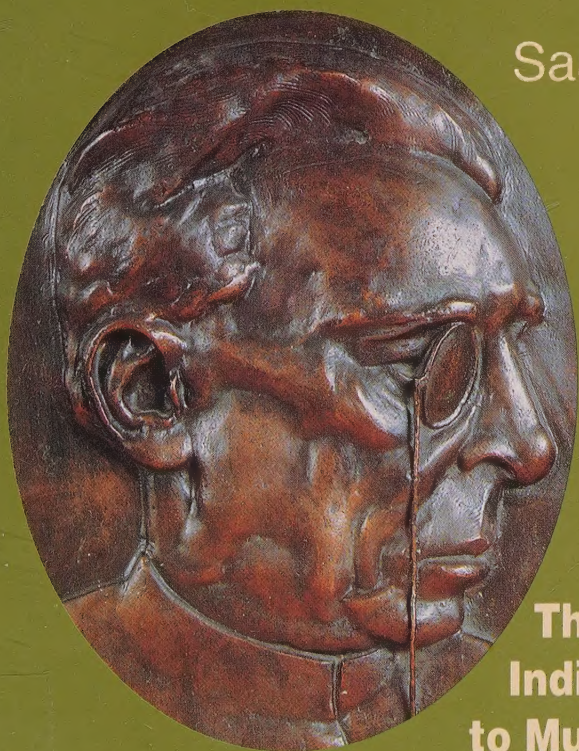


Jinnah

reinterpreted

Saad R. Khairi



**The Journey from
Indian Nationalism
to Muslim Statehood**

OXFORD

Jinnah Reinterpreted

The Journey from Indian Nationalism to Muslim Statehood

In 1916-17, Mohammed Ali Jinnah persuaded the warring Hindu and Muslim politicians to sign a pact for an agreed future constitution of a united India. For this he was hailed as the 'Ambassador of Hindu-Muslim Unity'. Thirty years later he brought about Partition.

What was responsible for this change? Personal ambition or private grievance? British intrigues or Hindu obduracy? Gandhi's overconfidence or Nehru's miscalculations? Or was it just the tide of historical forces against which all were helpless?

Jinnah Reinterpreted questions many of the myths that have grown around India's struggle for independence and highlights several factors that have deliberately been suppressed by historians on both sides of the border.

Cover

Portrait in bronze:

Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah

By Shahid Sajjad

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Saad R. Khairi

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*To
those who died
and to those who are dying,
so that we may live.*

*Do not be angry with me
if I tell the truth.*

Socrates

PREFACE

The end of the British Raj in South Asia started a process of decolonization that liberated all Asia and Africa. World interest in the subcontinent's own struggle for independence enhanced. Unfortunately, however, that interest, as manifested in the flood of books since published, is not matched either by sufficient knowledge or by a desire to know the whole truth. It is a measure of this ignorance that Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, and, to a lesser extent, Jawaharlal Nehru, are glorified as heroes of that struggle, while Mohammad Ali Jinnah is relegated to a negative role.

This is a false impression. It is as fallacious as to say that the Partition was the doing of the British, or that Gandhi liberated India. India's fight for freedom in the twentieth century had passed through many phases. In the first two decades, the fight was mostly in the Council chambers and through constitutional methods, during which neither Gandhi nor the Nehrus, father and son, were anywhere in the picture, but Jinnah was a leading participant. Gandhi came later, and rose quickly because of his mass movements. But it is a travesty of history to state that India became free because of these movements.

In reality, every one of Gandhi's movements in India failed. His first movement was against a repressive (Rowlatt) Act. It failed to have the Act removed from the statute book, and was suspended a few days after the start. The Non-co-operation Movement, which set the subcontinent aflame, was suspended when at its peak. The salt *satyagraha*, a decade later, started dramatically, was suspended after some time, re-started and then abandoned. The next *satyagraha* started tamely, and was called off even more tamely. The last, the 'Quit India' movement, was nipped in the bud by a pre-emptive British strike. Gandhi more

than once promised '*swaraj* in one year', but when *swaraj* did come it was not the result of any Gandhian movement.

This is not to say that Gandhi made no contribution to the cause of freedom. His contribution was great indeed. But it consisted in creating mass consciousness. It is equally true, though, that this consciousness was not solely directed against the foreign ruler, but also tended to divide the Indians on religious lines, and made partition of the subcontinent unavoidable.

India became free because the British decided to leave, not because Gandhi's movements made their continued stay impossible. The British had been bled white by the Second World War. They were impoverished, and totally exhausted, both physically and mentally. The British public now wanted to rest and relax, drinking beer at their locals, or watching football and cricket. It had no desire or stamina left to fight even small battles, in far off lands suppressing rebellious crowds. Hard realists that they are, the British decided to surrender power and concentrate on economic domination.

All these facts are forgotten, as are some others like India not being a country but a continent of many nations, and that one of them, a hundred million strong, while passionately desiring freedom, did not follow Gandhi.

For anyone desirous of knowing the truth it is imperative to find out the Muslim point of view; what they stood for, and why they insisted on partition. This can best be done by a study of the political career of its founding father, who started by working for a united India, and ended by establishing a separate State.

This is, however, not as easy as it sounds, for Jinnah's biographies do not do him justice. If his detractors heap abuse on him, and charge him with *volte-face*, and what not, his admirers depict him almost as a fundamentalist wanting to establish a religious State. The truth is thus covered by heaps of propagandist material from both sides.

This book is not a biography. Its aim is merely to restore the true image of Jinnah, and relate and analyse the events that forced him to have recourse to partition. It has a limited canvas. No doubt certain portions appear crowded, and others rather empty: but that is because in the case of the first some detailed background was considered essential to appreciate the foreground, and in the latter, any additions were unnecessary.

The author does feel, however, that he has pointed out several vistas for eager researchers to follow, and he would be more than happy to see new studies exploring and digging out new facts.

It has been my endeavour to quote Hindu sources on matters connected with the Hindus and British sources on matters connected with the British. Indian sources, even published works are not easily available to a Pakistani, and I had therefore, to sometimes rely on secondary sources, if they did not diminish the value of the point made.

In Britain there is a huge treasure of source material regarding the British period of Indian history. Yet much important material is still out of reach of a researcher. To give a small example, the Mountbatten collection is supposed to have been given to the Southampton University, and filmed copies are available in the India Office Library: but nineteen parts concerning Kashmir, which have not been filed, are 'closed to public access' and their originals are kept at Broadlands, the Mountbatten home.

In Pakistan itself, finding of material has been a constant headache. There is, for instance not even an authentic collection of all the speeches and statements of the Quaid-i-Azam, although a full-fledged Academy after his name has been functioning for several years. Nevertheless, after six years of hard work, I am presenting this book, with all its shortcoming of which I am conscious, and many more which the critics might discover, for whatever its worth.

In my search for material, I was greatly helped by the staff at the British Museum Library and its India Office Record. In Pakistan, the Quaid-i-Azam Academy, and specially its Deputy Director, Khawaja Razi Hyder, and the Librarian, Mr Salahuddin, were very co-operative.

Mr Abdul Hamid Dadabhoy placed at my disposal his private collection of very valuable books. Mr G. M. Riaz and Miss Jahanara Choudhry extended technical help. The typing of the manuscript was a real problem, but ultimately Mr Khalid Ahmed solved it with his patient hard work. Ambassador Birjis Hasan Khan and Miss Faiza Kazi went through the typescript, and gave many useful suggestions. To all these friends I owe a heavy debt of gratitude.

Special mention must, however, be made of Syed Khalid Shamsul Hasan, Senior Executive Vice President and Director of

the National Bank of Pakistan. Khalid is the son of the late Syed Shamsul Hasan, the devoted Secretary of the All India Muslim League. Syed Shamsul Hasan took up his job in 1914 and remained attached to it through thick and thin until 1958, when the Martial Law regime seized the premises of the office and sealed its documents, banning the political party that created Pakistan. During the lean years of the Muslim League, Shamsul Hasan ran the office unperturbed. In fact he was the only constant factor in the League. If he may be said to have married the League Office, Khalid may be said to have been born and brought up there. He learnt his alphabet from the League documents, and that reading has not stopped. To his profound knowledge in this field, he has added an excellent collection of documents and books for the Shamsul Hasan Foundation. Anyone interested in research on the Muslim League or the Quaid-i-Azam has inevitably to turn to him for guidance and advice, and it is never refused.

It was Khalid who first suggested that I write the book. He followed it up with friendly pleadings, taunts, and threats, alternately: and once I had undertaken the project, helped in every way. He must therefore share the blame for this work.

While thanking all these friends, I must clarify that the views expressed here are my own, and I and I alone am responsible for them.

Karachi
17 June 1994

Saad R. Khairi

INTRODUCTION

'Mr. Jinnah's life is logic,' a professor of Philosophy¹ used to say. His statement puzzled, but did not bother, Jinnah's devoted followers. Whether our Quaid-i-Azam was logically following the same course of politics he had initially adopted, or had taken a sharp turn, did not matter to us; it was enough that he was leading his people on the right road then, and there was no doubt in our young minds that we would achieve our goal under his supreme leadership.

Jinnah indeed led us triumphantly to Pakistan; but his apparent transformation from a fire-brand Indian nationalist to the prophet of partition has never been fully explained. None of the several biographies written about him have thrown sufficient light on this aspect.

Jinnah was not as complex a character as it is made out. Although he insisted on the privacy of his personal life, his political life was an open book. From the moment he entered politics, all his actions were inspired by noble objectives and based on high moral principles. One has only to study his political career to realize the truth of the professor's observation.

Jinnah was one of the greatest national leaders that ever lived. He created history, and, one is tempted to say, altered geography. But neither the dimensions of that victory nor the extent of his greatness are generally realized. One reason for this ignorance is the mess that the corrupt and the self-seeking leaders of Pakistan made of the country he fathered. This raised doubts about the soundness of his political vision; and there were many who considered him a perversely obstinate politician who created an artificial country. The secession of East Pakistan not only

¹Dr. M. M. Ahmed of the Muslim University, Aligarh, in the early 1940s.

confirmed this image of Pakistan in their mind, but also that of a mediaeval and reactionary State of robber barons, military juntas and religious fanatics.

The other reason is the lack of any dramatic impact that a historical figure makes on the minds of later generations. An average person is impressed by brilliant military victories, breathtaking adventures and story-book exploits, not by solid achievements. Eisenhower and Montgomery fascinate him, however, he knows nothing about the self-effacing General Marshall and Field-Marshal Allen Brooke who were the real architects of the Allied victory in the last war. People in general, remember, not decades of peace and construction, but years of war and devastation; not building of dams, but floods and famines. They remember Mussolini and Garibaldi, not Cavour. Even Einstein is known to them because of the atomic bomb and not for his general contribution to physics.

Jinnah led no army, fought no military battles and was not involved in any dramatic adventures that would thrill a reader. Nor did he propound any novel philosophy such as that of non-violence and non-co-operation; nor did he adopt a Mahatama-like life style—living on goat's milk, dressed in a *dhoti*¹, spinning a wheel, and responding to his inner voice—that would invite curiosity. He led a straight life, followed a straight path, talked and acted straight. Such a character arouses no interest. Simple truths are dull, facts are boring; fiction and make-believe are colourful and catching.

Jinnah fought his battles with legal and political weapons. They necessarily involved lengthy negotiations, evolution of constitutional formulae and drawing up of constructive proposals on such matters as distribution of power between a federal centre and constituting states, and the share of various communities in parliamentary seats—all matters of prosaic detail, which even a citizen of modern India² finds tiresome.

Naturally then a study of Jinnah's life is far from interesting to an average person, who very easily swallows the anti-Jinnah

¹Loin-cloth.

²'India' has, throughout the book, been used to denote the South Asian subcontinent which today consists of the sovereign States of Pakistan, the Indian Union and Bangladesh.

propaganda that has been going on systematically for decades. This has come from two sources: the Bharti and the British.

The Bharti propaganda started in real earnest in 1937 after the All India Muslim League was re-vitalized by Jinnah. The Indian Congress at first tried to ignore and then ridicule him, and finally started a full-fledged campaign of hate in which falsehood, fact-twisting, half-truths and baseless allegations were all mixed up to malign him and disfigure his image.

The British, on their part, never liked him. His independence of character, and their failure to either bully or buy him, made him a *persona non grata* from Minto to Mountbatten. In the last days of the Raj, this allergy became an obsession, especially because of the active hostility of Sir Stafford Cripps sitting in the inner cabinet in London, and Lord Mountbatten in New Delhi feeling jilted at Jinnah's refusal to accept him as Governor-General of Pakistan in common with Bharat.¹

Partition of India was anathema to Britain, and it was without grace that she accepted it. British leaders had no love for the new dominion which came into existence in the teeth of their opposition. The British Press was openly hostile and it was from the British that the rest of the world, especially America, took its cue about the new state, regarding which it knew next to nothing.

While the world at large may be excused for its lack of knowledge, there is nothing to justify the ignorance of the Pakistanis about their founding father. The tragedy of Pakistan is that while surviving all those problems of Himalayan dimensions that Bharat and Britain had created for it from its very birth, it was then hijacked by a gang which neither represented the people nor shared the spirit of the Pakistan Movement. Ghulam Mohammad, Iskandar Mirza, Choudhri Muhammad Ali and Ayub Khan (or Ghulam Ishaq Khan, for that matter), who would have normally retired as government pensioners of the British, captured power and ruled the country as a colony the way the British did (with lower standards of efficiency and integrity). They had never fought even a single municipal election and lived in their own world, totally cut off from the common man. They neither understood nor cared for popular sentiments. They had no idea

¹'Bharat that is India', one of the three countries created out of the former British India.

of, and had no sympathy with, the factors that had made the Pakistan demand a mass movement. And they mentioned Jinnah's name merely as a cover for their destructive policies, to trample under foot every principle he held so dear.

Jinnah has been as much misrepresented in Pakistan as in Bharat. The classic example of this is his speech before the Constituent Assembly, of which he was the first president, on 11 August 1947. In this speech he said:

If you will work in co-operation, forgetting the past, burying the hatchet, you are bound to succeed. If you change your past and work together in a spirit that every one of you, no matter to what community he belongs, no matter what relations he had with you in the past, no matter what is his colour, caste or creed, is first, second and last a citizen of this State, with equal rights, privileges and obligations, there will be no end to the progress you will make.

And:

You are free; you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other places of worship in this State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed...that has nothing to do with the business of the State...

We are starting with this fundamental principle that we are all citizens and equal citizens of one State...

Now, I think if we should keep that in front of us as our ideal and you will find that in the course of time Hindus would cease to be Hindus and Muslims would cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense, because that is personal faith of each individual, but in the political sense as citizens of the State.¹

The very day the speech was made, the Press Department of Pakistan's Information Ministry tried to suppress it. Although it failed—because some journalists stubbornly refused to accept the Department's instructions and because Jinnah was still alive—it was a shadow of the coming events². In any case, all propagandists of a theoretic state, including Ziaul Haq, have abused Quaid-i-Azam's name in their support of an Islamic State. Any reference to a secular state which he wanted, as is clear from this speech, is taboo.

¹Jamiluddin Ahmad, *Some Recent Speeches and Writings of Mr Jinnah*, Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf, Lahore, 1976, Vol. II, pp. 399-405.

²For details see, Zamir Niazi, *Press in Chains*, Karachi Press Club, Karachi, 1986 pp. 34-6.

The 11 August speech is now never referred to in Pakistan either by the Government or the Opposition. Attempts were actually made to remove it from the record.¹ This was, however, impossible as it had been published not only in Pakistan, but also abroad. Failing here, various explanations were then offered. But the lawyer in Jinnah was always extremely careful in choosing his words and never in his political life, spread over a period of half a century, did he ever have to retract a single word; and this speech he had prepared with extra care. He was laying down the guiding principle of the State he had created; and the man who used to speak for four or five hours extempore had delivered it with the help of his notes.

Recourse was then taken to interpreting its 'spirit'. But Jinnah's word was plain and explicit. So the final judgment was delivered by the Quaid-i-Azam Academy. This academy was founded in 1976, the year of Jinnah's centenary, to 'undertake, organize and promote research on Quaid-i-Azam', and one of its first publications was a book by its own Director, interpreting Jinnah's policies and politics. The verdict of the Director on this speech is that 'it represents a serious lapse on his part'².

When facts about Jinnah are suppressed and even his recorded speeches are mischievously edited and misinterpreted, it is futile to hope that the truth about Jinnah, his life, his politics and policies will emerge from Pakistan.

For the truth is that Mohammad Ali Jinnah was from the beginning to the end an uncompromising patriot and nationalist to the core. He was an enemy of foreign rule in India, and strove, through constitutional means, for the attainment of freedom; yet he was also an admirer of British parliamentary and judicial systems. He believed that the fruits of liberty should be shared by all communities equally. He had no communal bias in his politics; but he realized that the communal problem in India existed and had to be solved. He was unyielding in his opposition to the idea of bringing religion into politics, and his views in this regard never changed. He resisted for a long time the proposal to partition the subcontinent, and when he finally agreed, he

¹Ibid., p. 36.

²Sharif-ul-Mujahid, *Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah: Studies in Interpretation*, Quaid-i-Azam Academy, Karachi, 1981, p. 268.

desired Pakistan and Bharat to be close allies, not just friends. He honestly came to the conclusion that partition was the only possible solution of the communal question, and was in the interest of the Muslims as well as the Hindus, whose welfare he equally sought.

The Pakistan Movement was the culmination of the Muslim national effort which started in the first decade of the century. In the second decade, Jinnah achieved a signal success with the signing of the Lucknow Pact, and earned for himself the title of 'Ambassador of Hindu-Muslim Unity'. The Lucknow Pact was subverted, as were other later efforts for Hindu-Muslim unity, by Gandhi and his band. But undaunted, Jinnah continued on the path he had chosen. His scheme of partition was the most practical solution which, while creating two States, could establish lasting goodwill between Hindus and Muslims, who would then proclaim to the world, 'Hands off (free) India'¹.

Jinnah had kept on the same course that he had charted in Lucknow in 1916. He had not turned either left or right, much less taken a U-turn. Pakistan was inherent in the Indian situation and Jinnah only tried to convert the situation to the best advantage for the Indian peoples. He had not changed. He might have changed his tactics according to the need of the hour, as any general would do during a battle, but he never changed his strategy or his fundamental belief or his ultimate goal. His life was logic indeed.

CHAPTER I

EARLY INFLUENCES

Mohammad Ali Jinnah was admitted to the Bar in 1896. Three and a half years earlier he had come to England for training in business administration with a British firm, but, soon after arrival, decided to adopt law as a career rather than go into business as family tradition demanded.

Britain in those days was at the height of its power and glory. It had established the biggest empire history has known, directly governing one-fourth of the land surface of the globe, and ruling the waves. There was no power to challenge its authority. The Russian and the Austrian Empires were decadent and weak. Republican France was still licking the wounds inflicted at Sedan. The German Empire was not yet a threat. The United States, beyond the seas, was still not a world power. Britain in its 'careless supremacy' could afford to live in splendid isolation. Isolation or not, no international decision could be taken without its approval: and if it happened as it did at San Stefano,¹ Britain could put its foot down and have it changed. In less than a dozen years, between 1887 and 1899, territory twenty-four times the area of the British Isles had been added to the Empire.

Britain, despite new challenges from the United States and Germany, was still 'the workshop of the world'. Its manufactured goods flooded world markets. Its steamers claimed the lion's share in world shipping, carrying freight across the oceans, which

¹In March 1878, Russia, after a 9-month war, defeated Turkey, and dictated a treaty at San Stefano. It deprived the Ottoman Empire of almost all of its European territories. Britain, which had taken no part in the war, refused to accept the treaty, and bullied Russia to revise it. The new treaty of Berlin drastically changed the previous treaty. Britain came out of this successful manoeuvre with enhanced prestige, and acquired the island of Cyprus in the bargain.

British railways transported inland. British capital was invested heavily in Australia, India, South Africa and Latin America. British banks and commercial houses dominated international finance. The British pound was the strongest and the most sought after currency, and the word 'sterling' stood for 'genuine, of standard value or purity'.

Its foreign trade, its colonies and its business houses had made Britain the richest nation on earth. Its aristocracy lived 'upon a golden cloud, spending the riches as indolently and naturally as the leaves grow green', and was the envy of all European aristocracy.

Nevertheless this ruling class, although spending most of its time in banquets and balls, country-house gatherings and fox-hunts, no longer felt as secure as before. It had tried to meet the rising challenge from the lower and working classes by a series of reforms. The first Gladstone ministry had put into effect what Winston Churchill aptly called 'an avalanche of reforms'. The succeeding Disraeli government 'dished the Whigs' and introduced some more. It was indeed an era of reforms. There were reforms in every field: education and labour, judiciary and law, health and housing, army and civil services, rights of women and non-conformists, electoral process and franchise.

In England of *fin de siècle* every man had been given a vote, primary education had been put within the reach of all, and Oxford and Cambridge had been opened to 'non-believers'. It was, in the words of the social historian, G. M. Trevelyan, an era of new ideas and free debate in 'a liberal outspoken age'. They gave new food for thought and tantalizing subjects for discussion. There was a flood of pamphlets, posters, books and publications, and a rush for founding new societies...the Irish Home Rule League, the Fabian Society, the Democratic Federation to preach Marxism, the Independent Labour Party.

There was 'a rising rumble of protest from below, by the Radicals of the Opposition who talked about taxing unearned increment of land, by the Home Rulers who wanted to detach the Irish Island from which so much English income came, by trade unionists who talked of labour representation in Parliament and demanded the legal right to strike and otherwise interfere with the free play of economic forces, by socialists who wanted to nationalize property and anarchists who wanted to abolish it, by

upstart nations and strange challenges from abroad. The rumble was distant, but it spoke with one voice that said Change...'¹

All this was going on in a spirit of tolerance and free expression of ideas.

It was in this atmosphere of 1892-3 that Jinnah landed in England, at the age of sixteen, and where he spent the next three and a half to four most formative years of his life. 'I found a strange country and unfamiliar surroundings,' he once reminisced. 'I did not know a soul, and the fogs and winter in London upset me a great deal, but I soon settled down and was quite happy.'² And as soon as he settled down, he decided to change his career and become a barrister rather than a business man.

The British Empire was then at its peak and just two decades earlier, Queen Victoria had assumed, in addition to other titles, that of 'Empress of India' (*Kaiser-i-Hind*). For an Indian in that era, there was a halo around one who was 'England-returned'; to be a barrister was to be assured a berth in the elite class.

Since the doors of the executive and judicial services in India were closed to 'natives', and representative institutions were yet to be born, the only career that could bring both money and respectability was at the Bar. Rich parents sent their sons to England to become barristers, a qualification that needed nothing more than money and attending a few dinners. Even middle-class men saved to improve family prospects by following the rich in this respect. Vallabhbhai Patel lived from hand to mouth to become a barrister; Jawaharlal Nehru lived luxuriously to attain the same objective. In the end, neither made a name in law. 'Bar-at-law' was the magnet that attracted the best brains in India. Pherozechah Mehta, C. R. Das, Jawaharlal Nehru, Ali Imam, Muhammad Shafi, Fazl-i-Hussain, Liaquat Ali Khan, Vallabhbhai Patel were all barristers, like Jinnah and Gandhi. The fate of India was decided by these barristers.

Jinnah, unlike Jawaharlal, did not come from a rich family and lived frugally; but, unlike Patel, he enjoyed his stay in London and made the most of it. He absorbed new ideas, became a regular visitor to the British Museum Library and constantly endeavoured to add to his knowledge, to attain mastery over the

¹Barbara Tuchman, *The Proud Tower*, Bantam, New York, 1967, p. 4.

²Evelyn Wrench, *Immortal Years*, Hutchison, London, 1945, p. 132.

English language, to understand British institutions and British politics, and, in general, to broaden his horizons. He went to the House of Commons, watched its proceedings and listened to the heated debates then taking place, and to such great parliamentarians as Gladstone. He listened to soap-box orators at Hyde Park Corner. He went to the West End theatres, whenever he could afford it; and often read out Shakespearean plays himself. He even played Romeo at the Old Vic on one occasion, and was offered an actor's job in a theatrical company.

