

Review Article*

Liaquat Ali Khan: His Life and Work

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For almost thirty years Liaquat Ali Khan was at the centre of Indo-Pakistan's chequered and often volatile political scene. Joining the Muslim League in 1923, he was its honorary secretary from 1936 to 1947, and chairman of the central parliamentary board in 1945. He was also a member of the UP legislative council from 1926 to 1940 (deputy president, 1931-8) and of the Indian legislative assembly from 1940 to 1947 (deputy leader of the League parliamentary party, 1943-47). He served as member finance in the interim government of India from 1946 to 1947 and, finally, was the prime minister of Pakistan from 1947 to 1951. This period was particularly crucial for the Muslims of the subcontinent for they were involved in a complex political competition with their adversaries that entailed decisions of far-reaching consequences. And yet, in spite of this central position that Liaquat Ali Khan occupied, it is surprising that he never got a well-researched full-length biography in English written on him. The few earlier works that exist are in the nature of hagiographies or collections of speeches compiled by admirers in addition to some research articles. However, references about him abound in the official and non-official documents and printed material in the archives and libraries of India, Pakistan and Britain. Someone had only to put them together in the shape of a coherent full-length story. It is, therefore, a welcome update that Dr Muhammad Reza Kazimi has filled the gap by writing this biography of Liaquat. The author must feel elated that he has accomplished this pioneering task in spite of the hazards that biographers often face, especially with regard to the methodological question of objectivity. The book, in its present form, is an improved version of his earlier work, *Liaquat Ali Khan and the Freedom Movement*, published by the

* The article reviews Muhammad Reza Kazimi's book *Liaquat Ali Khan: His Life and Work* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2003), pages 354, price Rs.595.

University of Karachi's Pakistan Study Centre in 1997. With the help of a variety of primary and secondary source material Kazimi has furnished a very readable and well-argued construct on Liaquat in 354 pages of text and notes in addition to six pages of bibliography and seven pages of explanatory prefaces. But, unfortunately, the absence of the Liaquat Collection and the official records of the Government of Pakistan from the listed sources has left a huge gap in information. It is particularly surprising that sitting in Karachi, Kazimi could not obtain access to the papers and diaries of Liaquat Ali Khan in the possession of Ashraf Liaquat, the elder son of the former prime minister. Hopefully, this deficiency will be overcome in the next edition of the book. As usual, the Oxford University Press takes the credit for improved printing standards though in bookbinding they have still to come up with something better in quality. Somehow, a few clangers (e.g., 'All-India Congress' instead of 'Indian National Congress') have escaped detection and I wish the desk editors had removed them before sending the manuscript to the printers.

If one were looking for the central theme in Kazimi's biography then it would be Liaquat's gradual metamorphosis from a young party organizer to an astute and assertive political leader, maturing ultimately as an independent and effective prime minister. In the process of this change, according to the author, Liaquat held the party together and won the abiding confidence of his mentor which, save some minor hiccups, lasted for many years. In the pages that follow an attempt shall be made to see whether the author has been able to reveal the man behind the mask and present the life and work of Liaquat in full colour. It is generally known that Liaquat claimed descent from an aristocratic family of Persian origin that had settled in Mughal India first in the UP and later in the Punjab. He grew up as an affable and confident young hopeful in a country that was ruled by the British with a certain tinge of imperial arrogance and smugness. Queen Victoria's Proclamation of 1858 that had set the tone and tenor of the British rule in India also defined the place of the Indians within that equation. The 'native' rulers of the princely states were allowed to live in comparative opulence under the watchful eye of the British Resident but for the ordinary Indians life continued essentially as it had been before—tough and despondent. The élite were in no enviable position either but they could survive by adjusting to the new political and socio-economic dispensation. The generation of Muslims that had grown up in the shadow of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan found it easier to adjust to the contemporary situation than those who thought that India under the British had become *daru'l-harb*, requiring resistance as a glorified *jihad*, whether reactive or measured.

Gradually, the former were caught into the network of collaboration while the latter were cast aside, inviting repression whenever they tried raising their heads. Liaquat was among those young men of the former category who found the British system rather attractive to work with, especially when the family had prospered in the aftermath of the revolt of 1857.¹

According to Kazimi (pp. 3-34), Liaquat was bright and resilient as a child who grew up in a deeply religious environment but it did not prevent him from maturing as a liberal modernist. This was due mainly to the influence of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's Aligarh, which was then the natural choice of the upper class Muslim élite. He did quite well in studies there and took part in sporting events as well. He also took up singing as a hobby and showed enthusiasm in culinary activities that resulted in adding weight and girth to his figure which eventually gave him the familiar portly appearance. But surprisingly he showed no particular interest in politics at a time when Aligarh was the storm centre of the Khilafat-Non-co-operation movement and most young Aligarhians were sucked into its vortex. This is quite surprising and Kazimi does not attempt to provide an answer. Perhaps his feudal background or filial obedience had kept him away from this political tsunami. Or perhaps his feet were too firmly planted on the ground to be swept off even by this massive frenzy. This, however, needs further investigation. Anyway, after graduating in 1918 (and not 1919), Liaquat returned home to be married to his cousin, Jehangira, who bore him his first born a year later before heading for Britain in early 1920 for higher studies. At Oxford, he was a 'non-collegiate' student for a year before graduating in June 1921 in jurisprudence from Exeter College. From Oxford, he went to Gray's Inn in London and in January 1922 was called to the Bar from the Inner Temple.²

In the winter of 1922, Liaquat returned home and enrolled as an advocate of the Punjab High Court but affluence and family kept him away from the courts. Gradually, however, he was drawn into politics. His background and temperament brought him closer to the Muslim League, which was steadily coming to itself after five years of dominance by the exuberant Khilafatists. He joined it in 1923 more as a symbolic gesture for it was to remain in a moribund state for another few

¹ Kazimi, however, thinks that the family suffered a setback as a consequence of the revolt. See Kazimi, *Liaquat Ali Khan* (Karachi, 2003), p. 5.

² Kazimi does not mention his 'non-collegiate' status. The information is from Roger Long's introduction to his *'Dear Mr Jinnah'* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. xvi.

years. And, he does not seem to have attended its regeneration at Lahore in May 1924. His attempt to enter the Punjab Council did not bear fruit but in 1926, he succeeded in winning a seat in the UP Council. That launched him into practical politics which was to be his full-time profession for the rest of his life. But initially, by choosing to be an independent Liaquat had taken on for himself the odd and difficult role of balancing the interests of his class with those of the rural masses. According to Kazimi, this caused great tensions during much of his early career and that caused him often to stray from his political creed. But then gradually as he moved into the political forefront he began to shed his feudal outlook. Already by the late 1920s Muslim interests had taken a more prominent place in his scheme of things but it was not until the middle of the 1930s that the change took a pronounced form. This coincided with Jinnah's return from his self-exile in England.

His personal life-style also underwent a change. Gone were the days of stylish and extravagant living and instead a regimen of austerity took roots. Politics absorbed most of his time as life with devoted Jehangira and the first-born Wilayat became increasingly bland and nondescript which led to a void in their relationship. Then suddenly Liaquat fell head over heels in love with a Christian girl whose grandfather, a Pandit of the Pant caste, had dared to renounce Hinduism, the religion of his forefathers. Ra'ana was delectable, educated, intelligent and politically insightful. Liaquat was charmed. In December 1932, their friendship blossomed into marriage and Ra'ana, now a Muslim, took her place alongside a rising public figure. Theirs was fairytale romance and it continued until the end. Liaquat was unabashedly very expressive of his powerful love for Ra'ana and fondness for their kids. Whenever he was away they would write to each other almost everyday. His letters always started with 'Sweetheart Mine', and contained expressions like 'longing to be back with you', 'I miss you more than I can express', 'feel miserable when you are not with me', 'I love you most dearly' and invariably closed with 'All my love & kisses' or 'Lots & lots of love to Ashraf and Akbar'.³ Passion was not the only obsession with the Liaquats; their letters are full of comments about politics, policies and people. In response to one of Ra'ana's comments about Lord Amery's statement on India, Liaquat admiringly quips that she had 'really become a politician!'.⁴ This aspect of the Liaquats' life has escaped Kazimi's otherwise informed work. And though he throws some light on Liaquat's relations with Jehangira and her son Wilayat, he

³ See various letters to Ra'ana in the Liaquat Collection.

