

Chapter Seven

India

Through the years, through the centuries, India's long history has been such that it has always been a country that has been 'news'. So many pictures come to mind – Clive of India, the East India Company, the Indian Mutiny, Gandhi, the Black Hole of Calcutta, the Himalayas, viceroys, Kipling, maharajas – and more and more. Ever since history lessons in my schooldays India had fascinated me. So when I was called into my managing director's office at the end of July 1947 and told that I had been unanimously chosen by all the newsreels to go to India on my own to cover the transfer of power for India to become independent, and that I would be accredited to the viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, I did not know what to think. It was such a tremendous assignment that I was quite bewildered. Naturally it was great to be the one selected for such a prestigious, interesting and exciting job in a country with such a colourful, volatile history. There had been a great deal in the press and on the radio of unrest in India and of the forthcoming moves to independence but there had been no hint of talk of India in newsreel circles, which made my appointment so much of a surprise. Perhaps, therefore, I should go back to the period that led to the establishment of the Raj and give some of the background to events which resulted in Independence Day and to the point when the newsreels became involved. I am not attempting to tell a political story, of the many feuds, intrigues and wars that made up Indian history although, of course, they do have a bearing on what followed independence during my stay in that incredible, almost unreal, country.

In the early 1600s the East India Company began to trade in India, gradually establishing itself until it had acquired great power and influence. By 1773 corruption by its merchants resulted in the British government having to help it financially. This, however, was conditional on the setting up of a Governor-General in Calcutta, paid for by the company but appointed by the British government. The first of these was Warren Hastings, who ended corruption, reorganised the tax system and laid the foundations for the way the country was to be governed. Throughout the next eighty years a great deal of territory was gained by Britain during which time there were many periods of fighting and unrest, ending with the Indian Mutiny in 1857, centred principally in Lucknow, Cawnpore and Delhi. When order was restored in mid-1858 the British government decided to end the influence and power of the East India Company. The India Act of 1858 established a Secretary

of State for India and the appointment of the Governor-General Lord Canning as the first viceroy, to be the direct representative of Queen Victoria in India. The Queen later became Empress of India in 1877. By such moves events in India became of increasing interest to Britain. In the First World War India provided over a million soldiers to fight for the British and suffered very heavy casualties. Everywhere the war had made nations restless and the colonies began to strengthen their campaigns for freedom. In 1919 a British general – Henry Dyer – massacred many Indian men, women and children at a festival gathering in Amritsar in a mistaken attempt to quell riots in the city. Fuelled by the Amritsar massacres and war losses, the Indian struggle for independence mounted and continued to grow until World War II. The Congress party, the Hindus, were opposed to this war and because of an active and defiant attitude their leaders, Pandit Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi and many politicians were imprisoned by the British. With this situation, and beset with decades of religious feuds generally between Hindus and Muslims, it was decided soon after the war that India should receive independence as quickly as possible. Terrible riots in Calcutta in 1946, when thousands were killed, made it the more urgent.

Clement Attlee, the new Labour Prime Minister, had always been well-disposed towards India. His original thought was for a united independent country but he failed to get agreement on the basic issue on how to reconcile Muslim and Hindu. He then planned a Union of India consisting of all the British territory combined with the states of the princes and passed this idea to Lord Mountbatten in February 1947 when he appointed him to be the last viceroy, with the requirement that the transfer of power had to be accomplished by June 1948. Lord Mountbatten arrived in Delhi at the end of March 1947 and in meetings with all the principals of the parties soon realised that Attlee's plans for a united India were not going to be possible. Jinnah, the leader of the Muslims, would not compromise and insisted on partition. Having been given complete authority to act without reference to London, Mountbatten decided he had no alternative but to accept that the country had to be divided into two states – India and Pakistan – and that the transfer of power had to be more immediate than June 1948. He announced in June 1947 that the date of independence would be 15 August 1947.

This set the scene for what was obviously going to be a major story and with such a history it seems incredible that the newsreels had shown little interest. Paramount and Movietone had two Indian stringers (freelance cameramen) in Delhi and that seemed to be the only coverage envisaged. Gaumont, Pathé and Universal had nothing arranged, nor had made any effort for a tie-up with Paramount and Movietone. Lord Mountbatten, aware that the newsreels were the primary source for Britain and the world to see this all-important event, was appalled at their indifference, seemingly content to leave the story to Indians, both working for American-financed companies. He instructed his press secretary, Allan Campbell

Johnson, who had to return to London on another matter, to try to sort out the newsreel situation and in earlier correspondence with my managing director, Castleton-Knight, he had suggested that a British cameraman should be sent to India on rota. As a result, at the end of July 1947, made aware of Mountbatten's wishes in talks with Allan Campbell Johnson, the Newsreel Association decided to send a man to India and that I should be that person and I should get there as soon as possible. So it came about that I was in Castleton-Knight's office being given this decision with barely three weeks to prepare for an indefinite stay in a foreign country, get out to India and make arrangements to film a world story. Camera equipment had to be checked, filters and film stock ordered, passport checked, inoculations where necessary, an air passage booked in a holiday period, personal affairs sorted out – all the many things that had to be done for such an assignment. I arrived in India on 10 August 1947, which gave me just four days to organise an event which normally would have been planned months ahead and covered with a full staff.

When I landed at Delhi airport little did I know what lay ahead of me. Any of my thoughts of pictures I might get were generally so different from those I did get. What I can say was that if my romantic notions of India were not always as glossy as books and stories made it sometimes seem, nonetheless I could not have had a more interesting year; it was the fabulous country I had imagined it might be. I arrived at an exceptional time. The India of the Raj was no more – a new India was emerging. So much happened during those incredible months I spent there. From the first moments when I was overwhelmed by the huge crowds that thronged the streets on Independence Day I was involved in a kaleidoscope of events and situations almost beyond belief. The unforgettable vision of wild-eyed Sikhs, hair flowing, with their deadly kirpans, waiting to race across fields to murder all the passengers in a waylaid train; the bodies lying in the wide streets of New Delhi; the long queues of refugees and their camps; the quiet Gandhi ending a fast by sipping orange juice and the forever silent Gandhi after his assassination. Were there ever such places as the splendid palaces of the princes, the magnificent temples, the Taj Mahal and the mighty Himalayas? There were the cows taking their holy walks along the roads and pavements of the towns; the smells; the beggars, evidence of the dreadful poverty and hunger of huge masses of the people; the contrast of the elegant women in their saris; the craftsmen; the burning ghats of Calcutta; the murky, dirty waters of the holy River Ganges; the energy and enthusiasm of Lord and Lady Mountbatten; and Bombay and Poona which conjured up imperial India – the dying Raj. That was the India that I faced as I stepped off that plane at Delhi airport in August 1947.

I remember feeling rather lonely as I travelled into Delhi. I was in an unknown country with a population three times that of the United States of America but crowded into an area only one third the size of the States; a country which

had numerous languages with two hundred dialects; a country with tigers, lions, monkeys, elephants, cheetahs and hyenas. It was not surprising I felt rather a small being entering such a nation. But there I was with the responsibility of sending back film of this first and most important of the forthcoming declarations of independence to all the UK newsreels and their associates worldwide. It was quite frightening when I realised I had actually arrived and what I had to do.