After his arrival in England, Jinnah had abbreviated his name from Jinnahbhai to 'M. A. Jinnah'. He adopted the British way of living with gusto, later becoming 'the most anglicized politician in India'. His close study of the British also made him aware of their points of strength and weakness to an extent that an English journalist later remarked: 'Mr Jinnah certainly understands the British mind and knows England as few Indian leaders know it.'¹

While completely westernized outwardly, Jinnah's heart and soul remained totally Indian. What had impressed him most in an Englishman was his attachment to law and order, his individual and communal discipline, his freedom of conscience and expression, his love of individual liberty, sportsmanship, passion for fair play, business honesty...even if it was a matter of policy...his clean public life, and his liberalism. Jinnah was fascinated by the liberalism of Lord Morley, whose book on 'Compromise' he was to recommend to his audience half a century later, although he 'usually disliked recommending books to young people'². Morley belonged to the Liberal party, but all England, Whig or Tory, was under the spell of John Stuart Mill. No political philosopher influenced English thought and practice as much as he did; and all social and economic reforms in the later half of the nineteenth century, as well as those in the twentieth, bear his stamp. In 1885, the liberal philosophy of Gladstone was not good enough even for the Radical Liberals and Joseph Chamberlain was promising: 'Now that we have a Government for the people by the people, we will go on and make it the Government of the people.' On the Conservative side, Randolph Churchill and

¹Ibid., p. 163.

²Special broadcast from All India Radio on 13 November 1939.

Arthur Balfour were quick to create the Fourth Party of 'Tory Democracy' and raise the slogan 'Trust the People'.

All these changes of attitudes were the result of the Reform Bills which had given a vote to every British male. For a student belonging to a subject race, as Jinnah was, it must have been exhilarating to see lowly, unlettered, manual labourers participate in the selection of their rulers. It must have been equally depressing to realize that he himself did not even enjoy the benefit of local government which in England had then been extended to every county. And his sympathies at that time must naturally have been with the Irish nationalists who were fighting for Home Rule.

The Home Rule Leaguers seem to have made a great impact on Jinnah. Their passionate belief in the righteousness of their cause, their relentless struggle against heavy odds, and their ability, in spite of small numbers, to hold the balance in the House of Commons, was a fascinating spectacle. Years later, when he himself was fighting a similar battle against the majority community and the government of the day, Jinnah, during a speech, reminded his audience of Carson's reply to Redmond: 'I do not want to be ruled by you'. Redmond was an Irish Nationalist, and what he and Parnell wanted for Ireland as a whole, Carson wanted for Ulster.

One impressive aspect of the Home Rule struggle, at least to an Indian, was the attitude of the Government and English politicians...the Home Rulers were not shot down as rebels in a colony. They were shown respect and were treated as equals. They even had the sympathy of many Englishmen, and Gladstone himself was converted to their cause. That the Grand Old Man of England should himself espouse their cause and fight his own countrymen for them, spoke volumes for the worthiness of constitutional methods on the one hand, and the uprightness and moral courage of a great leader on the other.

The high moral principles on which Gladstone based his politics, and the limits to compromise which Morley preached, had lasting effects on Jinnah's character and politics. The return of their party with a majority in 1892 almost coincided with Jinnah's

¹Presidential Address at the Delhi Session of All India Muslim League, 24 April 1943.

arrival in England. Also to return on the Liberal ticket at this time was a fellow Indian, Dadabhai Naoroji (1825-1917), whom Lord Salisbury had contemptuously called 'that black man'. Jinnah had met Naoroji soon after his arrival in England, and had become a voluntary worker for him, helping him in his political activities. Jinnah later became Naoroji's secretary in India, but their relationship had started in London. Jinnah frequently saw Naoroji and some of his party friends during his student days, and regularly attended the meetings of the Indian Society that Naoroji had founded. His was the first great personal influence, politically, on Jinnah.

While Naoroji's election to the Parliament was enthusiastically hailed in India, the Indian student community in Britain was particularly elated. Jinnah had a political bent of mind, and one reason why he had decided to become a barrister was that he hoped he could earn enough for a comfortable living in this profession and at the same time take part in politics. As he made Naoroji his political guide, it is likely that in those young days he dreamt of following in the footsteps of his leader and himself entering Parliament one day, to serve the cause of Indian Home Rule. In fact, one biographer of Jinnah has claimed that in 1931-2, when he had settled in London, Jinnah tried unsuccessfully to get a party ticket for the Parliament. If that is true, the ambition must have been born during his association with Naoroji in the 1890s.

While Jinnah was coming more and more under the spell of liberalism, one ex-Liberal also made a deep impression on him. Joseph Chamberlain had travelled far from his Liberal Radicalism, and Jinnah could not approve of his neo-imperialism, but he felt the impact of his forceful personality. Chamberlain did not belong to the ruling British landed aristocracy, just as Jinnah did not belong to the Indian aristocracy; nor, like Jinnah, had he gone to a public school or to Oxford or Cambridge: yet he had come within an ace of becoming Prime Minister. He was masterful and hard-hitting, cool and confident, suave and debonair, sharp and quick-witted...qualities that appealed to Jinnah as much as his well-groomed appearance, poise, impeccable manners, elegant suits and monocle.

In February 1893, Gladstone introduced his Home Rule Bill in the Commons and piloted it through eighty-five sittings. When

Jinnah, in the visitors' gallery, heard him, what emotions must he have felt? Only the previous summer a Parliamentary Act had reformed the Central and Provincial Councils, giving the Indians a voice, however feeble, before the Government, and now an Indian, Naoroji, was sitting on the Government benches. How soon would it be before a Prime Minister would be presenting an Indian Home Rule Bill?

He carried this dream back to India.

He nurtured this dream while working hard at his profession in Bombay, where he had shifted to on return from England. His career came first, of course: he had no other, private or family, source of income; and without financial independence he could not make a full contribution to politics. But he kept in close touch with political moves and activities, voraciously reading newspapers and making clippings and systematically arranging them and taking active part whenever possible.

Now in his mid-twenties, Jinnah was an enthusiastic young man, tall and handsome, a *pucca sahib*, dressed in elegant suits, speaking English almost invariably, living in English style, but with the fire of Indian nationalism burning in his heart. An Indian first and an Indian last, totally free of any communal or parochial prejudices, he idealized a free India: an India governed by Indians themselves, without distinction of creed or caste; a democratic India, ruled by just laws, where all would be treated equally, impartially and justly; a liberal India, progressive and humane; a modern India, anglicized in so far as adoption of liberal British traditions were concerned...traditions of parliamentary government and independence of the judiciary, freedom of speech and assembly, and inviolability of an individual's person and property. India, the brightest jewel in the British Crown, was no longer to be a subject country, but a fully self-governing, self-respecting Dominion.

In December 1904, seven years after Jinnah began his struggle as a lawyer in Bombay, the Indian National Congress held its twentieth session in that city. Pherozeshah Mehta (1845-1915), the 'Uncrowned King' of Bombay, was the Chairman of the Reception Committee and Jinnah was one of the participants. This was the first Congress meeting that he attended, but so impressed was Mehta by Jinnah's enthusiasm, nationalistic fervour, single-mindedness, clear thinking and articulation, that

he proposed that Jinnah, then only twenty-eight, and the veteran Gopal Krishna Gokhale (1866-1915), be sent to England on a delegation to lobby the Congress cause.

It was at this Congress that Jinnah first met Gokhale. Jinnah found in Gokhale...with his robust nationalism, untainted by any tinge of communalism, and practical politics...a soul-mate and the two soon became good friends. Jinnah never forgot Gokhale and never lost respect for him. As late as 1943, in the annual open session of the Muslim League at Delhi when partition of India had become an article of faith with him, Jinnah, before the hundred thousand assembled Muslims, paid a handsome tribute to the 'liberal and broadminded statesmanship' of Gokhale who had 'learnt at the feet of that great man, Dadabhai Naoroji.'¹

Gokhale was the third nationalist leader to profoundly influence Jinnah's political ideas and methods, the other two being Dadabhai Naoroji and Pherozeshah Mehta. Naoroji cast his spell in London, and the association continued and flourished in India, when in 1906, as President of the Calcutta Congress, Naoroji made Jinnah his secretary. He impressed Jinnah with his kind heart that bled at the sufferings of his countrymen, his tireless efforts in spite of old age on their behalf, his deep interest in Indian students in England, his constant endeavours to preach India's cause both at home and abroad, and his courage in giving the stirring new slogan of '*swaraj*'. Mehta, in whose law chambers Jinnah worked, impressed Jinnah with his 'majestic demeanour', his 'awe-inspiring as well as inspiring ways', his mastery of legal and constitutional matters, his fearless criticism of the Government, his sharp mind and unbounded self-confidence. Gokhale, who was later his colleague in the Imperial Legislative Council, both representing the same province, impressed Jinnah with his humanism, his moral tone, his selfless conduct, his honesty, his sympathetic understanding of minorities' problems, and his realism. And all the three impressed him with their burning patriotism, their love of freedom, their higher nationalism unsoiled by communal feelings, their constructive approach to all problems, their appreciation of the better side of the British rule, their trust in the gradual but continued progress of India, and their commitment to democracy, constitutionalism, and liberalism.

¹Jamiluddin Ahmad, op. cit., Vol. I, 1968, pp. 496.

These were the three great men...all of them non-Muslim... who left a lasting influence on Jinnah. Belonging, however, to a younger generation, he was more of a firebrand, not a 'moderate' to the extent they were. B. G. Tilak's (1856-1920) war-cry of '*swaraj* is my birthright and I will have it', and his aggressive nationalism appealed to him, but not his technique. Nor did he have any use for Tilak's brand of nationalism, with its Hindu revivalist overtones. Jinnah may be considered a 'moderate extremist', who, while believing in constitutionalism and gradualism, spurned petitions and prayers to the Government and based his demands on natural rights.

Jinnah's association with the Congress, that started in 1904 in Bombay, continued right up to 1920 when Gandhi captured it at Nagpur. During all those years he remained totally committed to the Congress, undisturbed even by the split between Gokhale's 'Moderates' and Tilak's 'Extremists' that began at Surat in 1907 and lasted a decade. Jinnah was, of course, on the side of Mehta and Gokhale. But Jinnah's patriotism and high-mindedness came to the fore when he rose to the defence of Tilak when the latter was prosecuted for 'seditious writing'. An interesting sidelight on the character of Jinnah is also thrown by the fact that although he always charged adequate fees for his professional services, in the case of Tilak he would accept nothing.

Jinnah continued to be politically active as a Congressman, but public recognition first came when he was unanimously elected to the Imperial Legislative Council...created by the Minto-Morley Reforms of 1909...from the Muslim constituency in Bombay. This system of separate electorates, the arrangement whereby only Muslims voters elected their representatives to the seats reserved for their community, was anathema to the nationalist mind of Jinnah. He considered it against the spirit of Indian unity, something that created water-tight compartments, dividing the two major communities...the Hindus and the Muslims.

But the system, whether Jinnah liked it or not, was there, and it made it possible for him, at the age of thirty-three, to enter the Council.

CHAPTER 2

FROM CLIVE TO CURZON

Separate electorates were conceded by the British Government in response to a demand by the Muslims who sent a deputation to the Viceroy in 1906. The deputation was organized out of anxiety to safeguard, in the new scheme of things, the Muslim position which had consistently declined since the battle of Plassey, a hundred and fifty years earlier. To gauge the fears and apprehensions that forced Muslim leaders to take this step one has to go back a little in history.

The story of British ascendancy, and finally the total conquest of India, reads like a work of fiction: a trading company comes for purely commercial purposes; soon it starts interfering in local affairs, playing one regional potentate against another, weakening them, and then, with the help of its native soldiers, overpowering them one by one till it becomes master of the whole subcontinent.

The British took India from the Muslims. Although the Mughal administrative machinery had broken down and the successors of Aurangzeb were a debauched and degenerate lot, mere shadows and puppets, the Great Mughal was still a symbol. Even the Marhattas, when they controlled him, acknowledged his formal suzerainty: only a decree from him was considered as the final sanction for their authority. Actually the subcontinent was governed by independent satraps, some of whom held sway over larger areas and greater number of people than the British Isles and the British people. The Marhattas in Central India and the Sikhs in the Punjab had no doubt become very powerful, but the main opposition to the British came from the Muslims, and their states were subdued and annexed one after another—Bengal, Mysore, Karnatik, Sindh and Oudh. Only the Nizam, for reasons of diplomacy and balance of power, was allowed to exist on British terms. Even he was finally betrayed.

The conqueror of Sindh, Sir Charles Napier, had written in his diary: 'We have no right to seize Sind, yet we shall do so and a very advantageous, useful, humane piece of rascality it will be.' When the act was done, the message he sent to his superiors contained a single word 'Peccavi' (I have Sin'd). Such was the character of the acquisition of territories by the Company.

It was in Bengal, which fell first, that the Indian policy of the British was formulated. After the battle of Plassey (1757), the country was for the next fifteen years subjected to such 'organized loot and plunder', as finds no parallel in the history of the world. The British historian Sir Alfred Lyall called it 'the only period of Anglo-Indian history which throws grave and unpardonable discredit on the English name.'¹ Robert Clive, the architect of the victory, has confessed that 'such a scene of anarchy, confusion, bribery, corruption and extortion was never seen or heard of in any country but Bengal; nor such and so many fortunes acquired in so unjust and rapacious manner.'²

Clive should have known. As a part of the conspiracy to overthrow Nawab Siraj ud Doula, he had himself received after the battle £234,000 in cash and jewels, and, in addition, a *jagir* worth £30,000 a year. He returned to England with a fortune of more than £40,000 per annum, and a sum of £50,000 for his relatives. Not bad for a man of thirty-four, who had started service in India at a salary of £5 a year with free but unfurnished accommodation, and an allowance of £3.10s a month.

The Annual Registrar for 1760 (then edited by Edmund Burke) recorded: 'It is supposed that the General can realize £1,200,000 in cash, bills and jewels: that his lady has a casket of jewels which are estimated at least at £200,000. So that he may with propriety be said to be the richest subject in the three kingdoms.'³ Yet, when Clive recalled what he could have brought back, he in his own words, 'stood astonished at his modesty.'⁴

When Clive went home in July 1767, after his second tour in Bengal, Horace Walpole wrote to a friend: 'Lord Clive is arrived,

¹Sir Alfred Lyall, *The Rise and Expansion of the British Domination in India*, John Murray, London, 1907, p. 143.

²John Malcolm, *Life Of Clive*, John Murray, London, 1836, Vol. II, p. 379.

³Cited by Nirad Chaudhuri in *Clive Of India*, Barrie & Jenkins, London, 1975, p. 278.

⁴Clive in his defence.

has brought a million for himself, two diamond drops worth twelve thousand pounds for the Queen, a scimitar, dagger and other matters covered with brilliants for the King, and worth twenty-four thousand more.¹

Clive set the moral tone of the Company and its functionaries. Exacting of presents, which started with the first victim, Mir Jaffer, was developed into a fine art, and whenever the Nawab was changed, which in this period was frequently done, the new Nawab was forced to make expensive personal gifts to the Company officials. It was estimated by the Select Committee of the East India Company in 1772, that the total amount of 'proven or acknowledged' gifts by Mir Jaffer alone stood at about £1,250,000.² Thereafter it became a regular practice. The highest officials, including Governors and Generals, made enormous fortunes merely through such 'gifts'.³ James Mills, in his famous work, gives an account of the amounts thus collected between 1757 and 1766: they came, excluding Clive's *jagir*, to a total of approximately six million pounds sterling.⁴

Another source of illicit profit was the private trade of Company officials. The Company did not object to this, as it compensated for the meagre salaries it gave its employees. But when Bengal came in its grasp through 'fighting, tricks, chicanery, intrigues, politics and the Lord knows what'⁵, legitimate trade gave place to dishonest and fraudulent practices, and coercive methods by unscrupulous and greedy men in a hurry to make the largest fortune in the shortest time.

The East India Company had been exempted by a *firman* (royal edict) from the payment of any duties on its import or export trade. This was a special concession to the Company itself, and did not extend to its functionaries for their own private trade.

¹Nirad Chaudhuri, op. cit., p. 370.

²Hafeez Malik, *Muslim Nationalism in India and Pakistan*, People's Publishing House, Lahore, 1980, p. 114.

³In order to appreciate the value of these transactions, the reader is advised to read 'gold sovereigns' in place of '£' or 'sterling'. In those pre-paper currency days, gold was not only the sole means of determining the worth of anything, but most of the gifts themselves were in the shape of either *mohurs* or bullion or jewellery.

⁴Mill and Wilson, *The History of British India*, (5th edition), Vol. III, pp. 257-60.

⁵Clive's letter to Orme, S. C. Hill, *Indian Records Series: Bengal in 1756-7*, John Murray, London, 1905, Vol. 1, p. cciii.

But after Plassey, these functionaries abused the privilege for their personal ends. They refused to pay any duties on their own commercial goods (while the local merchants had to pay) and used their newly acquired power in a thousand ways to drive the local competitors out of business. They 'sold their exemptions to Indians for large sums, intimidated Indian functionaries, prohibited other traders from dealing in goods they sold themselves, coerced the villagers to purchase their goods at exorbitant prices, and to sell their own to them at cheap rates. They monopolized trade in the primary necessities of life and charged famine prices for them. They employed other methods too to swell their income.'¹ And when the Nawab, Mir Qasim, protested, and, in desperation abolished all duties, he was removed from the throne.

Clive himself, in a letter to his wife, pronounced Calcutta to be 'one of the most wicked places in the universe. Corruption, licentiousness and a want of principle seem to have possessed the minds of all civil servants. By frequent bad examples they are grown callous, rapacious and luxurious beyond conception.'² Even the Directors of the Company had to admit: 'We think the vast fortunes acquired in the inland trade have been obtained by a series of the most tyrannical and oppressive conduct that ever was known in any age or country.'³ Horace Walpole lamented in 1772: 'We have outdone the Spaniards in Peru! They were at least butchers on a religious principle, however diabolical their zeal. We have murdered, deposed, plundered, usurped—nay what think you of the famine in Bengal, in which three millions perished, being caused by a monopoly of provisions, by the servants of the "East India"?'⁴

'Never before had the natives experienced the tyranny which was at once so skillful, so searching and so strong', says a British historian.⁵

¹Dr Tara Chand, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, New Delhi, 1983, Vol. I, p. 236.

²Letter dated 31 July 1776.

³Mill and Wilson, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 279.

⁴Letter to Mann dated 2 March 1772.

⁵W. E. H. Lecky, *A History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, London, 1882, Vol. III, p. 374.

The Company officials, after a short span of duty in Bengal, returned to England with such fabulous wealth that they dazzled their compatriots. Even the highest among them—Governors of Presidencies—were never paid more than £300 per annum. Mere clerks were, on return, living in such luxury and buying real estate and rotten boroughs so merrily that British leaders became worried. In the general election of 1768, as many as twenty-one ‘nabobs’ were returned to the Parliament. ‘Clive had debauched the Company, Chatham was concerned, lest he should debauch the nation’.

Anglo-Hindu Combine

The ‘spirit of plunder and the passion for rapid accumulation of wealth’ which, according to Sir John Malcolm ‘actuated all ranks’ of the Company, was shared by the Hindus who saw in the situation a golden opportunity for themselves. ‘The plot to raise him (Mir Jaffer) to the throne’, says a Bengali Hindu writer, ‘was hatched and made successful by the Hindus,’¹ and it was ‘to the Seth’s house that the victorious commanders adjourned to celebrate the victory.’² The British and the Hindus formed a partnership in perfidy and profit that flourished as the days passed. It was beneficial to both, and brought undreamt-of dividends to both. Sometimes minor differences did arise, as in the case of Nand Kumar³—in which case the British acted forcefully to punish the dissenting robber—otherwise it worked smoothly, later political strains notwithstanding, and lasted throughout the Raj.

‘An alliance was struck’, says the Hindu historian Pannikar, ‘between the head of the European *baniadom*, the English Company and the Marwari⁴ merchants who commanded the wealth of Bengal.’⁵ It was, of course, directed against the Muslims,

¹Nirad Chaudhuri, *op. cit.*, p. 249.

²K. M. Pannikar, *A Survey of Indian History*, The National Information and Publication Ltd., Bombay 1947, p. 245.

³In 1775, Nand Kumar accused Governor-General Warren Hastings of accepting a large bribe. While this was pending, a charge of forgery was brought against him; he was quickly found guilty and promptly executed.

⁴*Marwari*, a trading sub-caste among the Hindus.

⁵Pannikar, *op. cit.*, p. 245.

who were ruthlessly and systematically robbed of everything they possessed—power, wealth and land.

The victims of the 'presents' system were Muslims alone. In private trade the Hindus acted as the *gomashtras*,¹ *benamis*² and agents of Company officials. The two sources dried up when the *nawabi* was abolished and the Company took over collection of revenue directly and prohibited private trade by its staff. Attention was then turned to land.

The year 1772 marked the introduction of the method of assessing land revenue by auctioning the *zamindaris*. Those *zamindars* (land proprietors) who were unable to pay the new higher assessments were deprived of their land in favour of new bidders. The 'land revenue collected by the Moghal's agents in Bengal in 1764-5 amounted in value to £818,000; in 1765-6, the first year of East India Company's financial administration, it rose to £1,470,000. By the year 1790-1 it had been forced up to £2,680,000 and it was on the basis of this year's collection that the Permanent Settlement was made.'³

The first settlement was for five years, after which it became an annual affair.⁴ The heavy weight of assessment and the severity with which it was enforced—if the *zamindar* failed to pay all his dues by sunset of a particular day, he was dispossessed—made it 'a matter of speculation amongst Calcutta financiers', the *marwaris* and *mahajans* (Hindu money lenders) with ready money against whom the *zamindar* had no chance. The officials of the Company themselves 'participated freely in the general loot' through their Hindu agents. Governor-General Warren Hastings himself was involved in the grant of a large *zamindari* which was registered in the name of the ten-year old son of his private servant Kantu Baboo.⁶ Another of his agents, Ganga Govind, had made £3,200,000 for himself.⁷

¹*Gomashtra*, superintendent, head clerk or accountant.

²*Benami*, anonymous (agent).

³J. Beauchamp, *British Imperialism in India*, Martin Lawrence, London, 1934, p. 24.

⁴A decennial settlement was made in 1789-90, which was made permanent in 1793.

⁵Vincent A. Smith, *The Oxford History of India*, (4th edition), Oxford University Press, 1958, p. 535.

⁶Paul Langford (Gen. Ed.), *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1991, Vol. VI, p. 449.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 442.

Hastings was indulging in a practice that was then widespread. A Committee set up by the Company observed in 1775 '... the *Banian*¹ is constantly the ostensible man in whose name the farm or contract is held by the master. Mr Fleetwood's *Banian* is a nominal farmer of Sharigar; Mr Thackery's of Silhet; Mr Christie's of Banjora and Apole; Mr Bartons's of the salt-farm of Belloa; and we have reason to believe that not less than one-third of the Company's lands in these provinces are, or have lately been, held by the Banians of the English gentlemen'.²

When the Permanent Settlement of Lord Cornwallis came in the force in 1793, 'it meant, in the circumstances of eighteenth century Bengal, the virtual closing of the door to landlordism to Muslims'.³ The new *zamindars* were practically all Hindus and with a vested interest in British Rule, all *pukka* loyalists.

But that was not enough. The Company now moved against *Lakhiraj* lands. These were revenue-free lands granted by Muslim Emperors to support learning and education. The Resumption Regulations empowered the Company to resume such lands. The result was a further disaster for Muslims. A severe inquiry was instituted into the titles of these lands, and a large portion was resumed by the State. This hit the Muslims hard, and had the effect of destroying their educational system.

'The provision of educational facilities is looked upon by Muslims as an act of piety.'⁴ The Prophet had asked his followers to pursue knowledge 'from the cradle to the grave', and the Muslims, whether of Ommayed Spain, or of the Abbasid Empire, or the Sultanate or Mughal India, had a passion for establishing educational institutions. Every mosque invariably had a school attached to it, and the big towns had many more. During the reign of Muhammad bin Tughlaq (1325-51), for example, in the city of Delhi alone there were one thousand schools and colleges.⁵

¹Banian, *bania*, a Hindu of the trading caste.

²*Committee of Circuit's Minutes* dated 15 September 1775, pp. ccxxvi-ccxxvii, Tara Chand, op. cit., p. 245.

³P. Hardy, *The Muslims of British India*, Cambridge, 1972, p. 43.

⁴Dr I. H. Qureshi, 'The Impact of British Rule upon the Muslims', *A History of the Freedom Movement*, Pakistan Historical Society, Karachi, 1961, Vol. II, p. 360.