⁴ Liaquat to Ra'ana, 24 August 1941, in *ibid.*

is almost silent about Liaquat and Ra'ana. Kazimi also concludes that Liaquat never divorced his first wife. I have checked with Ashraf Liaquat and he confirms that his father had definitely divorced his first wife before marrying Ra'ana and that he has documentary evidence to prove this.⁵ Roger Long, who has done work on Liaquat and is presently engaged in writing a biography of Liaquat, is also of the same opinion.⁶

Liaquat's rise as the honorary secretary of the All India Muslim League is Kazimi's next focus (pp. 35-44). In this revised version he has slashed the chapter to a point that it loses its coherence and grip. In my opinion, he should have merged the revised text with the next chapter. As it stands, it is very short and leaves out much important detail. Kazimi makes amends by giving an estimate of Liaquat's role as honorary secretary, especially in contrast to the part played by the previous office holders. The author rightly maintains that Liaquat enjoyed enough power to be assertive on occasions. But throughout his tenure, he was content to play the role of a deputy. His loyalty to Jinnah was categorical and the latter's confidence in him was justified. Kazimi maintains (pp. 45-65) that Liaquat made a 'fitful' start as honorary secretary for within months he developed differences with the UP parliamentary board and withdrew from that body. The differences emerged over the choice of candidates for the forthcoming elections when Liaquat took a rigid position. Kazimi justly controverts writers who ascribe Liaquat's rise within the League hierarchy to his loyalty to Jinnah alone. He also clears the doubts about the incongruity of his being the honorary secretary and yet contesting elections as an independent candidate and, more importantly still, getting away with this indiscretion at a time when the League was fighting the Congress and the British and facing challenge from among Muslims themselves. Liaquat survived because Jinnah was willing to look the other way due to his indulgence for his young honorary secretary and his reluctance to accentuate differences among Muslims any further, especially in the run up to the 1937 elections under the Government of India Act, 1935. In any case, it was imperative for Jinnah politically also

⁵ Interview with Ashraf Liaquat at Karachi.

⁶ Roger D. Long's representative works are: 'Liaquat Ali Khan and the Background to the Demand for Pakistan', *Proceedings of the Sixth International Symposium on Asian Studies, 1984* (Hong Kong, 1984), pp.1205-21; 'Jinnah and Liaquat', in DeWitt Ellinwood (ed.), *Asian Studies Conference Papers* (Ann Arbor, 1988); 'Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan – A Study in Comparison and Contrast', *Proceedings of the Fifteenth International Symposium on Asian Studies, 1994* (Hong Kong, 1995), pp. 139-48, and 'Dear Mr Jinnah' (Karachi, 2004).

to keep Liaquat within the League fold which helped the latter to emerge stronger from the crisis.

The watershed in the League-Congress relations – and by corollary in the lives of Liaquat and his mentor, Jinnah – was the Congress rule in eight out of eleven British Indian provinces during 1937-1939 (pp. 69-115). The miserable performance of the League in the 1937 elections had added to the arrogance of the Congress and resulted in a controversial three-year term of office that drew loud and vociferous protests from the Muslim League in its three well-documented reports by Pirpur, Fazlul Haq and Sharif that listed grievances. They were, however, rejected by the Congress as well as by Viceroy Linlithgow and Kazimi takes to task the apologists, especially Gowher Rizvi. His argument is that the majority of Muslims who had rejected the party at the recent polls turned round to accept the League version of the Congress rule. There was not ‘the slightest evidence that the Muslim League leadership had deliberately sought to concoct stories of Congress atrocities’ and cites excerpts from the Liaquat-Jinnah correspondence to show that ‘they tried to be meticulously fair in apportioning blame to the Congress ministries’. That helped the League to increase its following. Then he goes on to detail Liaquat’s part in building up the League’s campaign for the ‘Day of Deliverance’ in spite of some reservations within the League camp. The outbreak of World War II in September 1939 brought to the fore the divergence of tactics of the rival parties. The League, as Kazimi puts it, took the difficult path of treading between co-operation and non-co-operation. Liaquat feared that the League policy lacked a proper definition and was taking them nowhere. Already by March 1939, he had started thinking that if the Hindus and the Muslims could not live together then India should be divided based on religion and culture. Kazimi suggests that this line of thinking was the result of the various constitutional proposals that the Muslim League had been examining, especially those by Zafarul Hasan and Afzal Qadri. Now, here is some mix-up over chronology. By March 1939, only S. A. Latif’s proposal had surfaced. All the rest appeared later and Hasan’s and Qadri’s certainly did not come out until August of that year. But since ideas on similar lines were already circulating a change in Liaquat’s thinking is not surprising. And as honorary secretary he was pivotal to the whole process that led finally to the passage of the Lahore resolution. In my opinion the discussion on the crucial Lahore resolution deserved a little more space than has been allotted to other less relevant events such as Sapru’s abortive moves to bring Gandhi and Jinnah to the negotiating table.

Another event relevant to Liaquat's tenure as honorary secretary was the Cripps mission (March 1942) (pp. 90 ff.). Whatever the genesis of the mission it did try to find a solution to the tricky Indian constitutional problem at a time when the war was not going Britain's way. But the mission failed. According to Robin Moore it 'was crushed by the monolithic millstones of Churchillian conservatism and Congress nationalism'.⁷ Apparently, London sabotaged and thwarted political reform in India, especially when the Labour party was promoting it. Liaquat's and Jinnah's stand about Cripps's second mission, which Robin Moore largely overlooks and Peter Clarke in his recent work (which Kazimi has not seen and used)⁸ treats as a side-show, was as significant as that of the Congress. Earlier, Cripps considered the Pakistan demand 'as pure political pressure' but with the change in the communal feelings and the growth of the 'Pakistan' movement he changed his views.⁹ Jinnah was willing to meet Cripps half way and Liaquat placed before him three possible solutions to the constitutional problem: partition and establishment of Hindu and Muslim sovereign states, confederation and dominion status for each province under a federal government. But in Cripps's proposals 'Pakistan' secured only a 'veiled recognition' for his real preference was for an Indian union. In the end both the Congress and the League rejected his draft proposals. Apparently, Cripps had 'swallowed all [of] Nehru's views' and considered the Muslims as 'a tiresome opposition'. He went back empty handed, cursing Gandhi all the way for his intransigence that had brought the failure of his mission.¹⁰ The Congress option for 'Quit India' led to the arrest of Gandhi and the entire AICC. Jinnah responded by demanding 'Divide and Quit'. The CR Formula, conceding partition (down to the provinces level) failed to bring about a solution to the constitutional problem. Gandhi-Jinnah talks (1944), which Liaquat termed as the former's ploy to convince Wavell to accept his idea of a national government, also resulted in a failure. The only positive aspect

⁷ R. J. Moore, *Churchill, Cripps and India, 1935-1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 122.

⁸ Peter Clarke, *The Cripps Version: The Life of Sir Stafford Cripps, 1889-1952* (London, 2002).

