



Wavell and the Dying Days of the Raj: Britain's Penultimate Viceroy in India, Mohammad Iqbal Chawla, OUP Pakistan, 2012, 0199062757, 9780199062751, 350 pages. A critical and historical understanding of Lord Archibald Wavell's viceroyalty is important for understanding the rational dynamics amongst the three leading political actors of that time, the British, the Hindus, and the Muslims. This study primarily focuses on Lord Wavell's response to Muslim politics in India in the 1940s. The premise of this study is that Lord Wavell was against the demand for Pakistan, because he believed that India was a natural geographical unit and should be preserved as such. Therefore, during his viceroyalty, he struggled to preserve the union of India. But Pakistan emerged despite Wavell's attempts to sidetrack it. It is important to note that although Pakistan came into being almost six decades ago it still faces the effects of the problems it inherited from the decisions taken by the last two British viceroys. A reappraisal therefore of the circumstances in which Pakistan was born especially the politics and policies of that time which gave birth to Pakistan is of immense importance..

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ; INTRODUCTION ; 1. : Political Scenario in India on the Eve of Wavell's Arrival ; 2. : The Wavell Plan ; 3. : The Cabinet Mission Plan ; 4. : Wavell and Working of the Interim Government ; 5. : Wavell's Relations with HMG Regarding Muslim Politics in India ; CONCLUSION ; BIBLIOGRAPHY ; INDEX

Dr Mohammad Iqbal Chawla graduated from Government College, Sargodha, now upgraded to a university. He received his MSc, MPhil and PhD from Department of History, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad. His teaching career spans the period 1989 to date and this whole period has been spent at the History Department, University of the Punjab, Lahore. Dr Mohammad Iqbal has edited the Journal of Historical Society of Pakistan at University of the Punjab. He has contributed articles in several notable national and international academic journals. He has written articles on the modern South Asian studies, particularly the pre-partition Muslim politics, in the national and international journals. A book on the Islamic Writings in Pakistan was published in 1990 from Lahore.

A critical and historical understanding of Lord Archibald Wavell's viceroyalty is important for understanding the rational dynamics amongst the three leading political actors of that time, the British, the Hindus, and the Muslims. This study primarily focuses on Lord Wavell's response to Muslim politics in India in the 1940s. The premise of this study is that Lord Wavell was against the demand for Pakistan, because he believed that India was a natural geographical unit and should be preserved as such. Therefore, during his viceroyalty, he struggled to preserve the union of India. But Pakistan emerged despite Wavell's attempts to sidetrack it. It is important to note that although Pakistan came into being almost six decades ago it still faces the effects of the problems it inherited from the decisions taken by the last two British viceroys. A reappraisal therefore of the circumstances in which Pakistan was born especially the politics and policies of that time which gavebirth to Pakistan is of immense importance.

Lord Wavell's viceroyalty actually set the stage for all that transpired during the Mountbatten era. He was in favour of a Breakdown Plan for the British government so that it could fall back upon a course of action in case of its departure from India which he knew was inevitable. On the other hand, while seemingly agreeing with his assessment of the political situation in India, Wavell's eventual boss, Whitehall, was faced with the scenario of Britain having to relinquish all of its remaining global empire as well once India had attained freedom from its rule.

With this comprehensively researched work, Muhammad Iqbal Chawla provides a fresh

interpretation of an oft-overlooked aspect of the process leading to India's partition. Much of the existing historiography on the subject has tended to gravitate toward the viceroynalties of Lord Linlithgow and Lord Mountbatten, but Chawla instead focuses his attention upon Britain's penultimate viceroy, Archibald Wavell. In the process, he draws attention to Lord Wavell's gradual conceptualization of a future India, the method by which he proposed the British should withdraw from the country upon independence, and, most importantly from the perspective of this study, the prospective status of India's Muslim population. Chawla's central thesis is that Wavell, ultimately motivated by the requirement to safeguard Britain's postwar strategic interests on the subcontinent and in Central Asia and concerned principally with the requirement to circumvent a civil war, opposed partition and the formation of a

Welcoming the speakers and guests of the event, Prof Dr Jaffar Ahmed said the book was a sign that a shift in historiography was taking place. In the past 50 years, most historians had discussed a majority of leaders of the freedom movement. For example, there were studies on M.A. Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan and in India the likes of Gandhi, Nehru and Patel were the historians' focus. The shift from 'total narratives' to 'parts of India' in history was now being witnessed and other actors in the political theatre were being brought into focus, he said. He told the audience largely comprising students of the Pakistan Study Centre that the book was basically Dr Chawla's doctoral thesis and the author had selected a very important figure (Archibald Wavell).

Dr Ahmed put two questions to Dr Chawla. (1) Why was history always written about individuals (Mr Jinnah, Mr Gandhi, etc), and why can't the role of socioeconomic factors in shaping history be discussed? (2) With reference to the title of the book, what were the global factors that caused the demise of colonialism?

