

Alan Campbell-Johnson (1913-98) was a public relations specialist and author. From 1937 to 1940, he was political secretary to Sir Archibald Sinclair, the leader of the Liberal Party, who was to recommend him to Lord Mountbatten, then at the headquarters of Combined Operations. From 1943 to 1946, Campbell-Johnson served with Mountbatten in Supreme Allied Command South East Asia (SEAC). At both Combined Operations and at SEAC, Alan Campbell-Johnson had a special responsibility for recordkeeping - a responsibility that was to mould him a future, managing information, reputations and public relations. After the war he maintained the link with Lord Mountbatten on an informal basis, working on the official despatches for SEAC; and **in February 1947 he became the first and only press attaché to a Viceroy of India**, accompanying Mountbatten for the transfer of power to the newly independent India and Pakistan.

He remained with Lord Mountbatten, while Mountbatten was the first Governor General of India, until June 1948. Campbell-Johnson's blow-by-blow account of partition, *Mission with Mountbatten* (1951), remains one of the most dynamic records of the event. It is evident from this, from his papers and those of Lord Mountbatten, that the management of the presentation of partition to the media, in the subcontinent and worldwide, was a crucial element in the process.

The connection with Lord Mountbatten was sustained throughout the remainder of Lord Mountbatten's life, with a particular eye to the presentation of his role in the press and, in the longer term, managing historical reputation. As part of this work, Campbell-Johnson gathered materials for a future biographer of Lord Mountbatten, interviewing contemporaries and assembling documents. He also turned his expertise in public relations into a career and was among the first to do so, founding a public relations consultancy, and becoming both a Fellow of the Institute of Public Relations and its President.

Source: University of Southampton, Special Collections Newsletter, Spring 2007.

The following comments from Alan Campbell-Johnson are divided into three sections:

1. Excerpts from his book on Partition.
2. Interview given to Rediff on 27 May 1997.
3. Informal answers given to questioners after the interview.

Mission with Mountbatten by Alan Campbell-Johnson (London: Robert Hale, 1952)

p. 170 Government House, New Delhi, 20 Aug. 1947

... We have returned to a grim situation at the centre. Nehru and Liaquat moved on from Ambala to Amritsar, there issuing an urgent appeal for peace. Nehru has also broadcast underlining the resolve of the two Punjab Governments, in co-operation with the Governments of India and Pakistan, to end the 'terrible orgy'; 'India', he pledged, 'is not a communal state, but a democratic state in which every citizen has equal rights. The Government is determined to protect those rights.' The refugee problem is already assuming monstrous proportions. It is estimated that already some 200,000 people are huddled in the improvised refugee camps, living under conditions which invite an outbreak of cholera on a prodigious scale...

p. 171 Government House, New Delhi, 23 Aug. 1947

Bob Stimson and I have been working closely with Lady Mountbatten on her BBC broadcast. It provides a chance to get behind and beyond all the communal propaganda. Lady Mountbatten made the most of this opportunity. She has a beautiful broadcasting voice and read her script with great feeling. She spoke of the unknown heroes of India and mentioned the little Muslim doctor who abandoned his Delhi practice to set up an improvised dispensary at Gurgaon in the Punjab, the scene of some of the bitterest communal conflict. 'There in the dust and heat p. 172 he toiled ceaselessly for weeks on end to save the lives of Hindu and Muslim alike.'

p. 174 Government House, New Delhi, 27 Aug. 1947

...Mountbatten then turned to a general account of what was happening in the Punjab. The Sikhs, he said, had launched an attack just as Giana p. 175 and Kartar Singh and Tara Singh before the 3rd June had told him they would. Mountbatten had expostulated with them at the time, stressing that the British would have gone. It would be Indian fighting Indian. But they were adamant, and had in fact observed that they were waiting for us to go. The situation was now out of their control. In an area less than two hundred by one hundred and fifty miles containing some 17,000 inhabited localities and only about the size of Wales, some ten million people were on the move. At this moment, through the withdrawal of all the Muslims, the police in the East Punjab were suddenly and catastrophically 7,000 under strength.

p. 175. Government House, New Delhi, 28 Aug. 1947

Lady Mountbatten and Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, the new [Indian] Minister of Health, have just come back from the heartland of the communal frenzy, visiting no fewer than twelve refugee centres and camps, as well as seven hospitals and a number of other medical units, engaging in numerous conferences with officials, from the Governors of the East and West Punjab downwards. It has been a heroic errand of mercy to the point of danger at the hour of trouble.