⁹ Stafford Cripps's record of his meeting with Jinnah on 25 March 1942 in Nicholas Mansergh and E. W. R. Lumby (eds.), *Transfer of Power, 1942-47*, I (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1970), pp. 480-1.

¹⁰ Waheed Ahmad (ed.), *The Nation's Voice*, II (Karachi: Quaid-I-Azam Academy, 1996), pp. xxxix-xlii, quoting *Amery Diaries*, p. 729 and other sources. Amery, however, forgot that without plenipotentiary powers and in the face of a non-co-operating viceroy, Cripps had little chance of success.

of the CR Formula from the League point of view was the acceptance of the principle of partition even though it was hedged by many provisos. But what Gandhi offered was even less and, as Kazimi suggests, lacked seriousness and sincerity. The Simla Conference (May 1945) that resulted from the breakdown also failed. The obstacle was whether the League had the right to nominate all Muslim members of the national government. Wavell did not concede to the League on this point. Kazimi contradicts V. P. Menon's assertion that there were differences between Liaquat and Jinnah over the Simla proposals. He thinks that if any blame for the breakdown of the conference was to be apportioned then it must be pinned on Khizr Tiwana and Governor Bertrand Glancy of the Punjab. He defends Jinnah from the charge of being the real wrecker (pp. 96-8).

Next, Kazimi looks at the 1945-46 elections to central and provincial assemblies (pp. 100 ff.) when Liaquat was appointed the chairman of the League's central parliamentary board with Nawab Ismail and Khaliqzaman as members. The burden of the work fell on Liaquat's shoulders mainly because of Jinnah's frequent illness. At first Liaquat paid little attention to his own constituency but on the insistence of friends and student workers he made a short trip to Muzzafarnagar just a week ahead of the polls. The account is interesting and brings out Liaquat as a principled politician and an honest man who was sincere to friends and proper with his opponents. And though he was involved with the party affairs countrywide, he won easily with a large margin against his Muslim rival, who enjoyed the financial and logistic backing of the Congress. As to the provincial elections of 1946, Kazimi points out that the League strategy was to dwell on their identity as a nation and the soundness of the 'Pakistan' demand. But in the end the success of the Muslim League was the result of a solid countrywide campaign conducted through a network of party outfits run by dedicated cadres who crisscrossed provincial boundaries and spread the League message. And, Liaquat was in the thick of the battle, planning strategies, coordinating moves, overseeing details, troubleshooting, reprimanding erring leaders and addressing meetings and rallies. His house was the nerve centre of the election campaign. On top of this he had to report to Jinnah at every step, arrange party meetings, prepare their agenda and write minutes, and manage the party organs, the weekly *Manshoor* and the daily *Dawn*. It was by no means an easy job but Liaquat remained calm and unruffled throughout. The League won every Muslim seat in the centre and also did very well in the provinces and formed League ministries in Bengal and Sindh. This was Liaquat's finest hour and Kazimi is adept in analysing it.

Another topic where Kazimi's analysis is perceptive is the controversy over the Desai-Liaquat proposals (pp. 116-50). Simply stated, the episode arose from allegations that in April 1944, Liaquat had negotiated a clandestine agreement with Bholabhai Desai, his Congress colleague in the central assembly, for reconstituting the viceroy's executive council on a 40 (Congress) : 40 (League) : 20 (minorities) basis without disturbing either party's position on fundamental issues. The accusation was that Liaquat had taken a major step without clearance from Jinnah believing that the latter was a dying man. Desai was similarly targeted for having bypassed the Congress working committee though he had kept Gandhi informed of the negotiations. Based on the scrutiny of available evidence, Kazimi thinks that there is something seriously wrong with the accounts given by various writers. Liaquat's role in the episode, he contends, was secondary as the real actors were Desai and Wavell. One of the first acts of Wavell as viceroy was to entice the Congress and the League to agree on an interim government. But he wanted his proposals to come from the Indian leaders themselves. The Desai-Liaquat negotiations, Kazimi suggests, were a part of this plan. But Desai turned out to be too ambitious and too embarrassing for Wavell and to the Congress working committee whose detention he seemed to have prolonged deliberately in order to have a smooth ride to office. In the end, Desai's head rolled but, surprisingly, Liaquat was spared. According to Kazimi, the 'pact' was only a set of 'proposals' and the starting point of detailed negotiations between the Congress and the Muslim League. He lays the blame of the failure squarely on Desai, absolving Liaquat of any wrongdoing, and yet maintains that Jinnah had no inkling of the negotiations until they were leaked to the press. Kazimi has put up a gallant defence of Liaquat but it is difficult not to call to question the propriety of the latter's faux pas. Was he carried away by the prospects of clinching a dramatic victory by attaining parity with the Congress? Or, was he genuinely acquiescent to the outlook of a solution to a tricky problem? One would never know. But one thing is apparent. Liaquat knew the limits to which he could stretch Jinnah's affection for him. Like in 1936, this time round, too, he got away with his indiscretion. Jinnah was agitated no doubt but there was no question of rapping Liaquat on the knuckles, as M. H. Askari thinks he did.¹¹

In March 1946, a chastened Liaquat got ready to receive the Cabinet mission (pp. 151-80). Its genesis lay in the declining hegemony

¹¹ See M. H. Askari's review of Kazimi's *Liaquat Ali Khan in Dawn: Books & Authors*, 28 September 2003, p. 9.

of British imperialism after World War II (marked by popular demand for independence, mutiny in the Indian Navy, indiscipline in the Air Force, and some unrest in the Army) and the new Labour government's commitment to granting independence to India. Since the mission arrived without a plan of their own, various options, from a unitary India to a truncated 'Pakistan', came up for review. But with the experience of 1942 still haunting him, Cripps made the wooing of Gandhi as the focal point of his negotiations.¹² The British policy to attract the Congress was dictated by a long-term view that 'it will be more important to us to have good relations with the Hindus than with the Muslims'.¹³ Therefore, the risks involved in accepting 'Pakistan', especially from the point of view of defence, were considered overwhelming. The mission's preference was definitely for a loose federation and not partition. Liaquat dismissed the guarantees promised to the Muslims as unsatisfactory. To him the 'Pakistan' demand was based not on fear of the Hindu majority but was the unanimous urge of a nation that would be satisfied only by the grant of full sovereignty. Kazimi contends that Liaquat's stance underlined 'a basic shift' in the League's approach. Once the League entered into a dialogue with the mission no discussion on other alternatives, such as a common union, could be avoided (pp. 152-4). The League changed its tactics twice in quick succession: once when the Delhi legislators convention (6-9 April) decided to convert its 'two states' demand of the Lahore resolution vintage into a single 'Pakistan' state claim,¹⁴ and, again, when it submitted its proposals to the mission virtually compromising its demand for 'Pakistan'.¹⁵ The result was a tedious balancing act by the cabinet delegation that yielded on 16 May a three-tiered federation. At the top was the Indian Union embracing British India and the States, dealing with foreign affairs, defence and communications and power to raise finances. The Union was to have an executive and a legislature of Indian representatives. At the other end

¹² Gandhi knew his advantage and drove a hard bargain. A less indulgent view noted that 'The nasty old man has grasped that he can get what he asks & so goes on asking for more & more'. See Francis Turnbull, PS to Pethic-Lawrence, noted this in his Diary on 19 May 1946. Quoted in Peter Clarke, *The Cripps Version*, p. 434.

¹³ See Draft undated telegram in Nicholas Mansergh and Penderal Moon (eds.), *Transfer of Power*, VII, (London, 1977), p. 753.

¹⁴ This was done at the League Legislators' Convention at Delhi from 7 to 9 April 1946. See Waheed Ahmad (ed.), *The Nation's Voice*, IV (Karachi, 2000), appendix I, pp. 653-72.

