

Telegram from Sir Terence Allen Shone on the communal disturbances (New Delhi, 15 September 1947)

Caption: On 15 September 1947, Sir Terence Allen Shone, High Commissioner of the United Kingdom to India, sends a telegram to the Commonwealth Relations Office in which he reports on the situation in India and Pakistan after the partition of the British Indian Empire. He particularly refers to the communal disturbances between Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs as well as the problem of refugees and population movements.

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Last updated: 01/03/2017

OUTWARD TELEGRAM

0946

From High Commissioner for
the United Kingdom

To COMMONWEALTH RELATIONS
OFFICE

Cypher

~~Code~~

~~Class~~

Repeated to

Signed by

Name in type A.C.B. SYMON

Time 15th September 1.30 p.m.

Sent 151750 EF

No. 762

Priority IMMEDIATE SECRET

MY TELEGRAM NO. 749 DATED 13TH SEPTEMBER.

COMMUNAL DISTURBANCES.

1. PUNJAB FOLLOWING IS MAIN INFORMATION RECEIVED DURING LAST TWO DAYS REGARDING SITUATION.

A) THERE WAS CONTINUED TENSION IN RURAL AREAS OF EAST PUNJAB BUT MOVEMENT OF REFUGEES HAS CONTINUED SATISFACTORILY.

B) IN AMBALA DISTRICT SITUATION WAS REPORTED TO HAVE DETERIORATED GREATLY AND IN ROHTAK DISTRICT HEAVY KILLING WAS REPORTED AT ONE PLACE (PLEASE TREAT THIS PARA. AS CONFIDENTIAL).

C) MOB OF 25,000 PEOPLE ATTACKED VILLAGE ABOUT 30 MILES NORTH OF DELHI BUT WAS BEATEN OFF BY MILITARY FORCE.

D) DISTURBED CONDITIONS CONTINUE IN JULLUNDUR, HOSHIARPUR AND KAPURTHALA.

E) SIKHS ATTACKED MUSLIM REFUGEE COLUMN NEAR AMRITSAR AND INFLECTED ABOUT 90 CASUALTIES. ARMED ESCORT IN RETURN INFLECTED ABOUT 60 CASUALTIES ON RAIDERS (PLEASE TREAT NAME OF COMMUNITIES CONCERNED AND NUMBER OF CASUALTIES AS CONFIDENTIAL).

F) SIKHS ATTACKED A REFUGEE TRAIN BETWEEN JULLUNDUR AND KAPURTHALA AND INFLECTED ABOUT 70 CASUALTIES. RAIDERS ALSO SUFFERED HEAVY CASUALTIES (PLEASE TREAT NAMES OF COMMUNITIES AND NUMBER OF

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CASUALTIES AS CONFIDENTIAL).

G) ARMS AND AMMUNITION HAVE BEEN RECOVERED IN QUADIAN IN THE GURDASPUR DISTRICT WHERE 4,000 MUSLIMS HAD MOVED IN.

H) 50,000 MUSLIMS HAVE BEEN EVACUATED FROM FARIDKOT TO THE WEST PUNJAB.

I) SOME REFUGEE CONVOYS WERE BEING ATTACKED BY SIKHS IN VICINITY OF PATENGARH. (PLEASE TREAT NAME OF COMMUNITY AS CONFIDENTIAL).

2. SIMLA. SIX PEOPLE REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN KILLED IN BOMB EXPLOSION 13TH AND FEW SHOPS ON MALL WERE LOOTED 12TH. ON 14TH CURFEW WAS RE-IMPOSED AFTER FURTHER STABBING CASE. NO FURTHER INCIDENT WAS REPORTED UP TO 7 P.M. AND SITUATION NOW STATED TO BE WELL UNDER CONTROL. 200 MEMBERS OF MINORITY COMMUNITY UNDER MILITARY ESCORT WERE EVACUATED BY TRAIN.

3. DELHI. NEW DELHI HAS BEEN QUIET DURING LAST TWO DAYS BUT THERE HAVE BEEN A FEW INCIDENTS, STRAY ASSAULTS, LOOTING AND STABBING IN OLD DELHI. FIRING HAS TAKEN PLACE ON TWO CONSECUTIVE DAYS BETWEEN POLICE AND RIOTERS IN AREA (DARYAGUNJ) HALF WAY BETWEEN NEW AND OLD DELHI. ON 14TH FIRING LASTED ABOUT THREE HOURS. 10 PEOPLE ARE REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN KILLED AND AN EQUAL NUMBER WOUNDED. ABOUT

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5,000 PEOPLE WERE AFTERWARDS EVACUATED FROM AREA TO PURANA QUILA REFUGEE CAMP. DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MUSLIM EDUCATION MINISTER VISITED THIS AREA.