Rajkumari, by birth a member of the Kapurthala family, is a Christian and a close disciple of the Mahatma. She is a sensitive woman, whose air of resignation and sadness of expression serve to mask an indomitable will. Within twenty-four hours of becoming India's first Cabinet Minister, she was confronted with one of the most gigantic tasks of human salvage even for this era of concentration camps and p. 176 displaced persons...

On Tuesday 26th they were in Jullundur and Amritsar, which was... like a place of the dead. At the end of an exhausting day, having visited in all seven hospitals and refugee centres, where appalling conditions prevailed, news came through of a savage attack on a lorry of non-Muslim refugees from Sialkot. Lady Mountbatten at once returned to the Victoria Memorial Hospital to see the victims, many of them horribly mutilated. At 10.30 pm. she was in close session with Tara Singh, who is at last beginning to tremble at the wrath he so readily invoked. Lady Mountbatten left for Lahore at 6.30 the next morning, and visited a Muslim refugee camp and training-school before breakfast. There followed inspections of two more camps and two more hospitals before a sandwich luncheon and departure for Rawalpindi, where another thorough round of tours and conferences began. This morning they repeated the same proceedings in Sialkot and Gujranwalla, before returning to Delhi.

There could be no more compelling catalogue to testify to Lady Mountbatten's devotion to duty. Her report on the situation on both sides of the Boundary is disquieting enough. The refugees are now in a state of mass hysteria. Neither side has any trust in the intention, assurances or actions of the other Dominion. She reports also that there is a complete lack of confidence in the Punjab Boundary Force.

p. 178. Government House, New Delhi, 6 Sept. 1947

[Establishment of an Indian Government Emergency Committee, with Mountbatten as Chairman]. ...we are in fact confronted with the deadly perils of war emergency without having available the normal instruments or priorities of war to counteract it. With the spread of communal fears and frenzies which we are witnessing in the Punjab, the scale of the killings and the movement of the refugees become

even more extensive than those caused by the more formal conflicts of opposing armies. **As with nearly all the great migrations of history, the people themselves hold sway and create conditions which many can exploit but none can control.**

The fact that Delhi itself is the epicentre of this earthquake [*sic*] automatically converts a provincial into a national crisis. In this respect the Punjab catastrophe is perhaps even more deadly for India than for Pakistan, whose capital, Karachi, is at a safe distance from the disturbances. None-the-less, Jinnah on his side has already made an urgent broadcast appeal to his people to help in restoring peace and in building up the new state. Even if the Boundary Award was 'unjust, incomprehensible and even perverse', Muslims had agreed to abide by it. The new nation should see to it that what had been won by the pen was not lost by the sword.

It is easy to forget how far to the north Delhi lies - north even of Mount Everest... nearly half a million refugees are moving towards the city, already overcrowded, bringing in their train disorders and disease wholly beyond Delhi's administrative resources to control...

p 181 From Calcutta comes news of Gandhi's 'miracle'. His initial partnership with Suhrawardy did not achieve all that he had hoped; isolated stabbings and acts of violence continued. So on Monday he began a fast to end only if sanity returned to the city. On Thursday he was able to call it off after leaders of the various communities had given guarantees that the masses had already responded to the Mahatma's appeal through soul resistance for a change of heart.

After one of his Prayer Meetings, Hindus and Muslims by their thousands mingled and embraced in the Maidan. Hardened Press correspondents report that they have seen nothing comparable with this demonstration of mass influence. **Mountbatten's estimate is that he has achieved by moral persuasion what four Divisions would have been hard pressed to have accomplished by force.**

p. 200. Government House, New Delhi, 21 Sept. 1947

This morning at 7.15 a party of sixteen left Palam airfield by the Governor-General's Dakota to make a round tour of some four hundred miles over the routes of the great refugee migrations between the East and West Punjab... At all the key points we came down to about 200 feet.