¹⁵ The proposals were submitted on 12 May 1946. See *ibid.*, V, (Karachi, 2001), appendix, VII, pp. 875-7.

were placed the provinces, vested with all the remaining subjects as well as residuary powers. For the middle, the provinces were allowed to form groups according to a prescribed formula representing one Hindu and two Muslim majority provinces with executives and legislatures. A short-term plan called for installing an interim government; and a long-term one envisaged the promulgation of a constitution as an alternative to partition. After the initial ten years (and at ten years' interval thereafter) a province or a group could call for the reconsideration of the terms of the constitution.¹⁶ This was followed by two elucidations of 25 May and 16 June by which the plan for an interim government was outlined. On 6 June, the League, reiterating that sovereign 'Pakistan' was their ultimate goal, accepted the mission's scheme and authorized its president to negotiate with the viceroy for the interim government. Jinnah had to face considerable opposition from within the council.¹⁷ Twenty days later (26 June), the Congress, observing that the proposals fell short of their objectives, found sufficient scope for enlarging and strengthening the central authority. It agreed to join the proposed constituent assembly for framing the constitution and demanded 'a representative and responsible' provisional national government at the earliest. When Nehru assumed the presidency of the Congress in July 1946, a more obdurate stance led to a flippant interpretation of the compulsory grouping clause that impelled the League to withdraw acceptance of the mission's plan.

Kazimi questions the contention of those who think that a settlement was possible if Liaquat and not Jinnah had been in the driving seat. He argues that Liaquat was certainly not as amenable on this issue as he is made out to be. He considered the mission's declaration as mere 'eyewash' for it neither met the demand for Pakistan nor provided sufficient safeguards for the Muslims. In the grouping clause, in particular, he thought that the provinces could though opt out of a group they could not do so from the Indian Union. In his opinion, the proposals were far worse than the terms offered to them by Cripps in 1942 where at least the principle of 'Pakistan' had been conceded. Clearly, Liaquat was against accepting the mission's proposals (pp. 159-60). Jinnah concurred with Liaquat but preferred to leave the decision to the League Council. Going by their public statements there is nothing to suggest that either Jinnah or Liaquat ever wavered in his resolve to settle for anything less than a sovereign 'Pakistan'. Then, why did the League suddenly turn

¹⁶ Parliamentary Papers, 1946, Cmd. 6821. Also available in Mansergh (ed.), *Transfer of Power*, VII (London, 1977), pp. 582-91.

¹⁷ Liaquat Ali Khan (ed.), *Resolutions of the All India Muslim League, January 1944 to December 1946* (Delhi, n.d.), pp. 49-51.

round to accept the mission's proposals? Kazimi does not offer a clear answer. The mission's deference for Gandhi and Nehru was too obvious though the League leaders might not have known the extent to which Cripps and Pethic-Lawrence had been carrying on clandestine liaison with the Congress leaders.¹⁸ However, as a strategist, Jinnah must have realized that in view of new realities and the mission's strong apathy for 'Pakistan' and partition, the only alternative lay in getting it circuitously, even if meant a long wait. The option to secede from the Union and form an independent unit after a period of ten years was an attractive alternative route to 'Pakistan'. Jinnah was reacting to the situation as it then existed. If the League wavered any further the British might go ahead with an arrangement more disastrous for the Muslims.¹⁹ Therefore, full provincial autonomy and a weak centre within united India was not a bad deal. The League council's decision of 6 June is quite intelligible. The intention was not to hasten the funeral rites of the essential demands but to affirm that 'the basis and the foundation of Pakistan' were 'inherent' in the mission's plan, which would ultimately yield a sovereign state.²⁰ Obviously, the emphasis on national ideals and culture to the exclusion of the fear of majority was but meant for public consumption. The Congress had also realized the implications of the League decision. It was not for nothing that Gandhi had dismissed the compulsory grouping clause as 'worst than Pakistan'²¹ and Nehru had publicly pressed forward his mentor's interpretation.²² This was enough to alarm the already dithering League to withdraw its acceptance of the cabinet mission plan. The critics' contention that the League's acceptance of the plan was indicative of Jinnah's (and by corollary Liaquat's) tepid support for the 'Pakistan' demand does not stick. Sikandar Hayat's incisive critique of Ayesha Jalal's 'bargaining counter'

¹⁸ See Peter Clarke, *The Cripps Version*, pp. 393-457.

¹⁹ Hodson is of the view that Jinnah accepted the plan 'only because he feared that if he rejected it the Congress would be left not only in British favour as the time for independence approached but also in actual power as the Interim Government of India'. See H. V. Hodson, *The Great Divide*, fourth impression (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 164.

²⁰ Liaquat Ali Khan (ed.), *Resolutions of the All India Muslim League, January 1944 to December 1946* (Delhi, n.d.), pp. 49-51.

²¹ Gandhi to Cripps, 8 May 1946, PRO, CAB, 127/128 in Peter Clarke, *The Cripps Version*, p. 426.

²² Kazimi agrees with Maulana Azad's denunciation of Nehru in his *India Wins Freedom* but maintains that he himself as well as Gandhi had the same view which he had wilfully suppressed. See Kazimi, *Liaquat Ali Khan*, p. 178.

theory as 'a classic example of an unfounded inferential leap' deserves notice.²³ Except for this, Jalal's provocative thesis might have been pretty convincing for she is an articulate and perceptive critic. The Congress never expected the League to accept the plan or that Jinnah would call their bluff. But in the situation as it then existed the only alternative for the League was to make a bid for the longer route to 'Pakistan'.

It is evident that but for the Congress's intransigence on the grouping clause the basis for a settlement was almost established. The League was willing to work the system, at least for another ten years, and the Congress slip-up put back everything. Liaquat was clearly upset. This leads one to the tug of war over the interim government (pp. 163 ff. and 181-219). Negotiations in this connection had begun immediately after the 16 May statement and warmed up after its elucidation of 16 June. In the absence of Jinnah who was in Kashmir, Liaquat could have conducted the negotiations himself but he was too cautious to act independently because no positive assurances from the government were coming through. The other sticking points were the League demands for parity and the right to choose Muslim representatives. What Kazimi does not grasp is the fact that the real reason behind this tactical posturing was the 'broader struggle for 'representative legitimacy' that neither the League nor the Congress was willing to grant the other.'²⁴ Soon it became evident that Wavell was not ready to concede parity or accept the League's right to nominate Muslims. But since the decision was sugarcoated with certain verbal assurances, the League, despite Liaquat's genuine apprehensions, decided on 25 June to enter the interim government. For its part, the Congress, having had an exhilarating brush with power in the provinces during 1937-39, was anxious to get back into the saddle, without even waiting for the new constitution coming into being. But since it did not get the terms it wanted, rejection was the expected outcome. Wavell was committed to inducting the League even if the Congress declined to join the interim government.²⁵ But practical politics dictated otherwise, especially when Cripps and Pethic-Lawrence were bent on humouring the Congress. Jinnah and Liaquat reeled back

²³ Sikandar Hayat, 'Lahore Resolution: A Review of Major Criticisms', in Kaniz F. Yusuf, et al. (eds), *Pakistan Resolution Revisited* (Islamabad, 1990), esp. pp. 72-8. For Jalal's thesis see *The Sole Spokesman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 201.

²⁴ Peter Clarke, *The Cripps Version*, p. 428.

