

Faiz on division of the Punjab

(Faiz Sahib's editorial of the Pakistan Times dated June 29, 1947. Original title was: Price of Vanity)

The division of the Punjab, as demanded, by the Hindus and Sikhs, has taken place. The formality of ratification has been performed by the Punjab Legislative Assembly meeting for the last time. The Boundary Commission remains and its task of delimiting the frontiers; but the final boundary line cannot vitally change the balance of power in the two zones of the Punjab. In the West the Muslims will still be a huge majority. In the East, while no single community will have a complete majority, the Hindus will be the biggest group, the Muslims second and the Sikhs thirds, the last two being 34% and 18% respectively. The Congress are ruminating over the creation of a Haryana Prant, by the amalgamation of the 12 districts of the Punjab with the Meerut Division, Agra, Muttra and Etah districts of Agra Division and Bijnor, Moradabad and Badaun district of Rohilkhand plus Garhwal district. The MLAs of these areas of U.P. are meeting on July 3, to consider the matter. This would give the Hindus a complete majority in the new province, reduce slightly the Muslim percentage, and reduce the Sikhs to a percentage of one digit only. The division of the Punjab as mooted and taken up so gallantly by the Congress in the interests of the Sikhs. Apart from having been made stalking horses for sniping at the Muslim League what else, we might well ask, have the Sikhs got? They are divided more or less equally in the two present zones of the Punjab, the largest part of their assets and the bigger Gurdwaras remain in the Western zone, and now in the East they are being threatened with complete subservience if this new province is created. Vague promises of a Sikh premiership are of little avail when the Indian Union becomes a unitary State, and casts away, as it is doing, all thought of communal weightages, double voting on communal questions and similar constitutional safeguards for the minorities. The brutal fact of division is making many people think and think again. The misgivings of the Khalsa are expressed in the Shimani Akali Dal's recent resolution declaring HMG plan unacceptable and demanding a separate Union of the Sikhs States. Baba Kharakk Singh has in a statement said that the partition of the Punjab is detrimental to the Sikhs, and has opposed the Haryana Prant idea and also the plan for Sikh immigration to the East. The idea of a union of the Sikh State, with adjacent areas thrown in is one which some of the Akali leaders have played with for some time, ever since about 1942. There are, however, too many unanswered questions attached to the scheme. Can these States federate with Patiala as their leader? Inside or outside the Indian Union, will they be allowed to extend their territories to adjacent areas? Will the people of these areas, where in no district are the Sikhs in a majority, agree to go under the Sikh Federation? Will even the Sikhs known for their love of freedom, tolerate a feudal king ship? Whatever plans may have been hatched in the private audience chambers of the Sikh rulers, it is almost certain that they cannot

and will not survive before the glare of public opinion. Some Sikh leaders may fondly dream of the Boundary Commission taking them up to the Chenab, but the sensible ones realise that no such thing is possible. Loose talk of a conquest of Western Punjab also cannot be taken too seriously. The Sikh leadership inebriated with the exuberance of their own and the Congressmen's verbosity have gone so far without a constructive aim that they have landed themselves in a bog. The Sikh people have really only two alternatives. The first alternative is to accept the present division with all its shortcomings and disadvantages and hope that the Congress will go on treating them as its pet foster-children. The other choice is to go back on the partition and come to terms with the Muslim people. These "terms" could be in the nature of fundamental constitutional safeguards or even a separate homeland in Pakistan if such a homeland were geographically feasible.

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