...Only when we reached Bhatinda, an important railway junction, did we come upon the first signs of major upheaval. Two trains, crammed with their human cargoes, were in the station. We could see the refugees clambering on to the tops of the carriages, bursting out of the sides, in occupation of the engine and tender itself. On arrival at Ferozepur, we saw another such refugee train and more rolling-stock. As we approached the Ravi we had our first aerial vision of the scale of this desperate exodus. We are looking down on one of

the greatest movements of population in recorded history, and then only on a small segment of it.

...We struck the first great caravanserai between Ferozepur and Balloki Head, and pursued it far across the Ravi. We flew, in fact, for over fifty miles p. 201 against this stream of refugees without reaching its source. Every now and then the density of bullock-carts and families on foot keeping to the thin life-line of the road would tail away, only to fill out again in close columns without end.

At Balloki Head, the actual boundary, the refugees waiting to cross the bridge overflowed and took on the appearance of a squatters' township. Here they had been brought to a standstill, but the general movement was very slow, and we could see men on horseback passing up and down who seemed to be giving some coherence, if not command, to the closely packed mass. At the roadside some families were flanked by their cattle, in many cases their only worldly asset, but few, if any, would be able to pass their livestock across the bridge. Already the flow of human traffic across it was beyond any conceivable capacity for which it had been built.

As we flew back into India we came down low over the northernmost of the Muslim refugee convoys making its slow and painful way across the main Lyallpur-Lahore road. Their exodus brought them across the Beas River, and involved an elaborate detour to save them from passing through Amritsar. We estimated that it took us just over a quarter of an hour to fly from one end to the other of this particular column at a flying speed of about a hundred and eighty miles per hour. This column therefore must have been at least forty-five miles long...

Today we saw for ourselves something of the stupendous scale of the Punjab upheaval. Even our brief bird's-eye view must have revealed nearly half a million refugees on the roads. At one point during our flight Sikh and Muslim refugees were moving almost side by side in opposite directions. There was no sign of clash. As though impelled by some deeper instinct, they pushed forward obsessed only with the objective beyond the boundary.

p. 201. Government House, New Delhi, 22 Sept. 1947

At this morning's Emergency Committee, [Indian] Cabinet Ministers took a rather firmer and more urgent view than hitherto of the need to defend refugee trains. In the past few hours reports have come in of no fewer than four serious attacks on refugee trains, two on Muslims in Jullundur and at the Beas bridge and two on non-Muslims in the Lahore area. There was anxious discussion on the measures needed to tackle these bestial outrages.

During his visit Liaquat had referred to one train starting off with two thousand passengers, of whom only seven hundred had arrived at the other end, and of another completely lacking in any water supplies for a three-day journey. As in all these train horror

stories, there is the usual factual confusion and difficulty in securing reliable data. In the meanwhile rumours fan hatreds...

[Account of Ian Morison, *The Times* Indian correspondent in the Times on Friday 19 Sept. 1947:]

'In its recent manifestations... it has appeared rather as a sort of infectious hysteria or mental derangement... What causes this disease, this infectious hysteria?... One of the symptoms of this disease... is that each side passionately believes the other to be solely responsible. The outside observer studying this gigantic and terrible phenomenon wonders whether questions of 'responsibility' and 'blame' are not irrelevant. **Either all parties concerned are responsible, officials who have sanctioned communal solutions, and politicians who have made inflammatory speeches equally with illiterate peasants who have speared women and children, or else there are cataclysms in human affairs in which men do not retain control over their destinies.**

p. 202. Government House, New Delhi, 23 Sept. 1947

... The Amritsar situation is still very grave. Cholera has broken out, and the train attacks continue. Yesterday's decision to cancel all trains passing by Amritsar has been discussed today at the highest level, and the decision is still in force. Telephonic communication with Amritsar is very difficult. [High importance placed by Mountbatten and Government circles on joint appeal of two Sikh leaders, Tara Singh and Oodham Singh]... The tone of their language had, in keeping with their patriarchal appearance, much more of the Old than New Testament ring about it. After boldly denouncing shameful attacks upon women and children, they added fiercely, 'we do not desire friendship with the Muslims, and we may never befriend them. We may have to fight again, but we shall fight a clean fight, man killing man.'