²⁵ Penderel Moon (ed.), *Wavell: The Viceroy's Journal* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 285-6.

and, taking a leaf out of Gandhi's book, threatened 'Direct Action' as the most effective way of dealing with British and the Congress.²⁶ Kazimi asserts that Liaquat was firm in his resolve to fight it out even though he foresaw trouble from the Congress. On 31 July, Jinnah turned down the viceroy's invitation. Early in August 1946, the Congress decided to come aboard and was quickly installed without the League. Wavell realized his mistake only after the horrors of the three-day Calcutta riots (16-18 August) in which 20,000 hapless people perished setting off an even bloodier chain reaction but by then it was too late to make amends. The damage had been done. The communal frenzy stood at the point of no return and the League's belated induction only highlighted the tensions.

Liaquat's nine-month tenure as the finance member in the interim government is the high point of Kazimi's study (pp. 181-219). But it must be remembered that the interim government was neither a cabinet nor a coalition in the real sense; it was a circus of political contenders with opposite aims. They functioned as two separate blocs. The Congress was out to consolidate its gains and oust the League while the latter was working expressly for secession and 'Pakistan'. The League had also been able to impose its nominees on Nehru (whose leadership they did not accept) without recognizing the constituent assembly under the long-term plan. It was to this interim government that in October 1946, Liaquat had been sent by Jinnah to head the League faction and deliver.²⁷ And he made it abundantly clear that the League had come in without any kind of bargain but would work for 'a common enterprise to advance the good of India'. Kazimi believes that there were occasions when the League and Congress nominees were able to come together and he wonders whether the atmosphere of hostility was due to events or personalities. The author also dwells on the pressure that was brought to bear on the League nominees to accept the long-term plan or resign. The issue could not be resolved even at the London conference in December 1946 and the ambiguity continued to prevail until the change in British policy overtook events. All this time Liaquat had been involved in a protracted argument with Wavell refusing to give a try to the constituent assembly unless the Congress accepted the 'essentials and fundamentals' of the plan. Thus the demise of the cabinet mission plan was assured. Kazimi takes his reader beyond the Wavell period to

²⁶ The League passed its 'Direct Action' resolution on 29 July 1946. See Khalid bin Sayeed, *Pakistan: The Formative Phase (1875-1948)* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 151-2.

²⁷ Liaquat was grateful to Jinnah 'for the confidence which you have placed in me'. Liaquat to Jinnah 13 October 1946, Liaquat Collection.

emphasize the pro-Congress attitude of Mountbatten that did not auger well either for Liaquat or for the demand for 'Pakistan'. The author gives several instances where the new viceroy tried to intimidate Liaquat and displayed his excessive reliance on Nehru. Kazimi suggests that Mountbatten's hostility continued until long after the partition. Liaquat was placed in a quandary, especially following the 3 June plan, when the viceroy rolled into action V. P. Menon's proposals in consultation with Nehru for the bifurcation of the central government, confining the League nominees to the 'Pakistan' areas. This was the last ditch attempt by the Congress, maintains Kazimi, to dislodge the League from the interim government. When this did not succeed he tried to obtain their resignations under the plea of reconstitution. The Congress nominees obliged but those of the League refused until its details were available and legal status established. He wonders where Mountbatten got the idea from that Liaquat would be amenable to whatever he did. The Menon proposals were redrawn and the executive council continued as before until the independence act was passed. Liaquat's vigilance, maintains Kazimi, obtained for the League further amendments in the draft formula. Thus Liaquat, with Jinnah's guidance, was able to steer the interim government to a favourable conclusion as regards the League's interests.

Apparently, the Congress had not grasped the implications of the finance portfolio going to the League nominee because only three out of fourteen important portfolios were allowed to the Muslims. Liaquat proved to be an adept financial manager. He had some experience of economic and agricultural matters early in his career and Kazimi thinks it frivolous to consider Liaquat a novice in this regard. His 1947 Budget was the culmination of his tenure in the interim government. The author deals with it as a separate episode (pp. 220-44). His central argument is that the Budget, especially with its 'Business Profits Tax' (BPT), was not a negative measure meant to obstruct the Congress colleagues but was formulated on sound economic principles and in the interest of India as a whole. It conformed to the Congress's supposedly egalitarian principles and most certainly was not intended to intimidate the Hindu businessmen who formed the core of the Congress financial support. He also contests the impression that Liaquat was hesitant and deficient in taking up the challenge. He quotes Mumtaz Hasan as well as Wavell at some length to discount the above impression created by Choudhry Mohammad Ali and Maulana Azad. He suggests that the Budget and his speech were vetted by the British and Indian (both Hindu and Muslim) officials and was devoid of malice or deceit. In the pre-Budget meetings of the small committee (Wavell, Nehru and Mitthai), Liaquat did not encounter any

opposition. One tends to accept the argument here that Nehru, who headed the socialist faction of the Congress, perhaps did not fathom the extent of opposition from the conservative section of his own party and when the crunch came he decided to support the latter. The economic soundness of the budget proposals apart, the political atmosphere was such that a compromise was the only prudent way out. Wavell's acknowledgment of Liaquat's financial prowess and professional integrity was not just courtesy. And what perturbed the business community was the social orientation of the measure. The stakes were raised when the affair was translated into communal language. The conclusion: the BPT was not as iniquitous as it was made out to be by the Congress and its big business lobby. If the Budget had been unsound economically and socially, it would not have withstood the pressure in the assembly. Liaquat had also taken other steps, such as the abolition of the salt tax and the imposition of food subsidies for the amelioration of the poor without affecting the middle classes. The doubling of the cess on tea, which was to cost ten million pounds to the British food industry, shows he had national interests at heart. Kazimi maintains that the business community was furious more at the social orientations of the Budget, which received approbation from the progressive and liberal sections both among the Hindus and Muslims. It is interesting that Liaquat did not live up to the same high ideals in the Pakistan and his government reverted to a conservative economic policy. The finance minister Ghulam Muhammad must share the blame equally with Liaquat but still Kazimi digs up excuses to let the latter off the hook.

The drop scene in the partition drama came when on 20 February 1947, the British government announced its intention to relinquish control by June 1948. Kazimi devotes considerable space to these events (pp. 245-85). In his opinion, Liaquat focused his attention on the process by which the plan of partition was to be evolved, including the division of the armed forces and the demarcation of the boundaries of the future dominions. The British, for their part, were intent on avoiding partition at all cost and the opinion of the new viceroy, Mountbatten, was no different. In order to achieve the results, he followed an opposite course to that of Wavell: pressure the weaker party rather than the stronger. If Jinnah was unbending he might find through Liaquat 'a more reasonable solution than this mad Pakistan'. But soon he realized that that was a vain hope. The only way out was to divide British India into two. Kazimi winds through the maze of negotiations, cobwebs of deceit, double-dealings, last-minute changes and outright injustices played out by the last viceroy, his advisors and his Congress beneficiaries. The vicereine's role, which escapes Kazimi's notice, was no less crucial in this political

drama. A candid construal would depend on which side of the divide one is sitting but an impartial analysis would, no doubt, help filter through some of the behind-the-scenes goings-on in their true light. Liaquat's part in the partition crisis as the League's man in the interim government allowed him not only the vantage point but also the space necessary to negotiate. Kazimi goes to some length in pointing out that Mountbatten's official records could not be relied upon because internal evidence suggested lacunae in his minutes of meetings. As such his claim about Liaquat intending to help him becomes doubtful. Similarly, there are discrepancies in his version of the negotiations. The author pays more attention to the division of armed forces than to the process of partition itself probably because Liaquat was more directly involved in controversy with Auckinleck, the chief proponent of the unity of the armed forces lobby. Both Liaquat and Jinnah were insistent that the division was essential as the concomitant of sovereignty. Liaquat's argument was that without its armed forces Pakistan would collapse like a house of cards. He entered into a long-drawn-out argument with Mountbatten who would not budge on this issue. The negotiations proved inconclusive until the viceroy was left with no option but to accept the sheer inevitability of the divide. Like other segments of the Indian society, the armed forces had also been affected by the communal strife. Liaquat pressed for division because he was worried about the ill effects of speedy reorganization and nationalization on Muslims. In the end, maintains Kazimi, the political necessity prevailed over the technical difficulties and even Auckinleck's hostility faded away eventually. The rest was a matter of tedious detail conducted in acrimonious parleys. The author then races through the process of division of India, including the demarcation of the boundaries, to reach 15 August 1947 in just a few pages.