Dr Chawla, who teaches history at Punjab University, said while Dr Ahmed's point about the socioeconomic factors was valid, he'd been studying Lord Wavell for the past 20 years. He explained that there were studies aplenty on leaders such as Mr Gandhi and Mr Jinnah therefore he had thought he should inquire the role of British viceroys. He remarked though Churchill had tried to use Lord Wavell as the nightwatchman, Wavell turned out to be a thinking being and tried to settle disputes between Hindus and Muslims. He said much had been written on Mountbatten and Linlithgow, and there was scope to inquire about Wavell. There was a research gap and Wavell had not been studied by prominent historians.

On the second question, Dr Chawla answered that when the British were leaving India, the Cold War had just begun. The US was putting pressure on Britain to grant independence to India. British economy had become so weak that it couldn't afford to remain in power in India, which was why they left Sri Lanka despite the fact that there was no resistance.

Prof Shariful Mujahid was the last speaker of the event. He commended Dr Chawla for his work and commented it was a result of painstaking research and analytical vigour. 'He has filled an important gap in our historic narrative.' He asked, if a plethora of books on Mr Jinnah could be written in India, why couldn't books on Mr Gandhi be penned in Pakistan? On the issue of the votes cast in the 1945-46 general election, he said it was a unanimous verdict.

Highlighting the importance of the book, Prof Mujahid said all the major events in Indian constitutional history took place in the four years when Lord Wavell was viceroy (1943-47). Wavell wanted to do justice to Muslims and Mr Jinnah. Lord Mountbatten followed up on whatever had happened before him, he added.

What I have gathered from different accounts, a powerful section of Congress leadership was very skeptical about the role of Muslim population after independence and deemed them to be a constant thorn in their side and an obstacle in the Hindu Raj and Hindutva. V B Patel and Rajgopalachariya were leading this group. Under pressure from this group Jawaharlal Nehru gave a negating statement in Bombay which made Mr. Jinnah to take counter action. So, notwithstanding, what Indian historians write, the real intention of Congress leadership was either subjugate the Muslim population or get rid of them in whatever manner possible. Rejection of Cabinet Mission Plan was a

step towards that objective.

It is very difficult to put blame on one community or the other. What ever happened at the time of partition was a greater tragedy about 1.7 million innocent people were killed and about 10 million people or more were displaced. It is very difficult to heal these wounds but even afterwards the two countries continued fighting further devastating the life of common people. In my view the only solution lies in developing good relations between the two nations and allowing the people of the two countries to come together an atmosphere like that of European nation shall be created, The Region should grow up after all we have great potentials the world has come to realise.

Gandhi was definitely a great leader for his own people as he realized so many years ago that the millions of muslims with increasingly radical ideas would be a problem for India and hindus, and gave his consent for partition, without which the British could not have divided India. By giving them parts of Punjab and Bengal, he was able to get rid of what would have been 400 million muslims today. Muslims were happy in their thoughts that they were gaining independence. India would do nothing today to get these 400 million back.

It would be interesting to read the book and only then we can comment if author has really done a thorough and honest research, this subject has been under the shadow of our beloved establishment and this book is part of the acadmic thesis, these two factors do not create strong confidence that a independent research would have been carried out and accepted. Let us read the book first. Diary of lord wavell by itself has quite bit of material which reflect on politics of the time and interesting observation on characters of both Jinnah and Gandhi. Mazhar

Mr.Kumar is very unkind to Mr.Jinnah He was the great leader of sole representative organisation of Indian Muslims.Rejection of Cbinet mission plan and earlier to that Crips'plan was very unfortunate.In fact Maulana Azad also,as president of the Congress given a similar plan but messers Ghandi,Nehru&Patel did not agree.Mr. Jinnah gave maximum chance to congress leaders to let India stay united as he was most secular leader in India.Mr.Jaswant Singh a leader of BJP &former F.M of India has accepted this.Mr.Advani present leader of BJP has agreed with Mr.Singh.

The Indian point of view is English engineered pakistan because otherwise their theory we are all one falls apart-in reality we are not all one. we were just one empire. when the emperor went so did the empire. Infact india should have been broken into several more countries. The north of India, i.e awadh, kashmir, agra etc should have formed mughalistan and been seperate. The people decide the creation not any super power, case in point, south vietnal and north vietnam. did not work because tyhe people did not beleive in it.

Whatever, and however Pakistan was established, I think it was in the best interest of both the communities. Had there been no Pakistan, Muslims would have created an unbearable situation for the Hindus in independent India? Now, they have Pakistan and let them make it or break it. At least they can not blame the Hindus for all the problems.

Here is a question I have always wanted to ask. Perhaps Dr. Chawala would be kind enough to address it in this forum: What were the reasons behind the rejection of the cabinet Mission plan by Congress leaders after Mr. Jinnah had accepted it. The Plan would have maintained a united India. I have always thought Indian historians have been very dishonest in heaping full blame for the partition of India on Mr. Jinnah when the final straw that broke the camel's back was Nehru and Patel's rejection of the cabinet mission plan.

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(350) Wavell's era provides the backdrop for the finale which so historically, and tragically, unfolded under his successor and the last British viceroy, Mountbatten. No understanding of Mountbatten's era and the last days of the Raj in India could be complete without a deeper and proper understanding in all its complexities, of the Wavell's time as the second-last viceroy of India (October 1943-March 1947). (Hardback). Bookseller Inventory # AQ0199062757

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