⁵*Masalik-ul-Absar* (Persian), cited by Mufti Intizamullah Shihabi, in *A History of the Freedom Movement*, *ibid.*, p. 171.

Such institutions flourished all over the subcontinent. They were all run privately and were financed through lands specially granted for this purpose. Imperial governments, local governors, and private citizens vied with each other in making such grants. Education was not only free, students received liberal stipends. Teachers and students imparted and pursued knowledge without any worry about their daily bread. Teachers were held in such high respect that when Emperor Shah Jehan lost his throne to his son, all he wanted to do during the last days of his life was to teach a few students.

The Resumptions dealt a mortal blow to the entire system. Even a large number of Muslim endowments were taken over, and their funds diverted to purposes other than for which they were created. The result was to convert, in a few years, 'an educated community into one of the most illiterate in the world.'¹

In 1835, the Court language was suddenly changed from Persian to English. This action resulted, *inter alia*, in further closing the doors of the administrative services to the Muslims. The Company had at the very beginning showed its preference for Hindus. When Clive forced Nawab Najm ud Daula to transfer the business of revenue collection to a body of three Hindus and only one Muslim, he also laid down the policy of employing 'none but Gentoos (Hindus)'²

This policy was extended by Clive's successors to other departments. When the sharia was replaced by the new criminal code, Muslims automatically lost the posts they held in the judicial departments. When British collectors and Magistrates were appointed and all posts with a salary of £500 or more were reserved for the British, they were again greatly affected. But the making of English as the official language was the final and most severe blow.

By 1856, the virtual exclusion of Muslims from the services was so great that out of 366 persons listed as holding appointments in the judicial and revenue services in Bengal, with salaries of fifty rupees and upwards, only fifty-four were Muslims.³

¹Dr I. H. Qureshi, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 361. Also *see* footnote, giving the number of schools in Bengal alone, in 1835-8, at 100,000 as against 150,569 in 1899-1900 in the entire of British India.

²Nirad Chaudhuri, *op. cit.*, p. 342.

³Azizur Rahman Mallick, *British Policy and the Muslims in Bengal, 1757-1856*, Asiatic Society of Pakistan, Dacca, 1961, p. 50.

Before the coming of the British, the Muslims had either been landowners or had sought careers in civil and military service. Trade was generally neglected, but there were special fields in which they dominated. One of these was maritime trade, which had been ruined by the coming of the European powers who had indulged in outright piracy. The Muslims had failed to benefit from the progress in ship-building, leaving the newcomers to dominate the seas. Inside the country, however, they ran small factories for the manufacture of such items as leather goods, shawls and carpets, silks and muslin, embroidered fabrics with gold and silver threads, and jewellery. The malpractices of the Company in Bengal ruined local trade in general, but certain measures were specially aimed at particular industries. In 1769, for example, the silk-winders were prohibited from working anywhere except for the Company's factories¹: the Company wanting the Indians to produce only raw silk and not silk fabrics.

Muslims had lagged behind in business. They did not adapt themselves to new business methods, some of which they considered *haraam* (forbidden). They made no effort to go into banking, as usury is prohibited in Islam: and would not even take business loans from banks. There was a similar prejudice against insurance. The Hindus, on the other hand, had no such inhibitions. The *mahajans* and the *baniyas* took to new techniques as a duck takes to water. Thus if the Hindus suffered at all in any field, new opportunities opened up for them in others. The same was not true of Muslims, and such business communities as Bohras, Khojas and Memons that survived, did so because they lived in the west, having escaped the misfortune of the early British onslaught. In any case their activities were on a small scale.

As the steam-roller of the Company moved over more and more territory, the fortunes of the Muslim suffered in direct proportion. Muslim States were the special target of British aggression. They were destroyed systematically. Mysore was not annexed but handed over to a Hindu, and Kashmir sold to another Hindu for £750,000, like a piece of real estate. The disappearance of these States meant not only loss of power and

¹Romesh Dutt, *Economic History of India*, Low Price Publications, Delhi, 1990, Vol. I, p. 183.

prestige for the Muslims as a class, it also affected their cultural influence and brought about mass economic distress. Earlier, in the case of the fall of one State, other Muslim States had proved havens of refuge for those affected. In the south, Hyderabad had become the centre for those suffering after the fall of Mysore. In the north it was Oudh, which, in the last days of the Mughals, had become the chief patron of the stream of scholars, poets, artisans and craftsmen coming in search of livelihood. But with each annexation there was yet another community of the dispossessed and the impoverished, and one place less for refuge.

The misfortune that first visited the Muslims of Bengal enveloped them everywhere. The Company's policies had been calamitous for them as a community. Their ruling class was eliminated.¹ Their upper classes lost their land and the higher jobs in the government. Their middle classes could no longer find traditional careers in the military and rural police. Their working classes were thrown out of employment because of the collapse of their industries. Their cultivator classes were driven to starvation by the tyranny of the revenue collectors. Their trading classes lost their business. Their scholars lost their means of sustenance because of the resumptions. All classes were affected. The Indian Muslims in 1856, were, in the words of Sir William Hunter, 'a race ruined under British rule'.

While the Muslims were sinking ever deeper under their misfortunes, their Hindu compatriots were thriving and flourishing. The Anglo-Hindu Combine working to mutual advantage had, despite the Marhatta wars, become stronger. Movements like the *Faraizi*² in Bengal had driven them closer to each other.

'Never trust the ambition of any Musalman', Clive had said, and the British always acted on that dictum. Fearing a revolt from what they considered the 'bloodthirsty Musalman', they continuously supported and helped the 'mild Hindu'. The policy of strengthening the Hindu at the expense of the Muslim led to various steps to rejuvenate and regenerate him. Early efforts for social reform were given up because they were unpopular and

¹...the most significant fact', says Dr I. H. Qureshi, 'is that after the policy of annexations had virtually come to an end, traces of Muslim rule were fewer in the shape of Muslim dynasties, though the Muslims had ruled the subcontinent for several centuries'. I. H. Qureshi, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 357

²See, p. 24.

were feared to be counterproductive: they stopped at Wellesley's ban on sacrificing infants into the Ganges, and Bentinck's prohibition of *suttee*. But a revival of Sanskrit and the Hindu culture in general was undertaken. The great Hindu heritage was discovered. Hindu philosophy, Hindu religion, Hindu mathematics, Hindu astronomy, Hindu medicine, and Hindu arts and sciences were revived. The Hindu Code was compiled. Sanskrit classics were translated to a chorus of acclaim. Charles Wilkins' translation of the *Geeta* was published in 1775, and Sir William Jones' translation of Kali Das's *Shakuntala*—one of his many translations from Sanskrit—appeared at about the same period. A Sanskrit College was established at Benares, and the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal at Calcutta. Links were discovered not only between Sanskrit and European languages, but also between Hinduism and Christianity. Sanskrit was found to be 'more perfect than Greek, more copious than Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either'¹. The *Geeta* was considered by Warren Hastings, during whose Governor-Generalship the first steps were taken, as 'a performance of great originality, of a sublimity of conception, reasoning and diction almost unequalled; and a single exception, among all the known religions of mankind, of a theology accurately corresponding with that of Christian dispensation, and more powerfully illustrating its fundamental doctrines'². This new-found religious proximity had even succeeded in unearthing a Christian *Purana* and a Christian *Veda*.³ With this 'Discovery of India', the Hindus were urged to look back to the ancient past, beyond the Muslim period, and feel proud of it. The Muslim rule was branded as an unmitigated evil which stifled the Hindu mind and tyrannized the Hindu peoples, from which deliverance came only through the British.

Early British historical writings on India had expressed admiration for the achievements of the great Mughals, but later historians maligned Muslim rulers and painted the Muslim rule

¹Sir William Jones, cited in Tara Chand, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 234.

²Warren Hastings in his foreword to Wilkins' translation of *The Bhagwat Geeta*, C. Nourse London, 1785, p. 10.

³Dr A. Halim, 'Hindu Reformist and Revivalist Movements', *A History of the Freedom Movement*, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 391.

in the darkest hues. A typical example is Elliot and Dowson's *History of India as told by its own Historians*. Considered as a classical work, and prescribed as indispensable reading in the universities during the Raj, it seeks to condemn Muslim rulers through their own original sources. Actually it is a huge piece of *suppresio veri suggestio falsi*, where with the help of mistranslation and mischievous editing, facts have been twisted and misrepresented. The motives of the authors are revealed in the preface itself that was written in 1849.

Sir Henry Elliot laments that Hindu writers did not charge the Muslims with destruction of temples, oppression and brutality, and '... there is not one of this slavish crew who treats the history of his native country subjectively, or presents us with thought, emotions and raptures which a long oppressed race might be supposed to give vent to, when freed from the tyranny of its former masters, and allowed to express itself in the natural language of the heart without constraint and without adulation.'¹ This subjective historian talks of 'Hindus slain for disputing with Muhammadans, of general prohibitions against processions, worship, and ablutions, and of other intolerant measures, of idols mutilated, of temples razed, of forcible conversions and marriages, of proscriptions and confiscations, of murders and massacres, and of the sensuality and drunkenness of the tyrants',² and claims that his work 'will make our native subjects more sensible of the immense advantages accruing to them under the mildness and equity of our rule', and 'we should be spared the rash declarations respecting Muhammadan India, which are frequently made by persons not otherwise ignorant. Characters now renowned only for the splendour of their achievements, and a succession of their victories, would, when we withdraw the veil of flattery, and divest them of rhetorical flourishes, be set forth in truer light, and probably be held up to the execration of mankind. We should no longer hear bombastic *Babus*, enjoying under our Government the highest degree of personal liberty, and many more political privileges than were ever conceded to a conquered nation, rant about patriotism, and the degradation of their present position. If they would dive into any of the volumes mentioned herein, it would take these

¹Elliot and Dowson, *The History of India*, Kitab Mahal, Allahabad, 1964, p. xxii.

²Ibid., p. xxi.

young Brutuses and Procions a very short time to learn, that in the days of that dark period for whose return they sigh, even the bare utterance of their ridiculous fantasies would have been attended, not with silence and contempt, but with the severe discipline of molten lead or impalement'.¹

He goes on to say: 'Should any ambitious functionary entertain the desire of emulating the "exceedingly magnificent" structure of the Moghul predecessors, it will check his aspirations to learn that beyond palaces and porticos, temples and tombs, there is little worthy of emulation.'² His history 'will serve to dissipate the gorgeous illusions which are commonly entertained regarding the dynasties which have passed, and show him that...we have already, within half-century of our dominion, done more for the substantial benefit of the people than our predecessors, in the country of their adoption, were able to accomplish in more than ten times that period'; and, 'drawing auguries from the past, he will derive hope for the future, that...we shall follow them up by continuous efforts to fulfill our high destiny as the rulers of India.'³

The British were of course following the age-old policy of *divide et impera*, but with a new twist. *The Imperialists always patronized the minority community and used it against the majority: but in India, it was the minority community which became the target of oppression, and the majority community that became the willing tool of imperialism.* To Lord Ellenborough this was the only wise policy. He wrote to the Duke of Wellington on 4 October 1842: 'It seems to me most unwise, when we are sure of the hostility of one-tenth, not to secure the enthusiastic support of the nine-tenth which are faithful.'⁴ He strongly believed that the Hindu should be favoured at the expense of the Muslim for 'that race is fundamentally hostile to us and therefore true policy is to conciliate the Hindus'⁵

¹Ibid., pp. xxii-xxiii.

²Ibid., p. xxiii.

³Ibid., p. xxvii.

⁴Lord Colchester, *History of the Indian Administration of Lord Ellenborough in His Correspondence with the Duke of Wellington*, Richard Benslet & Sons, London, 1874, p. 296. Ellenborough, it may be mentioned, was President of the Board of Control of the East India Company on three separate occasions between 1828 and 1858.

⁵Ibid., letter to Wellington dated 18 January 1843, p. 322.

Ellenborough gave a public demonstration of this true policy at about the same time that Elliot was busy with his 'history'. The British army had then failed to vanquish Afghanistan, but before withdrawal, it had brought with it from Ghazni the supposed gates of the temple of Somnath which Sultan Mahmud was reputed to have carried away with him. While restoring these gates, Lord Ellenborough issued a proclamation to the Hindu Chiefs and Princes that 'the insult of eight hundred years is at last avenged.'¹

As a contrast, one may mention that a decade earlier, one of the most humane and enlightened Governors-General that the British ever sent to India, William Bentinck, had proposed that 'we should pull down the Taj at Agra and sell the blocks of marble'.²

'Up to the "Mutiny"', says the Pakistani historian Dr I. H. Qureshi, 'it is an unrelieved tale of brutal effort to crush the Muslims'³. Their fortune seemed to have reached its lowest ebb, yet there was no general uprising, occasional movements excepting. This was due to a number of causes. The British did not eliminate Muslim rule in one big operation: they annexed Muslim states one by one. The conquests of Bengal, Mysore and Oudh were victories more of British diplomacy than of British arms. In Oudh, the Nawab 'abdicated', and the Company troops occupied it without firing a shot. In Mysore, the Nizam was an ally of the British against Tipu Sultan. And in Bengal, to start with, Siraj ud Doulah was replaced with Mir Jaffer. When Mir Jaffer was dethroned, Mir Kassem was made the Nawab, and when he rebelled, Mir Jaffer was brought back—scrupulously maintaining the myth of the *Nawabi*. Even when the *Nawabi* was abolished and administration was directly assumed by the Company, it pretended to merely act as an agent of Delhi. Such appearances, and the fact that the British, while destroying one Muslim state were allies of some other Muslim State, did not make their duplicity clear to the Muslim mind; and since the Muslims were free to follow Islamic rituals in the territories

¹Thompson and Garratt, *Rise and Fulfillment of British Rule in India*, Central Book Depot, Allahabad, 1958, p. 314.

²Sir William Howard Russell, *My Diary in India in the year 1858-9*, London, 1860, Vol. II, p. 77.

³Dr. I. H. Qureshi, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 338.

governed by the Company, it prevented the Ulema from declaring these areas as *Darul Harb* (land of war). The Company was so careful in this respect that even when it had stopped paying *nazar*—the outward symbol of submission—to the Mughal Emperor and Bahadur Shah had been told that his successor would have to move out of the Red Fort, the heralds of the Company used to announce: *Khalq Khuda ki, mulk Padishah ka, hukum Company Bahadur ka* (The people belong to God, the country to the Emperor, the order comes from the Honourable Company).

Nevertheless, after the Battle of Delhi in 1803, which broke the power of the Marhattas in the region and established the British as the master of the Mughal Empire, the eminent theologian and savant Shah Abdul Aziz, son of the famous Shah Wali Ullah, did declare India as *Darul Harb*. This *fatwa*¹ gave rise to two movements in the early part of the nineteenth century which deserve mention.

One was the *Faraizi* movement of Haji Shariatullah of Faridpur, and carried on by his son Dadhu Mian. Reformist in the beginning, it fought against the oppression of the Bengali *zamindars*, then the most loyal allies of the British. It was organized as a military fraternity, considered India to be *Darul Harb*, and it was universally believed that 'the real object of the *Faraizis* was the expulsion of the British and the restoration of the Muslim Power.'² The movement was strengthened by the followers of Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed, and under Titu Mir proclaimed the extinction of the British rule. Titu Mir was defeated and killed in a pitched battle against a British military force in 1831. The movement, however, survived him by some eighteen years.

The other movement was that of Sayyid Ahmed Shaheed of Rai Bareli (1786-1831). It declared that India was no longer *Darul Islam* (abode of peace), and called for *jihad*. The Shaheed was, however, careful not to provoke the British. Instead, he decided that the first important thing was to secure a firm base from which operations could be launched. For this purpose he selected the north-western region, where he emigrated, following the example of the Prophet's *Hijrat*. The area chosen, with its hills and mountains, also had the advantage of being the home of the

¹*Fatwa*, a formal decree given by religious scholars.

²R. C. Majumdar, *The Sepoy Mutiny and the Revolt of 1857*, Fima Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1957, p. 58.

Pathans, who would be eager to join a war against the Sikhs, then ruling the Punjab and terrorizing the Muslims. Sayyid Ahmed Shaheed carried his *jihad* against the Sikhs for four years until he was killed in a battle in 1831, the same year that Titu Mir was killed. He did not succeed in defeating the Sikhs and then coming face to face with the British, but his followers carried on his mission after Punjab's annexation by the Company. 'Henceforth the Wahabis (as they were called) carried a relentless campaign against the British from their remote seat in Sittana. But the sinews of war, both in men and money, were regularly supplied from all over India. For this purpose the Wahabis developed a wonderful organization, the like of which was not known in India.'¹

The *jihad* movement of Sayyid Ahmed Shaheed continued for several decades after his death. The Mujahideen refused to be disheartened, and, despite their meagre resources, continued to give battle to the vastly superior foe. Between 1850 and 1863, as many as twenty British expeditions, in which 60,000 troops were engaged,² were sent against them. After every reverse the Mujahideen would regroup, and be ready to fight with renewed vigour, recovering lost territory. When even a large force under Sir Neville Chamberlain failed to crush them in 1863 the Government adopted other methods. A concerted attack was made on their propaganda and supply centres from Patna to Punjab. Their leaders were arrested, prosecuted and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment and transportation for life. Simultaneously, a propaganda campaign was launched against the movement. The Mujahideen were dubbed as 'Wahabis', and *fatwas* obtained against them from many *ulema*,³ including the Mufti of Makkah. Since the Wahabi sect was unpopular with the Muslims as a whole, the one-sided campaign succeeded in alienating the general Muslim sympathy from the Mujahideen's cause. Simultaneously, another campaign was started, with the help of some *ulema*, declaring that as the Muslims were free to perform all their religious obligations under the British rule, India was *Darul Islam*, and any warfare against it was *haram*.

¹Ibid.

²Tara Chand, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 28.

³*Ulema*, plural of *alim*, religious scholars.

'Ultimately, British diplomacy succeeded where their arms had failed'.¹ The back of the movement was broken by 1884, and it gradually petered out. But it blazed a trail. It kept the desire for freedom alive in the Muslim breast, and 'demonstrated the possibility of organizing a rebellion against the Government'.²

The Great Revolt

The eruption came in May 1857, when what started as a mutiny by a few sepoys spread like wildfire and became a popular revolt. Although both the communities participated, it was viewed by the British mainly as 'a handiwork of the Muslims',³ who had tried to 'conceal the character of the movement, viz. its being Mahomedan one.'⁴ For the British 'a Mahomedan was another word for a rebel.'⁵ The entire English Press in Calcutta regarded it as 'a Muhammadan rebellion'.⁶ In London *The Times*, according to a letter, reported that 'the most obvious, popular and pressing theory is that the Muhammadans have rebelled...the people of India as one body have not rebelled'.⁷ A clergyman's wife, then in India, recorded: '...as this is completely a Mahomedan rising there is not much to be feared from the Hindoos'.⁸ 'Sir Alfred Lyall, then a young civilian officer in the North-Western Province (Agra), 'put the whole rebellion down to them (Muhammadans)'.⁹

The British set about the task of suppressing the revolt with an iron hand, and, in the words of a young military officer, later to

¹Tara Chand, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 28.

²Ibid., p. 29.

³R. C. Majumdar, *The Sepoy Mutiny and the Revolt of 1857*, op. cit., p. 398.

⁴Report of Captain P. G. Scott from Jhansi, Majumdar, op. cit., p. 399.

⁵Charles Raikes, at that time Collector of Agra, *Notes on the Revolt in the North-Western Provinces of India*, Longman and Robert, London, 1858, p. 175.

⁶Sir H. S. Cunningham, *Earl Canning*, Oxford University Press, London, 1891, p. 152.

⁷Sir George Campbell, *Memories of My Indian Career*, Macmillan, London, 1893, Vol. II, p. 392. Campbell, who later became Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal (1871-4), was at that time Commissioner of the cis-Sutlej states.

⁸Mrs R. M. Coopland, *A lady's escape from Gwalior, and life in the Fort of Agra during the Mutinies of 1859*, Smith Elder & Co. London, 1859, p. 104.

⁹R. C. Majumdar, op. cit., p. 430, footnote No. 20.

become a Field Marshal, to 'show these rascally Musalmans that, with God's help, Englishmen will still be masters of India.'¹ And they did it with a vengeance.

After the fall of Delhi, the aged Emperor was humiliated, 'tried' and exiled. Three princes were shot summarily while in custody by Lieutenant Hudson: seven others were executed after farcical trials. Thousands were shot; thousands of others were blown to bits from the mouths of cannon.² Still thousands of others were, after a trial under Martial Law lasting a few minutes at the most, found guilty and sent to their deaths. According to Mrs Saunders, wife of the British Commissioner of Delhi, 'For several days after the assault every native that could be found was killed by the soldiers; women and children were spared.'³ The initial massacres were followed by 'a more systematic reign of terror which lasted for several weeks.'⁴ 'Our proverbial tendency to give a dog a bad name and hang him was most barbarously and literally exemplified in the case of the unfortunate Moslem,' says G. O. Trevelyan. 'After the capture of Delhi every member of a class of religious enthusiast named *Ghazees* were hung, as it were, ex-officio: and it is to be feared that a vindictive and irresponsible judge, who plumed himself upon having a good eye for a *Ghazee*, sent to the gallows more than one individual whose guilt consisted in looking as if he belonged to a sect which probably was hostile to our religion.'⁵

'A Military Governor had been appointed; but he could do little to restrain the passions of those who surrounded him. Natives were brought in batches to be tried by a Military Commission or by Special Commissioners, each one of whom had been invested by the Supreme Government with full powers of life and death. The judges were in no mood to show mercy. Almost all who were tried were condemned: and almost all who

¹Field-Marshal Roberts, *Letters written during the Indian Mutiny*, Macmillan, London, 1924, p. 119.

²'The old Loharu Chief assures us 26,000 persons were killed by soldiers or hanged or shot or blown up', records W. S. Blunt in *India under Ripon*, T. Fisher, London, 1909, p. 164.

³Percival Spear, *Twilight of the Mughals*, Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1973, p. 218.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵G. O. Trevelyan, *Cawnpore*, Macmillan, London, 1865, p. 109.

were condemned were sentenced to death...English Officers used to sit by, puffing at their cigars, and look on at the convulsive struggles of the victims.¹

'Many who had never struck a blow against us...who had tried to follow their peaceful pursuits...and who had been plundered and buffeted by our own armed countrymen, were pierced by our bayonets, or cloven by our sabres, or brained by our muskets or rifles', records Sir John Kaye,² who was a secretary at the India Office and took on the task of writing an authentic history of the Mutiny.

The city was given to plunder. 'The people of Delhi had expiated many times over the crimes of mutineers', says Holmes in his *History of the Mutiny*. 'Tens of thousands of men and women, and children, were wandering for no crime, homeless over the country. What they had left behind was lost to them for ever, for the soldiers, going from house to house and from street to street, ferreted out every article of value, and smashed to pieces whatever they could not carry away.'³

These acts of looting and plunder had official sanction and those committing them were given the formal title of 'Prize Agents'. On 25 October, five weeks after the fall of Delhi, Mrs Saunders recorded: 'every house in the city was desolate and many of them injured...The inhabitants of this huge place seven miles round are dying daily of starvation and want of shelter. The Prize Agents are digging for treasure in the houses'⁴

The entire population of Delhi which survived the massacres was driven out and forced to spend its days and nights under the open sky. It was allowed to return several weeks later after paying a fine: Muslims were required to pay 25 per cent of the value of their property, while Hindus had to pay only 10 per cent.

This policy of discrimination against the Muslims went back to the days of Clive and was reinforced by such Governors-General as Ellenborough, who desired to bring 'the Mahommedans to their senses',⁵ now received a fresh impetus. As William Howard

¹T. R. E. Holmes, *A History of The Indian Mutiny*, Allen & Co., London, 1883, p. 406.

²Sir John William Kaye, *The History of the Indian Mutiny*, Allen & Co., London, 1876, Vol. II, pp. 635-6.

³Holmes, *op. cit.*, p. 406.

⁴Spear, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

⁵Sir Alganon Law, *India under Lord Ellenborough*, John Murrall, London, 1926, p. 65.