What effect this crude appeal will have on their followers it is difficult for anyone who has not made a close study of Sikh psychology to say. Both are undoubtedly big men in the complicated hierarchy of Sikh religious politics. The trouble is that the situation, as at other moments of supreme crisis in Sikh history, seems to have passed out of control of the leaders... [view of Billy Short that] **the authority is passing from the older leaders, such as Tara, Oodham and Giani Kartar Singh, to a number of younger men, chiefly ex-Indian National Army officers...**

p. 205 **Informed observers see in this situation all the ingredients of a Sikh nationalist movement...**

p. 213. Government House, New Delhi, 30 Sept. 1947

...**There has... been a wider dispensation – the frenzy having spent its first destructive force – disease and famine, which by all**

the laws of probability should have exacted the final penalty, by the deeper laws of providence have so far passed over without doing so. **As far as human effort is concerned special credit is due to those responsible for health and food services on both sides of the border. A prodigious number of cholera injections, vaccinations and other inoculations have been carried out. India has flown large supplies of cholera vaccines to Pakistan. The works of mercy and healing shine out in the communal darkness.**

Claims have been made that about 500,000 people died during Partition. It was nothing of that sort

<http://www.rediff.com/freedom/13allan1.htm>

27 May 1997

Fifty years ago, he set out on a mission with Lord Mountbatten, the man given the difficult task of burying the British Empire in India. Alan Campbell-Johnson, the last viceroy's press attaché, is one of the few surviving eyewitnesses to history, those tumultuous months when India became free.

At his tastefully decorated apartment on Ambrosden Avenue, near Westminster Cathedral in central London, Campbell-Johnson, who will be 84 in July, spoke to Amberish K Diwanji about Partition, Gandhi, Nehru and Patel.

The violent birth

The Independence of India was unique, it was a battle fought on the principles of non-violence, led by a man whom many today consider a saint, Mahatma Gandhi. Yet, what was largely a peaceful struggle for Independence, ended in brutal bloodshed as the new nation was divided into two countries along religious lines. Hundreds of thousands died as millions migrated eastwards or westwards, depending upon their faith.

There was bewilderment that the British, who ran undivided India like clockwork, could not control the horrific violence. Fingers were pointed at London for its callousness, but more specifically at the man in charge, Lord Mountbatten, for trying to rush things and thereby causing bloodshed.

Campbell-Johnson strongly disagrees. 'We did not leave too early. Even the slightest delay would mean leaving too late. When Mountbatten accepted the assignment, the tentative date set was June 1948. But on reaching India in March 1947, he found that 1948 was too far, it would have to be the same year, the sooner the better. Delays would have caused greater mayhem, not less.'

'Many of Mountbatten's critics do not understand that Mountbatten's task was a political one, not administrative. His job was to find a solution to the transfer of power. And once a political settlement had been reached, the administrative consequences became clear', he continues.

Certainly a statement that not many would agree with. The British could have stayed a little longer, acted more firmly in putting down violence, surely?

'How could you do that?' questions Campbell-Johnson. 'Within hours of reaching the political settlement on 3 June 1947, the interim government virtually collapsed. What on earth was Liaquat Ali Khan going to do as finance minister in the cabinet with Jawaharlal Nehru as prime minister? So you would have to govern India under Section 93 imposing martial law. How could you govern a country on the verge of Independence under martial law?'

From June 3 to August 15 was just 73 days. Perhaps more time would have given the people time to come to terms with their new nations and move across in a more peaceful method. Campbell-Johnson dismisses the suggestion. 'Once Partition was accepted, including the partition of the Punjab state, the Sikhs were in total revolt. We were dealing with a situation where we feared a collapse of law and order across the subcontinent. More delays only meant more trouble. We ensured that the violence overall affected only 3 per cent of the country.'

