

Epilogue

The events of 1929 to 1942 had not produced a final result in the confrontation between the forces of imperialism and of nationalism in India. The new policies initiated by both the British and the Congress in 1942 were intended to produce a dead-lock, not a solution to the Indian problem. The end game of the British Empire in India was not begun until 1944–5, and then lasted only until 1947. In these final negotiations the British and the Congress leaders were joined by a third major political grouping – the All India Muslim League led by M. A. Jinnah.

In the tripartite negotiations which settled the independence and the partition of the sub-continent, internal Congress politics played little part. The final battles between the *Raj* and its rival heirs were fought out at the national level and over all-India problems. Between 1934 and 1939 and, to a lesser extent, even between 1940 and 1942, the eyes of the Congress leaders had been turned in to events within their own organisation. The major issues in all-India Congress politics had been largely determined by the pressures and problems pushed up from the lower levels of the organisation. The constraints which their subordinates imposed on the ability of the national leaders to lead had also determined the policies they had adopted. Between 1945 and 1947 the all-India leaders of the Congress could abandon their role of producing consensus, resolving disputes and establishing a fragile and complex system of control over their subordinates on the basis of stimuli thrown up from underneath, and were free to act as national negotiators on national issues. But this was only a temporary phenomenon and, although after 1948 the relationship between the all-India Congress leaders and their subordinates was further complicated by Congress control over central government, the origins of the political system of independent India must be sought in the events of 1934–9, not those of 1945–7.