Russell, correspondent of *The Times*, wrote in early 1958: 'the Mahomedan element in India is that which causes us most trouble and provokes the largest share of our hostility...Our antagonism to the followers of Mahomed is far stronger than that we bear to the worshippers of Shiva and Vishnu. They are unquestionably more dangerous to our rule...If we could eradicate the traditions and destroy the temples of Mahomad by one vigorous effort, it would indeed be well for the Christian faith and for the British rule.'¹

Such sentiments were universal among the British, and even shared by Prime Minister Palmerston. He had himself, as early as in October, suggested to Canning that every building connected with Muhammadan tradition should be razed to the ground 'without regard to antiquarian veneration or artistic predilection.'²

Palmerston had referred obliquely to the Grand Mosque at Delhi, but the Governor-General, the man on the spot and more conscious of the effects of such action, considered it impolitic.³ There were, however, alternative proposals, viz. to convert it into a barrack for the troops or to sell it outright—shades of William Bentick. Ultimately it was returned to the Muslims, but not before five years had elapsed. The other great Mosque of the city, Fatehpuri, the larger part of which was auctioned off, was not returned till 1875; and the Zinatul Masajid not until the Viceroyalty of Lord Curzon, at the turn of the century. The famous Akbarabadi Mosque, was however razed to the ground. Similarly razed, and ploughed up, was the entire area between the Red Fort and the Grand Mosque, which formed the living quarters of the aristocracy of Delhi.

Delhi felt the full impact of British wrath because it was, in the words of Sir John Kaye, 'that great centre of Muhammadanism'. It had been, with a brief interval, the capital of the Muslim

¹Russell; *op. cit.*, pp. 77-78.

²Letter dated 9 October 1857, *Canning Papers*, cited by Hardy, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

³'The men who fought us at Delhi were of both creeds,' he told the President of the Board of Control, '...If we destroy or desecrate Musalman mosques or Brahman temples, we do exactly what is wanting to band the two antagonist races against ourselves...As we must rule 150 million people by a handful (more or less) of Englishmen, let us do it in the manner best calculated to leave them divided.' *Ibid.*, p. 72.

Empire from the beginning of the thirteenth century and the traditional home of Muslim nobility and Islamic culture. The British wished to uproot all this. As an act of sheer vindictiveness and vandalism, they even destroyed and scattered the Imperial library, which contained thousands of rare manuscripts painstakingly collected by Mughal princes and princesses over a period of several centuries. The venom against everything Mughal was particularly strong. Even a supposedly gentle soul like 'Clemency Canning' regretted that an 'unauthorized act at Delhi' enabled old Bahadur Shah to get away with his life.

The surviving royal princes were reduced to pauperism, and their princesses, in order to keep body and soul together, were forced to marry helots. Their tales of woe and misery were told by old Delhi-wallahs for decades after the Revolt. Eminent Urdu writers like Allama Rashidul Khairi and Khawaja Hasan Nizami narrated them in their books and caused thousands to cry in anguish. In fact, it was partly for this reason that the former received from the public the title of *Mussawir-i-gham* (The Painter of Sorrow).

What happened at Delhi was repeated, though on a smaller scale comparatively, in other places, particularly in Agra and Oudh (the present UP). Even a year after the Revolt, the British sentiments towards the Muslims were that 'they deliberately planned and tried to carry out a war of extermination', as Lyall told his father in 1858, and that 'retaliation in such a case is sanctioned by every human law.' 'If the Musalman could by any means be entirely exterminated, it could be the greatest possible step towards civilizing and Christianizing Hindustan.'¹ The Revolt was 'the fruit of the Musalman intrigue in the hope of gaining empire',² and he must now pay the penalty for failure. 'The English' therefore 'turned fiercely on the Mohammedans as upon their real enemies and most dangerous rivals.'³

¹Letter to his father, 14 May 1858. Cited by Latif Ahmed Sherwani, *Pakistan in the Making*, Quaid-i-Azam Academy, Karachi, 1987, p. 9.

²According to James Outram, Resident at the Kingdom of Oudh. Thomas R. Metcalfe, *The Aftermath of Revolt*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1965, p. 55.

³Sir A. C. Lyall, *Asiatic Studies: Religious and Social Section*, John Murray, London, 1884, p. 239.

The punitive action was not limited to large-scale confiscation of lands and forfeiture of pensions¹: it also included steps to deprive them of other means of livelihood and removing their cultural influence. 'In the longer term this policy was extended to the relics of the Mughal administration. Oriental departments were abolished at government colleges; Persian schools were taken over by the education department; the court of *sadr diwani adalat* (chief civil court) was set aside; the functions of the Hindu and Muslim law officers came to an end, and in 1868 the centre of government in the N.W.P was moved from Agra, scene of great Mughal glories, to Allahabad, holy city of the Hindus.'²

The failure of the Revolt did not mean merely the end of an empire. That empire had crumbled more than a century earlier; in 1857 it only received a *coup de grace*. But for the Muslims as a community it was a dreadful calamity. They had consistently been losing ground for a hundred and fifty years since the death of Aurangzeb, and now finally they had met their Waterloo. After ruling India continuously for more than five centuries, they were now without power, prestige or position, without landed estates, without wealth, and without hope for survival.

It would be relevant here to explain something that historians often ignore or misunderstand: the fact that destruction of the upper classes always brought ruin to the lower classes as well. The present tendency among a certain type to brand any sympathy for the elite as mediaeval in approach and to magnify the miseries of a small class into a national tragedy, betrays not only sheer ignorance of the extent of the disaster, but also lack of knowledge about the Muslim society in India.

In Eastern societies in general, and in a Muslim society in particular, a rich man has a special responsibility to his relatives and the poor. The word 'family' itself is not restricted, as in the West, to one's wife and children only or even to immediate relations. It includes a whole range of cousins, nephews and uncles. Actually there are no equivalent words for 'uncle' or

¹To give one example: 'In Bareilly district, however, a consolidated return of forfeitures gives ninety-five Muslim forfeitures to two Hindus', admits British apologist, P. Hardy, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

²Francis Robinson, *Separatism among Indian Muslims*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1974, p. 101.

'cousin' in Urdu. The brother of one's father and of one's mother, even the husband of the sister of one's father and that of the sister of one's mother, are, all the four of them, called by different names indicating exact relationships, and cousins are always referred to as *bhais*¹ or brothers. Even distant in-laws have distinct positions and names.

All these distant relations, some of whom a rich man did not even know, had a claim on him. They lived on his generosity which was automatically given and not considered as charity. Charity was reserved for the poor with whom there was no family tie whatsoever.

The local widows and orphans, the sick and the aged and the unemployed were similarly looked after by him. Naturally, the extent of generosity differed from individual to individual, but society expected him to do it as an obligation, and tradition was strong. This was the Muslim system of social security.

An aristocrat had other hangers-on too. They included not just boon companions and mere parasites, but also budding artists and craftsmen, poets and scholars, and many young men of promising talent. Thus whole legions of people lived on the generosity of the elite, and when they were ruined, those supported and sustained by them were ruined with them.

'The Muslims,' admits the official *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, 'who became the special target of British hatred after the Revolt, naturally suffered most from its consequences. Their leading families were uprooted, many lost their lands and property and their bread-winners became paupers. The young men faced a bleak future as the doors of Government patronage were shut upon them. Darkness enveloped the community and a destiny boding nothing but ill threatened them.'²

¹Sir Muḥammad Zafarullah Khan mentions in his autobiography how in one case the members of the judicial committee of the Privy Council were perplexed by oral evidence as against the record in a family tree: and how he unraveled the mystery by pointing out that the witnesses had used the word *bhai* for the sons of their father's brothers, *Tahdis-i-Niamat* (Urdu), Dhaka Benevolent Association, Dhaka, 1971, pp. 271-7.

²Tara Chand, *op. cit.*, p. 349.

Syed Ahmed Khan

The calamity that befell the Muslims was of such magnitude that it seemed they would never be able to recover from it. But the hour produced the man. This was Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (1817-98), a versatile man of genius. Archaeologist, historian, interpreter of the Koran, social reformer, educationist, a pioneer in Urdu prose-writing, linguist, thinker and orator, he was a man of vision, and what is more, a man of action.

He was the scion of an old aristocratic family of Delhi, but unable to find a suitable job in the impoverished court of the Mughals, had taken employment in the judicial department of the Commissioner of Agra. During the Revolt he had saved many English lives, but he refused the British offer of a *tabuka* (large estate) that had originally belonged to another Muslim family and had been confiscated after the Revolt. His heart bled at the condition of his community, which 'made me old and turned my hair white'. At one stage, bearing it no more, he thought of emigrating from India, but considering that an act of cowardice, he decided to stay on and share the fate of his fellow Muslims.

Syed Ahmed Khan felt that if the Muslims were to rise again they had to pull themselves out of the many superstitions and practices which, contrary to Islamic teachings, had crept into Muslim society, and live according to the real spirit of Islam. A sweeping programme of social reform and restoration of the right moral values was required. They had to attain modern education, shed their illusions and face facts.

The hardest of these facts was that British rule had come to stay: the Muslims were soundly beaten and were in no position then, or in the foreseeable future, to challenge the firmly entrenched government. The existing attitude, totally unrealistic as it was, could only aggravate their position. A cease-fire between the Muslims and the British was long overdue. There must be a truce; confrontation must make way for conciliation.

Syed Ahmed Khan launched his campaign for conciliation through a series of books, pamphlets and lectures, and the formation of several societies. He started a journal, *Tehzibul Akhlaq*, which became a vehicle for his thoughts, expressed passionately by his powerful pen. He pleaded with the Muslims to shake off their prejudice against the British, and not to consider India as *Darul Harb*.

It was actually *Darul Islam*, he argued, because Muslims were entirely free to perform all their religious duties without let or hindrance. The Christians were 'people of the book' whose prophets were true prophets in Muslim eyes as well: the beliefs of the two were closer to each other than was realized. The Muslims must freely mix with the British, and, if they were to progress, emulate their good habits and customs. He started to translate the Bible in Urdu, and wrote a pamphlet on the eating and drinking habits of the 'people of the book'. Side by side, he pleaded with the British to give up their distrust of the Muslims. The Muslim part in the Great Revolt, he insisted, had been highly exaggerated, and wrote two books, *The Loyal Mohammedans of India*, and *Asbab-i-Baghawat-i-Hind* (The causes of the Indian Revolt).

The latter work almost landed him in jail. What saved him was his utter sincerity in helping the rulers realize their mistakes, with no intention of spreading disaffection among the ruled—he had, apart from keeping some for himself, personally posted all the copies of the book to members of the Parliament and high government officials only. Syed Ahmed Khan's purpose, was, however, served, for the book touched off a debate in high Government circles and some stalwarts like Sir Bartle Frere and Sir James Outram found altogether too much truth in this 'most painfully interesting paper.'¹ He had forced the Government to review its policies.

In his own community, however, Syed Ahmed Khan became a controversial personality. Two of his themes—loyalty to the British and social reform—were generally unpopular. The conservative classes and the *ulema* opposed him bitterly: he was branded as a *kafir* (unbeliever) and ridiculed as a *naturee*—the latter because of his insistence that Islam was a rational religion and contained nothing in conflict with the laws of nature. But Syed Ahmed Khan had a will of iron and would not yield. However, he realized that the future of the community would be jeopardized if its leaders merely continued the debate and did nothing constructive. He had therefore to make a choice and decide on priorities, and he chose education. He had always held that no progress was possible without modern education, and had founded schools at Muradabad and Ghazipur while still in service. Education to him was the key to

¹Metcalfe, p. 91, quoting the note of 28 March 1860 by Frere and Outram in *Canning Papers Miscellaneous*, No. 558.

Muslim regeneration. But his opponents were now saying that education in the hands of a man of his views would only result in the children being converted to Christianity. Syed Ahmed Khan met this campaign by dropping his programme of social reform—this could come gradually with education. He closed down *Tahzibul Akhlaq* and concentrated henceforth on establishing a modern educational institution on the lines of Cambridge and Oxford. To placate the opponents of his religious views, he left the preparation of the curriculum and the imparting of religious education at the institution to generally-acceptable religious dignitaries, having nothing to do with it himself. After retirement from service he settled in Aligarh and spent all his waking hours in furthering this one aim.

Syed Ahmed Khan had gathered round him a band of brilliant colleagues and devoted followers, and his efforts were crowned with success when the foundation of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College was laid at Aligarh in 1875.

The Aligarh Movement of Syed Ahmed Khan was something unique in the history of Indian Muslims. It was neither for *jihad* nor for religious reform: it was for education. 'Education' for Syed Ahmed Khan was, like the magic word 'sesame', which would open for the community the door to preservation and progress, social reform and economic well-being. It was a movement for education, yet it had great cultural, economic and political implications. In a way it was also a revivalist movement and a movement for modern interpretation of Islam. The Aligarh College aimed, as Syed Ahmed Khan explained, to have 'philosophy in our right hand, the natural sciences in our left hand, and the crown of "There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His prophet" on our head'.

Aligarh in due course became the centre of Muslim regeneration in India. It was also destined to play a decisive role in shaping the political future of the community and the country.

Syed Ahmed Khan's untiring efforts bore fruit in another direction also: by the 1890s the British attitude towards the Muslims softened slightly. Five factors were responsible for it. First: on account of the vigorous action taken against the followers of Sayyid Ahmed Shaheed in the 1860s, they were no longer the threat they once were. Second: the Government, being satisfied that no military danger existed any longer, was in a conciliatory mood. It realized that any policy that drove the

Muslims to military opposition would be self-defeating. Canning himself had believed that pacification of all communities was necessary if the British rule was to last, and now that the 'Wahabi' Mujahideen had been worsted militarily, and discredited religiously in the eyes of the general Muslim public through some *fatwas*, the time had come to show that the Government was not pledged to be anti-Muslim for ever. Third: the revivalist Hindu movements were becoming more and more aggressive, and were making exaggerated demands on the Government. The pendulum had gone too far in favour of the Hindus and was creating new problems. 'Equilibrium' now called for a tilt towards the Muslims. Fourth: Syed Ahmed Khan's movement had given an excellent opportunity to the Government to make the slight change and encourage the belief that if the 'Muhammadans' were 'loyal', they had everything to gain and nothing to lose.

The fifth factor, however, was more external than internal. Within fifteen years of the fall of Napoleon, he had been replaced in British eyes by the Czar as the threat to British interests. Protection of the Ottoman Empire became the main plank of British foreign policy in the later part of the nineteenth century, even if it meant a resort to arms. Early in 1853, Czar Nicholas I, using the phrase 'sick man' for the Ottoman Empire, suggested its dismemberment to the British Government, and proposed that Britain take Crete and Egypt. The suggestion was then declined, but it is obvious that Nicholas had merely read British thoughts. The British did later take, if not Crete, Cyprus from Turkey, and occupied Egypt. India, too, had come under the administration of the Crown after the Great Revolt, and Whitehall, with a Secretary of State for India sitting in the cabinet, was now directly responsible for any matter involving the security of the Indian Empire.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the safety of communications between England and India became a matter of vital importance to the British. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 caused great concern, and Britain moved swiftly and decisively. It purchased the shares of the canal company, then established the Dual Control in Egypt and finally occupied it militarily. The British bases in Gibraltar, Malta, Cyprus, Egypt, and Aden formed a chain of communication to India.

Britain was now following a dual policy of protecting the northern part of the Ottoman Empire against Russia and

grabbing the southern parts herself. In both cases, however, she had to appear as a friend of the Muslims. This had its inevitable effect in India too.

In 1877 Lytton told Salisbury 'that there is no getting over the fact that the British empire in India is a Mahommedan Power, and that it entirely depends on the policy of Her Majesty's Government whether the sentiment of our Mahommedan subjects is to be an immense security or an immense danger to us.'¹ Lytton's own appointment as Viceroy of India, after his experience as ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, was a clear indication that Her Majesty's Government was conscious of the situation.

The Viceroy at Calcutta was very much alive to the issue, and constantly consulting his colleagues and the men on the spot. It was generally agreed that the 'bloodthirsty Mohammadan' should not be driven to desperation. It was also conceded that the Muslims had been reduced to the lowest political and economic levels, and if the drift was not stopped, it would quickly reach the danger point. What was being discussed was how that drift could be stopped, how the community would react to any initiative on the part of the Government, and what that initiative should be. This had to be considered in the background of the activities of the followers of Sayyid Ahmed Shaheed. The view of the Commissioner of Peshawar was: 'I am not at all sure, that they do not languish when ignored and flourish when persecuted.'² Others, like the Governor of North-Western Province (UP) Sir William Muir, and the Acting Secretary of the Foreign Department, John Wyllied, suggested that a distinction be made between 'the religious beliefs and the political objectives of the 'Wahabis'.³ One official wrote: 'Everybody knows the Mohammedans regard us as usurpers and would gladly see us knocked on the head...But in this there is nothing to take notice of, or to be fearful of.'⁴

This view found reluctant but general acceptance. Earlier a senior British official of the Civil Service, William Hunter, had been commissioned to study Muslim conditions and inquire

¹Lytton to Salisbury, 23 June 1877, *Lytton Papers*, cited by Tara Chand, op. cit., p. 515.

²Hardy, op. cit., p. 87.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 88.

whether it was possible to pacify them or were they bound by their religion to be perpetually at war with the British.

In the book that Hunter compiled he graphically described, with the help of facts and figures collected from government records, the sad plight of the former ruling race. 'A hundred and seventy years ago it was almost impossible for a well-born Musalman in Bengal to become poor; at present it is almost impossible for him to continue rich,'¹ he said, and vividly described how in every district 'the descendents of some line of princes...drag on a listless existence in patched-up verandahs or leaky outhouses, sinking deeper and deeper into a hopeless abyss of debt' until 'a host of mortgages foreclose'.² 'During the last seventy-five years the Musalman Houses of Bengal have either disappeared from the earth, or at the moment being submerged beneath the new strata of society which our Rule has developed.'³

Hunter has mainly given the statistics about Bengal, but they were typical of the Muslim position in general. In any case Calcutta was then the capital, and the presence (or rather the absence) of Muslims from the central services was a matter of all-India import. He clearly showed that, whereas the traditional army career was no more available, even in the civil sphere the Muslim share was hopelessly inadequate.

'None of the native gentlemen who won their way in the Covenanted Civil Services or up to the bench of the High Court are Musalmans,'¹ Hunter reported, and said further that, in April 1869, in the highest grade 'there is now but one Musalman to three Hindus'; in the second grade 'there is now one Musalman to ten Hindus'; in the third grade 'there are now three Musalmans to a total of twenty-four Hindus and Englishmen'; in the lower ranks 'there are now four among a total of thirty-nine'; and among the probationers 'there is now not a single Mohammedan.'³

In other departments the situation was even worse. In the three grades of Assistant Government Engineers there were fourteen Hindus, and not one Muslim; among the apprentices

¹W. W. Hunter, *The Indian Musalmans: Are they bound in conscience to rebel against the Queen?* Reprint from 1871 Edition, Premier Book House, Lahore, 1974, p. 134.

²*Ibid.*, p. 131.

³*Ibid.*, p. 140.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 142-3.

there were four Hindus and two Englishmen, and not one Muslim. Among the sub-engineers and supervisors there were twenty-four Hindus and only one Muslim, among the overseers there were sixty-three Hindus, but only two Muslims. In the office of Accounts there were fifty Hindus and not one Muslim; and in the Upper Subordinate Department there were twenty-two Hindus, and again not a single Muslim.¹

Hunter found it 'unnecessary to multiply instances of a fact that is patent in every page of the Civil List',² but he proved statistically that in regard to the gazetted appointments for which legally Englishmen, Hindus and the Muslims were all eligible, the proportion of Hindus to Europeans was more than one-half, while the proportion of Muslims to Europeans was less than one-fourteenth.³ It was not because qualified Muslims were not available, for 'even when qualified for Government employ they are studiously kept out of it by Government notification'; the Government 'publicity singles out Muhammadans in Gazettes for exclusion from official posts.'⁴ 'In fact, there is now scarcely a Government office in Calcutta in which a Muhammadan can hope for any post above the rank of porter, messenger, filler of inkpots and mender of pens.'⁶

Turning to professions, Hunter dealt with the two most respectable and lucrative ones, Medicine and Law. In the former, the figures for the Calcutta university were: Graduates—Hindus three, English one, Muslims nil; Bachelors—Hindus ten, English one, Muslims nil; Licentiates for Medicine—Hindus ninety-eight, English five, Muslims one.⁷

About Law, he noted that, 'This was a branch of professions almost completely in the hands of Musalmans within memory of men still living' and, 'Even as late as 1851 the Muhammedans stoutly held their own, and in fact equal the whole number of the English and Hindu Pleaders put together.' But from 1851 different tests of fitness were prescribed, and 'the list (now) shows

¹Ibid., p. 143.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 145.

⁴Ibid., p. 150.

⁵Ibid., p. 149.

⁶Ibid., p. 145.

⁷Ibid., p. 149.

that out of two hundred and forty natives admitted (to the High Court) from 1851 to 1868 two hundred and thirty-nine were Hindus and only one Musalman.¹

'It matters not to what department or profession I turn the result is the same,'² Hunter said.

Hunter pleaded with the Government not to make martyrs out of the 'Wahabis', but to remove the 'chronic sense of wrong' from which the Muslims suffered. He suggested that the Government should help in 'developing a rising generation of Muhammadans no longer learned in their own narrow learning, nor imbued solely with the bitter doctrines of their mediaeval law, but tintured with the sober and genial knowledge of the West. At the same time they would have sufficient acquaintance with the religious code to command the respect of the community, while an English training would secure them entry into the lucrative walks of life.'³

At about the same time as Hunter's book, Lord Hobart, Governor of Madras, wrote a minute on *Muhammadan Education and Employment of Muhammadans in the Public Services* in his province. He found that the 'disappearance (of Muslims from public services) is by no means imaginary as far as concerns this presidency,' and the reasons were more or less the same as given by Hunter for Bengal. A return giving the appointments in India for posts carrying a salary of Rupees 150 and above for the years from 1867 to 1871 'distinguishing those held by Hindus from those held by Muhammadans' had also been prepared, and was submitted by George Hamilton, the Under Secretary of State for India, to the Parliament.

All this pointed in the same direction. The Viceroy, Lord Mayo, had himself recorded an important minute in the same strain even before Hunter had submitted his report. In this minute, Mayo pointed out that in the Muslim stronghold of Bengal there were 14,000 Muslim students against 100,000 Hindus, and deplored 'the lamentable deficiency in the large mass of what was not very long ago the most powerful race in India'. Because of the prevailing system of education, 'We have not only failed to

¹Ibid., pp. 146-7.

²Ibid., p. 147.

³Ibid., p. 182.

attract (or attach) the sympathies and confidence of a large and important section of the community, but we may even fear that we have caused positive disaffection as is suggested by Mr O'Kinealy (Acting Secretary of the Home Department).¹ 'Mayo's note of 26 June 1871 on Muslim Education', says an English author, 'shows clearly that he and his senior officials recognized that politically the time had come for a change of course.'²

It was a political decision³, not out of sympathy for, or a sense of fairness to, the Muslims. The Muslims had been crushed systematically and ruthlessly, while the Hindus had been pampered and patronized: but now, for factors already mentioned, it was considered expedient to make a change, a slight one. The Hindus had come to monopolize government offices to the exclusion of almost all other Indians, and the British remembered that during the rule of Aliwardi Khan, as Orme wrote, 'Thus was the Gentoo (Hindu) connection became the most opulent influence in the government of which it pervaded every department with such efficacy, that nothing of moment could move without their participation or knowledge.'⁴ This influence was used with deadly effect by the British against his successor, Siraj ud Daula (as was similarly done against Tipu Sultan in Mysore). Could it not work against them, now that they were themselves the masters in Calcutta?

Sir Henry Elliot had felt annoyed that, in spite of all that the British had done for them, 'these young Brutuses and Phocians' continued to 'sigh' for the return of the good old days. He had done his service to the cause of imperialism by creating a gulf between the Hindus and Muslims, and later British historians had played endlessly on the theme he had started. They had wanted the Hindu to become proud of his part. They had

¹*Mayo Papers, Education 12/V*, dated 26 June 1871. Cited by Hardy, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

²Hardy, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

³Even in 1878, Lord Northbrook was telling the House of Lords that 'Mahomedans' is a religion which chafes under foreign rule, especially the rule of a nation whose religion is not Mahomedan. A really religious Mahomedan cannot be content with other than Mahomedan rule.' *Hansard*, Third Series, (Lords), Vol. ccxli, 18 July 1878, col. 1825.

⁴R. Orme, *A History of the Military Transaction of the British Nation in Indostan*, F. Wingrave, London, 1778, Vol. II, p. 53.

succeeded in that, but he had also become too arrogant, and too demanding.