The first thing was to show my face at the Viceroy's House and establish good relations with Mountbatten's press secretary, Allen Campbell Johnson, and to obtain an official programme of events planned for Independence Day and the days to follow. Then I had to find somewhere to live. I had been booked into the Imperial Hotel in New Delhi for I needed to be central for the initial celebrations, so that took care of that immediate problem, but as Delhi was going to be my base for a long while I wanted somewhere less expensive and less formal. I subsequently found a delightful friendly hotel in Old Delhi, the Cecil, which had all the facilities I needed and being in Old Delhi I felt I was in India and not a tourist in a five-star hotel of the guide books. After meeting the press secretary and a brief 'hello' from Mountbatten the next most important thing was to make contact with the Paramount and Movietone cameramen. I had never met either but Campbell Johnson had the phone number of Paramount's man, Ved Parkash, and we met at my hotel early on that first evening. He had not worked for Gaumont but turned out to be a tower of strength, very likeable, and he was very friendly to that intruder on his territory just when a very big story had come his way. His knowledge of the city was invaluable in the short time I had to make arrangements for coverage. The task ahead seemed formidable. I had to go over the processional routes to the various ceremonies, establish vantage points and where possible arrange for stands to be built or elevated positions to be acquired. With the aid of Parkash I spent that first evening getting to know key places, watched flags and bunting going up, and felt fortunate to have found an agreeable and helpful associate. We arranged for another session the following morning. After that I sat down with Parkash and his brother Mohan, the Movietone man, to decide the positions for each of us to cover, with three men, a story with the importance of a coronation. Unlike England where such events were worked out to the nth degree, overseas there was a certain amount of unpredictability. Crowds were more excitable, routes could be changed, flagpoles could grow up overnight, possibly in front of positions I had chosen. I knew I would have to go over the routes very early on Independence Day to check our positions, to see that stands had not been moved and somewhat hopefully to advise people who occupied them that they would have to move later. Then there was the problem of transport. With roads closed, barriers erected, massive crowds and the three of us needing to get to more than one position the only answer was a good pair of shoes. And as important as anything we had to arrange a rendezvous at the end of

the day to collect the negatives, and fix with the customs and airline for the dispatch of everything to London without delay.

With the basic arrangements under way I had to think about clothes. Although I was used to upheavals and finding myself in new situations overnight there had been no time to think about clothes before I left England. It was very hot in Delhi and the transition from the cool British summer to the British twilight in India meant I had to acquire a 'thin' wardrobe very quickly. I had to be prepared to go anywhere. Apart from working situations I knew there would be invitations to parties and social occasions. There always were on foreign assignments and there was still much of the pukka sahib around. Even during the war I found this to be so. With the camera there would be formal pictures of Viceroy's House, and formal pictures at the Congress Assembly parliament, and I would be hurrying from one place to another in Delhi's heat. Although I do not perspire very easily, I knew I would be wet through and then probably have to appear before a group of VIPs who had managed to change. I could arrive in a scruffy state and no doubt everyone would understand why, but a sweaty cameraman is not the best way of getting the best pictures, whatever the justification. I knew there would be occasions when I would have no choice, but I had been entrusted with a special privilege and I felt it was up to me to present as reasonable an appearance as possible. I have always made an effort, sometimes a super-effort, in that respect, the top layer often hiding a very different underneath. This may seem rather prissy but on every story I have ever covered I have always tried not to look scruffy. The Imperial Hotel in the centre of Delhi helped a lot on Independence Day. With all these thoughts I decided I needed a white dinner jacket, a light suit and casual wear. The Indians mostly wore very casual clothes but on official or formal occasions were very correctly attired. Fortunately in Eastern countries it was possible to get clothes made overnight. This I was able to do.

There was one other thing I had to do at once. A journalist friend of mine in London, well used to overseas assignments, had advised me to establish a tie-up with a news agency if possible. They would help to keep me informed of anything that might happen unexpectedly and generally keep me in the picture. It was good advice. I learned from Parkash that Associated Press of America had an office in Delhi. I was able to arrange good relations with them, my accreditation with Mountbatten no doubt helping initially. They had an American press photographer in their set-up, Max Desfor, and we became great friends and covered several stories together.

With the preliminaries taken care of I was ready to start work and did not have long to wait. I was told by Campbell Johnson to be ready to fly to Karachi with Lord and Lady Mountbatten during the day of 13 August. On the following morning Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the Muslim leader, was to be installed as the first Governor-General of Pakistan. On arrival the Mountbattens went to Government

House and I went to a hotel which had been booked for me. The rest of the day I spent finding out where the ceremonies were to take place and sorting out possible positions. I arranged for an assistant to carry a pair of high steps which seemed the most practical way of getting film with no time to build any set positions. The next morning I filmed Jinnah's arrival at the Parliament building, the viceroy's arrival, and shots as Jinnah was installed as Governor-General by Mountbatten, followed by the beginning of the state drive back to Government House. There had been threats that Sikhs would throw bombs on the return journey but it passed without incident. A rather worrying hour for me as I was only able to cover the early part of the drive. Then it was a dash back to the airport to return to Delhi for the Independence Day programme which began at midnight the same day – 14 August. There was to be no sleep that night. I began with shots at the Congress Assembly where the transfer of power took place as midnight struck, followed by Pandit Nehru departing for the Viceroy's House to ask Mountbatten to be the first Governor-General.

After a short rest I was out to check our positions among the crowds, which were already quite dense. As I had anticipated, our rostrums made good vantage points for some watchers but they got off without any trouble when we came to take up our positions. It was very different later on. As soon as it was daylight there were build-up shots to be filmed – general views, names of roads, sellers of souvenirs, faces in the crowd, decorations, anything to set the scene. Parkash and his brother were in their places early on and they had managed to find assistants to support them. I took up my position on a stand outside the Assembly where Lord and Lady Mountbatten were due to arrive, with Lord Louis to address the Congress after he had been sworn in as Governor-General. First came Nehru and other leaders in their cars, with the crowds trying to grab them by the hand. Then came the state drive, similar in style to one in England with outriders, guards, etc. The Mountbattens, in an open carriage, were surrounded by crowds who had broken through the police cordons and were insisting on shaking hands with the new Governor-General and his wife. They and the rest of the procession had the greatest difficulty in reaching the Assembly hall. After the arrivals I had problems in trying to prevent some Indians from climbing on my rostrum. It had been constructed in a hurry, just wooden planks nailed together without any strengthening supports and I feared it would collapse. When the return journey was about to start the mass of people went wild with excitement and swarms of them clambered on to my stand, which started to shake alarmingly. I was completely overwhelmed, neither able to move nor see anything and was unable to film the departure from the Assembly – so much for plans! Fortunately the other two fared better and between us we managed a reasonable coverage of the morning's events. It was impossible to get upset by the crowds. They were so good-natured and pleasant when I told them to get off the stand but such were the masses of people below that they were unable to get down. Having got good pictures of the arrivals I was not too concerned about

missing the departure. I could not help but be infected by everyone's cheerful spirits on this, their Independence Day. It was good to see Indians of all religions getting together without animosity. This was the day, too, when the leaders of the Indian government and their Prime Minister, Harrow-educated Pandit Nehru, saw come to fruition their ambitions for their people and their country after enduring many hardships over many years. The first difficult goal had been reached. Friday, 15 August 1947, was a memorable day in Indian history as Indians prepared to assume control of their own destiny. Independence had been achieved even though it had meant partition. Only Gandhi had not taken part in the celebrations. He had spent the day fasting in Calcutta, where there were jubilant scenes as Hindu and Muslim fraternised in unprecedented accord. Alas, the euphoria of the day was short-lived for in a few days a very different story emerged with the beginning of a mass exodus of Hindus and Muslims fleeing from India to Pakistan and from Pakistan to India. However 15 August was Independence Day and everyone was determined to enjoy it.