The Sikhs were also the ones who suffered and lost the most, their political leadership in disarray. 'Their own situation in the state was such that they simply would not accept the agreement. But what other option did they have? If they had asked for sovereignty, it would have been refused by both India and Pakistan.'

Campbell-Johnson recalls the meeting between the then governor of the Punjab and Mountbatten, when the viceroy was told that partitioning Punjab would lead to trouble. 'Mountbatten replied that he had to think of the whole country when making a decision', said Campbell-Johnson.

However, that is little consolation for those hurt, and the hundreds of thousands who died. Campbell-Johnson adds a caveat on the number of dead.

'Claims have been made that about 500,000 people died during Partition. It was nothing of that sort. I was part of the Emergency Committee set up to monitor the situation, and let me say here that most of the violence took place in a period of two and a half months,

during which time about 200,000 people were killed. There are noted historians who agree with the same figure.'

Campbell-Johnson feels, and most Indians would agree, that the situation began to deteriorate after the British accepted the communal electorate system. 'You are justified in asking how such a scenario was allowed to develop in the first place. It was a crisis in the making for five years, even longer. For this, everyone was responsible to some measure: the British administration before the war, the Congress during the war, and the Muslim League after the war.'

'I expect Kashmir to be partitioned, some day if not right now.'

<http://www.rediff.com/freedom/13allan2.htm>

Fighting for Kashmir

Unfortunately, all the troubles did not end along with Partition and Independence. Newly-born India and Pakistan fought three wars, two over Kashmir, the one unresolved matter that still remains.

Today, Kashmir is divided between the two countries, and both claim the other's share. Ongoing turmoil in the state on the Indian side has always kept the dispute alive, and both sides accuse the other of renegeing on its promises. One particularly insidious charge often made by Pakistanis, recently reiterated by Professor Akbar Ahmed, who is making a film on Mohammad Ali Jinnah, was that Edwina's 'affair' with Nehru influenced Mountbatten to favour India.

Campbell-Johnson is clearly upset at the innuendo. 'What has Lady Mountbatten having an affair with Nehru got to do with Kashmir? I am certain that her relation with Nehru, in the sense that they were lovers, is an absolute myth. They admired each other. As John Kenneth Galbraith, the American ambassador to India once said, "Can't people realise that men and women can be friends?" Lady Mountbatten had nothing at all to do with Kashmir.'

So we go back to Kashmir, a Muslim majority state ruled by a Hindu maharaja, and bordering both the newly-formed nations. As viceroy of India, Mountbatten also had a special relation with the numerous princes of India. At the time of Partition and Independence, they were clearly told by Mountbatten to decide their future, keeping in mind the people of their territory.

'The key man concerned with the princes was Sardar Vallabhbai Patel', says Campbell-Johnson. In the course of the hour-long interview, Campbell-Johnson clearly revealed a great admiration for the abilities of the Sardar, also known as the Iron Man and Bismarck of India. 'Patel assured Mounbatten that if he got the full bag of kings before August 15, there would be no trouble.' Prophetic words, as events would reveal only too clearly.

The Maharaja of Kashmir, Hari Singh, joined neither India nor Pakistan till Independence day. 'Perhaps he was frightened, as most kings were. They were clearly swept up by the changes taking place, and each one wanted time, especially the big states such as Kashmir and Hyderabad.

However, time for Kashmir was not available. Reports poured in that 'tribesmen' had moved into the state. Patel and Nehru were keen to salvage the situation. Johnson recalls those days. 'Mountbatten's view, which I consider the only view he could have taken as the constitutional governor-general of India, was that the maharaja should accede before the Indian army moved in. That would have been the right legal move.'

'We had a situation where two new sovereign countries, formed just three months earlier and both part of the Commonwealth, were on the verge of a war, which was dangerous and humiliating. Mountbatten said the only step he would recommend was transferring the dispute to the UN to make it an international one. And with this the two sides just drew back.'