Hindu Agitation

Hindu revivalism received a new impetus in the last three decades of the nineteenth century. It had traveled far from the earlier movements, which merely aimed at reforming Hindu society. 'Round about 1870 in Bengal and 1880 in Maharashtra,' says the official history of the Indian Freedom Movement, 'revivalism began to replace in popularity the creed of the Brahmo Samaj and Parthana Samaj, and a new note of assertive Hinduism began to sound above the voice of rationalism, which had reverberated in the land for nearly forty years.'¹

Meanwhile many political organizations had been established and were functioning actively. Early organizations confined themselves to mere academic discussions, but in 1851, the British Indian Association was established in Bengal with the object of bringing about improvement in the administration. Similar associations were formed in the other two presidencies, the Bombay Association in 1852, and the Madras Native Association in 1853. All these associations, it must be noted, were established even before India became a Crown colony. They organized public opinion and 'acquainted' the authorities with 'the state' of public feelings; and in 1853, when the question of renewal of the East India Company's charter was under consideration in Parliament, the British Indian Association submitted a memorandum which, *inter alia*, suggested that Indians should have the right to elect their representatives to the Legislative Councils.

The Hindus quickly extended their activities to England itself. The Indian Reform Society was formed in 1853. It was followed in less than a decade by the London India Society and the East India Association. These societies enlisted the sympathy and support of many eminent public figures, including Cobden, John Bright and the future Lord Ripon.

New political associations were formed during this period in the three Indian port cities of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay.

¹Tara Chand, *op. cit.*, p. 407.

These organizations, more aggressive in tone, soon drove out of the arena the earlier societies, which had been cautious in their approach and mild in pronouncements. The most important of these was the Indian Association, founded in 1876 by Surendra Nath Bannerji and Sisir Kumar Ghosh (founder of the newspaper *Amrita Bazar Patrika*), and it was under the auspices of this association that Bannerji toured the whole of India and carried his campaign against certain acts of the Government.

The 1870s and early 1880s were a period of unprecedented Hindu agitation. A number of administrative measures came in for severe criticism, and protest meetings were held all over the sub-continent. The resolutions passed and the speeches made at these meetings were in a tone hitherto unknown. Surendra Nath Bannerji undertook more than one all-India tour to give it a 'national' look.

This agitation revealed the hitherto unsuspected strength of the middle class and the Press. A new Hindu middle class had started forming after the battle of Plassey. The old Muslim aristocracy had been wiped out, and the Company's land and trade policies had given birth to a new breed of Hindu *zamindars* and commercial classes. The policy of employing Hindus in government services had created yet another group. The European methods of economic organization and commercial management had made an impact in the port cities of Bombay, Madras and Calcutta, which had flourished at the expense of Delhi, Lucknow and Murshidabad. The Hindus had acted as middlemen for Europeans in these ports, and had emerged as a group of subordinate commercial class serving their principals and copying their methods. The Hindus had also learned the English language and, to some extent, imbibed European ideas. All these groups, although differing in family background, monetary power, education and occupations, had developed certain common characteristics and outlook and formed a new distinct class.

The Hindu Press had also developed and by this time had become quite strong. There was a Muslim Press too but it was very weak in comparison and was, generally speaking, confined to Urdu only. In 1871 in Bombay, for example, there were twenty-nine Marhati, twenty-six Gujrati, three Urdu and one Persian newspapers. At about the same time (1875 to be exact) the

Hindus owned fifty-six newspapers in the Bengali language. They also had a strong English language Press. The *Hindu Patriot* and the *Amrit Bazar Patrika* in Bengal, the *Indian Herald* in NWP (now UP), *The Marhatta* in Bombay, *The Hindu* in Madras and the *Tribune* in the Punjab were all popular and powerful newspapers.

The new English-educated Hindu middle class and the Hindu Press became the pillars of the agitation which was provoked by such measures as the Arms Act and the Vernacular Press Act of 1878, the Ilbert Bill of 1878, and the reduction of age of entry in the I.C.S. in 1876.

The Arms Act practically prohibited the carrying of firearms by the Indians; the Vernacular Press Act curbed the freedom of the local languages newspapers. The reduction of the age of entry gave an unfair advantage to the Englishmen against the Indians. The Ilbert Bill was a case in reverse: it sought to remove an anomaly in the legal procedure and enable Indian members of the I.C.S., like their British colleagues working as magistrates, to try Europeans. It was vehemently opposed by the European community, which led to counter-agitation by the Hindus.

The agitation launched on these occasions, coming quickly one after the other, surprised the British. They had not realized the extent of power that the Hindus had gathered, and since matters could, and did, reach Parliament, where Irish members of the House of Commons and some liberal elements were ready to support the Indian point of view, or at least find one more ground for attacking the government of the day, Calcutta was forced to make compromises. Although it could not, because of European agitation, go ahead with the Ilbert Bill, and did not modify the Arms Act, it did make some concessions on the Civil Service question and rescinded the Vernacular Press Act.

The Government, however, became worried about the power that the Hindus had begun to wield and their increasingly aggressive attitude. The Hindu Press and literature were now singing the hymn of Hindu superiority, past and present. The Hindu leaders were now making demands as a matter of right and not begging for favours. And the public, through organized meetings, was supporting them, as was the Press. So bold had the latter become that *The Bengali*, commenting on the Ilbert Bill, called it a matter of principle, and said that: 'It will be

decided...whether Englishmen will rule India according to the principles of justice and equity or by force."¹

At this stage two long-term decisions were taken by the British. One was to contain the agitation in different parts of the country through a central organization that could be controlled and yet be used to allow the Indians to let off steam. This found its final shape in the Indian National Congress in 1885. The other, and the earlier, decision was to do something to relax the Hindu hold and weaken the Hindu influence.

In December 1868, Sir John Strachey, as a member of the Governor-General's Council, had minuted: 'There is hardly any class of population which hates us more thoroughly than the highly educated gentlemen of Lower Bengal...but when the time arrives, as it certainly will arrive, in which the brave and high-spirited gentlemen of Northern India are as well educated as the gentlemen of Bengal, the matter will be one of very different political import.'² This analysis found added weight after the Hunter report, and in June 1872 the government adopted a resolution 'to give to the Muhammadans their full share of high class intellectual training and sound knowledge useful to them in life.'³

The words 'useful to them in life' should, in the context of the conditions of those times, be translated as 'may qualify them for government service.' How 'useful' they were can be gauged from the example of Bengal where, as late as in 1887, fifteen years after the Resolution, there was one Muslim subordinate judge to forty-six Hindus and only eight Muslim *munsifs* (civil judges) against 227 Hindus.⁴ The Muslims had, during their long rule, become used to considering military and civil service as the only possible careers, losing their commercial and trading instincts, and government service had become to them a matter of bread and butter. But in the changed circumstances of the nineteenth century, knowledge of English was the *sine qua non* for government jobs. It was this economic pressure which forced

¹Tara Chand, op. cit., p. 541.

²Metcalfe, op. cit., pp. 282-3.

³Syed Mahmood, *A History of English Education in India, 1781-1893*, Aligarh, 1895, pp. 153-54. Cited by Tara Chand, op. cit., p. 444.

⁴*Proceedings of the Public Service Commission*, Vol. VI, Calcutta, 1887, p. 430, cited by Hardy, op. cit., p. 124.

many otherwise reluctant Muslim parents to send their children to Aligarh and other English medium schools. Knowledge of the English language not only promised a government job, it was, if no job was available, useful in any other profession as well.

Nevertheless, ten years after the government resolution of 1872, the percentage of Muslims in English Middle and High schools was still no more than 9.2 of the total number of students, and 3.6 in colleges.¹ Hunter had recommended 'special encouragement of Mohammedan education as a legitimate charge on local funds', but the government had been niggardly. In October 1884, however, the government adopted a resolution which spoke of it being desirable to give Muslims 'in some respects exceptional assistance', and in 1885 ordered that the annual education reports should in future contain a special section reviewing the progress of Muslims in this field.²

Even as late as in 1903 the Muslim percentage in art colleges was 7.3 and in professional colleges only 6.4.³ This was thirty-two years after Mayo's Minute, and in the fifth year of the Viceroyalty of Lord Curzon.

CHAPTER 3

BIRTH OF THE MUSLIM LEAGUE

The Viceroyalty of Lord Curzon was the high noon of British imperialism in India: it was also the beginning of the open conflict between 'nationalist' forces and the Raj.

The softening of British attitudes towards the Muslims had produced an uproar from the Hindus. They saw in it a threat to their monopoly of power, but the hue and cry they raised was in the name of 'nationalist India'. The government, it was represented, should be impartial in giving educational facilities to all communities, without favour to any one in particular, and jobs should be given strictly on merit. The government, it was said in ridicule, was treating the Muslims as a 'favourite wife'.

Actually, despite the resolution to improve the Muslims' position, and despite all its sympathetic decisions, the Government had done little for them. The British had not completely shed their distrust of Muslims, for one thing; for another, they were never able to get over their Christian prejudice against Islam. Every schoolchild in the West is exposed, even today, to so much propaganda against Islam so persistently that he develops a deep hatred for the religion and its followers. These feelings were amply reflected in two books by Sir William Muir, *The Life of Muhammad* and *The Caliphate: Its Rise and Fall*. Muir, who was the Lieutenant-Governor of the United Province, (then known as the North-Western Province) presented in these books the usual jaundiced view of Islam and the Prophet and reasserted the theory of Islam having been spread by the sword.

Assault on Urdu

What was most damaging, however, was the continued British

campaign to help Hindu revivalism and to further weaken Muslim cultural influence. This was particularly visible in the case of Urdu.

Urdu was the symbol of the composite Hindu-Muslim culture. Its script is the Persian *Nastaliq*; its vocabulary mostly Hindi (Prakit) with a high percentage of Persian and Arabic; and the syntax and grammar entirely Hindi. It belongs to the Indo-Aryan family; and unlike Arabic, Persian and Turkish, which were the languages of the Muslim conquerors, Urdu is a purely Indian language.

'...The plant of Urdu poetry grew lustily in its native soil,' says the official history of the Freedom Movement in India. 'Urdu spread to all corners of India and Urdu literary circles were established in every province of India. When the British dominion extended over northern India, Urdu was the *lingua franca*, employed by the polite society...Muslim and Hindu...as the medium of culture and social intercourse.'¹

The British, who had successfully uprooted Persian in 1831, now moved against Urdu. In the words of Tara Chand, 'it occurred to the authorities of the (Fort William) College² that Urdu, which was written in Persian characters, was greatly influenced by Persian in its vocabulary and versification and was mainly used in towns, could not be regarded as the language of the people. They therefore set about evolving a prose style free from Persian elements. Thus Hindi prose came into existence. This Hindi had no poetry and its prose was a form of Urdu in which Sanskrit words had taken the place of Persian words.'³

Speaking of the birth of Hindi, the author of *A History of Hindi Literature* says: 'A literary language for Hindi-speaking people which could commend itself more to Hindus was very desirable, and the result was produced by taking Urdu and expelling from it words of Persian or Arabic origin, and substituting for them words of Sanskrit or Hindi origin.'⁴

On the orders of John Gilchrist of Fort William College, 'to create a literary medium for the Hindus' in place of the 'Persianized

¹Tara Chand, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 192.

²A college at Fort William, Calcutta, was established in 1801 for the purpose of helping English civilians learn Indian languages. It compiled works on different subjects in local languages.

³Tara Chand, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 372.

⁴F. E. Keay, *A History of Hindi Literature*. Oxford University Press, Calcutta, 1920, p. 88.

Hindi of the Musalmans', Lalluji Lal wrote *Prem Sagar*, the first work of Hindi prose, in 1809. This was 'the dawn of modern Hindi'.

The next step was the replacement of Persian as the court language by 'Hindustani', although no language of that name really existed. It may be remembered that when the *Diwani* of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa was granted to the East India Company, the Imperial *firman* had stipulated that Persian was to continue as the court language. But such stipulations had never bothered the British, and it was not going to bother them when they were engaged on a long-term project—to divide the Hindus and the Muslims. Urdu was the most excellent example of Hindu-Muslim unity, and by turning Hindu sentiment in favour of Hindi, and against Urdu, they could break the strongest link binding the two communities.

The dawn of Hindi, however, proved, in the words of Dr Tara Chand, 'a false dawn'. Hindi did not become popular, even after the dethroning of Persian; and, contrary to British expectations, it was Urdu that gained fresh prestige and popularity. Then came the Great Revolt and, as one of its consequences, renewed British efforts against Urdu.

'After 1857,' says the official history of the Freedom Movement in India, 'a fresh impetus was given to Hindi. A number of British officers became interested in its development. They wrote its grammar and encouraged the Hindi writers. S. C. Bailey advised the Government that Hindi could be and should be gradually introduced into the courts and offices.'¹

Action was then taken with due deliberation. Sometimes it was 'in response' to delegations pleading for upgrading of Hindi at the expense of Urdu: at others, the Government would take the initiative itself. In 1872, in nine districts of Central Provinces (modern Madhya Pradesh), Hindi was made the court language instead of Urdu. A few months later the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, Sir George Campbell, was so moved by the plight of 'the poor, voiceless and downtrodden' that he felt that, 'so long as their vernacular (that is, Hindi in the Nagri or Kaithi characters) is not introduced in the courts they will continue to be victims of oppression.'² Orders were issued that in the districts of Bihar, then forming part of Bengal, Hindi in Nagri script was to be used in

¹Tara Chand, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 372.

²*Ibid.*

courts and government offices, and in all processes, notifications and proclamations. The orders were repeated in 1874 and again the next year. In January 1881, the exclusive use of the Nagri script was made compulsory; use of anything issued from or received by the courts in Persian characters was absolutely forbidden.

In the UP, the cradle of Urdu, the blow took longer in coming but come it did in 1900, when Sir Anthony McDonnell, who as Commissioner of Patna was actively associated with George Campbell in introducing Hindi in Bihar, decreed the use of Hindi in Devanagri script in courts and offices and made its knowledge obligatory for all government servants.

The demand to replace Urdu with Hindi gave Syed Ahmed Khan the shock of his life. It signified not only the repudiation of the common culture which had been developed by Hindus and Muslims jointly, but also the rejection of the Muslim element in something that was entirely Indian in character. He had so far wished and worked for the good of all Indians, Hindus and Muslims, alike and compared the two communities to the two eyes of a bride—injury to one, no matter which one, caused suffering to her. But he was deeply pained when, in 1867, some Hindu leaders of Benares asked the Government to discontinue the use of Urdu in courts and replace it with Hindi written in Devanagri script. ‘Sir Syed used to say,’ records his biographer, Hali, ‘that this was the first occasion when he felt certain that it was now impossible for the Hindus and Muslims to march as a single nation, and (for anyone) to work for both of them simultaneously.’¹ It was during this period that he called on his old friend Shakespeare, who was then Divisional Commissioner of Benares. Syed Ahmed talked about the problems of Muslim education. When he had finished, Shakespeare remarked in amazement that that was the first occasion that he had heard the Syed talk about the progress of Muslims alone. ‘Before this you were always keen about the welfare of your countrymen in general,’ he said. Syed Ahmed’s reply was prophetic. ‘Now I am convinced,’ he said, ‘that the two nations will not join wholeheartedly in anything. At present there is no open hostility between the two nations, but on account of the so-called “educated” people it will increase immensely in future. He who lives, will see.’²

¹Altaf Hussain Hali, *Hayat-i-Jawaid* (Urdu), Punjab Academy, Lahore, 1957, p. 194.

²Ibid.

Syed Ahmed Khan did not live to see that hostility reach its logical culmination, but he did see the start of the process as well as the adoption of the technique through which the majority community strove to wipe out traces of a common culture on the one hand, while on the other, advancing its own exclusive interest in the name of a common nationalism. The howl over the reduction in the age of entry to the I.C.S, for example, had nothing national about it. It was an agitation by Hindus only for a place in the higher echelons of the Civil Services. The Muslims, backward as they were in English education, were not affected by it in the least. Their interests at that moment were to be served not by open competition but by nomination by the Government.

What the Muslims needed most in the circumstances then prevailing, Syed Ahmed believed, was to get education, more education and still more education. According to figures compiled by him from the Annual Reports on Public Instruction the position in 1878 was:¹

	Total No. of Graduates	Total No. of Muslim Graduates
Doctor in Law	6	Nil
Honours in Law	4	Nil
Bachelor in Law	705	6
Licentiate in Law	235	5
Bachelor in Civil Engineering	36	Nil
Licentiate	51	Nil
Master of Arts	326	5
Bachelor of Arts	1,343	30
Doctor in Medicine	4	Nil
Honours in Medicine	2	Nil
Bachelor in Medicine	58	1
Licentiate in Medicine	385	8
Total	3,155	57

¹Rafiq Zakaria, *Rise of Muslim in Indian Politics*, Somaiya Publication, Bombay, 1970, p. 177, footnote No. 6.

The Hindus had a lead of over a century over the Muslims and with their advantage in the field of modern education, their hold on government jobs, and better economic conditions, they could indulge in politics; but this was a luxury the Muslims could not afford. They needed a politically quiescent period of at least thirty or forty years to catch up with the sister community. Nothing should be done during this period, Syed Ahmed felt, to divert their attention from this primary task of regeneration through education. They may seek redress of their grievances by bringing them to the notice of the authorities, and even Parliament, through such non-political bodies as the British-Indian Association, which Syed Ahmed himself founded in 1866, but nothing more. He considered any political activity by the Muslims at that time as simply suicidal for the nation, and so great was his abhorrence of politics that when Syed Ameer Ali asked him to support his Central Muhammadan Association, Syed Ahmed flatly refused.¹

Indian National Congress

The Indian National Congress was founded in 1885, by an Englishman, a retired Government servant, Allan Octavian Hume. The three objects he had in view, he said, were: 'First, the fusion into one national whole of all the different elements that constitute the population of India; second, the gradual regeneration along all lines, spiritual, moral, social, and political, of the nation thus evolved; and third, the consolidation of the union between England and India, by securing the modification of such of its conditions as may be unjust or injurious.'² At the first Congress held in Bombay, the President spelled them out as: (a) 'The promotion of personal intimacy and friendship amongst all the more earnest workers in our country's cause in the various parts of the Empire'; (b) eradication of all racial, religious or provincial prejudices, and 'the further development and consolidation of those sentiments of national unity that had their origin in our

¹Syed Ameer Ali, *Memories in Islamic Culture*, Dayal Singh Trust Library, Lahore, Vol. V, p. 540.

²Sir William Wedderburn, *Allan Octavian Hume*, Fisher & Unwin, London, 1913, p. 47.

beloved Lord Ripon's ever memorable reign'; (c) the recording of opinion on important and pressing social questions of the day, and (d) 'the determination of the lines upon and methods by which during the next twelve months it is desirable for native politicians to labour in public interest.'¹

'It is shrouded in mystery,' says the official historian of the Congress, Pattabhi Sitaramayya, 'as to who originated this idea of an All India Congress.'² But there is not the least doubt that it originated in the higher councils of the British Government in India. The idea itself may or may not have originated with Hume, but he became associated with it. He must surely have discussed it with his colleagues and the powers that be. When he retired, instead of going straight back home in the fashion of other members of I.C.S., he decided to stay on and work on his project.

According to Sir William Wedderburn, another retired member of the I.C.S. who twice became the President of the Congress, it was in 1878-9 that 'Mr Hume became convinced that some definite action was called for to counteract the growing unrest. From well-wishers in different parts of the country he received warnings of the danger to the Government'³

'The evidence that convinced me,' Hume's biographer quotes him as saying, 'at the time (about fifteen months, I think, before Lord Lytton left) that we were in imminent danger of a terrible outbreak was this. I was shown seven large volumes...these were said, at that time, to be communications from over thirty thousand different reporters...all going to show that these poor people were pervaded with a sense of hopelessness of the existing state of affairs...and they wanted to do *something* and that something meant violence'⁴

Continuing, Hume said that, 'In the existing state of the lowest half-starving classes it was considered that the first few crimes would be the signal for hundreds of similar ones, and for a general development of lawlessness, paralyzing the authorities and the respectable classes. It was considered certain also that everywhere

¹A. Moin and Shahida Zaidi (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Indian National Congress*, S. Chand & Co., New Delhi, 1976, Vol. I, p. 46.

²B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress*, Working Committee of the Congress, 1935, p. 16.

³Wedderburn, op. cit., p. 50.

⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 80-1. (Emphasis original.)

the small bands would begin to coalesce into larger ones, like drops of water on a leaf; that all bad characters in the country would join, and that very soon after the bands attained formidable proportions, a certain small number of the educated class, at the same time desperately, perhaps unreasonably, bitter against the Government would join the movement, assume here and there the lead, give the outbreak cohesion, and direct it as a national revolt.¹

A national revolt had been the principal worry of the British after 1857. Before this they had fought and easily defeated Indian princes, but the Great Revolt had been a People's War. Although it had started without previous planning and lacked strong leadership, it had, despite dissensions and many blunders, shaken the Raj to its very foundations. The next time it might be carefully planned, better organized and competently led, and the British less fortunate. Many precautions therefore had been taken. The army had been re-organized to meet that possibility. The European element, which prior to 1857 used to be in the proportion of one to eight or nine Indians, had been increased to a ratio of two to five, or in some cases, to one to two. The Indian element was excluded from arsenals and artillery. In 1856 the Indian army consisted of 39,575 Europeans and 214,985 Indians, but by 1878 (when Hume received his evidence) its complexion had been changed to 6,002 British Officers 60,341 British men and 123,254 Indians.²

This was all very well, but something more than mere military measures was called for. The root cause of the unrest was the alien rule. Since that cause could not be removed—on the contrary, it had to be protected—the only other option to 'counteract the growing unrest' was to prevent it from assuming a snowball process and to wean away the educated classes which could provide leadership to the masses.

And it was to these English-educated classes that Hume turned when starting *his* movement—his circular of 1 March 1883, the first definite step towards founding the Congress, was addressed to the 'Graduates of the Calcutta University.'³

¹Ibid., p. 81.

²Peel Commission Report on Indian Army Organization, 1879, paras 11 and 16.

³Wedderburn, op. cit., p. 50.

To the author of the official history of India's Freedom Movement, it would merely 'appear' that 'Hume discussed the plan of a political conference with the Governor-General Dufferin,'¹ but there is irrefutable evidence that the final shape to the plan was given by Dufferin himself. We have it straight from the horse's mouth, i.e., from the President of the first Congress, W. C. Bonnerji. In his *Introduction to Indian Politics* published in 1898 he says: 'It will probably be news to many that the Indian National Congress, as it was originally started and as it has since been carried on, is in reality the work of the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava when that nobleman was the Governor-General of India.'² He goes on to reveal that when Hume presented his plan to Dufferin in Simla early in 1885, the Viceroy, 'after considering over it for some time...sent for Hume', and made two fundamental changes. He vetoed Hume's idea that these meetings should be held merely to discuss social matters, and politics should be taboo. On the contrary, Dufferin very much wanted it to be a political animal. He wanted to know 'what was thought of them and their policy in the Native circles'. He also rejected Hume's suggestion that the local governor should preside over such a gathering.³

Dufferin, according to Bonnerji, had also 'made it a condition with Mr Hume that his name in connection with the scheme of the Congress should not be divulged so long as he remained in the country.'⁴

Having obtained the approval of Dufferin, Hume then went to England and discussed his plan with important personalities interested in Indian affairs. It was only after he had received the blessings of these 'well-wishers of India' that the first Congress was launched. 'The Congress Movement was neither inspired by the people, nor desired and planned by them,' admits Lala Lajpat Rai, President of the 1920 Congress. 'It was a movement not from within.'⁵

According to Bonnerji's account, Dufferin, finding the newspapers unreliable, and eager to remove the defects of

¹Tara Chand, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 549.

²Sitaramayya, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

³*Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵R. C. Majumdar, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Book Traders, Lahore, 1979, Vol. I, p. 422.

administration, wanted to keep himself informed of the opinion of the new educated class, meeting every year and acting as Her Majesty's loyal opposition. Actually there was much more than that. What the British had in mind was to eliminate scattered centres of agitation in the provinces by bringing them out to one forum. There was, the British calculated, no danger that it would strengthen the hands of agitators: there would be far too many diverse interests to allow agreed issues to emerge. On the contrary, it was more likely that a common platform would lead to intense in-fighting.