In the afternoon the Mountbattens and their daughter Pamela, who had also been at the morning ceremonies, went informally to a children's playground where thousands of children were being entertained with roundabouts, dancing bears and snake-charmers, with the climax to be a distribution of sweets. When the Mountbattens arrived there was chaos with screaming, pushing youngsters anxious to see them and get their share of the goodies. This meant good pictures but hot work for me. The day finished at Prince's Park, near to the Victory Arch in Delhi. There was to have been a march past, an inspection of the various Indian forces by the Governor-General and a ceremonial hoisting of the new national flag. Again the vast crowds, said to have been anything up to 20,000, broke loose and invaded the parade ground. Mountbatten had difficulty in getting out of his carriage and most of the programme was impossible to fulfil, but they did manage to unfurl the flag. I covered the afternoon session on my own but arranged for the three of us to film the evening events and allocated positions for each of us. As the morning had illustrated, the best of plans do not always work out. We were pushed everywhere by the excited crowd, our vantage points overrun, but somehow between us we managed to get a good coverage. Thank goodness it was still daylight although generally the lighting was none too good for film. We rendezvoused at my hotel to pack up our day's efforts for dispatch to London, write what dope sheets we could, enclose programmes and then go to the airport with everything – to make sure there were no delays or planes missed. Rupees were very useful. So ended an exhausting but unforgettable day. All the material got back safely and the story appeared in the newsreels in their issues of 21 August. As a footnote to that day I quote from a letter from Lord Mountbatten to Castleton-Knight which showed that my efforts with those of my assistants had been worthwhile and had made a successful start to my stay in India:

I have just seen the copy of the Gaumont-British newsreel which you were kind enough to send out. It seems to be excellent and the general coverage which you mentioned in your cable to Campbell Johnson has certainly justified the Rota arrangements. Turner has undoubtedly got off to a good start and his presence here should lead to a great improvement in the hitherto meagre film material on India ... the newsreel of the transfer ceremonies in Delhi arrived very expeditiously in time to be shown at the Sunday evening show on the 24th August. This was seen by a large audience who were much impressed by the excellence of the photography and the competence of the commentary.

It is over fifty years since that letter was written and only now have I seen it! The next day, 16 August, I was told that I was to fly in the plane again with the Governor-General to Bombay when he would be reviewing British troops the following day before they left for England. That was a historic occasion, for their departure marked the end of British rule in India. Whenever possible Lord Louis did all he could to help me to get good coverage and an incident happened on this event which was a case in point. There was a big parade and a very impressive guard of honour which he inspected. I was confined with some local still photographers some distance from the end of the ranks, not a good position to get close-ups, so I moved forward and a horrified officer stopped me. Lord Louis saw this and indicated that it was in order for me to move, and I was actually able to get in between the ranks, something I had never been able to do in England! The astonished officer in charge of the press was only partially able to stop the other photographers from following me. After this the occasion became more informal. Mountbatten addressed the troops on the quayside, bands played and the first ship to repatriate troops since independence, decked out with flags and bunting, sailed away into the sunset. On the morrow we returned to Delhi. On the way Lord Louis showed an interest in my equipment. He knew all about film-making, for he had undergone a course in America run by top Hollywood technicians. Knowing this I made no attempt to blind him with science but it was pleasant to show him what could be done with a quite unsophisticated hand-camera.

After those first busy days I thought maybe I could relax for a while. Mountbatten was going to be tied up in numerous meetings or making short journeys not suitable for filming. However, a different situation was developing. There had been trouble in the Punjab prior to independence but now, with partition, just a few days later it had become the centre for the most horrific acts of violence and killing. The mass exodus of Muslims from India to Pakistan and Hindus the other way had begun. My friends in Associated Press told me of massacres in and around Lahore and Amritsar and it was obvious there would be no relaxation, for I had to show what was happening. Lady Mountbatten was already in the Punjab near Amritsar so I started in that area filming her visiting refugee camps. Events were moving at a

frightening pace. I filmed refugees trudging along the roads, pitiful men and women and their families with their pathetic bundles of belongings, sometimes on carts with bullocks, and terrified of attacks by marauding Muslim, Hindu or Sikh bands, depending on which way they were going. It was made worse by the approach of the monsoon, which made it very wet with many roads flooded. Some scenes were unbelievable. There was looting, arson, whole villages destroyed and the most horrible mutilation of victims on both sides. Some pictures had no chance of being screened. There were groups of Sikhs with their evil kirpans stopping trains and butchering the passengers. Although I did not see any of these attacks I did witness wild-eyed bands gathered together waiting to rush across the fields with murderous intent. History repeats itself. Almost a hundred years before when the Raj was facing killings during the Indian Mutiny, the Sikhs took advantage of the situation and indulged in massacres and horrors similar to the present ones. In that sorry exodus of populations from each side there were no firm figures of the numbers killed but it could have been as many as a million. They made the journeys by rail, motor transport, some by air, but mostly on foot, risking the attacks and massacres that occurred every day. It was many months before the transfer of the populations was complete. I returned to Delhi to despatch my film at the end of August just as Lord Mountbatten had decided he needed a rest and chose to go to Simla for a ten-day break.

Although there were to be no official pictures in Simla I decided to go up there too. With the country in the state it was and the killings as bad as ever I thought it wise to be reasonably close to Mountbatten. Also I was looking for a different kind of picture from the awful scenes I had just witnessed. It was very hot and humid in Delhi with the rains beginning so it was good to get up 5,000 feet into the Himalayas in the cool for a while. There was a fine hotel and restaurants and although it was pleasantly picturesque with red-roofed houses, many similar to English styles, it had too many signs of the Raj, which was not the story – we were post-Raj. However, it was a short stay. Mountbatten got an urgent call to return to Delhi. Some thousands of displaced Hindus and Sikhs were pouring in from the Punjab and it was feared that the many Muslims in Delhi would try to take over the city. So it was back to be greeted with an alarming situation.

This was not the first time there had been trouble in Delhi. It had a history of wars, violence and brutality from Mogul times to the terrible atrocities during the Indian Mutiny in 1857. Much of this had been centred round the great mosque, Jama Masjid, the Red Fort and the renowned Chandni Chowk, a wide street of shops, silversmiths, clothes stores, fruit and vegetable markets, bangle shops, sweet shops, fortune tellers, shoemakers and beggars, always crowded with people of all religions and castes and with the all-pervading smells of India – spices, herbs, incense sticks and flowers – and dust and flies and betel juice everywhere. This was once again the scene for violence and terror in 1947 where more of the shopkeepers

GAUMONT DOPE-SHEETNEW DELHI, INDIA.