What made Mountbatten give his recommendation, which many Indians feel deprived them of the chance to recover the whole of Kashmir? 'In case it developed into a war, we would have had British soldiers in the Indian and Pakistani armies fighting each other; something that could not be allowed. Field-Marshal Auchinleck who was still the supreme commander of both the armies had warned that British troops would return home if sent to the warfront. So Mountbatten, in my opinion, took the only step he could take.'

Still, history records the 1947-48 conflict as a war which divided Kashmir into two till date, giving an unhappy situation. 'Everyone was unhappy: the Indians, Pakistanis, Lord Mountbatten was unhappy at the idea that the two countries may have war within three months of coming into existence.'

Campbell-Johnson has very firm views on the continuing of the crisis. 'I don't believe that there has ever been a firm will by both sides to ever resolve the Kashmir dispute. For Pakistan Kashmir was part of a bigger gameplan, at least before the creation of Bangladesh, to link up the East and West wings of the new country. So for the Pakistanis, the idea was to keep the crisis going, there are bigger issues involved.'

'The Indian view was that one day Pakistan will collapse and it was worth keeping the dispute going. And the temptation has been too keep the dispute going, and it has been kept going for 50 years.'

Did he expect it to remain so all these years? 'I would have thought that after the creation of Bangladesh, Kashmir isn't really worth

fighting for. I expect Kashmir to be partitioned, some day if not right now.'

Certainly J&K Chief Minister Dr Farooq Abdullah must be pleased for he had made the same suggestion some time recently, but was not well received by Indian or Pakistani politicians.

'Had Patel and Liaquat Ali Khan lived for five more years, the history of the subcontinent would have taken a different route'

<http://www.rediff.com/freedom/13alan3.htm>

The players and the game

No doubt Kashmir remains a painful dispute, a source of tension and mistrust, and a memory of those difficult days when great men like Nehru, Patel, Jinnah, and Mountbatten fought over territory, Campbell-Johnson says, 'One reason why there have been such bitter wars is that deep down no one liked Partition, but they all accepted it'.

Campbell-Johnson narrates an incident when Mountbatten asked Jinnah if he agreed to the solution to which Jinnah replied: 'I do not agree, but I accept.' 'Mountbatten was annoyed with this reply, but he didn't say anything', he recalls. 'No one agreed, they accepted; it wasn't the best solution, it was the only solution. Everyone had overplayed their hand, and thus accepted what they got.'

So according to Mountbatten, which way should Kashmir have gone? 'Mountbatten clearly believed that the Act of Accession was to be signed by the king concerned. He should consider the religion of the majority of his people, but if he didn't, his decision was final.'

Leaving Edwina aside, some historians have claimed that the fact that Mountbatten and Nehru got along very well hurt Jinnah and his cause. 'Actually, it is probably the other way round', said Campbell-Johnson. 'The fact that Mountbatten did not get along with Jinnah made the viceroy go out of his way to ensure that he played fair with Jinnah, and protect his interest, perhaps more so than if he had been friendly with him.'

But that could also mean that since Nehru and Mountbatten did get along very well, India's interest might have been hurt. Campbell-Johnson corrects me. 'They didn't get along very well, they got along. And Mounbatten wasn't bothered about his relations with Jinnah, it just made it a bit more difficult.'

But was not India's interest compromised by the Nehru-Mounbatten friendship? 'No, they were not, because the key person we had to deal with was Patel, not Nehru. Without Patel, you could not get anything

done. So Jinnah had to ensure that any deal he tried to implement would have Patel's consent, otherwise there would have been no agreement, and Jinnah would have been the final loser.'

Campbell-Johnson says Nehru was a charming person who had international stature, but was very weak at administration. Speaking about the role of Patel, whom Campbell-Johnson termed as an administrator par excellence, in the days preceding the transfer of power, he said, 'Patel was certainly the key person. He, and his eminently capable secretary V P Menon, brought into India more people than they lost to Pakistan. He ensured that about 560 Indian princes joined India without any attachments, whereas earlier, they were all prepared to negotiate for semi-independent power. He was a person who had little time for ideologies, he just wanted to get on with the job at hand.'