Of particular interest is the first object of the Congress—the fusion into one national whole of all the diverse elements of the population. Sir John Strachey had said not long before that, 'there is not, and never was, an India, or even any country of India'; and two decades later Secretary of State Morley, while discussing with Viceroy Minto whether English political institutions could be transplanted, was referring to 'the Nations who inhabit India.'¹ Dufferin's own view was that India was 'composed of a large number of distinct nationalities, professing various religions, practicing diverse creeds, speaking different languages, while many of them are still further separated from one another by discordant prejudices, by conflicting usages, and even antagonistic interests,' and the 'two mighty political communities' were 'as distinct from each other as the poles asunder.'²

Believing in this truth, the British could not have considered it possible that these different 'Nations' could be fused into one, nor could they have desired it. The lack of unity among Indians had been the single most important factor in their subjugation, and it was still the foundation on which the Raj largely rested. The British could not have gone about destroying their own foundations. But historians who otherwise never tire of charging the British with single-mindedly following a policy of *divide et impera* suddenly change their tune when they come to the

¹Fundamental difference between us, I really believe, there is none. Not one whit more than you, do I think it desirable, or possible, or even conceivable to adopt English political institutions to the Nations who inhabit India', Morley to Minto, 6 June 1906, *Morley Collection*, India Office Mss. EUR D53.

²*Report on the Indian Constitutional Reforms*, Montagu and Chelmsford, London, 1918, para 141.

founding of the Congress. They blame the British for dividing the Indians before, after, and even during this period when the Congress was formed, yet they single out the Congress as the only shining exception and praise Hume for his love of India, his public spirit, and his mission of unifying Indians. Unifying the Indians, fired by a nationalist fervour, against British rule!

This absurd line is taken to obfuscate the historical fact about the founding of the Congress, which must always be glorified in the light of anti-British struggle. But this is not history, and it cannot hide either its origin or the British motive behind it.

The British purpose was not to unite, but to divide. They knew that the Indians did not form one nation, and could not become one, but by bringing them on one platform, under the cover of nationalism, the British would not only be accentuating their differences, but also be keeping them under watch.

The Hindus and the Muslims in the 1870s and 1880s were following diametrically opposed policies. Their interests clashed at almost every point. A common Congress was more likely to widen than narrow the gulf. To these may be added provincial differences. The three Presidencies of Bengal, Bombay and Madras had developed at a much faster rate than the rest of India; and the problems of the two sets of provinces were entirely different. What could be a burning issue in Madras might leave the Punjab cold. Such an issue, if public agitation was started in Madras, could inflame the whole province, but if it went to an all-India body it would most likely be watered down.

Transferring local or provincial problems to an all-India organization might appear to be dangerous for the Government, but it would in fact take out the sting. The British calculated that conflicting communal and provincial interests would prevent, not promote, unity of thought and action. The provincial associations like the Indian Association in Bengal, the Bombay Presidency Association, the Madras Mahajan Sabha, the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha, which were becoming centres of agitation, would be overshadowed by the new all-country body, and would in their turn rush to join it, only to lose their existing influence. Moreover, the Congress would meet only once a year. Difficult problems would not be solved during a three-day session, and would be postponed to the next, with the provinces taking little action in the meanwhile. The Congress would help keep the educated

classes in check. Courteous treatment of Congressmen and a show of goodwill by the Government would blunt their hostility. The Congress platform would, at the same time, provide these classes with an opportunity to make fiery speeches and have it out of their system. No damage could be done, but it could do a lot of good. So the British, with their *savoir faire*, established the Indian National Congress, in the words of its founder Hume, as 'a safety valve' for 'the future maintenance of the integrity of the British Empire'.

Under British patronage¹ the Congress thrived. Hume remained its General Secretary from 1885 to 1906. During the first quarter century of its life, its annual sessions were presided over by Englishmen five times: by David Yule in 1888, by Sir William Wedderburn in 1889 and again in 1910, by Alfred Webb in 1894, and by Sir Henry Cotton in 1904. Ramsay MacDonald was due to preside over the Congress of 1911, but his wife's illness prevented his coming.

For the second Congress at Calcutta, Dufferin held a garden party in honour of the delegates. His example was often followed by Governors in provincial capitals. Even as late as in December 1906, when relations between the British and the Congress had soured, Lord Minto permitted such high officials as the Lieutenant-Governor of the province, the commander-in-chief, Lord Kitchner, and his own private secretary, Dunlop Smith, to attend the garden party held in honour of the Congress delegates by the Maharaja of Darbhanga.²

¹It is interesting what Sir William Wedderburn, a former acting Chief Secretary of Bombay, said in 1913: 'But here it must be noted that, although the Congress movement has always been looked on with undisguised hostility by that section of officials who are in permanent antagonism to the educated and independent classes, this disfavour has not, *as a rule*, extended to the higher authorities. This was especially the case at the outset. Indeed, in initiating the national movement, Mr Hume took counsel with the Viceroy, Lord Dufferin; and whereas he was himself disposed to begin his reform propaganda on the social side, *it was apparently by Lord Dufferin's advice that he took up the work of political organization*, (emphasis added) as the matter first to be dealt with...Indeed so cordial were the relations, that Lord Dufferin was approached with a view to the first Congress being held under the presidency of Lord Reay, the Governor of Bombay'. Wedderburn, *op. cit.*, pp. 59-60.

²Minto to Morley, 26 December 1906, *Morley Collection*, *op. cit.*

Syed Ahmed Khan and the Congress

In the first Congress, only two local Muslims, out of a total of seventy-two, had participated. This was too obvious a failing, and Hume resolved to repair it. He invited the Central Mohammedan Association and the Mohammedan Literary Society to the second Congress, and selected Badruddin Tyabji, who had kept away from the first two congresses, to preside over the third.

The two Muslim associations declined to participate, but Syed Ahmed Khan's reaction was stronger. The Congress represented everything against his political creed. He had, with the greatest of difficulty, and despite the hostility and derision of important sections of his own community, built a bridge with the British, and the new movement threatened to destroy it. He could not allow Muslims to indulge in political activities, and most certainly not of the kind that the Congress represented.

Syed Ahmed had ignored the first Congress, but Hume's subsequent efforts to enlist the Muslims alarmed him. A month before the second Congress, he wrote a lengthy editorial in the Aligarh Institute Gazette in which he said that the country was 'certainly not' ready for popular Government. Later, in exchanges with Hume and Tyabji, and in his speeches and articles, he came out strongly against the idea and the ideals of the Congress.

Syed Ahmed Khan first made a scathing attack on the Congress at a public meeting in Lucknow on 28 December 1887, at the time of the Madras Congress. From then on he continued a veritable crusade against it till his death. His main arguments against it can be summed up as: (a) India was a continent. The Hindus and Muslims, although 'they drink from the same well, breathe the air from the same city and depend each one on the other for his life,' were 'two different nations.'¹ (b) The Congress could be called national only when 'the ultimate aims and objects of the people of which it is composed are identical': but could the Congress leaders honestly say whether 'out of two such nations whose aims and objects are different but who happen to agree on some small points, a "National" Congress can be created?' The answer was 'No. In the name of God no.' (c) The real aim of the Congress was that, while the Government of India should be English in name only, 'the

¹ *The Pioneer*, Allahabad, 11 January 1888.

internal rule of the country should be entirely in their own hands,' but the two nations 'could not sit on the same throne,' and the Congress movement was in effect 'a civil war.' (d) The representative institutions were unsuited for a country like India 'where caste distinctions still flourish, where there is no fusion of the various races, where religious distinctions are still violent, where education in its modern sense has not made an equal or proportionate progress among all sections of the population.'¹ So long as those differences remained, in a system of elections the larger community would override the interests of the smaller minorities. As between Hindus and Muslims 'it would be like a game of dice, in which one man had four dice and the other one.' (e) The Indian Muslims must co-operate with the British and trust them to safeguard their interests.

Syed Ahmed Khan's stand against the Congress infuriated the Hindu Press which attacked him violently, pouring epithets similar in nature to what Jinnah was to receive half a century later. The *Indian Mirror* called him 'a tool in the hands of our enemies...who has covered himself with shame and disgrace'. The *National Guardian* said, 'If ever a man deliberately set about cutting his own throat, that man is the old Muhammadan of seventy years, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan of Aligarh.' The *Tribune* described him as 'aging in intellect as well as in years', and the *Young Bengal* as 'queer, foolish, childish, sycophantic.'²

These views were not very different from those of Hume, who had considered the Muslim leader as 'senile', 'a fossil' and 'a little insane'.

But Syed Ahmed Khan was not the man to be deterred where he thought the future of his community was at stake. Nor could he be influenced by Hume's plea that 'on the whole our Viceroy looks upon (the Congress) with so much favour'³. His reply to Hume was that, even if 'Sir Auckland Colvin (Lieutenant-Governor of the Province), Lord Dufferin, the Secretary of State for India and the whole House of Commons had declared in favour of the Congress,' he would still be 'as firmly opposed to it as ever.'⁴

¹Speech in the Viceroy's Legislative Council, January 1883.

²All these quotations have been taken from Zakaria, op. cit., p. 55.

³*The Statesman*, Calcutta, 18, 19 & 21 December 1886, Zakaria, op. cit., p. 50.

⁴*The Pioneer*, Allahabad, 10 November 1888, giving the full text of the statement in which he revealed the contents of his reply to Hume two years earlier, *ibid.*, p. 75.

If Syed Ahmed Khan suspected the British hand in the formation of the Congress, as this very significant passage may indicate, he never expressed it either in his speeches or writings or even in his private talks. But that is understandable. It must be realized, however, that despite his expressions *ad infinitum* of loyalty to the British which sound so jarring to the ears of the present-day Pakistani, he was no British stooge. He had tried to build an alliance with the British, and any attempt to relegate the Muslims to the position of camp followers was rejected by him. His stress on self-respect was so great that even when he was in government service, in 1867, he had walked out of a *darbar* (levee) at Agra because the seats for the Indians were arranged at a lower level under the sun, while those for the English were on an elevation under a *shamiana* (canopy). Similarly, when Governor Muir questioned the veracity of one of his statements, he broke off all relations with him.

His concept of loyalty included the ability 'to speak out openly, honestly and with due respects all your grievances, hopes and fears.'¹ Loyalty did not mean blind submission.

The bitterness with which he carried out the campaign against the Congress was perhaps because of his suspicions about the British role in its creation. He summed up the Muslim attitude towards the Congress by a quotation from the Koran on 'the privation of this world and the next' (*خسرة الدنيا والآخرة*).

Syed Ahmed Khan's positive action against the Congress was the establishment in 1886 of the Muslim Educational Conference, which met annually in different parts of India and was devoted to the spread of modern education in the community, but his relentless attacks on the Congress succeeded in preventing Muslims from joining it as a community.²

The absence of Muslims from the Congress affected its 'national' character and did not really serve the purpose which

¹Sir Syed, A speech on the Institution of British Indian Association, p. 6, Ibid., p. 37.

²During the first quarter century of its life, 1885-1910, three Englishmen, but only two Muslims, became its presidents. Not more than a handful of Muslims participated in it actively. At its annual sessions, although travel expenses were given to Muslim delegates, very few came. Only some local Muslims were roped in and made delegates. See, Syed Razi Wasti, *Lord Minto and the Indian National Movement*, Oxford, 1964, Appendix I.

the British had in view. Although they continued to patronize it, their enthusiasm slackened. The Congress became an annual social-cum-academic event, a gathering of leading lawyers and intellectuals making speeches and passing resolutions, renewing acquaintances and exchanging social graces. Dufferin's two successors, Lansdown and Elgin, remained favourably disposed towards it, but the rise of the extremists, led by Aurobindo Ghosh and B. G. Tilak, changed the situation. The moderates, under Gokhale and Pherozeshah Mehta, fought them and prevented them from taking it over. But the imperial mind of Lord Curzon was repelled by the whole business and he hoped that he would see the Congress totter to its demise before he left India. Paradoxically it was Curzon himself who, by a single act, gave the Congress not only new life, but a prestige and position it had never enjoyed before. That act was the fateful decision to partition Bengal.

Partition of Bengal

When the British Crown took over the administration of India, the province of Bengal consisted of all territories east and south-east of Oudh. In terms of today, it comprised the Bharti states (provinces) of Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal, Assam, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Manipur, Nagaland, Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh, in addition to the Republic of Bangladesh. It was too large and unwieldy to be governed as one unit.

Suggestions to divide Bengal, and to create in its place more than one province of manageable proportions, had originated as far back as 1853. Various plans were drawn up, discussed and discarded, till it was decided to separate Assam and set up a Commissioner's province in 1874.

But this did not solve the problem. Bengal was still too large and too populous to be run by one Lieutenant-Governor, who could never find time to visit all its districts. Communications, especially in the interior, were hopelessly poor and its 189,000 square miles made Bengal larger than any European country except Russia. The interior and the outlying areas were in a primitive state as Calcutta and the adjoining areas had been the focus of development. Its population of over 78.5 million was

bigger than the population of Britain and France combined, and consisted of many different and heterogeneous elements.

One of the groups causing concern was that of the Orriya speakers. They were divided into three provinces, Bengal, CP and Madras. The Madras Government had been finding it irksome to deal with four groups of people speaking different languages—Tamil, Telegu, Malyalam and Canarese—and was most willing to surrender the areas inhabited by the fifth group, speaking Orriya. Assam, on the other hand, was suggesting that some areas of eastern Bengal be given to it to make a bigger Assamese province. One of the reasons advanced by Assam was that this would then enable it to create a provincial service of its own instead of being always dependent on the Government of Bengal, from which officers were continuously borrowed.

When Curzon arrived, a scheme for partitioning Bengal was already before the Government of India. Curzon, with all his defects of character, was a very conscientious administrator and never shirked from taking a decision. Efficiency was his watchword. He carried out reforms in every field of administration, and the provinces did not escape the sweep of his efficacy. He curbed the tendencies of Provincial Governors to act as independent rulers, and asserted the authority of the Governor-General. He also readjusted the boundaries of more than one province, incorporating Berar in the CP, and partitioning the Punjab, detaching the north-western areas and forming them into a new province, the North Western Frontier Province (renaming North West Province as the United Province, the UP).

Bengal too, Curzon decided, must be partitioned. Certain areas of eastern Bengal were amalgamated with Assam to form a new province of 106,540 square miles and a population of 31 million, of whom 18 million would be Muslims. The western province, after adjustment of the Orriya areas, was to have an area of 141,580 square miles and a population of 54 million, still much larger, both in area and population, than the eastern province.

This was a purely administrative measure. An added reason might have been a desire to break the hold of the Bengali Hindus. But the Bengali Hindus saw through it immediately and created an uproar as never before. They realized that the creation of the new Muslim-majority province meant that their monopoly of the government offices would be broken. So would their

monopoly of Calcutta University and education in general. Many Hindu *zamindars* had their land in the new province, which would have its own Board of Revenue, and Hindu businessmen would be affected by it as much as the *zamindars*. It would also have its own High Court and the practice of the Calcutta lawyers would suffer. The English-educated class was the one to be most seriously affected, and this was the one to make the most noise.

A storm of protest broke as soon as the scheme of partition became known. It was denounced as a criminal conspiracy to destroy the Bengali people who were united by race, language, and culture; the imperialist *divide et impera* in its ugliest form; the vivisection of the Motherland. Newspapers carried screaming headlines and bitter comments. Meetings were held all over the province, processions were taken out, and shops were closed and work suspended to register protest. A vigorous and sustained agitation was started. Vows were taken at Kali temples not to rest content until partition was annulled, and *rakhi* threads (thread wristlets) were distributed to create a fraternity of anti-partition partisans. A boycott of British-manufactured goods was undertaken, and a movement launched to promote *swadeshi*¹ goods.

The Muslims, in general, kept away from all this. They had avoided politics for half a century, and their political instinct had become so weak that even now, in a matter that concerned them directly, they did not bother to consider its implications. It was the British who, in order to prevent them from making common cause with the Hindus, tried to win them over to their side by starting the theme that one of the most important objects of the measure was to help the Muslims improve their lot economically and educationally. Curzon himself claimed that partition would provide 'the Mohammedans of Eastern Bengal with a unity which they had not enjoyed since the days of the old Musalman Viceroys and Kings'.² Muslim leaders and intelligentsia, on reflection, discovered that partition was indeed a godsend for them. They would have a majority of 60% in the new province where, free from the stifling Hindu dominance, they would have a chance to develop and progress. In 1901 the total amount spent on education in the city of

¹*Swadeshi*, indigenous, manufactured in India.

²Curzon in a speech at Dhaka on 18 February 1904, India Office Track, EUR 1037, *All About Partition*; Calcutta, 1905, p. 39.

Calcutta alone was more than that spent on the whole of East Bengal. In 1903-4 there were only 463 Muslims out of a total of 8,009 students in art colleges of undivided Bengal; the percentage in other colleges was even smaller. The new province could spend more on education, benefiting Muslims as a whole. This would also help them in getting more government jobs. In 1905, in the Muslim majority areas of Dhaka and Rajshahi in undivided Bengal, there were only four Muslim inspectors of police out of a total of 54, and only 60 Muslim sub-inspectors out of a total of 484.¹ All this could be redressed, in a small way, by the creation of a new province.

What alienated the Muslims from the agitation, however, was its Hindu religious overtones—the use of Hindu symbols, the vows at Kali temples, and singing of *Bande Matram* which became the anthem of the campaign.

Neo-Hinduism

Bande Mataram—‘Hail to thee Mother’—was written by Bankim Chandra Chatterji, undoubtedly ‘the creator of the new Hindu nationalism of Bengal.’ It is taken from his novel *Anand Math*, whose plot revolves round the revolt of the *sanyasis* (Hindu ascetics) in 1760s and 70s, which is depicted as a national rising. The *sanyasis* are worshippers of the Hindu goddess Kali, who symbolizes the Motherland. Their sole aim is the destruction of every trace of Muslim rule. They attack Muslim rulers and go about massacring Muslim communities, plundering and burning Muslim villages. The story ends with a supernatural figure telling the *sanyasi* leader that he has already completed his task by defeating the Muslims. ‘The Muslim power is destroyed. There is nothing else for you to do. We must make the English rule...The rebellion took place to make the English ascend the throne...There are no foes now. The English are friends as well as rulers.’

This was the base on which Chatterji built his nationalism. In an article published in 1872 he explained his conception of nationalism as: ‘I am a Hindu...I must do what is good for all the Hindus, and abstain from doing what is bad for any Hindu...it is

¹These figures are from Hardy, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

the duty of the Hindus to take counsel together and agree upon a definite policy and chalk out a common line of action. This conception is the first half of nationalism.' But there were many other nations, and what was good for them was not necessarily good for the Hindus. 'In such cases we must so act as to deprive them of the good. If this involves oppression of other nations we shall not shrink from it. Similarly, something that is good to us might bring evil to them. Even so, we must not cease to work for the good of our nation; if that means causing evil to another nation, we shall do so. This is the second half of our nationalism.'¹

Bankim Chandra Chatterji wrote many other novels in which Muslims were disparaged. The plots of many of these were based on historic fights between Hindus and Muslims; Hindus were, of course, glorified, while Muslim characters were depicted as villainous, bloodthirsty and treacherous. All his writings contain 'a passionate outburst' against Muslim rule. But it was *Anand Math* which made a terrific impact on the minds of young Bengali Hindus and set a trend in Bengali literature. Many of those who followed him achieved fame and glory. Rangalal's *Ode to Liberty*, for instance, comes from the mouth of a Rajput fighting against Muslims. Even Rabindranath Tagore wrote songs glorifying those who fought Muslims—Shivaji, and Sikh heroes Guru Govind Singh and Banda.

In developing this Hindu national sentiment two organizations played an important part in Bengal. In 1866 Rajnarain Bose established a 'Society for the Promotion of National Feeling among the Educated Natives of Bengal'. Its object was to curb the tendency among the English-educated to imitate the West. It proposed to revive old values, manners and customs and to adopt and patronize everything Indian...Indian music, Hindu medicine, Bengali food and dress, Bengali poetry and literature, even Indian physical exercises.

Bose's idea was taken up even more enthusiastically by Nabagopal Mitra, who started a Hindu *mela* (festival) in 1867. The *mela* was organized 'to promote national feeling, a sense of patriotism and a spirit of self-help among the Hindus.' Patriotic and religious songs were sung at the *mela*, lectures delivered on

¹R. C. Majumdar, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, op. cit., Vol. I. p. 334.

Hindu superiority, political and social conditions of the Hindus discussed, and an exhibition given of physical exercises. After the fourth *mela* its organizers established 'The National Society' and started a school, a press, a newspaper and a gymnasium.

Mitra was a strong believer in the concept of Hindu nationalism. To him the chief criterion of nationalism was unity. What had promoted unity among the Greeks was the common love for their country. Among the Jews it was the Mosaic law, and among the Romans, love of liberty. In India the basis of national unity was the Hindu religion. 'Hindu nationality is not confined to Bengal,' he said. 'It embraces all of Hindu name and Hindu faith throughout the length and breadth of Hindustan; neither geographical position, nor the language is counted a disability.' 'The Hindus,' he declared, 'are destined to be a religious nation.'¹

A few years later, Rajnarain Bose himself proceeded to 'base his nationalism on Hindu religion', and saw 'in my mind the noble and puissant Hindu nation rousing herself after sleep, and rushing headlong towards progress with divine prowess.'²

All these protagonists of Hindu nationalism, however, freely used 'India' for 'Hinduism' and 'Indian' for 'Hindu', and *vice versa*, and refused to see if any contradiction was involved. When Mitra was asked why his society, which was confined to Hindus only, should call itself 'National', he answered through his newspaper, the *National Paper*: 'We do not understand why our correspondent takes exception to the Hindus, who certainly form a nation by themselves, and as such a Society established by them can very well be called "National Society".'³

Hindu nationalism was Indian nationalism. Or, in other words, Indian nationalism was Hindu nationalism.

'This was not an isolated expression of views, casually formed,' says the well-known Hindu historian, R. C. Majumdar, 'but rested on a deep-rooted conviction which, at first confined to a small section, was gradually imbibed, consciously or unconsciously, by a large majority of educated people.'⁴

¹B. Majumdar, *History of Political Thought*, University of Calcutta, Vol. I, p. 294.

²R. C. Majumdar, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Vol. I, op. cit., pp. 332-3.

³Ibid., p. 331.

⁴Ibid.

This was not confined to Bengal alone. In Maharashtra, Bal Gangadhar Tilak organized a Ganpati festival, like Mitra's Hindu *mela*. It started as a purely religious event, but with the singing of patriotic songs and lectures on subjects of national interests it soon assumed a political character. Tilak also organized a festival in honour of Shivaji, the Marhatta chief who had defied the Mughals. Praise was heaped on Shivaji for having fought for the Hindu religion and the motherland, and a robber chief was placed on the high pedestal of a national hero. The Shivaji cult was zealously promoted and it quickly spread outside Maharashtra, particularly in Bengal and the Punjab.

Hindu nationalism found strong support from the Hindu revivalist movements of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. These movements differed from earlier movements both in approach and in tone. They were assertive, not apologetic. They rejected western ways, and proclaimed the superiority of Hinduism in every respect. Ramakrishna and Vivekananda offered Hinduism as a universal faith, which alone could save humanity. Dayanand Saraswati preached for a return to the Vedas. He abandoned the defensive posture of his predecessors, and instead of attempting to explain the seamy side of Hinduism, violently assailed Christianity and Islam. Hindu society needed reforms, no doubt, but, he maintained, it was because many practices had been adopted which had no sanction in the Vedas. The caste system as practiced, the superiority of the Brahmans, the child-marriages, the subjugation of women, and other such features, had no religious justification. He discarded the Purans, and gave the Vedas the same place that Christians give to the Bible or the Muslims to the Koran.

Its 'chief inspiration comes from its intense patriotism,' B. C. Pal, the eminent Congressman and a leading member of Tilak's extremist wing, says of Dayanand's Arya Samaj. 'This patriotism has always carried with it a spirit of intolerance of, if not virulent antagonism to, other religious systems particularly the Moslems.' 'The young Arya Samajists,' says Pal, 'openly declared that they were waiting for the day when they would settle their accounts both with Moslems and Britishers.'¹

¹B. C. Pal, *Memories of My Life and Times*, Bipin Chandra Pal Institute, Calcutta, 1972, pp. 465-6.