Curfew imposed. Shots showing empty Streets.
 Close up of Bolted Doors.
 Shot of a closed door of shop.
 Looters in the heart of New Delhi.
 Shot showing looted shop in Connaught Place.
 Close up of Street name of Connaught Place.
 Shot showing a section of Connaught Place, chief shopping centre of New Delhi.
 Shot of Indian troops in the streets ready to fire at the first sign of rioters, looters or curfew breakers, semi-close-up.
 Close-up of same.
 Car is stopped for examination of curfew pass.
 Sacred Cow walks by.
 Soldier walks through the Street at the Ready.
 Shots of looters at work showing 5 in the street and looters bringing things from the shops to throw on the fires.
 General Shot and Semi-close-up of looters and rioters attacking Moslem shops in a side road.
 Stream of refugees leaving an attacked area.
 Shot of three knifed bodies lying on the pavement.
 Shot looking down of a group of dead bodies which had been very brutally treated. One person's head being half missing.
 Shot of refugee old man struggling through the litter and debris and dead, with an old lady on his back.
 Shot of refugee with wounded colleague passing the bodies.
 Smoke in the distance over the town.
 Shots of a fire started by rioters in Connaught Circus being got under control by Fire Brigade.
 Close shots of smoke pouring from burning cemetery.
 Shots inside of JAMA MASJID MOSQUE, showing Moslems at prayers the day before the riots. (This Mosque is third largest in the world).

REFUGEES MOVED OUT OF THE CITY

General Shot of PURANA QILA. Shots of encamped individuals families.
 The Water Queue. Lines of girls, women, boys and men. Close-up of individuals at the Water Queue.
 Close-up of various types of containers being used to collect water. There is only one water point in the camp at present.
 Cave-dweller refugee washing hair.
 General Shot of the camp. Shots of refugees on their way through Old Delhi to PURANA QILA. Shots of refugees in the same Mosque. (These shots may contrast with those showing the Prayer meeting there just before the trouble started. All refugees in these pictures are Moslem.)
 NOTES: Delhi authorities are doing their best to cope with the situation, there are at least 10,000 refugees within the PURANA QILA Camp - known in New Delhi as the Old Fort, which was built in 1541, and is one of the best preserved ruins in New Delhi. The Camp lies two miles South of the City.

The dope sheet for my film of the riots in Delhi.

were Muslims. This would have been familiar to Old Delhi. For New Delhi it was something new.

In 1911 Calcutta had been the seat of government but it was decided in that year

that Delhi should be the capital city as it had been many years before. Sir Edwin Lutyens was commissioned to design a new city. The work began immediately and splendid government buildings grew up around wide avenues and Connaught Place became the main shopping and administrative area, although the magnificent Viceroy's House was not completed until 1929. Now, unlike the old town, New Delhi was to experience for the first time communal hatred and strife. It seemed a lifetime since 15 August and the rejoicing on that day.

With the Muslims outnumbered by the resident Hindus, reinforced by the incoming Sikh and Hindu refugees, events deteriorated rapidly. Rioting broke out all over the city. Fires lit the streets at night. Looters fed the flames with goods brought from the shops and shopkeepers were decapitated mercilessly by Sikhs. Much of this took place around Chandni Chowk, not far from my hotel. A curfew was imposed from 10.00 p.m. to 5.00 a.m. To contrast with what had been happening earlier I filmed empty streets with soldiers everywhere at the ready to deal with anyone breaking the ban. I was not too happy in those unstable circumstances and took the precaution of attaching myself to a soldier. In the daytime the looters were busy again carrying out their insane acts, stripping Muslim shops, slaying every Muslim they encountered and lighting fires in the main streets, with the fire brigade having difficulty coping with all the outbreaks. In New Delhi in the early mornings there were bodies lying in the streets in Connaught Place and Connaught Circus near the Imperial Hotel, some brutally butchered and mutilated. Grenades exploded, shots were fired by the police, but the riots continued unabated. There were lines of refugees in New Delhi waiting to register for official evacuation and every so often there would be a dash across the road and one of the queue would be fatally stabbed. The Hindu police, there to guard the refugees, turned a blind eye to this. There were poignant pictures such as the old man who made his way through the litter and the dead with an old woman on his back. I was very wary filming much of this, for although there had not been any attacks on the British such was the frenzy and determination of the Hindus to exact revenge for the treatment of their people in Pakistan that they were half-crazed and could well have taken exception to being filmed. However, they did not seem to notice the camera. And through the smoke and chaos the sacred cows wandered unharmed and unperturbed oblivious to the mayhem around them.

Refugee camps were set up. Many Muslims took refuge in the huge Jama Masjid mosque for safety until moving to one of the larger camps. At Purana Qila (Old Fort), two miles south of Delhi, over 10,000 Muslims were incarcerated in the most appalling conditions of mud and filth. There was only one water point and men, women and children lined up to collect water in any container they could find. Then there was the problem of feeding everyone. Cereals were loaded into sacks from the godowns (warehouses) or unloaded from trains and transported to Old Delhi to be sorted in ration shops, the fronts of which were piled high with filth. Some

cereals were taken to flour mills, tipped into machines and refilled into the sacks as flour. These too went to the ration shops. After sorting into batches the food was carried to the various camps. At the Old Fort very meagre rations were distributed to the refugees next to open latrines, filth and mud. I filmed at this camp and a sickening sight it was. Little wonder there were many cases of cholera.

Back from Simla, Mountbatten set up an emergency committee and was fully occupied dealing with the situations in Delhi and the Punjab. Having concentrated on events in India I decided this was an opportunity to show the other side in Pakistan. In the Amritsar area and in Delhi I had only been able to film small attacks and killings and I thought the other side of the border might offer the chance of a more major attack. I had been told there was much unrest in villages north of Lahore where there had been terrible violence and slaughter just after Independence Day. Now most of the Hindus had gone and the rioters had moved on to other places. So I gathered together some camping equipment and with my camera gear flew from Delhi to Lahore which then seemed the likely place to establish a base. All was quiet when I arrived, the town almost dead. The Hindus had been the clerks in the banks, the postal services and the railways and many of the shops had been owned by them. Most of the banks were closed and the other services only just managed to keep going. I made my headquarters in a hotel in the centre of the town and tried to find out exactly where trouble was likely to occur. It was sometimes possible to get an indication of imminent trouble from army intelligence but it was extremely difficult to be on the spot when anything happened. Army sources suggested a village some 100 miles northwest of Lahore might be worth a visit. Everything was chance. One could do the journey for nothing. And they warned that filming a mass attack could be hazardous as most massacres of that type were spontaneous and one had to be sure not to get caught up directly in them. Having arrived by air my immediate problem was to find transport. There was no official car to spare and no army unit was going to the suggested area. Frustration indeed. I needed to act quickly and as I sipped a John Collins in the hotel bar, I wondered what the chances were of hiring a car. I did not feel very hopeful. The answer came unexpectedly.

Two Hindus were sitting at a nearby table and were talking in English and rather louder than was wise. I listened with interest. They had a car – a Plymouth, I believe it was an American make – and were desperate to leave Pakistan and get to India before someone attacked and killed them. It was extremely hazardous living on the wrong side of the border. Their problem was that to attempt to drive the 300 miles from Lahore to Delhi was almost certain suicide. They would never make it past the bands of marauders waiting for such travellers. If they went by air they would lose their car; this seemed a better bet to me than losing your life. They were in a no-win situation for if they stayed as Hindus in Muslim country they were in constant danger. I had just seen the other side of the picture in Delhi – Muslims cut down in

the streets in broad daylight. I moved over to their table and told them I had overheard their dilemma and had a possible solution. I was in need of transport. If they would lend me their car I would drive it to Delhi after I had completed my mission. I must confess I did not enlighten them as to exactly why I wanted the car. We struck a deal. I arranged to pick up the car the next morning and they set off happily to fix a flight to Delhi. Next day when I saw the car I wondered whether I had been so clever. Like so many vehicles in that country then, this was in the banger class. However it had four wheels and moved. It was a large car, thirsty on petrol – my next problem, as this was rationed due to the unrest. I managed to persuade the army to let me have enough to get to the troubled area and back to Delhi. So, loaded up with all my equipment and cans of petrol I set off from what now seemed a city haven into the unknown countryside of Pakistan. The clutch slipped, there was rain and the narrow roads were very lonely. I knew there were men wandering the country looking for victims and although they rarely attacked foreigners, I proceeded with not a little unease.