He also places Patel in the centre as far as accepting Partition was concerned. 'Mahatma Gandhi was against Partition all along, but he finally accepted. But we were more worried about Patel's acceptance; without his nod, it would never have happened.'

I tell him that many Indians firmly believe that had Patel lived, the Kashmir issue would have been resolved, one way or the other, and that Nehru was too emotional on the subject to handle it with clarity. Campbell-Johnson agrees. 'It was a great tragedy for both India and Pakistan that Patel died so early (December 1950). Had Patel, and Liaquat Ali Khan in Pakistan, lived for five more years, the history of the subcontinent would have taken a different route.'

What about Jinnah, who is loved and hated in the subcontinent as no other? 'Jinnah was a rather lonely, remote man, he didn't much like people or have much charm. Not that it mattered', said Campbell-Johnson. 'The person I compare him to was Charles de Gaulle. Jinnah, like de Gaulle, symbolised a nation. He didn't go about being friendly, and you had to be like that if you had as big a task as he had.'

Jinnah seemed paranoid about Indian intentions, firmly believing that India was waiting for a chance to gobble up Pakistan despite the assurances of Indian leaders. He remained extremely distrustful of Congress leaders. Campbell-Johnson, however, takes a more sympathetic view. 'Jinnah died in September 1948, and he must have known that he was dying, though no one else knew it. His relations with Liaquat Ali Khan were deteriorating. And he must have been worried that if he died Pakistan would never be a reality; he doubted the guts of his followers. We didn't know this in 1947. His condition was very tense, and maybe this is why he often forced an issue rather than wait. I am talking now, but today I would sympathise with a man who had only a limited time on earth.'

What was the single quality of Mahatma Gandhi that Campbell-Johnson liked the most? He replies without hesitation. 'His sense of humour. Mountbatten said that Gandhi was a laughing man.'

Reflecting further on the Mahatma, he adds, 'In my personal view, I think Gandhi was enormously important at the highest level of human affairs. He was part of the conscious of mankind and he placed value on individual human behaviour. You had to conquer violence, especially within yourself. It may not have been practical, but it gave moral value to the Independence movement. And this still remains the aim and aspiration of the world in the most violent century in recorded history.'

Most certainly, Campbell-Johnson holds Lord Mountbatten in very high opinion, with whom he worked during World War II. He describes him as a person with boundless energy and extremely decisive in implementing policies.

'After Mounbatten was summoned to become the viceroy, he called me and told me about it, and asked me to be ready to accompany him. It may appear strange today, but Mountbatten was not too keen to accept the assignment which has immortalised him because it took him away from the Royal navy. He felt his naval career was being sacrificed for a task which was not considered to have much chance of success. I feel proud and honoured to have served under him.'

Answers to questions:

<http://www.indiaabroad.com/chat/alanchat.htm>

1. No, Mountbatten was not biased towards India. If he had been, he would not have been able to secure a settlement. If he had been biased, he would not have secured a settlement. Pakistan did not get all it wanted; neither did India. It was a settlement all accepted, but none of them agreed to. If they hadn't accepted, there would have been collapse and chaos. The disagreement had gone on for so long that there was a danger of total collapse of central authority.

2. No I don't think the British were wrong at the time of the 19th century. At that time, there was a widespread belief in the rights of imperialism, but with the passing of time, new ideas prevailed. One has to judge these ideas in the context of their times. The British Raj was very popular in India and many regretted our departure. The time had come for us to go.

3. ... We ourselves do not whether Jinnah himself was aware that he had only a few months to live. If he was so aware, he kept it from his followers. Clearly the Indian leaders would have been tempted to wait for his passing. But he was a key man in the situation and he pressed for a solution.

4. My abiding memory is the genius for friendship that the Indians have, and which they expressed throughout the time Mountbatten was there.