One of the methods employed by the Arya Samaj was something unknown to Hinduism, i.e., '*shuddhi*' or conversion to Hinduism. Hinduism is not a proselytizing religion: everyone is born in it with a caste. But the Arya Samaj decided to do it nonetheless. 'The strong urge of Dayanand to establish Hindu nationalism on a foundation of religious and social unity found a concrete expression in the *shuddhi* movement.'¹ 'There is no doubt,' says the Hindu historian Dr Majumdar, 'that the Arya Samaj aimed at the creation of an Indian nation by establishing a common religion and culture all over India.'²

The programme of the Arya Samaj was bound to create tension between the Hindus and the Muslims. The Hindus were already unhappy that the Muslims were increasingly taking to English education and making inroads into what had so far been their close preserve, the government jobs. The aggressive activities of the Arya Samaj accentuated Hindu-Muslim differences immensely. The Samaj began by focusing attention on three matters, viz. (i) Urdu-Hindi controversy, (ii) assertion of religious privileges on certain festivals, and (iii) cow protection. The Hindus had already scored great victories for Hindi by driving Urdu out of Bengal, Bihar and CP; and in 1900 succeeded in bringing it at par with Urdu in UP also. Now they asserted the right to take out noisy processions and to ring temple bells just at the time of Muslim prayers. They also started a movement to stop the Muslims from slaughtering cows. Dayanand founded his Gaurakhshini Sabha, the cow protection league, in 1882. The strong-arm methods adopted by his followers resulted in Hindu-Muslim riots in Delhi, Lahore, Ambala, and Ferozepur the very next year. This was repeated in other cities in 1886, and in subsequent years.

The Hindus had started their campaign to settle accounts with the Muslims.

The British were still too powerful, but the Hindus were nevertheless, spoiling for a trial of strength with them too. The occasion was provided by the partition of Bengal.

The agitation against the partition of Bengal was a purely Hindu movement. Its object was to preserve Hindu supremacy. It was the first clash between the British rulers and their Hindu

¹R. C. Majumdar, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Vol. II, op. cit., p. 297.

²*Ibid.*, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 336.

subjects, a notice by the Hindus that they were not satisfied with the share assigned to them in the Anglo-Hindu Combine.

The forces of Hindu nationalism had been gathering strength for some four decades. After the suppression of the Great Revolt, which resulted in the exile of Bahadur Shah and the formal extinction of the Mughal Empire, they had started dreaming of Hindu Raj. Their resurgence was based on past glories. This was natural, but it was too exclusive, and made no allowance for the pluralist nature of Indian society. It rested entirely on Hindu religion, Hindu culture, Hindu traditions and Hindu symbolism. There was no place for Muslims in it—except as *malechas*, the untouchables.

Hindu nationalism was not a purely positive concept. It had a strong negative and anti-Muslim content without which it was not complete. We see it in Binkim Chandra Chatterji's writings. Later prophets of this nationalism adopted as national heroes those figures who had fought against the Muslims and were in the Muslim eyes villains and malefactors. Thus Shivaji's treacherous murder of the opposing general, Afzal Khan, during a period of truce was declared a sacred act, and Shivaji elevated to a hero because he had fought the Muslims. And it was not the Mughal Emperor Akbar, generally considered the first apostle of a common Indian nationality, who was made a hero, but the Rajput prince who fought him, Rana Partap. Dr Majumdar speaks enthusiastically of Rabindranath Tagore, who during the agitation 'sang the glories of ancient India and its culture and brought vividly before us the portraits of Shivaji and Guru Govinda' as *nation-builders*, and of Banda² as a symbols of stoic heroism and spirit of sacrifice displayed by the Sikhs. Many of his ballads touch upon the patriotism, chivalry and heroism of Rajputs and the struggle of Marhattas and Sikhs for *freedom*.³

Yet the agitation, which was in essence as much anti-Muslim as anti-British in character, was called a national movement, not a Hindu national movement but an Indian national movement.

¹Govind Singh, the tenth and last guru, 'the real founder of Sikh military power which he organized to oppose the Muslims,' *Oxford History of India*, pp. 431-2.

²Banda, 'an impostor-Govind' after the tenth guru, whose ghastly crimes include massacre of Muslim men, women and children, defiling of mosques, looting, pillage and burning of towns.

³R. C. Majumdar, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Vol. II, op. cit., p. 142. (Emphasis added.)

This was in line with Nabagopal Mitra's calling his exclusively Hindu Society 'The National Society' thirty-five years earlier.

With all this pretence, however, an occasional slip gave away true Hindu sentiments. Speaking in the Bengal Legislative Council on 8 July 1905, one Hindu leader called partition 'a calamity unparalleled in the days of the Mughal or the Pathans.'¹ The abuse for Muslim rulers was similarly implied when the British administration was frequently compared to the *Nawabi* period, or when the Governor of the new province was condemned as 'Muhammad Tughlak of East Bengal' or 'Shaista Khan II'² But the truth escaped the lips of Maharaja Mohindra Chandra Nandi of Cassimbazar when he declared that, 'In the new Province the Mahomedan population would preponderate... We shall be strangers in our own land. I dread the prospect and the outlook fills me with anxiety as to the future of our race.'³

Muslim Entry in Politics

Such sentiments swayed Muslims totally in favour of partition. The Muslim masses were also alienated by the attempts of the agitators to force the Muslims to join them, e.g., in coercing them to close shops when Hindu bodies called for a day of strike.

The Hindu agitation showed no sign of abatement; in fact it intensified. 16 October 1905, the day the new province officially came into existence, was observed as a day of mourning with renewed pledges to fight partition. Muslim leaders felt the dire need for a counter-agitation lest the British should weaken in the resolve for partition, but they were seriously handicapped because they had no political organization of their own. The Congress, which had so far been no more than an annual socio-political gathering of successful lawyers and arm-chair politicians, had come in handy for the Hindus. If there had been a similar Muslim organization, it would have been as useful on such an important occasion.

Despite the intense political activities of the Hindus in the last two decades of the last century, the Muslim had religiously avoided

¹R. C. Majumdar, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 9.

²Wasti, op. cit., footnote No. I, p. 35.

³On 7 August 1905, *All About Partition*, op. cit., p. 88.

politics. In 1900, however, when Anthony McDonnell introduced Hindi in the UP, Mohsinul Mulk (1837-1907), Syed Ahmed Khan's successor at Aligarh, had called a representative meeting, formed an Urdu Defence Association, and started an agitation in favour of Urdu. But McDonnell had bullied Mohsinul Mulk into severing all connections with the agitation on pain of being removed from the office of the Secretary of Aligarh College. Viqarul Mulk (1841-1917) then called a meeting at Lucknow, where it was decided to form the Muhammadan Political Association. However, the Muslims had not yet shaken off the policy of Syed Ahmed Khan: they were still hesitant to enter the political field and nothing came of the decision.

But time did not wait for them. In 1905 the Japanese naval victory over the Russian Fleet sent a thrill all over Asia. 'Europe is not invincible'—that was the general Asian reaction. If Russia could be defeated today, Britain could be defeated tomorrow. It raised the morale of the Bengali agitators, who intensified their activities and, *inter alia*, adopted terrorist methods.

In England itself the Conservatives were beaten in a general election and the Liberal Party was swept into power. The Liberals were thought to be what their name implied, and quite unlike the trounced Tories who were considered hard-boiled imperialists. Lord Morley, who became the Secretary of State in the new administration, was believed to be sympathetic to Indian aspirations, and he lived up to his reputation when he told Parliament that the Government was considering extending the representative element in the Indian Legislative Councils.

Morley's announcement caused great excitement in India. Since the Great Revolt some calculated steps had slowly been taken to give the Indians representation in the Councils of the Governors and the Governor-General, and in local (municipal) bodies. But the Muslim position in this sphere also showed lamentable weakness. Between 1893 and 1906 they hardly ever found more than one or two places in the total non-official membership of ten or eleven. In the provinces not one Muslim had been elected to the Legislative Councils of Madras and the United Province...the heart of Muslim culture.¹ And in Bengal, with its large Muslim population, the Hindus enjoyed twice, thrice or even eight times the Muslim representation.

¹Francis Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

The same was true of Municipal and District Boards. In the district of Muzaffarnagar (UP), for example, which had a Muslim population of 41%, just one Muslim had been returned against twelve Hindus.¹ In the extreme west, the district of Shikarpur in Sindh, with an overwhelmingly Muslim population, had only two Muslims against fifteen Hindus.²

This was a foretaste³ of the elected institutions. Syed Ahmed Khan had opposed the election principle because he had foreseen what it implied. He had asked instead for nomination by the British, because that would have safeguarded Muslim interests. But now the same British were introducing drastic and far-reaching constitutional reforms based on the electoral principle, and if the Muslims did not wake up and do something immediately, they would suffer beyond measure.

Hurried consultations took place between Muslim leaders. While they were still discussing the matter Sir Bampfylde Fuller, Lieutenant-Governor of East Bengal, resigned. The Bengali Hindus had been asking for Fuller's head ever since he had become the Governor. He symbolized partition, had tried to suppress the agitation with a firm hand, and had showed some sympathy with Muslim aspirations, and these three things had made him hateful to the Hindus. His resignation had come in protest over a minor point, about disciplinary action against some students who had taken part in the agitation, but the Viceroy Lord Minto had eagerly accepted it.

Fuller's resignation was received by the Hindus with joy, but the Muslims were deeply disappointed. It was an act of surrender on the part of the powerful British, and showed what popular agitation could achieve. It gave a fillip to the move for the formation of a Muslim political party, but the question of constitutional reforms had to be tackled first. It could not be postponed for lack of an organization.

¹Ibid., p. 122.

²*Al-Haq*, Sukkur, 17 March 1906.

³After independence, the position in Bharat, according to a Hindu writer, Kalyan Sharma, in the *Saudi Gazette*, Jeddah of 4 November 1989, was: 'Going by plain statistics, percentage-wise Muslims should have over 60 seats in the 545-seat Lok Sabha. But the highest level they have reached was 48 seats in the 1980 Lok Sabha (8.8 per cent). Muslim representation in the Lok Sabha has been 36 seats in 1952, 24 in 1967, 32 in 1962, 29 in 1967, 27 in 1972, 32 in 1977, 48 in 1980 and 45 in 1984.'

Consequently, Mohsinul Mulk organized a deputation of thirty-five 'nabobs, *jagirdars*, *talukdars*, lawyers, *zamindars*, merchants and others representing a large body of Mohammedan subjects of His Majesty', under the leadership of the Aga Khan III (1877-1957), to call on the Viceroy, Lord Minto. On 1 October 1906 at Simla, the deputation petitioned, *inter alia*, that 'due representation of the Mohammedan interests' being of vital importance, Muslim voters should be 'invested with electoral powers' 'for the purpose of choosing Mohammedan members.'

Neither Morley nor Minto were totally enamoured of the idea, but in view of the Muslim meetings held all over India in support of the demand, they considered it unwise to estrange the Muslims at the same time that the Hindu agitation was at its peak. So the Muslim demands were largely, though not entirely, accepted. This was the beginning of separate electorates...maintenance of a separate electoral register of Muslims, for election of Muslims, to a fixed number of seats reserved for Muslims in elected bodies.

If the partition agitation had underlined the need for a Muslim political party, and the Fuller resignation had further emphasized it, the success at Simla encouraged it even more. It had now become a matter of compulsion, not of choice. By force of events the Muslims were made to reverse their policy and enter active politics.

The Muslim leaders during their sojourn at Simla had reached a consensus about forming a party to watch and safeguard Muslim interests. Before three months were out most of them, and many others, met at Dhaka, where they had come to attend the Muslim Educational Conference, and formally decided to establish the All India Muslim League. Its aims and objects were:

(i) To promote among the Musalmans of India, feelings of loyalty to the British Government and to remove any misconception that may arise as to the intention of the Government with regard to any of the measures;

(ii) To protect and advance the political rights and interests of the Musalmans of India and to respectfully represent their needs and aspirations to the Government;

(iii) To prevent the rise among the Musalmans of India, of any feeling of hostility towards other communities, without prejudice to the other aforementioned objects of the League.

CHAPTER 4

THE NEW SPIRIT

The first session of the All India Muslim League, like its last annual session in 1943, was held in Pakistan's former capital Karachi, in December 1907. Apart from the speech of welcome and the address of the President, Sir Adamjee Peerbhoy, the session was devoted solely to the discussion of the draft constitution framed by the committee that had been set up at Dhaka, and the unfinished business was concluded two months later at Aligarh. The constitution, as adopted, restricted the membership to a maximum of 400 adult, literate Muslims with an annual income of no less than Rs. 500. There was to be a Central Committee (Council) of forty, a secretary, six Vice-Presidents and a President, although there was to be a separate President to take the chair at each annual session. The officials were elected at Aligarh, including the Aga Khan III as Permanent President.

The Muslims were in the business of politics.

The community had made its journey to Karachi hesitantly and haltingly. In the wake of Badruddin Tyabji's selection as president of the third Congress, and the desperate efforts of Tyabji and Hume to enlist Muslim support, Syed Ahmed Khan had formed a 'Patriotic Association' in 1888 to contest the Congress claim of representing Indian sentiments. This was followed, in 1894, by the founding of a purely Muslim association by the name of 'Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental Defence Association.' But his heart was not in these activities. He did not take up either project with his usual enthusiasm. Perhaps fearing that despite the defensive nature of these organizations they might lead the Muslims to the minefield of agitational politics, he allowed both of his creations to die out. Viqarul Mulk's Mohammedan Political Association had similarly been still-born.

The successors of Syed Ahmed Khan were reluctant to change his policies, even when the situation had changed.

It was almost against their will that the Muslim leaders had established the Muslim League. But when they did, they did it entirely on their own, without any outside help. The Muslim League had no retired British civil servant to organize it nor a British Viceroy to bless it. It was a purely Muslim effort, of the Muslims, by the Muslims and for the Muslims.

The leaders had been pushed into it not only by the fast-moving events of 1905 and 1906, but by the younger generation of English-educated Muslims. Thanks to Syed Ahmed Khan's crusade for modern education, Muslim youths were coming out of colleges and universities in increasing numbers and proving their mettle. In 1899, a year after the Syed's death, a Muslim, Ghazanfar Ali Khan, had topped the list of candidates in the final examination for the I.C.S. Some years earlier a similar distinction had been achieved by another Muslim, Tayabji. Aligarh itself was now three decades old, and had been sending out large batches of University graduates every year.

The product of Aligarh was a new kind of Muslim youth—proud of his traditions and culture, well-versed in modern philosophy and science, as much at home with Hafiz and Ghalib as with Shakespeare and Milton, as well as with John Stuart Mill, self-confident, fired by a national spirit and conscious of his destiny. The students at Aligarh came from far and wide, but by studying and playing in groups, arguing and debating with each other, and eating and living together, they developed a strong bond of mutual sympathy and a common outlook. The college laid greater stress on sports, debating skill, development of personality and individual initiative than on academic achievements, and four years of corporate life did wonders to them. In every room of its overcrowded hostels, the inmates belonged, as a matter of policy, to different provinces. They came to the college as Bengalis and Bhopalis, Biharis and Punjabis, Pathans and Gujratis, and went out simply as Aligarians and Muslims.

They went out with a strong 'old school tie', a powerful Islamic consciousness, and a sense of mission. They spread to the four corners of the subcontinent and carried the torch. No educational institution ever played such a decisive role in the fortunes of any nation as Aligarh did in the case of Indian Muslims.

'Aligarh,' says the Hindu historian Pannikar, was 'the central factor of Islamic renaissance in India.' It gave the Muslims 'a central institution which provided them with a common intellectual background, and fostered a common ideology' as well as 'an intellectual general staff for the work of Islamic integration.'¹ 'The independent sovereign nation of Pakistan was born in the Muslim University of Aligarh,' says the Aga Khan.²

These English-educated Muslim young men were stirred by the example of their 'docile' compatriots challenging and defying the Government and carrying out a relentless campaign against what they considered a wrong. They themselves were getting tired of the declarations of loyalty to the British by their leaders. They wanted action, but did not know for what immediate cause. Mohsinul Mulk, in a letter to the Principal of the College, W. A. J. Archbold wrote on 4 August 1906 that, '...there is still a general complaint on their part that we (Aligarh people) take no part in politics and do not safeguard the political rights of the Mohammedans; they say that we do not suggest any plans for preserving their rights, and practically do nothing and care nothing for the Mohammedans beyond asking for funds to help the College.'³ The letter, written after Morley's speech about the prospects of constitutional reforms and asking Archbold to arrange an appointment with the Viceroy for receiving a deputation, shows how perturbed the old leaders were about the growing generation gap, and that the idea of sending a deputation came because of the unrest in the younger crowd.

On 18 August Mohsinul Mulk wrote: 'I find that Mohammedan feeling is very much changed, and I am constantly getting letters using emphatic language and saying that the Hindus have succeeded owing to their agitation and the Mohammedans have suffered for their silence. The Mohammedans have generally begun to think of organizing a political association and forming themselves into political agitators...people generally say that the policy of Sir Syed and mine has done no good to Mohammedans.'⁴

¹Pannikar, op. cit., p. 283.

²The Aga Khan, *World Enough and Time*, Cassel, London, 1954, p. 36.

³Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada (Ed.), *Foundations of Pakistan*, National Publishing House, Karachi, 1969, Vol. I, p. xxxiv.

⁴*Ibid.*, pp. xxxvi-xxxvii.

Thus Mohsinul Mulk had to revise this policy, and he and Viqarul Mulk became the Joint Secretaries of the Muslim League when it was founded in Dhaka a year later.

The founding of the Muslim League was received with distaste by both the British and the Hindus. The Hindu Press generally said that if the League was to exist it had to fall in line with the Congress. The British Press generally ignored it, but the newspapers which did comment thought, like *The Times*, that it would make for trouble. The Muslims, however, once the Karachi session had been held, welcomed it. The Muslim intelligentsia were thrilled at the prospect of an active political life, and from the first day the League enjoyed the support of every prominent English-educated Muslim leader in India—except one.

'Who then was our doughtiest opponent in 1906?' asks the Aga Khan III in his memoirs, and then answers: 'A distinguished Muslim Barrister in Bombay, with a large and prosperous practice, Mr Muhammad Ali Jinnah...We had always been on friendly terms, but at this juncture he came out in bitter hostility towards all that I and my friends had done and were trying to do. He was the only well-known Muslim to take up this attitude, but his opposition had nothing mealy-mouthed about it; he said that our principle of separate electorate was dividing the nation against itself, and for nearly a quarter of a century he remained our most inflexible critic and opponent.'¹

Jinnah had neither been a member of the Simla deputation nor had he joined the Muslim League. He considered communalism, whether Hindu or Muslim, an unpleasant and unfortunate aspect of Indian society which deserved to be discouraged in the political field. He was totally devoted to the ideals of the Congress, an ardent supporter of the moderate Naoroji-Mehta-Gokhale wing.

Though a constitutionalist, he detested the method of petitions and prayers; though a Muslim, he was opposed to separate electorates, which he considered a blow against common Indian nationalism. In Calcutta, when the Congress, under his mentor Naoroji, was discussing a resolution on *swaraj*, Jinnah had moved an amendment to the official resolution. The original version had provided for reservation of seats in the legislatures and

¹The Aga Khan, op. cit., p. 94.

administrative service for 'educationally backward classes', but Jinnah moved for deletion of that clause. In his speech, Jinnah had pleaded that, '...the Muhammedan community should be treated in the same way as the Hindu community.' 'The foundation upon which the Indian National Congress is based,' he had said 'is that there should be no reservation for any class or community.'¹

In opposing separate electorates, Jinnah was a greater nationalist than Gokhale. Gokhale had not only accepted separate electorates, there is reason to believe that he had recommended them to Morley. He had publicly said: 'Confronted by an overwhelming Hindu majority the Muslims are naturally afraid that release from the British yoke might in their case mean enslavement to the Hindus. This is not a fear to be ridiculed. Were the Hindus similarly situated in regard to numbers and other things, would they not have entertained similar misgivings? We would undoubtedly have felt the same fears and adopted the identical policy which the Muslims are adopting today.'² Similarly some other Hindu leaders like C. Y. Chintamani, one-time Minister in UP, and Satyendra Sinha, president of the 1915 Congress, had declared themselves to be 'strongly in favour' of separate electorates. But perhaps Jinnah felt that, belonging to the Muslim community as he did, he had a greater responsibility to oppose this system than Hindu leaders.

Jinnah's opposition left the Muslims cold. The League continued to grow, as did the general Muslim discontent. This was a period which was preceded by Jamaluddin Afghani's movement of Pan-Islamism, and Sultan Abdul Hamid of Turkey's encouragement of Pan-Islamic sentiment. The Indian Muslims, having lost their empire finally, had started taking more and more interest in the affairs of the Turks, with whom they felt close affinity and whose Sultan called himself the Caliph of all Muslims. His name was mentioned in the *khutba*;³ and when in 1897 Greece made an attempt to annex Crete and was defeated, the Indian Muslims had illuminated their homes and enthusiastically celebrated the Turkish victory.

¹Annual Congress report, 1905, pp. 76-7, Zakaria, op. cit., p. 103.

²Jamiluddin Ahmad, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 496.

³*Khutba*, sermon at Friday prayers. Mention of the name of a Caliph in *khutba* was a recognition of his rightful position.

Gladstone's outbursts against the Turks had been highly resented by Indian Muslims. The English-educated among them had read the works of such writers as Muir, Sprenger, Wellhausen and the like, and realized the depth of Western animus against Islam. The misleading portrait of the Prophet and his teachings as painted by these 'Orientalists' and their highly prejudiced view had shocked and pained them. This disenchantment with European scholarship and European values had an inevitable effect on their perception of the British. It also increased their fondness for the Turks, who were heroically meeting the onslaught of Europe: it became in their eyes a crusade in which the Crescent was pitted against the Cross. The Ottoman Empire, for all its corruption, repression and decadence, began to appear as the citadel of Islam. To the Indian Muslims it was the Turkish Sultan, and not the British Sovereign, who assumed the position of the 'Defender of the Faith'.

The interest aroused in the fate of the Turks continued until the Caliphate itself was abolished in 1924. But until then the Turk, in the eyes of the Indian Muslims, was the epitome of bravery, chivalry and nobility. The Muslim Press, led by Abul Kalam Azad's *Al-Hilal* and *Al Balagh*, Zafar Ali Khan's *Zamindar* and Mohammad Ali's *Comrade*, published articles on Turkish life and leaders, all laudatory and veritable panegyrics. The 'Young Turks' revolution of 1908 was as much welcomed in Muslim India as in the Ottoman Empire, and its leaders, long after they had disappointed Arabs and even many Turks, remained their heroes. Enver Pasha, in particular, stirred the fancy of the Indian Muslims and his photos could be seen in Muslim shops and houses until 1939-40, when they found a hero of their own.

The years between 1908 and 1913 were an agonizing period for the Muslim world. The Anglo-Russian convention of 1908 divided Iran into two spheres of influence; and in 1912 the Russians bombarded the holy city of Meshed. In 1911 France declared Morocco as its protectorate; and Italy annexed Tripoli. The Turks had, since the 'Young Turks' revolution, been faced with an intensely hostile Europe which was not prepared to give them a chance to set their house in order, and to reform and reconstruct. Within weeks of the revolution, Austria had incorporated Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Bulgaria had proclaimed complete independence. Before long, Greece

annexed Crete, and Italy's invasion of Tripoli was followed by the Balkan Wars.

These events perturbed the Indian Muslims deeply. The sympathy for Turkey, which was now left as practically the only independent Muslim State, was great and widespread. The students at Aligarh gave up a meal every day, contributing the money thus saved to a Turkish Relief Fund. A medical mission was sent to Turkey under the leadership of Dr M. A. Ansari, and six students from Aligarh went with this mission as voluntary workers.

In their anguish the Muslims noticed, with increasing disappointment, the role played by Great Britain in international affairs and how it had changed since the Crimean War and the Congress of Berlin. Did its acts of omission and commission not show a definite anti-Muslim bias? Had it not been in sympathy with Turkey's enemies and had it not let the Treaty of Berlin be scrapped to Turkey's disadvantage? Was it not an accomplice of Russia in Persia? Was France, seizing Morocco, not a British ally? Had Britain not acted illegally and immorally, and helped Italian aggression, by not permitting Turkish troops passage across Egypt, which was still formally a part of the Ottoman Empire? And had Britain not recognized the occupation with indecent haste, and had not its Prime Minister, Asquith, in his Guildhall speech, referred to Salonica as the gateway through which Christianity had spread in Europe and expressed pleasure that it was again in Christian hands?