I came to a stretch of road with a high banking on one side and stopped to relieve myself. As I returned to the car I saw a movement on top of the banking and a man appeared, waving me to get away, to move on. He was armed and I left. It was not the time to question why or what. Some miles further on I came upon a ragged column of Hindu refugees heading towards that high banking down the road I had just come up. I realised they were probably walking into an ambush and that was why the man on the banking was so anxious to get rid of me. It was a guess on my part, of course, but I thought I ought to try to warn them. I tried but they smiled at me and did not understand. I wondered whether I should follow them and, if I was right, perhaps obtain a film of what I feared would transpire. Then I reasoned that if I had guessed wrongly I would have used valuable petrol for nothing. I took some pictures of the column and decided to press on as I wanted to get to my destination before dark. I did not fancy a night in that hostile area. Then came a frightening mishap. The road surface was poor, just a track. The rain had made it very muddy. The car was difficult to drive with its slipping clutch. Suddenly I went down to the hubs in a muddy hole. I stopped. I sat in the car for a while wondering what to do. I had no hope of moving the car out of the hole myself. The chances of anyone else coming along that road were minimal.

It was well on in the afternoon and the thought of being stuck there in the dark was not attractive. I had no means of communication nor any idea how far I was from a village or town. I had covered about eighty miles and was in open country. My imagination became very active. Although I did not think I would be personally assaulted, who knew what could happen to a solitary traveller in those volatile times? There was a case for robbery – my camera, my camping equipment and petrol. No one would know what had happened if I was found with throat cut, or stabbed or bludgeoned to death. I went through the full range of

possibilities as I tried to rationalise what to do. It was impossible to walk and, indeed, that was just plain foolish – like setting out into the Sahara without water. And what about all that camera equipment? I surveyed the car and the surrounding countryside to see if there was any way I could move the wretched vehicle. But there was none. It was too far down in the mud. Well, miracles do happen, and I was about to witness one. Suddenly I was aware of faces, dozens of faces, smiling and making their way towards me. This is it, I thought. Put on a good show. Do not try to run. Then with amazement, I realised the faces were friendly. They advanced to the car, surrounded it and lifted it out of the hole and on to the road. I could not believe what was happening. I waved money at them but they were not interested. They spoke no English and once the job was done, placed their hands together in the Indian fashion of greeting and vanished into the fields as silently as they had come. I wondered if they had been watching me for some time to see if I was an enemy. I got into the car. Would it start? It did. I was away on my journey again.

The rest of this story is mostly anticlimax. I could not find the troubled area. Maybe the anticipated fighting did not materialise. On my return journey as I passed the high banking on the road where I had feared an ambush it seemed the worst had happened. The road was strewn with the sad relics of the refugees' belongings and there were other signs that the Hindus had got no further. Although I would have had some film to show for my journey I was glad I had not turned round and followed the ragged column. It sounds hard but that was not good thinking for a newsman. I drove without mishap to Delhi and made for the address where I had agreed to return the car to its owners. They would be pleased, I thought. There was no one there and I was unable to find the two Hindus. What had happened to them? I never found out. Their old banger was no use to me now. I left it near the address without regret but I gave it a pat as I said goodbye to it.

After that abortive journey to Pakistan I thought, in addition to the official ones, I should look for stories other than riots. The killings were continuing and although there were outbreaks in other parts of the country the Punjab remained the main centre of conflict. The Sikhs were very unhappy with the division of their area by the boundary commission which had left many of their sacred temples on the wrong side of the border. The murders and rapes had become less frenetic as so many villages had been destroyed leaving fewer targets for the marauders. But there were still the lone vulnerable columns of refugees – some estimates being as many as five million in each direction. The emergency committee managed to defend them to some degree but there were too many to provide complete protection. However with Delhi having quietened down and Mountbatten still very much occupied with the emergency committee I decided to make a quick journey to Agra, some 130 miles from Delhi. With no troubles there at that time it seemed a good opportunity to get some library pictures of the marvellous Taj Mahal. I had managed to get agreement from the Newsreel Association for me to buy a car to

enable me to move about more easily in Delhi without having to rely on costly taxis. It enabled me to get further afield than the immediate environs of the city for stories other than the official ones with Mountbatten. As I travelled the road to Agra in my new car my mind went back to many years before, when I was six. Our family was living in the Isle of Wight, in Ventnor. I remembered a telegram arriving, my mother opening it and bursting into tears. Her sister had been on holiday in India, was in an open car on this same road on her way to see the Taj Mahal and was killed in an accident. How vivid was that memory even though the event had occurred so many years before. I will not attempt to describe the beauty of that marble tomb. Suffice to say it was every bit as perfect as so many others have said in books and poems.

Returning to Delhi it was off to Jaipur for the festival of Dasshera, which, like so many such occasions, was extremely colourful. There was a durbar and in this instance the added spectacle of a military show. I was accommodated in a splendid guest house with every possible convenience. There were servants for everything. It was like staying in a ten-star hotel with all the fittings of the very best quality, some even gold. Lady Pamela Mountbatten and General Auchinleck had been invited by the maharaja and were his honoured guests at his luxurious Amber Palace, the scene for the first of the military ceremonies. The proceedings began with the blessing of the colours; the state, the regimental and the maharaja's standard. The colours were marched up to the parade ground at the Amber Palace, which was at the top of a hill, handed over to a priest and taken into the private temple. There followed a gruesome sacrifice of a goat for each colour, which I filmed from the top of a building. Each goat was beheaded with a sword on the parade ground and the three heads taken into the temple. After the blessing the colours were ceremoniously returned to the army. Then followed the durbar with horses, elephants, camels and bullocks, all in their finery, parading through the streets. At the durbar hall the maharaja sat on a golden throne to receive the homage of rich nobles. I flew over Jaipur – a city of pink sandstone – and showed its wide streets, its walled surround and the Amber Palace, which made a spectacular picture from the air. The next day there was trooping the colour, which followed almost exactly the London one in Horse Guards Parade. Here the salute was taken by the maharani of Jaipur, the first time she had appeared so conspicuously in public as she was still in semi-purdah. The whole visit was a very grand event unlike what was happening not so many miles away in the north. Later in the year it was the maharaja's silver jubilee and the Mountbattens visited both Bikaner and Jaipur for the celebrations. There were duck shooting, fabulous parades and similar opulent surroundings, meals and accommodation.

In spite of the lavish entertaining those must have been worrying days for the rulers of the 562 princely states. They had been forced to accede to either India or Pakistan, and although at first they were able to keep their riches, they had lost their independence with the transfer of power from the Raj. Despite promises made,

they were very vulnerable to change as indeed they discovered a few years later. The two largest states, Hyderabad and Kashmir, in fact did not accede before independence. Hyderabad held out for a year but then there was still no agreement. A short military action forced the miserly Nizam to join India. Kashmir, with a Hindu maharaja but a mostly Muslim population, eventually acceded to India, but the disputes between India and Pakistan over that decision are a major cause of trouble between the two dominions even today.