The Part III of the book (pp. 289-331) deals with Liaquat's period as prime minister. To my mind, this is the weakest link in Kazimi's otherwise well-organized work. Liaquat's rise to premiership was the culmination of his political life and it was spread over a thousand and four hundred eventful days. It is also the culminating point of Kazimi's biography. As such it should have received a comprehensive analysis. Instead, the reader is treated to a thirty-three page 'summary' of events in six short uneven chapters, averaging five pages per chapter. In his preface to the present OUP edition (2003), the author informs that Richard Symonds had specifically suggested to him to include this additional part in the second edition. But I am sure Symonds did not advise him to squeeze the events of four years into just thirty-three odd pages without really adding much new information. Voluminous archival

material now available to researchers has simply been ignored. This has turned the Part III into a hotchpotch of disjointed events. It is particularly irksome that old myths not only survive but are also given added credence. Kazimi seems to have been in a hurry to get the second edition out of his way with the result that this part fails to blend in with the rest of the book. In fact, he should either have merged these six chapters into a single coherent part or expanded them to conform in substance and size to those in the Part II. That would have made some sense. Hopefully, this will be taken care of in the next edition. In its present shape, when the foreign affairs find a place before the domestic scene, the sequence seems to be quite inapt. Following independence, the priority for the successors was the domestic scene, especially with regard to the formation of the political and administrative structures of the fledgling state. Even if he had no access to the official records of the Government of Pakistan, the newspapers of the period and volumes v, vi and vii of Dr Zaidi's *Jinnah Papers* (Islamabad, 2000-2), perused in conjunction with the first two chapters of Mohammad Waseem's *Politics and the State in Pakistan* (Islamabad, 1994), the last four of Khalid bin Sayeed's *Pakistan: The Formative Phase* (Karachi, 2001), and chapters two, three and four of Ayesha Jalal's *The State of Martial Rule* (Lahore, 1988), would have given him a good starting point. Such a treatment would have blended the colonial era smoothly with the state-structuring bustle of the post-independence period. Kazimi seems to have shied away from this difficult task. His nine-page review of the domestic politics is pungent but lacks detail. So one does not know how the central government was put in place or the provincial administrations evolved. There is nothing about the restructuring of the armed forces or the rehabilitation of the refugees that set off tensions between the Punjab and Sindh governments. Nor is there anything on the constitution-making activity or the political wrangling inside the legislature. Kazimi is silent on the bifurcation of the All-India Muslim League in December 1947 into the Indian and Pakistani branches. The differences over how the party should be run are also glossed over completely. It was here that in February 1948 Jinnah got his first big shock when his advice over the election of the chief organizer was disregarded and instead of Liaquat (whom he supported), Khaliqzaman was chosen. Jinnah did not wait to see the outcome and left the meeting in a huff.²⁸

²⁸ See interviews with Ch. Nazir Ahmad, Ayub Khuhro, Arbab Abdul Ghafoor and Jamal Mian Farangi Mahalli in S. Z. Zaidi Al-Huma (ed.), *Qa'id-i-'Azam ke rufaa' se mulaqaten* (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, 1990), pp. 71-2, 81, 90-1 and 137-9.

Liaquat, too, was getting his share of disappointments. He could not handle the challenge from his ambitious peers, especially from the vocal Bengalis and powerful Punjabis, and reacted imprudently against what he called the 'curse of provincialism', not realizing that quite apart from the struggle for power the chaos was enmeshed within the turmoil unleashed by the partition and the consequent construction of the new at a fast pace. The seeds of the separation of East Pakistan were sown during this period. The language issue was the starting point. The grumbling over quota in the services and autonomy were to follow. The clash of personalities was the final straw. Liaquat blundered into making a clandestine change in the interim constitution by which he blocked the majority leader from becoming chief minister. It had its repercussions in the western wing, too. Gradually, Liaquat's control began to erode. The ambitious adversaries who were out to scalp had long knives. The Objectives Resolution, which was a sop to the right-wing sabre-rattlers, failed to improve his ratings but inadvertently pushed the country farther away from Jinnah's dream of a modernist Pakistan. The sloppy control over the armed forces and the stalemate in Kashmir had left the Pakistani officer corps grumbling over how the affairs of the country were being run which bred seditions like the 'Rawalpindi Conspiracy' that also permeated the civilian left-wing intellectuals and socialists. Its impact on the later history of Pakistan is evident and Liaquat's assassination itself may have been a by-product of this scenario, if the theory of a foreign hidden hand is discounted. It is no laughing matter that the ruling prime minister of Pakistan was shot dead in broad daylight in the presence of the law enforcing agencies in a city which housed two federal ministries and the general headquarters of the army. As an eyewitness to this nightmarish incident I can never forget it and even after fifty-four years, I get the jitters at the thought of it. Several high-level inquiries, clamours in the press and appeals from Begum Liaquat Ali Khan have failed to solve the mystery. Kazimi should have devoted at least a chapter to the chain of events that led to this tragic incident and what followed thereafter.

My penultimate observation is reserved for Liaquat's relations with Jinnah which has often excited contentious comment. The two leaders were, of course, entirely different in nature. Liaquat was easy in manners, a family man who loved his wife and children tremendously. He was warm, affectionate, and loyal to his mentor. As a political leader and the chief organizer of the Muslim League he was an asset to Jinnah for he acted as a link between the party hierarchy and the ordinary workers. He was also an adept orator in Urdu who could put across party's point of view to the masses, especially after the early departure of

a stalwart like Nawab Bahadur Yar Jung at the early age of just thirty-nine.²⁹ Jinnah was generally reserved though not cold, a lonely figure with no family except a loving sister. A cold logician and a shrewd politician, he was resolute, determined and brimming with will power. He was appreciative of Liaquat's role and publicly conceded that he was his 'right hand' and 'thoroughly proletarian'.³⁰ The private correspondence of Jinnah and Liaquat suggests that both were very cordial and respectful to each other and remained so until the end. The only documentary evidence that points to a possible rift between the two is Liaquat's personal and confidential letter to Jinnah of 27 December 1947 wherein he had offered to resign.³¹ Apparently, the reason for the tiff was the rebuke that Jinnah had administered to Ra'ana at the dinner he had hosted the evening before (not at Liaquat's reception on the 25th to celebrate the former's seventy-second birthday). Liaquat was not well and could not attend. Kazimi seems to suggest that though Jinnah did not accept the resignation he never got over his prime minister's audacity and in an attempt to settle the score he forced the cabinet to clip the latter's wings. On 30 December, a notification from the Government of Pakistan declared that no question of policy or principle would be decided except at a meeting of the cabinet presided over by the governor-general. The convention was personal to Jinnah until the country's constitution was promulgated (pp. 339-40). The interpretation is incorrect.

For his information, Kazimi seems to have relied on that portion of the cabinet proceedings which refers to the adoption of the convention. He ignores the minutes of the meeting altogether. Had he seen them he would have realized that the convention was Liaquat's idea and not Jinnah's. Liaquat and his cabinet colleagues were of the opinion that Jinnah's charisma as the 'Quaid-i-Azam' would be most useful to them if he were to preside over the meetings. His presence in the cabinet would be 'the greatest factor making for stability and progress of the State'.³² Jinnah, however, was reluctant and told Liaquat that he was quite content to remain as a constitutional governor-general. But Liaquat and his colleagues insisted that Pakistan needed Jinnah's guidance and

²⁹ He died in June 1944.

