the consumption of their goods. While Amritsar offered the prospects of an *enterepot* for the Panjab and the hill territories of Jammu and Kashmir, Multan and Peshawar promised to become advanced depots for British trade in Afghanistan and in regions beyond the Oxus.

The Panjab also offered vast opportunities of employment for a large number of British civilians and politicals with handsome salaries, allowances, furloughs and pensions. It also offered facilities of extensive cantonments and mountainous training-grounds for the British troops.

The British had stirred up the frontier Muslim tribes against the Sikhs and their government. They could only retain their sympathies and attachment by the subversion of the Sikh kingdom and occupying the country themselves to be able to reward them. For a whole century the Muslims of the Western Panjab served as henchmen of the British against all progressive movements in the country and were, in the end, richly rewarded by their patrons with the grant of Pakistan in 1947.

And, above all, with the Sikhs removed from the Panjab, the British, sitting at the mouths of the Afghan passes, could with greater ease and facility watch the politics of Afghanistan, move up their armies when necessary, and strengthen their defences against the dreaded Cossacks of Russia.

*CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS*

In the end it has to be admitted that the British succeeded in the Panjab not only because of their superior skill and training in diplomacy but also because of the lack of national spirit and territorial loyalty in the chiefs of the country. While the people and soldiery of the Panjab were highly patriotic in the struggle, the so-called pillars of the state (the Prime Minister, the Commander-in-Chief, etc.) subordinated the interests of the country to those of self and became willing tools in the hands of the British. Leave alone the Poorbias and the Dogra hill-chiefs who were only soldiers of fortune and not the sons of the soil, the Sandhanwalias also played an equally ignoble part in the weakening of the state. It is also a pity that the leading Sardars of the country—the Atari-walas, the Majithias and the Sandhanwalias—could not rise to the occasion and stand as one man against the enemies of the Panjab to save it from the impending doom. But this, alas ! was common to the whole of the sub-continent of India.

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BORN in 1901 at Hariana, an ancient town in Hoshiarpur district of the Panjab, Ganda Singh has had a most chequered and eventful career as soldier, political official, journalist, lecturer, author and archivist. In World War I he saw action in the Middle East, and, subsequently, settled down in Abadan (Iran), where he came into contact with Sir Arnold T. Wilson, who was then working on his *Bibliography of Persia*. Sir Arnold introduced him to English journals and societies devoted to oriental studies. Ganda Singh undertook extensive tours of England and other European countries in pursuit of his literary interests.

LANGUAGES and history were his chief passions. As a boy, he had studied Arabic and learnt up chapters from the *Quran* in a Moslem mosque of his native town. Urdu and Persian he learnt at the Vernacular school and Hindi and Sanskrit at the high school. He passed at Peshawar during the Third Afghan War the Army Certificate Examination in Pashto, polished his Arabic and Persian in Iraq and Iran and learnt French and German during his sojourns in Europe. He learnt Marathi with a view to studying the original documents of the eighteenth century.

ON his return to India in December 1930, he joined as an editor the *Phulwari*, a Panjabi journal of Lahore, and later, took up a teaching and research job at the Khalsa College at Amritsar, where he organized the Sikh History Research Department. His summer holidays he spent every year travelling in the country collecting for his college material and manuscripts bearing on the history of the Panjab.

HE took his Master's degree in history from the Aligarh University and his Doctorate from the Panjab for his researches in the eighteenth-century history of India and Afghanistan.

NOW Director of Archives to the PEPSU Government, Professor Ganda Singh is a recognized authority on the history of the Panjab. He is a member of the Asiatic Society (formerly, the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal), the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland and the Indian Historical Records Commission. He is currently engaged in doing for the Government of India a bibliography of Panjabi literature. His published work includes some 30 books and over 100 papers on historical subjects.

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