In November Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh were married and the Mountbattens flew to London for the wedding, with Pamela Mountbatten a bridesmaid. Because my assignment in India was chiefly a specific one to cover the move to independence and the follow-up during the period Lord Louis was Governor-General I kept close to Government House, but I did have a free hand to find other stories when there was a quiet period. I had been to Agra for library material – now I looked for something that showed a way of life of the local people but which would be of general interest elsewhere. Such stories were always useful as fillers in the newsreel when news was short. One did not normally provide items of this kind when on a rota appointment but I thought some extra coverage was legitimate in the exceptional circumstances and length of stay of that job. The skills of the craftsmen such as the silversmiths and tailors made attractive pictures. And building made a story. Here was a country which had constructed magnificent temples and places like the Taj Mahal and the palaces of the princes but could also, at that time, build by the most primitive methods and the contrast suggested a fascinating story.

The Mountbattens returned and became busy with official duties and gave garden parties as a way of saying farewell to many people. I filmed some of these. The Governor-General still had to cope with unrest and massacres and while he was thus occupied I took advantage of this to go to Calcutta. This was the city in which Gandhi had made his headquarters during the independence celebrations and I went there with the idea of trying to get some pictures of him. There had been some terrible riots and killings after Independence Day and he began a fast which he threatened to continue until the fighting stopped even if he died by doing so. It worked and the city became calm again. I went to Calcutta by train and that was an experience. Everywhere in the East the trains carried people on top and on the sides of the carriages in large numbers. All the long train journeys followed the same pattern, as I found out later when I went to Bombay by train. Periodically we stopped for meals at stations when there was time, and there usually was. Otherwise, when there was a short stop, the char-wallahs would board the train and for a few annas would produce an egg roll and tea – chancey but welcome. Hawkers would appear with phoney gold watches and rings and souvenirs of all kinds and sometimes they would offer exotic fruits. In the overcrowded conditions and among the general shambles and chaos they did their best to cater for our wants.

Calcutta was a mixture of wealth and extreme poverty like most of the large Indian cities. It was a city of diverse history from the days when it was the headquarters of the East India Company, from grim times like the legendary Black Hole in 1756 when a number of British were shut up in an underground shelter and suffocated, to 1858 when Government House, a splendid building, became the Viceroy's House on Lord Canning's appointment as the first viceroy. The seat of government remained in Calcutta until New Delhi became the capital in 1911. In the busy streets with their open-fronted shops traders carried goods on their heads and others had yokes across their shoulders with buckets at either end. Rickshaws weaved among the crowds, pulled by weary, thin men, or the grander bicycle rickshaws pedalled recklessly along the streets with bells ringing loudly. Chowringhee with its hotels was a fashionable residential area and a centre of entertainment, cinemas, restaurants, bars and clubs. Everywhere one heard the wail of 'backsheesh' from the hundreds of pitiful beggars, many devoid of arms or legs or both, or from young children who ran by with outstretched palms. Government House stood near to the Maiden, a huge park, peaceful and very pleasant by the Hooghly river which ran alongside the city. Here, in sight of the long bridge which crossed the river, the dhobi-wallahs washed their clothes in the dirty waters; coolies washed their hair, cleaned their dishes and urinated in the passing stream; others bathed or washed themselves unconcerned as corpses sometimes floated by, for the burning ghats ran down to the water's edge, some of the pyres still with gruesome remains of bodies not completely consumed by the fires when perhaps their folks had not had quite enough money for wood to finish the job. Nearby a barber wiped his razor on his leg. And always the cows wandered where they pleased, as though well aware of their sacred status and indifferent to their contributions to the filth that lay in many side-streets. Scenes that contrasted dramatically with the opulence of Government House within sight on the other side of the Maiden. Interesting film.

Before leaving Delhi I booked into the Grand Hotel where I had stayed during the war on my way to Burma. I had not seen Calcutta then for I had been confined to the hotel by an outbreak of cholera. Then there were six or more to a room. Now I had a spacious apartment with a noisy punkah in the ceiling. A net covered the bed to protect one from the mosquitoes, flies and other insects which flew around. Calcutta was very hot and humid – an unpleasant climate. I decided I would try to fix a meeting with Gandhi as soon as I could and return to Delhi as quickly as possible. Mountbatten had gone to Assam, however, and late one evening he telephoned me. He told me there was a marvellous festival beginning and he had arranged for me to go there the next day, partly by air and then by car up the steep, winding mountainous roads to the capital, Gawahati. I did not enjoy that journey by road. The Indian driver drove at speed round the many bends and insisted that I sat in the back of the car. I enjoy driving but I am not a good passenger and I was almost carsick as we twisted and turned. On arrival, as Lord Louis had said, there was a

spectacular show – dancing in wonderful costumes, singing, elephants, everything. It emphasised how aware Mountbatten was of the importance of showing the other side of the country apart from political stories. Assam produced sixty per cent of India's tea but I did not have an opportunity to film at a tea plantation, nor did I get my pictures of Gandhi as I returned to Delhi in the official plane.

Mahatma Gandhi, having done all he could to bring a peaceful solution to the troubles in Calcutta, turned his attention to the Punjab. He decided to go there by way of Delhi, where although the killings had eased, there was still an underlying tension. He was there in early January and stayed at Birla House, the large lavish residence belonging to his great friend, G.D. Birla, a rich industrialist and politician who had financed many of his ventures since they first met in 1915. There was a large garden where he was able to hold his prayer meetings each evening. He had always been opposed to partition and on 12 January he saw Lord Mountbatten to tell him he was about to begin a fast to try to promote better relations between Hindus and Muslims. He started his fast the following day. By the third day he had become so weak he was forced to take his prayer meetings at his bedside, causing the greatest concern among the public and political leaders of India and Pakistan, who feared he might die. He was given immediate assurances from both dominions that they would make every effort to encourage understanding between the two countries. With these undertakings, on 18 January Gandhi broke his fast and I filmed him sipping a glass of orange juice, so I got the pictures I had tried to obtain in Calcutta. Two days later a bomb exploded at his prayer meeting. It did little damage and injured no one, but it reinforced the rumours about possible attempts on the lives of prominent politicians including Gandhi.

Prior to Gandhi's fast I had been attending his prayer meetings each day with a BBC reporter, Bob Stimson, and my photographer friend from Associated Press, Max Desfor, in case of any trouble. I had cabled London some time earlier for more film as I was getting dangerously short and filming Gandhi at Birla House had used up the remainder of the footage I had. Ten thousand feet went to Karachi for onward transmission to Delhi but the customs in Karachi would not release it unless I went there personally – a case of 'backsheesh' required – not unusual. I was due to go to Ceylon at the end of the month for its independence day on 4 February, so I decided to go via Karachi to pick up the film. Consequently, with no film, I stopped going to the prayer meetings. The bomb explosion was worrying but as I had just over a week before going to Ceylon it seemed pointless going to Karachi to get the film, returning to Delhi and then leaving again. How wrong was that decision. The BBC reporter continued to attend the prayer meetings but Max Desfor had a special assignment with one of the maharajas and flew off on 29 January. I had arranged to go to Karachi on 1 February and on Friday 30 January I went to the cinema in the afternoon. Suddenly, about 6 p.m., the screen went blank, there was solemn music and the lights came on. The manager appeared on the small