5. Gandhi did not have a soft spot for Jinnah. Jinnah was a member of the Congress, but over the years they drifted apart and towards the end, were fundamentally opposed to each other. Gandhi regarded Pakistan as the vivisection of India; Jinnah regarded Gandhi as representing traditional Hinduism in its opposition to the Muslim faith. Yes I was surprised, but not entirely so, when Gandhi was shot, because he took great risks in his effort to be impartial between the rival claims of India and Pakistan. He always said he would not be able to exert the same influence in the Punjab as he had in the Bengal, where almost alone he managed to keep the peace at the time of Independence. I was in Delhi when Gandhi was killed.

6. He [Mountbatten] didn't rush it through. The fact is that on the contrary the Indian leaders pressed for a quick solution and they were right to do so because it was the end of an endgame. Negotiations had been going on over a period of five years, and unless a quick solution had been reached, there was a risk of total collapse at a continental level.

7. The invasion of Kashmir by the tribesmen made it a very dangerous situation. Mounbatten's overwhelming desire was to ensure that the two successor governments of India and Pakistan did not go to war within three months of their formation. Although he was [in] a constitutional government, he was strongly of the opinion that the dispute should not end in war, and should be subjected to international arbitration.

8. Nehru was a leader of international stature, and high moral quality. But he was not by instinct an administrative politician. Administration was really Sardar Patel's area, and during the period Mounbatten was there, Nehru and Patel were really a diumvariate. But Nehru was a most attractive personality and Winston Churchill once said of him that he believed Nehru to be a man devoid of hatred and fear. A tribute from one old Harrovian prime minister to another.

9. I can't answer for what the Muslims believed in, but the perception that they were unfairly treated is not true. If India had rejected the settlement, the Muslim League would have got nothing. Lord Mounbatten had to ensure that India would accept the settlement and he was particularly sensitive to this issue. Mountbatten faced a great problem after the plan had been accepted. He hoped to be invited by both India and Pakistan to be joint governor-general. When Jinnah indicated that he would be the governor-general of Pakistan, Mountbatten faced a dilemma. He had been invited by India, but was

he to refuse because Pakistan had not invited him. Lady Mountbatten wanted him to go home on the 15th of August. But this was not the view of his staff, and there was overwhelming backing to stay, it was his duty to do so. But he recognised that in staying on he realised that the feeling would be there that he was not impartial; but believe me, he was, because it was in his interest to ensure that the settlement was successful.

10. Mountbatten was a very good man to work for. I served on his staff for altogether six years, and I think I am the only survivor from those who were with him when he was Chief of Combined Operations; subsequently as Supreme Allied Commander, Southeast Asia. His experience as Supreme Commander was in fact a form of rehearsal for his term as Viceroy. He was a good man to work for as he gave his staff their head (independence). I always remember my last assignment for him when I went to visit the Nizam of Hyderabad. The Nizam did not want to meet him and I had to tell that to Mountbatten. Mountbatten said to me: 'You tell me not what I want to hear but what I ought to hear.' A man who can say that is a good man to work for.

11. I think Partition was inevitable by the time and under the circumstances we got there. I don't think it was always inevitable and there were a whole series of lost opportunities going right back to the 1930s. But the decision of the Congress party to reject Cripps's offer in 1942 and go on a civil disobedience movement was, to use Jinnah's words, Gandhi's Himalayan blunder. Whether Jinnah would have settled for anything less than Partition during the time of the Cabinet Mission Plan in 1946 is an open question. The opportunity, if there was one, came and went.

12. Clearly, World War II did play a role. Churchill's view on India before the war had been extremely reactionary, but with the vast Indian army engaged in the war he was obliged to come to terms with reality. The Cripps offer in 1942, if accepted, would have ensured a unitary solution; but Gandhi regarded it as a blank cheque given on a crashing bank. It looked that way but it was not true.

13. I like them all [the Indian political leaders]. They were a collection of men of outstanding calibre and speaking historically, India and Pakistan were fortunate that they were all in one place at one time. But in my view, at the critical level, the two key men were Sardar Patel and Jinnah.

14. If we could have had the opportunity of temporary constitutional responsibility for Pakistan as well as India, it would have been most welcome. But it just wasn't possible, and I regret the lost opportunity.