³⁰ Speech at Karachi, 26 December 1943, quoted in Waheed Ahmad (ed.), *The Nation's Voice III* (Karachi, 1997), p. 356.

³¹ The original is in NAP, Quaid-i-Azam Papers, F. 1090/450-3. A copy is available in Liaquat Collection.

³² See NDC, Govt. of Pakistan, Cabinet Records, Case no. Q. 224/35/47, 'Adoption of a Convention by the Cabinet'.

begged him to act as ‘the head of the State in the real sense of the term’. Jinnah agreed but he was to preside only over those meetings where important matters came up for decision. Whether this was plain expediency, measured sycophancy or simply a weak-kneed stance, the argument can be stretched in all three directions. The records of the cabinet meetings from 15 August 1947 to 23 May 1948 (when Jinnah decided to leave for Balochistan for health reasons) shed an interesting picture. Before the convention of 30 December 1947, there were altogether thirty-four cabinet meetings. Liaquat presided over sixteen of them while the rest of the eighteen were deputized by one of the senior cabinet ministers during the prime minister’s absence.³³ Jinnah *attended* only four of these meetings but did not *preside*. After the convention of 30 December 1947 there were forty-nine cabinet meetings in all. Out of these, Jinnah presided over sixteen, Liaquat twenty-six and others seven.³⁴ The number of meetings presided over by Jinnah was thus comparatively small, only sixteen out of eighty-three, a mere thirteen percent. What is even more remarkable is that the minutes of all the meetings were approved by the prime minister and not by the governor-general, even where the latter had presided. This should end the myth of Jinnah acting like a dictator and Liaquat conspiring against his leader’s back. However, this does not mean that the two leaders were free from differences. There were clear signs that Jinnah and Liaquat were stressed out.³⁵ And, Fatima and Ra’ana did nothing to ease the situation. While the former paraded her dislike of the Liaquats, the latter was too anxious

³³ See NDC, Govt. of Pakistan, Cabinet Records, Cabinet Proceedings. As to the four meetings that Jinnah attended before the convention of 30 December, the notices for the meetings were issued stating merely that ‘the Quaid-i-Azam will meet the Cabinet at Government House at 6 P.M. today’. Nowhere did they mention that he would *preside* over the meeting. See, for instance, S. Osman Ali’s circular notice no. Q. 12/C.N./47 dated 22 September 1947, in NDC, Cabinet Papers, file no. 93/CF/47.

³⁴ NDC, Govt. of Pakistan, Cabinet Records, Cabinet Proceedings, 1st meeting (15 Aug. 1947) to 47th meeting (23 May 1948).

³⁵ See my ‘Preliminary Notes on Jinnah’s Health and Politics’, in Dr. K. F. Yusuf (ed.), *Politics and Policies of the Quaid-i-Azam* (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, 1994), pp. 225-30; and my review of *Jinnah Papers*, Volume VII (Islamabad, 2003), in *Pakistan Perspectives*, 9:1 (Jan.-June 2004), pp. 175-9. Incidentally, Liaquat shared at least three doctors with Jinnah: Dr Albert Batty, Dr. A. Rahman and Dr Susanta. Sen.

to appear as the 'first lady'.³⁶ Evidently, gone were the days when Jinnah was full of charm and courtesy to Ra'ana, always addressing her as 'Begum Sahib'.³⁷ At one point when he was holidaying in Kashmir in summer 1944, he insisted that Ra'ana and the children join him and Fatima and even offered to arrange a houseboat for them. Liaquat, too, if he liked could run up there for a short time.³⁸ Now, things were quite different. Jinnah's response to Liaquat's letter of resignation is not traceable in the Quaid-i-Azam Collection or in his State Papers at the National Archives in Islamabad. But a document of later date in the Liaquat Collection gives a clue to the outcome of the incident. This is a memorandum from Ra'ana's life-long friend and confidante, 'Billy' Kay Miles. It informs that on receiving the resignation of his prime minister, Jinnah was deeply upset and immediately phoned Liaquat, asking him over to the governor-general house that same evening. According to her, Liaquat was reluctant to continue in office because of the 'unjust aspersions' cast on his wife and the lack of 'stable confidence' in him revealed by the incident. But then Jinnah and Liaquat 'talked the whole thing out that night', agreeing that in future they would not allow both Ra'ana and Fatima to come between their friendships.³⁹ In Billy Miles's

³⁶ Fatima Jinnah, in her *My Brother*, is particularly subjective in her approach and often speaks disparagingly of Liaquat. When Sharif al Mujahid edited the manuscript for publication in 1987, the more critical portions were still under embargo at the National Archives of Pakistan, Islamabad. They are now open to readers. Mujahid's edited work was published from Karachi by the Quaid-i-Azam Academy. In another book to which Fatima Jinnah contributed a preface, Liaquat is again the subject of criticisms. See Col. Dr. Ilahi Bakhsh, *With the Quaid-i-Azam During his Last Days* (Lahore, 1949), *passim*. Ra'ana's bid for primacy was no idle gossip, according to the late Col. Sahibzada Najmuddin Mirza, the first ADC to Liaquat, whom I interviewed in Lahore. For visual evidence, he pointed out to a picture of Ra'ana where she is seen striding gleefully a step or two ahead of Jinnah, Fatima and her own husband. In the opinion of Pasha Haroon, the wife Yusuf Haroon, the two leading ladies had gradually drifted apart and their friends were also divided into opposite groups. Fatima Jinnah's supporters included Lady Hidayatullah while Ra'ana Liaquat's enjoyed the support of Lady Abdoola Haroon. Pasha Haroon's interview with 'Red Baron' on City 89 Radio on 14 August 2005.

³⁷ See Jinnah to Ra'ana Liaquat, 18 June 1940; Jinnah to Ra'ana Liaquat, 1 August 1942; and Jinnah to Liaquat, 26 April 1945, Liaquat Collection.

³⁸ See Jinnah to Liaquat, 3 June 1944, in *ibid*.

³⁹ See the undated note by Kay Miles in the Liaquat Collection. Kay Miles, nick-named 'Billy', was an interesting soul. She was born on 14 November 1905 in Quetta of Welsh parents. Her father was working in the railways.

opinion, Fatima was extremely temperamental and jealous by nature and had steadily poisoned her brother against Ra'ana.⁴⁰ Since Kazimi had no access to the Liaquat Collection, he was bound to come to a rash conclusion, especially in tying up the resignation with the passage of the 30th December convention. Miles's document should settle the argument that Jinnah was an autocrat and had deliberately held down his prime minister. The truth is that Liaquat, in deference to his senior, always referred important cases to Jinnah and sought his advice. On one occasion in March 1948 when Jinnah was touring East Pakistan, Liaquat intentionally postponed discussions until the old man was back in the capital.⁴¹

It is not easy to write a biography. It is even more difficult when the subject is a political leader who lives and works under the shadow of another great leader. Therefore, Kazimi's dilemma, which is the natural result of his adulation of Liaquat, drives him to defend his icon on every count. Methodologically, when an author's approach raises eyebrows, it needs careful scrutiny. Fortunately, Liaquat was a leader in his own right. His organizing competence, negotiating ability and oratorical skills were outstanding. But as number two to Jinnah, his role was naturally circumscribed and his achievements obscured by the charisma and awe of his mentor. In contrast, Jawaharlal Nehru was able to shine in spite of Gandhi. The reason was simple. Nehru's incursions into political philosophy and long innings buoyed him up while they eluded Liaquat. The latter won recognition only after Jinnah died. But then, he was too

Ra'ana's friendship with Billy blossomed when they were together at Isabella Thorburn (IT) College in Lucknow. Later, she became the principal of the IT College. In 1937, Billy was at Simla when Liaquats' first-born Ashraf arrived. During World War II, she worked with the US Army Headquarters in New Delhi. She was living in Delhi when the partition took place. She came over to Karachi as a citizen of Pakistan and became a part of the Liaquat household, quite like a family member. She was also an unpaid governess to Ashraf and Liaquat. Billy did commendable social work and with Ra'ana became the founder member of the APWA. After Liaquat's assassination in October 1951 their friendship grew even stronger. When Ra'ana went to Holland (1954–61) and Rome (1961–66) as Pakistan's Ambassador, Billy went with her as her private secretary in the employ of the Government of Pakistan. She came back in 1966 to resume work in APWA. Billy died on 28 May 1982 and is buried in Karachi. For details about Billy Miles's life and work, I am indebted to Ashraf and his wife, Patricia Liaquat.