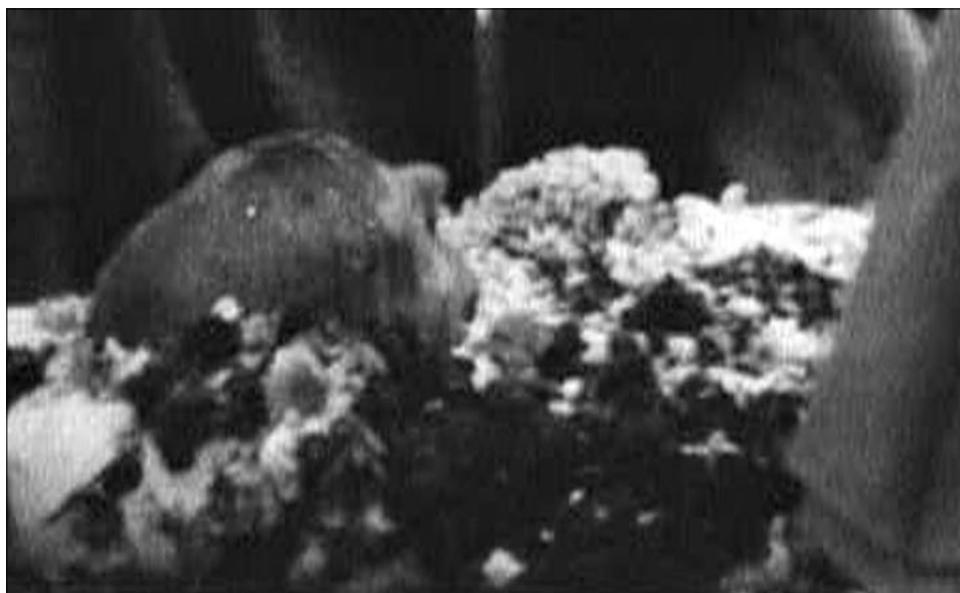
stage in front of the screen and announced, first in Hindi and then in English, that the show had ended as Gandhi had been shot at his prayer meeting and was dead. There was no reaction from the large audience; they were too stunned. They filed out quietly. It was eerie and very dramatic. But apart from the dreadful news as such I realised it was dreadful news for me. I had no film with a world story on my doorstep. I knew the BBC would have a world scoop but for Max Desfor and me there was nothing – we had missed out. I remember hurrying from the cinema in a panic. My immediate hope was that they would have a lying-in-state for a day, or several days, so I could get to Karachi and back with the film before the funeral.

I went to Birla House where there were already large crowds and was relieved to see Ved Parkash. He had managed to get some early shots. He, too, was short of film, as I had kept him supplied and he had been hoping to get some from me. I arranged to meet him later at the Imperial Hotel and tried to contact Karachi but it was too late in the evening. Then came the news on the radio that the funeral was to take place the following day from midday. More feelings of panic. My only hope then was that I could work out something with Parkash. And thank goodness for that resourceful man. When he arrived at the hotel he told me he knew a lot of film cameramen in the town and in the past had used some of them as assistants in filming stories. So we made a list of those most likely to have film, including his brother Mohan, and set out to see what we could get. I must confess I had little hope, but the situation was desperate and we could only trust that if any had film they would not want to use it themselves. One thing was fortunate. Those were the days before television's 16mm film so whatever film was around was likely to be 35mm. Parkash told me if anyone would not part with film he would blackmail them



Mahatma Gandhi on an open bier for his funeral, following his assassination. From the newsreel.

ITN Archive/Reuters



ITN Archive/Reuters

The body of Mahatma Gandhi. From the newsreel.

by telling there they would never get another job with him in the future. A true newsman! We spent almost the whole night locating those people. Parkash was as good as his word. When we found someone reluctant to release film, my good friend used his persuasive powers. By dawn we had collected a number of tins containing variable lengths of film. We sorted it out as best we could and I finished up with approximately 2,000 feet and Parkash had some 1,000 feet. We had no idea how reliable each piece was but it was remarkable that we had managed to find so much. Most of the people we contacted were very generous and handed over without any problems. But it was a daunting day ahead for both of us. In addition to the camera it meant carrying tins of different lengths and constantly having to reload the camera via the changing bag in the street and the crowds, and all the time wondering whether one was filming vital scenes with faulty stock. I can say without reservation it was the worst day in my whole career as a cameraman. But it transpired that all the film was usable and that was indeed a miracle.

I arranged with Parkash for him to film scenes at Birla House at the start of the funeral procession and whatever else he could in that area while I would make my way to the other end for the cremation. What saved the day was the time the procession took to get from Birla House to the banks of the Jumna river where the pyre awaited, a distance of about four and a half miles. With the vast crowds and stops it took the cortège five hours to make the journey. It gave me time to get pictures on the way – the shrouded Gandhi, head exposed, surrounded with flowers, the crowds and the general atmosphere – and to tin-up exposed film as I made gradual progress along the road. There had been no opportunity to arrange

for an assistant or for transport. With all that gear it was a long, hot walk and if there had been less time I would not have been able to finish the story. When I finally arrived at the pyre it was to be confronted with a crowd of around half a million waiting for the climax. In the front were the VIPs: the Mountbattens, Nehru, ministers, ambassadors and military top brass. I took some pictures of all this but surveyed the scene with some disquiet. I needed some elevation to show such a setting. A high pair of steps would have helped. However, I seemed to be blessed with miracles. A local photographer whom I knew had somehow managed to fix a small platform on a single pole which he had embedded in the ground and which was about ten feet high. There was just room for two and I pleaded with him to let me join him. Understandably he was not keen but he agreed. I cannot remember how I got up there. Probably on someone's shoulders but up there I got, festooned with equipment. We were very close to the pyre and ideally placed to show it when it was alight. When the cortege arrived, drawn by members of the state services, Gandhi's body was placed on the pyre and the sandalwood logs set alight by his son. As the flames rose high the crowd went wild and broke through the police cordons, and the VIPs disappeared in the ensuing pandemonium. Police horses came in to restore order and continually brushed past our pole. It really was a wonder we did not fall off or get knocked off. However, due to the generosity of my photographer friend I managed to film the whole scene. I had kept my longest piece of film – it seemed to be about 200 feet – for that part of the proceedings and it was just enough for the arrival of Gandhi, the pyre alight and the chaos that followed. Parkash had done well at Birla House with good close-ups and the start of the procession. Thanks to him and his efforts during the night we got a good coverage when it seemed we were in an impossible situation. When the film was dispatched to London all we could hope was that the stock was OK. I never found out what the laboratories thought when they received all those short pieces of film. I thought it wise to say nothing about having run out of film. I was also very lucky not to have been on my way to Ceylon, for if Gandhi had been assassinated two days later I would have been unable to return to Delhi in time for the funeral. So ended the life of that frail individual at the age of seventy-nine, one who had tried so hard to end violence but died by violence. In the Hindu language of Sanskrit 'Mahatma' means 'Great Soul', a fitting epitaph for the man.

The next day I was on my way to Ceylon with little time to prepare for its independence on 4 February 1948. I left behind a sad city with flags at half-mast, places of entertainment shut, and most shops closed for the thirteen days of mourning that had been declared. I picked up my film in Karachi, satisfying the customs of my claim to the film by a suitable handover of rupees. Ceylon is just twenty miles south of the Tamil states of India and is roughly the size of Ireland. It is a Buddhist country in spite of being so close to Hindu India. As one approaches from the air one can see many of its tea plantations, tea being its main export. On

arrival in Colombo I made for Mount Lavinia and the Galle Face Hotel next to the sea. I was pleased to see from my hotel bedroom that there were still vendors of pineapples and mangoes on the beach. Apart from that it was a different city from the wartime days. The harbour was as busy as ever but the warships had gone. No sailors, soldiers, airmen, Fanys or Wrens filled the restaurants and bars, or walked the streets, or waited for buses or boats. Now flags, bunting, ceremonial arches lined the processional routes and there were very large crowds to cope with again. I had the advantage, this time, of knowing the town, but I made no attempt to put up stands. I was on my own and needed to be mobile to cover as many aspects of the proceedings as possible and with the prospect of excitable crowds as in Delhi stands were not all that useful.