4. CASUALTIES. NEHRU AT PRESS CONFERENCE ON 12TH SAID THAT OFFICIAL AND NON-OFFICIAL SOURCES ESTIMATED NUMBER OF DEATHS IN DELHI DISTURBANCES ROUGHLY AT 1,000. OFFICIAL VERIFIED FIGURES OF CASUALTIES IN DISTURBANCES IN WEST AND EAST PUNJAB WERE 15,000 KILLED BUT HE FELT THESE FIGURES WERE VERY LOW AND MIGHT EASILY BE DOUBLED OR TREBLED.

5. REFUGEES.

A) OFFICIAL FIGURES ON VIEW IN GOVERNMENT HOUSE MAP ROOM SHOW THAT BETWEEN 17TH AUGUST AND 7TH SEPTEMBER 323,000 MUSLIM REFUGEES AND 838,000 NON-MUSLIMS HAD CROSSED OVER PRINCIPAL FRONTIER POSTS BETWEEN PAKISTAN AND INDIA. NEHRU AT PRESS CONFERENCE SAID THAT BY SEPTEMBER 12TH ONE AND A QUARTER MILLION PERSONS HAVE COME FROM WEST PUNJAB TO EAST PUNJAB AND SIMILAR NUMBER FROM EAST TO WEST. PROBABLY HALF A MILLION ARE ON MOVE NOW ON EITHER SIDE AND PROBABLY ANOTHER HALF A MILLION ARE AWAITING TO BE MOVED.

B) DELHI REFUGEE FIGURES OBTAINED FROM MAP ROOM SHOW THAT ON SEPTEMBER 13TH THERE WERE 162,000 NON-MUSLIM

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REFUGEES OF WHICH ONLY 12,000 WERE IN REFUGEE CAMPS, THE REMAINDER STAYING WITH FRIENDS OR RELATIVES. ON SAME DATE THERE WERE 90,000 MUSLIM REFUGEES IN ABOUT SIX CAMPS AND 14,000 MORE HAD BEEN CLEARED FROM DELHI DURING PRECEDING TWO DAYS. NEHRU SAID NEARLY QUARTER OF DELHI POPULATION NOW CONSISTED OF REFUGEES.

6. EXCHANGE OF POPULATIONS. IN HIS PRAYER SPEECH ON 13TH GANDHI SAID THAT TRANSFER OF POPULATION WOULD MEAN NOTHING BUT GREATER MISERY AND WISHED THAT INDIA AND PAKISTAN WOULD UNITEDLY MAKE UP THEIR MINDS AGAINST TRANSFER OF POPULATION. IN CONTRAST NEHRU SAID THAT THEY HAD NOT BEEN THINKING OF EXCHANGE OF POPULATION BUT IT WAS FORCED UPON THEM AND THEY HAD TO CARRY OUT THEIR DUTY.

7. SIKHS. NEHRU IN PRESS CONFERENCE SAID THAT HE FOUND IN REPORTS, ESPECIALLY IN FOREIGN REPORTS, STATEMENTS MADE THAT BLAME, IF NOT ALL A GREAT PART OF IT, LAY WITH SIKHS. THAT WAS NOT FAIR TO SIKHS, WHO HAD UNDOUBTEDLY MISBEHAVED THEMSELVES AS OTHERS HAD MISBEHAVED BUT TO CAST BLAME ON SIKHS WAS COMPLETELY WRONG.

8. BOUNDARY COMMISSION AWARDS. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORT GAZETTE OF INDIA EXTRAORDINARY

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NOTIFICATION STATES THAT GOVERNMENT OF INDIA INTEND TO SEEK TO MODIFY TERMS OF BENGAL AND PUNJAB AWARDS BY SUCH METHODS AS MAY BE FOUND SUITABLE. THOUGH THEY CONSIDER AWARDS TO BE UNSATISFACTORY AND UNREASONABLE IN CERTAIN PARTS IT WAS ONLY BECAUSE THERE WAS AGREEMENT BETWEEN PARTIES TO THE ARBITRATION PROCEEDINGS TO ABIDE BY DECISIONS OF COMMISSIONS THAT THEY PROPOSE FOR PRESENT TO ACCEPT BOUNDARIES DETERMINED BY THEM.

9. COPY TO U.K. HIGH COMMISSIONER KARACHI BY AIR MAIL.