⁴⁰ Undated note by Kay Miles in the Liaquat Collection.

⁴¹ See NDC, Govt. of Pakistan, Cabinet Records, 12/CF/48.

busy administering the affairs of the state and had hardly three years to play an effective role. Though his life was cut short by an assassin's bullet, Liaquat achieved a good deal within that short period. According to Kazimi (pp. 332-42), Liaquat won the trust of his mentor not for his docility as some writers contend but because of his ability and intellectual capacity. He was a magnetic figure, an adept organizer and had considerable reserves of strength. For his work in the interim government he earned the respect of Wavell though not of his successor, Mountbatten. His 1947 Budget was a triumph for Indian nationalism though the Congress would not admit it. Liaquat cleverly negotiated the division of the armed forces though he was unable to secure equitable partition of the provinces. But then he made amends by salvaging 'from the grasp of an unscrupulous and dishonourable Viceroy' a semblance of 'a viable structure for the new state of Pakistan' (pp. 338-9).

Liaquat's term as prime minister was weighed down by myriads of problems which, Kazimi thinks, he was able to solve. This is rather a tall claim because the continued presence of these problems caused instability that allowed the rot to set in. The Kashmir issue was different. All his efforts came to naught. But I think it was not just his failure. It was the failure of leaders on both sides of the great divide. For Nehru, Kashmir was an emotional issue and Mountbatten saw to it that his friend got his way, first, by pressuring Radcliffe to give him a contiguity with the state and, secondly, by personally running the military campaign from Delhi. Liaquat, who was in the eye of storm, had supported Pakistan's covert incursions in Kashmir (including the tribal raid) and Jinnah was not altogether kept in the dark. The latter was also getting information on Kashmir from other sources.⁴² Khalid Hasan's stance based on K. H. Khurshid's diary that Jinnah had no inkling of the tribal invasion of Kashmir⁴³ needs revision. Khurshid's vantage point after August 1947 had become uncertain. Of course, he was still Jinnah's personal secretary but then he was not involved in any official business of the governor-general. All authorized paperwork was handled by his private secretary, S. M. Yusuf, and assistant private secretary, Farrukh Amin. During the interval when Yusuf had not arrived from Delhi (which took almost six weeks, taking over charge finally on 25 September) the work was carried on by Farrukh Amin, almost single-

⁴² See, for instance, Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Defence Archives, Serial No. 2412, File No. 17 of 1048; and Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives, Files S-4(9)/47; and SA(4).S.1/2/48.

⁴³ K.H. Khurshid, *Memories of Jinnah* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. xvi.

handedly. It is on record that Jinnah's approval was sought on important matters and copies of top-secret papers were sent to the governor-general's private secretary for information.⁴⁴ It is unlikely that Jinnah took no notice of them. It is another matter that overtly Jinnah chose to distance himself from the goings-on in Kashmir. But the ceasefire of 1 January 1949 (not December 1948), though inevitable, became the fodder for Liaquat's detractors. In other external matters Liaquat earned the undeserved blame for having alienated the Soviet Union by preferring to visit the United States. Ambassador Sajjad Hyder in his diplomatic license, *Foreign Policy of Pakistan*, calls the fiasco 'The Visit that Never Was'.⁴⁵ According to him, Liaquat was ever so keen on visiting the Soviet Union and had even agreed to the precondition of exchanging ambassadors. He was still eager to undertake the visit to the Soviet Union when he received an invitation from Washington. But, in the mean time, Moscow had had second thoughts and 'postponed' the visit. Obviously, someone was working to wreck Pakistan's relations with the Soviet Union. The missed opportunity hurt both the sides though more so in the case of Pakistan. The chances of a subsequent visit, believes Sajjad Hyder, diminished when Liaquat visited the United States and was drawn into their noose ever more tightly for one reason after another.⁴⁶ At home, Liaquat's triumphs and failures, believes Kazimi, were indistinguishable. His predilection for maintaining economic independence adversely affected the efforts towards institution building. Personally though, he was selfless and never placed the well being of his own family and relatives over others. He filed no claim for the vast property he left behind in India. When he died in October 1951, his bank balance was pitifully small and had no house of his own for his bereaved family and the State had to come to their rescue.

It is audacious to compare Liaquat with other League leaders whom he had surpassed and left far behind to climb the pinnacle of his career, next only to Jinnah. He had achieved this distinction by hard work, organizing skills, a sense of duty and loyalty to his mentor. But critics (lately, Khalid Hasan) have often played down Liaquat's role by suggesting that Jinnah achieved the creation of Pakistan single-handedly

⁴⁴ See, for instance, Ministry of Defence Archives, Serial No. 1396, File No. 119/SEC/I.

⁴⁵ Sajjad Hyder, *Foreign Policy of Pakistan* (Lahore: Progressive Publishers, 1987), pp. 8-15.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

with the help only of his personal secretary and his typewriter.⁴⁷ It was uncharacteristic of Jinnah to have made such a loose statement and there is no corroboration from his speeches either. Kazimi seems to have fallen into this trap (332-4) without realizing that the myth was the result of a spin-off from the polemicists' twist to Jinnah's speech delivered at Delhi on 22 February 1940, wherein he had lamented that his and his party's 'entire equipment was confined to an attache case, a typewriter and a personal assistant'.⁴⁸ Several versions of this story asserting different occasions and different dates have since been circulating even among known writers, who refer to the incident without realizing its dubious origins.⁴⁹ I wish Kazimi had stayed with his own assessment and given a little more attention to the 'life' aspect of his subject. His years with Ra'ana and the children are simply missing from the account. One also does not know the kind of impact she had on Liaquat's personal and political life. But, after all the pluses and minuses, Kazimi's study of Liaquat Ali Khan, especially in its first two parts, stands out as a meticulously written biography. It is incisive, pungent and solid and I would recommend it to all those who are interested in seeking reliable information about the first prime minister of Pakistan. Liaquat has been one of the least understood and much maligned leaders of Pakistan. Kazimi has tried and, to my mind, has almost succeeded in restoring Liaquat to his rightful place in the gallery of our eminent freedom fighters.

⁴⁷ See Khalid Hasan's introduction to K.H. Khurshid, *Memories of Jinnah*, p. xviii. Earlier, Sherwani had fanned this myth. See Kazimi, *Liaquat Ali Khan*, pp. 332 and 341, n. 3.

⁴⁸ Quoted in Waheed Ahmad (ed.), *The Nation's Voice*, I (Karachi, 1992), p. 461.

⁴⁹ More recently, Safdar Mahmood and Mubarak Ali have been involved in this controversy. See several issues of *Nawa-i Waqt* (Lahore) and *Jang* (Lahore) for the summer of 2005.