The programme in Ceylon was on a smaller scale than in India with no country to be divided and no communal troubles looming. They came some years later when the Tamil Indians tried to establish a permanent home for themselves. The initial ceremony at midnight took the form that was to signify the transfer of power at all future independence ceremonies – the lowering of the Union Jack, the raising of the national flag and the singing of the national anthem. Local cameramen had arranged for this to be lit. Throughout the night there was much jubilation until the next day, 4 February. Early that morning the inaugural ceremony, at which the governor of Ceylon, Sir Henry Moore, was sworn in as Governor-General, took place in a special structure in one of the large gardens in Colombo, as the parliament building was too small for the numbers they wished to accommodate. It was a covered hall with open sides and room for several thousand guests including schoolchildren. With the new Governor-General installed and the British henceforth represented by a high commissioner, a spectacular festival was staged and the rejoicing went on into the late evening.

Although there were a number of parties and displays of fireworks after the inaugural formalities there was a break in the proceedings until the opening of the first session of parliament on 10 February by the Duke of Gloucester, who arrived in Colombo with the Duchess on 8 February. They were greeted by Sir Henry Moore, a guard of honour, and a twenty-one-gun salute at the airport which was about twenty miles outside the city. Large crowds lined the processional route to Queen's House, the Governor-General's residence. The following evening there was a very large garden party in honour of the royals. The next day, the 10th, the Duke, in smart white uniform, opened the new parliament in the presence of representatives from more than twenty nations. After greetings and a gun salute the royal procession moved through the specially constructed open-sided hall to a dais on two levels. On the upper level was the throne of the Kandyan kings in gold and red, a gift from King George V in 1934. On the lower level were two thrones for the Duke and Duchess. After the proclamation of King George VI's commission authorising the Duke to open the first parliament of the new dominion, the Duke

read a speech from the King and declared the parliament open. Very large crowds were in the park outside the Assembly hall to see the conclusion of the proceedings when the Singhalese prime minister, watched by the Duke and Duchess, unfurled the Lion Flag, standard of the Singhalese kings. There was some query as to which flag to hoist on Independence Day and it was decided that it should be the Lion Flag for its close association with the Kandyan court of past days, but a new national flag was to be designed as soon as possible. The next day it was up to Kandy where, at the Temple of the Tooth, the Duke raised the Lion Flag. This was followed by a perahera – a torchlight procession of Kandyan chiefs, dancers, elephants adorned in finery and ornaments and tom-tom beaters. There was a lot to picture and I was glad I had plenty of film.

Before I returned to India I was invited to dinner at the house of one of the white tea-planters with whom I had become acquainted when looking for some elevation on one of the processional routes. It was almost palatial and I was treated to one of the best curries I have ever had. I had had one or two when I was in Ceylon during the war, but nothing like that one. I returned to India on fire.

Mourning for Gandhi had ended when I arrived back in Delhi. The next few months were spent travelling all over India, sometimes with Lord Mountbatten, sometimes solo. There were goodbyes or thanks to maharajas, heads of states and officials. Sometimes there were festivals with their processions of elephants, horses, dancers and singers and religious statues of Hindu gods like Ganesh, the elephant-headed son of Shiva. There was a visit to Madras. There was Bombay, the home of the film industry where thousands of feet of film was exposed every year, for the Indians loved their films. Bombay with its elegant Parsi women, its slums, its Gateway to India arch, and where just outside its boundaries stretched miles and miles of paddy fields and where a little over a hundred miles away in the hills was Poona, the Simla of the south. There was Hyderabad where the very wealthy, miserly Nizam drove around in his old banger of a Rolls-Royce. There were farewells to tea-planters and the military. I regretted that on some of these journeys there was not always time to see the places other than cursorily. I would have liked to see more of the temples, the paintings of Hindu gods and the wildlife. No matter where one is, this is one of the frustrating things for a cameraman, for he has to concentrate on the story, leaving little time to enjoy the locality.

I did manage, however, to get up to Srinagar in Kashmir and see something of the place. I flew there in a single-engined plane between snow-covered mountains of the Himalayas, a rather unnerving flight but very beautiful. There was no trouble in Srinagar while I was there and the houseboats, lakes and flowers provided a welcome relief from the hot, steamy country 5,000 feet below. The city, situated on Dal Lake, was transversed with canals and the Jhelum river. It was a lovely place for a different kind of picture of India as one took a trip through the canals and lakes in a *shikara* (gondola). I was only there for a few days but it was certainly a nice break

to be able to show a peaceful scene, although, of course, what I saw was a facade. I was just lucky, for Kashmir was by no means to remain a peaceful state after independence.

The time came for Lord Mountbatten to leave India and for an Indian Governor-General, Mr Rajagopalachari, to be sworn in. In the evening of 20 June 1948 the Indian Cabinet gave a state banquet at Government House followed by a reception for thousands of guests to give them an opportunity to say goodbye to the Mountbattens, who left early the next morning before the new Governor-General was sworn in. They drove down to the main gates in the state landau escorted by the colourful, turbanned Governor-General's bodyguard, watched by large crowds. Then it was by motor procession to Palam airport where, after Lord Louis inspected a guard of honour, the Mountbattens were seen off by Pandit Nehru, the new Governor-General and a number of diplomats and politicians. I had followed in the motor procession from Government House and took my last pictures as the plane disappeared into the distance to end my coverage of that historic assignment.

Then it was my turn to say farewell to the many friends I had made, to those at Associated Press and in particular to Ved Parkash. I told him to be sure to contact me if he came to London in the future. Some years later I was delighted to see his cheerful face and tubby figure when I took him to dinner in London's West End. When I called him several days later I was devastated to learn he collapsed and died in an Indian restaurant. It was a very sad end for a very nice, generous and likeable man. And the other participants in those dramatic days did not survive for very long. Jinnah died in September 1948, Patel in 1950, Nehru in 1964. And Mountbatten was assassinated in 1979. A sobering thought.

In the plane returning to England I thought back to the journey the other way when I was heading for India and to what had happened between those two flights. I would no longer hear 'Yes, Sahib' or call out, 'Bearer!' I would no longer see the straight-backed Parsi women in Bombay, clad in their beautiful saris. I thought of the excitement of Independence Day and the awful days that followed in the Punjab; of the squalor in Calcutta and the bodies in Delhi. In a way my look at India was superficial. One needed more than a few months to appreciate all its intricacies, its customs, its temples and to understand its peoples. In writing this account of my stay in India I should emphasise that my thoughts of the country were strictly as I saw it as a newsreel cameraman. I saw it in exceptional circumstances and I could not claim to know it in any way otherwise. It is a fascinating country and has much of the romance with which I surrounded it. I was so grateful to have seen history in the making, when, after 163 years of British rule and ninety years of the Raj, the country became two countries, each with a future that depended on its own initiatives. As my plane touched down at Heathrow I returned to my very first thoughts – India is, and always will be, 'news' – a good thought for a newsreel cameraman.