While the Indian Muslims were so disturbed about the misfortunes of their brethren abroad, they themselves received a bolt from the blue. In 1911, at a *darbar* in Delhi, King George V announced that the partition of Bengal was annulled and the eastern and western portions would be reunited (Assam was to be a separate province, and Bihar-Orissa another province). The Muslims were bewildered. They had not asked for partition, but once it had been made, they had welcomed it. They had secured a second Muslim-majority province in India, apart from the Punjab, and a chance for the downtrodden Bengali Muslims to rise. In the short period of five years of the existence of Eastern Bengal, the number of Muslim pupils in different schools, thanks to government grants, had increased from 425,840 in 1906-7 to

575,667 in 1911-12.¹ A number of development projects had been started which brought the Muslims new opportunities for progress. But all this was suddenly changed.

There was disappointment, anger and bitterness. This 'Government policy', said Viqarul Mulk, who was then Secretary of the Aligarh College in succession to Mohsinul Mulk, 'was like an artillery which passed over the bodies of the Muslims, regardless of whether any life was left in them and whether they would feel any agony... To say nothing of Morocco or Iran, Islam is being annihilated right here.'² All the talk by Curzon and other high British officials that partition had been effected for the benefit of the Muslims was rubbish. They had just used the Muslims as a pawn in the game; and when they decided to scrap it, they showed no consideration whatever to the Muslims, and did not even consult them.

The highest officials of the Government, including the Viceroy and the Secretary of State for India, had repeated time and again that partition was a 'settled fact' and there was no question of annulling it, but the King's announcement proved that the Government pledges were worthless. It also showed the power of agitation. The Government had bowed to the agitators, throwing to the wolves those who had trusted it and sided with it. 'A ready concession to the clamour of an utterly seditious agitation,' and 'a premium on sedition and disloyalty,' said Nawab Salimullah of Dhaka.

The policy of unquestioned loyalty was shaken to its very roots. Initiated by Syed Ahmed Khan fifty years earlier, it had become excessively servile under his successors. Its success, however, had depended on the appreciation of and encouragement by the Government. But the Government *volte-face* meant a new era of 'no bombs, no boons,' as Nawab Salimullah put it. As late as in 1906, Viqarul Mulk was saying: 'If, God forbid, at any remote period the British Government ceases to exist in India, then the conduct of the government of the country would pass to the community which is four times as large as ourselves... Then our life, our property, and our faith will all be in great danger... There

¹Jamiluddin Ahmad, *Early Phase of Muslim Political Movement*, Publishers United, Lahore, 1967, p. 106.

²Ikramullah Nadvi, *Hayat-i-Viqar*, Academy of Education Research, Karachi, 1984, p. 699.

is no way to escape this other than the Muslims rallying under the British flag and committing their lives and property to protect it.¹ But within eight days of the abrogation of partition he publicly felt: 'It is now as clear as the midday sun that, after these happenings, the Muslims can no longer be advised to depend on the Government. The time for such reliance has gone...After our faith in God, the next best thing is to depend on our own strength; and we have the example of our compatriots before us.'²

The Government, meanwhile, was also making itself unpopular with the Muslims because of its attitude towards the proposal for converting Aligarh into a full-fledged university. This was the aim of its founders from the very beginning. After Syed Ahmed Khan's death, the All India Muslim Educational Conference, at its first meeting, formally adopted a proposal to that effect and repeated it at every subsequent session. The move was given a push after the death of Mohsinul Mulk, and a campaign was started in right earnest after the Aga Khan took it up in 1910. A drive was started to collect two million rupees. Soon some three million had been collected, and the Government's requirement about financial resources had been met. But the Government then suggested certain changes in the proposed charter of the University. It objected to the name 'Muslim University', suggesting instead 'Aligarh University', and restricted its jurisdiction to the district of Aligarh only, with no powers to affiliate with any outside institution. The first was only a matter of sentiment, but the second cut across the fundamental idea of a Muslim university. What the Muslims aimed at was the establishment of a well-integrated educational system, with schools and colleges in every district of India, controlled and guided by the central body at Aligarh. It was for this purpose that the entire campaign had been launched. But the British vetoed the scheme when everything had been done to implement it.

In this atmosphere occurred an event that, though minor in itself, assumed a major all-India character and brought the masses in conflict with the Government. In Kanpur, a part of a mosque was demolished so as to allow a road to be constructed and

¹Nadvi, *op. cit.*, p. 675.

²*Ibid.*, *op. cit.*, p. 693.

widened. The local Muslims tried to stop it. This led to firing by the police with some loss of life, and inflamed Muslim feelings throughout India. The Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, however, saved the situation by visiting Kanpur personally and finding a formula satisfactory to both sides.

The Kanpur incident caused the Muslim League to send a two-man deputation to England to enlighten the British Government on the general state of Muslim feelings in India, and how British policies were responsible for it. The deputation consisted of the Secretary of the League, Wazir Hasan and the editor of *Comrade*, Mohammad Ali (1878-1931), but neither the Secretary of State, Lord Crewe, nor any other minister of the government, agreed to meet them. The delegation thus achieved nothing—except to enroll a new member of the Muslim League, M. A. Jinnah.

Jinnah had so far kept away from the Muslim League. He was a nationalist, and his place was in the National Congress. Gokhale had found in him the 'true stuff' and 'that freedom from all sectarian prejudice which will make him the best ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity.' He had continued to oppose separatism—communal politics, reservation of seats in elected bodies on communal basis, and separate electorates. In the 1910 Congress he had even moved a resolution deprecating the proposal for extension of the principle of separate electorates to municipal and local bodies.¹ But characteristically, in fairness to all, he had made it clear in his speech that the resolution reflected his own views and not that of the community.

While his own views remained the same, there was a radical change in the outlook of the Muslims and the Muslim League. Their faith in 'loyalty' had been shaken and they were now seeking self-reliance. In this quest they were distressed to see the brilliant and dashing barrister from Bombay cut off politically from his own community. The League was still very weak. On a vital question such as the partition of Bengal, it had, in sharp contrast to Hindu defiance, done nothing on its annulment. The Aga Khan, its president, had advised against any agitation, and even the voice of protest had been faint. Nawab Salimullah, in his presidential address at the Calcutta session in March 1912,

¹Resolution No. XVI.

had devoted only three pages out of eighteen to this question, and the very mild resolution passed at the session did not go beyond saying that the League, '...places on record its deep sense of regret and disappointment at the annulment of the partition of Bengal in utter disregard of Muslim feeling, and trusts that Government will take early steps to safeguard Muslim interest in the Presidency of Bengal.'¹

Five years earlier, when it was proposed at Dhaka that a Muslim League be formed, Mazharul Haq (1866-1930) had warned that, '...the young men are thirsting for the fight,' and therefore thought it, 'most necessary that the leaders should be old and experienced veterans who could properly regulate the exuberant energies of youth.'² The young men now asserted themselves and, in April, the League Secretary, Wazir Hasan, proposed a change in the Constitution. After discussions between members and consultations with the provincial branches, a meeting of the Council was held in Bankipur on the last day of 1912 which modified the aims and objects of the League. The first two objects, i.e. loyalty to the British and protection of Muslim rights, remained, but loyalty to the British Government was replaced by 'loyalty to the British Crown', and the clause about removing 'any misconception that may arise as to the intentions of the Government' was dropped altogether. The protection of Muslim rights, of course, remained an objective, but the clause providing for 'respectful representation' was similarly deleted. The third objective, of 'preventing' feelings of hostility towards non-Muslims, was made into a positive aim, i.e. 'to promote friendship and union between Musalmans and other communities of India.'

But a fourth objective was also added—'the attainment, under the aegis of the British Crown, of a system of self-government suitable to India' through constitutional means.³ This was the big step forward, and reflected the increasing influence of the angry young men, much to the dismay of the old guard. No wonder the Aga Khan soon resigned his presidency.

¹Pirzada, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 250.

²*Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 2.

³The words 'under the aegis of the British Crown' were not a part of the resolution at Bankipur. They were added later at the sixth session at Lucknow in March 1913.

Jinnah happened to be in Bankipur at that time for the twenty-seventh Congress. He was invited to attend. He could not but be pleased at the change in the League's outlook, and accepted the invitation. He even spoke at the meeting, though 'as a Congressman'. His speech was significant not only because he had attended and participated in a meeting of the Council of the Muslim League, but also because of what he said. Mazharul Haq had objected to the words 'self-government suitable to India'; he thought 'self-government' was sufficient and the use of 'suitable to India' was meaningless. Jinnah defended the phraseology and said that the system of self-government prevailing in other colonies, where conditions were different, was not possible in India. He praised the League for placing the right ideal before the community. In this respect, although he was a Congressman himself, he had to admit that the Congress was wrong and the League deserved to be congratulated for going ahead of even the Congress and fixing the right ideal. He thought that very soon the Congress itself would adopt the same form as suggested by the League.

Jinnah's speech is indicative of his approach to the communal problem. Even as an uncompromising opponent of communal politics, he did not deny the existence of the problem. Whether one liked it or not, it was very much there. It could not be solved by ignoring it. It had to be faced and resolved. The western model was irrelevant as the situation in India was different. Self-government? Yes, by all means. This was the goal and dream of a nationalist. But the cloth of freedom and democracy had to be cut according to the size and requirements peculiar to the Indian body politic. Therein lay the challenging job for a nationalist.

The new creed of the League was confirmed by the full session at Lucknow after two months. Here, too, Jinnah was present by invitation, and received the official congratulations of the League, through a resolution, for his skilful piloting of a bill on Muslim *awqaf* in the Imperial Legislative Assembly. There is no record of any speech made by him (he was, in any case, not a member yet), but a resolution passed at this session bears his stamp. The resolution stated the League's '...firm belief that the future development and progress of the people of India depend exclusively on the harmonious working and co-operation of the various communities', deprecated attempts to widen the gulf

between Hindus and Muslims, and hoped that leaders of both communities would periodically meet '...to restore the amicable relations prevailing between them in the past and find a *modus operandi* for joint and concerted action on questions of the public good.'¹

Whether this resolution was passed at the instance of Jinnah, or whether the Muslim Leaguers themselves thought that such action would please their guest, it certainly indicates the increasing rapport between Muslim India's only political organization and the only non-League Muslim leader of eminence. The Muslim League was happy that Jinnah had begun to take an interest in its affairs, and Jinnah was happy that the League was gradually moving towards the nationalist mainstream.

The League's session at Lucknow concluded on 23 March 1913, and in April Jinnah went to Europe for a holiday. He was still in London when Mohammad Ali and Wazir Hasan asked him to join the League. The fact that Lord Crewe had arrogantly refused to see them must have won Jinnah's sympathy for them,² but what clinched the issue was their argument that the League having changed its creed at his bidding, had come close to, even, as he himself had admitted, ahead of, the Congress goal. Why should he then refuse to join it? He might still have some differences, but the League was after all a democratic body reflecting the view of its members in general, and not any one individual. Mohammad Ali might have waxed eloquent on the League's failings, yet he continued to be a member and hoped one day to convert other members to his point of view. Jinnah could do the same, couldn't he?

He could indeed. He could also use his influence in the Congress, and thus start a two-way movement for unity and joint action. No other nationalist leader could do it. Only he and he alone.

Jinnah was persuaded to sign the membership form, but in his characteristically honest fashion he simultaneously declared that, '...the loyalty to the Muslim League and Muslim interests would

¹Pirzada, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 281.

²The first time Jinnah participated in any League meeting as a Muslim Leaguer was the one arranged in Bombay to welcome Mohammad Ali and Wazir Hassan on their return from Europe and to protest at British behaviour towards them.

in no way and at no time imply even the shadow of disloyalty to larger national cause'. Here was an Indian nationalist with a difference, quite unlike Binkim Chandan Chatterji, Tilak, Aurobindo Ghosh and others.

And the pledge he then gave he kept all his life, even when he had been hounded out of the Congress and in later years when he had become its *bête noire*.

In December the Congress met at Karachi and, in a resolution which Jinnah seconded, welcomed the League's adoption of self-government as its ideal and reciprocated its hope of finding a *modus operandi* for joint action. This was not the only departure from the usual Congress policy, for that year the Congress also refrained from passing the usual resolution condemning separate electorates, something that had now become a habit with it. Obviously Jinnah's influence was working and gestures were being made and reciprocated by both sides.

From Karachi Jinnah proceeded to Agra, where the League was holding its seventh session. Now a member of the League, Jinnah opposed a resolution that re-affirmed the principle of communal representation. He asked the League to consider the issue dispassionately and pleaded with it to at least postpone the decision for one year. He had begged the Indian National Congress to drop the question, which it had; and it should not be too much to ask the Muslims to postpone the question for one year as well. There were many reasons for his plea, but he could not give them in public.

Jinnah was in all probability referring to the long talks he had had with Gokhale. The two leaders had travelled by the same boat to England, and had endless discussions not only during the long voyage, but also during their stay in London. They had also had many talks with Members of Parliament, including Sir William Wedderburn, who as Congress President had called a unity conference in Allahabad in 1910. Jinnah could not reveal what they had discussed and agreed to, but he wanted the Muslims to be patient. But his plea was not accepted and the League passed the resolution by a majority of eighty-nine against forty, impressing Jinnah, no doubt, with the depth of its feeling on the issue.

A few months later Jinnah sailed for England as a member of a Congress delegation whose other members were President

Bhupendranath Basu and Lala Lajput Rai. Gokhale was in England too. But the talks with British officials and politicians were overshadowed by the problem of Irish Home Rule and the gathering war clouds. When Jinnah returned, the political situation was changing fast: the country was officially at war and Tilak had returned from his internment in Mandalay and soon Gokhale was to die, followed a few months later by Pherozeshah Mehta.

The deaths of these two stalwarts were a great blow to Jinnah in his endeavours for Hindu-Muslim unity; but he also realized that now, more than ever, it was his duty to complete their mission. He would be severely handicapped and miss the support of such towering personalities, but that called for still greater effort on his part.

Lucknow Pact

In that fateful year, the Congress was due to meet in Bombay and Jinnah had a brainwave: he invited the League to hold its session in Bombay at the same time. The League's gesture for finding a *modus operandi* had been reciprocated by the Congress, but nothing positive had been done thus far, apart from passing some resolutions. Jinnah now took a step towards translating those sentiments into action. This was a great opportunity for the Muslims, he said in a long letter to the *Times of India*, 'to formulate their demands along their Hindu brethren. Can there be better opportunity than this that the Indian National Congress and the All India Muslim League should meet in one place and confer together as to the future of India?'¹

The suggestion created quite a stir. The pro-British section of the League did not want to do anything that would be frowned upon by the Government. This section had already succeeded in preventing the League from holding its annual session in 1914 for fear that with Turkey's entry in the war, anti-British sentiments were likely to be expressed from the League's platform. It sensed even greater danger in Jinnah's move. This section was also joined by another set of people who sincerely felt that the step might be

¹Dr Mohammad Umar, *Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah—Rare Speeches 1910-18*, Al Mahfooz Research Academy, Karachi, 1973, p. 115.

the end of the League, which might then be absorbed by the Congress. The Government, on its part, was most unhappy. It had watched with concern the changing pattern of Muslim politics—the change of the League's creed, the resignation of the Aga Khan, the growing goodwill with the Congress—but a joint session, from their view point, was the worst of all, for it carried the possibilities of the formation of a joint Hindu-Muslim front against the Government.

Jinnah stood firm against all machinations. He issued a statement denying that, '...any Mohammedan leader thinks that the League should be merged into the Indian National Congress'. The object of a joint session was to have a 'conference in collaboration,' and he spelt out the following advantages:

1. It will show the power of organization, the solidarity of the Musalman opinion and their true worth. This will entitle them to claim the rights and privileges of a free people.
2. It will make our Hindu friends value us all the more and will make them feel more than ever that we are worthy of standing shoulder to shoulder with them for the cause of the Motherland.
3. It will prove to the British politicians and statesmen, to Parliament and the British nation generally, that we are not crying for the moon when we ask for self-government, but that we are determined and are in earnest about it and that we shall pursue our course steadfastly and unitedly till the goal is realized.
4. It will convince the Government here and in England and the British Empire at large that Mohammedans in India, notwithstanding their religious sentiments and feelings at this juncture of the greatest crisis that the Empire has to face, can show due control, restraint and moderation in their deliberations and can exercise judgment and pursue a course which is worthy of the highest statesmanship.

Jinnah ended the statement by urging 'all the Mohammedans to rally round the flag of the All India Muslim League and as true patriots, stand by its constitution and thus make the community feel proud of the only political organization it possesses at present.'¹

The session was duly held on 30 December 1915. On the first day, everything went off smoothly. But the next day, when Jinnah rose to move the main resolution, trouble started. There was an uproar from a part of the crowd, followed by some hooliganism, with police connivance. The disruptionists denounced the

¹Dr Mohammad Umar, *op. cit.*, pp. 116-17.

President, Mazharul Haq, as a *kafir*, and acting against Muslim interests. One of them, who was later rewarded with many British favours including a knighthood, alleged that they were 'merging the League into the Congress, and were dictated (to) by the Congress leaders.' The meeting had to be adjourned but the next day it adopted Jinnah's resolution appointing a committee 'to confer with political and other organizations or committees' and frame a scheme of reforms. In moving the resolution Jinnah said that, '...the Congress and the League were the two chief representative political organizations of India,' and after formulating their scheme they could go to the authorities and say, 'those were the reforms which they demanded in the name of United India.'¹

The Bombay session was a personal triumph for Jinnah. Nothing like it had ever happened before. For over half a century the Muslims, envious of the progress of the Hindus in the field of education and their monopoly of government jobs, as well as suspicious of their political intentions, had scrupulously avoided joining them in any political action; all their efforts being aimed at ingratiating themselves with the British and seeking their patronage. But now a man of thirty-nine, who had until two years ago shunned their company politically, persuaded them to change course.

With his rapport with the League, he had influenced both its objective and its approach. He had also influenced the Congress in showing friendliness to the League rather than insisting on a claim to represent all communities in India. He had no doubt not succeeded in making the Muslims give up separate electorates, but he had in the interest of larger issues persuaded the Congress to give up the posture of confrontation on this issue and to settle it by negotiations.

Jinnah had attended the 1913 session of the League, even though he was not a member, in the company of Mrs Sarojini Naidu and Bishan Narain Dhar, President of 1911 Congress; and here, at Bombay, he had brought to the Muslim League meeting a whole galaxy of Congress leaders—President Sinha, Surendranath Bannerji, Mrs Annie Besant, Madan Mohan Malviya, Sarojini Naidu, and M. K. Gandhi. He was also responsible for having the

¹Ibid., p. 120.

League pass, for the first time in its history, two resolutions expressing sorrow at the death of national leaders. One resolution was about five Muslim leaders, the other exclusively on Gokhale and Pherozeshah Mehta, 'whose great and varied services in the cause of India shall ever live in the grateful recollections of every class and creed of the Indian people.'¹

Such was the climate created by Jinnah that Mohamammad Ali once humorously wrote that the Congress President Sinha and the League President Mazharul Haq had travelled to Bombay by train in the same compartment, and that during this journey they had exchanged the texts of their written speeches but had forgotten to take them back. Consequently Sinha read Mazharul Haq's speech at the Congress, and Mazharul Haq read Sinha's speech at the League session—and nobody knew the difference.

Jinnah's achievement was remarkable indeed, but the much more important and the much more difficult task was to profit from it and produce in concrete form an agreed scheme of reforms. With Gokhale dead, Jinnah was deprived of his greatest Hindu supporter in the Congress, and all the many plans they had discussed in 1913 and later had gone astray: while the League had not only turned him down on separate electorate, one rowdy section had also denounced any attempt for a rapprochement with the Congress. He did not underestimate his difficulties but they did not overawe him.

He was the ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity, working feverishly for his mission. As a Muslim leader, he was telling Muslim students, as when inaugurating their Union in Bombay in February 1915, to develop self-reliance, to be true patriots and to have as one of their chief objects 'co-operation, unity and goodwill, not only among the different sections of Mohammedans but also between Mohammedans and other communities of this country.'² He was urging the Muslim League not to insist on separate electorates, but if it had to, it should still co-operate with the Hindus and the Congress. At the same time he was urging his fellow Congressmen to understand and appreciate the Muslim point of view, and let nothing come in the way of unity and co-operation.

¹Pirzada, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 348.

²Mohammad Umar, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

'I believe...that the keynote of our real progress lies in the goodwill, concord, harmony and co-operation between the two great sister communities,' he said. As regards the Muslim demands, they '...want proper, adequate and effective representation in the Council chambers of the country and in the District and Municipal Boards, a claim which no right-minded Hindu disputes for a moment.' About separate electorates—to which he had himself been opposed, and where he had failed to carry the Muslim League with him—'rightly or wrongly the Muslim community is absolutely determined for the present to insist upon' them. 'To most of us the question is no more open to further discussion or argument as it had become a mandate of the community.' As far as he understood, '...the demand for separate electorates is not a matter of policy but a matter of necessity to the Muslims, who require to be roused from the coma and torpor into which they had fallen so long.' He therefore appealed '...to my Hindu brethren that in the present state of position they should try to win the confidence and the trust of the Muslims who are, after all, in the minority in the country. If they are determined to have separate electorates, no resistance should be shown to their demands.' The form of Muslim representation was a comparatively minor issue that should not be allowed to create an impasse. It was '...not a question of a few more seats going to Muslims or Hindus', but of '...transfer of power from the bureaucracy to democracy', and all attention and energy should be concentrated '...on this question alone'. 'Hindus and Muslims, united and firm...will produce a force which no power on earth can resist.'¹

A show of this force was given the same month, when Jinnah was able to persuade eighteen other members of the Imperial Legislative Council to sign a memorandum to the Viceroy. *The Memorandum of the Nineteen*,² as it came to be known, from both Hindus and Muslims jointly, demanded to, '...give the people real and effective participation in the Government of the country', and made some definite suggestions.

¹Dr Rafique Afzal, *Speeches and Statements of the Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah*, Research Society of Pakistan, Lahore, 1976, pp. 42-4.

²The Council then had, in all, twenty-five non-official Indian members. Three of these members were then away, and two Muslims and a Sikh member did not sign.

Jinnah's activities and speeches throughout this period displayed qualities of a true patriot and a statesman of the highest order. What was most impressive was his refusal to play to the gallery. On the contrary, he would plead the cause of the Muslims before the Hindus, and of the Hindus before the Muslims, trying to remove misunderstandings, creating goodwill, and appealing to both sides for co-operation in the larger interest of the country as a whole. And he worked hard to give those feelings a positive and concrete shape.

In response to the League's gesture, the Congress had also passed a resolution authorizing its All India Committee to confer with the League for framing a scheme of reforms. This *entente cordiale*, as Jinnah called it, led to discussions between the two sides in Allahabad and then in Calcutta, and produced an agreed scheme which, with a slight modification, was accepted by both organizations meeting, in accordance with the practice started by Jinnah, in the same city at the same time, namely Lucknow during the 1916 Christmas season.

The Lucknow Pact, as the Congress-League Scheme came to be known, was an agreed minimum demand for constitutional reforms. It provided for maximum administrative and financial autonomy of the provinces, and suggested measures that would be a gigantic step forward towards self-government. From the Muslim point of view, it had three important provisions, viz. (i) no bill, 'nor a clause thereof', nor any non-official resolution, could be proceeded with in any Council, Central or Provincial, without the support of three-fourths of the members of a community affected thereby, the question '...to be determined by the members of that community'; (ii) the number of Muslim seats in each Council was fixed; and (iii) Muslim members were to be elected through separate electorates.

The scheme was the result of friendly negotiations in a spirit of give and take. The Congress conceded separate electorates, but the Muslims had to renounce their right of voting in mixed constituencies, an advantage they had enjoyed in the Minto-Morley Reforms. They got 'weightage', i.e. extra seats in minority provinces and at the Centre, but in exchange they had to give up their majorities in the Punjab and Bengal, a price that proved exorbitant later. However, they also got a guarantee that no measure affecting their community would be taken unless 75%

of their own representatives were in its favour. Concessions were made by both sides and all obstacles vanished before the 'New Spirit' generated by Jinnah.

It was an astounding feat. The political differences that had separated the Hindus and the Muslims, to the great satisfaction of the foreign rulers, were boldly tackled and solved, not pushed under the carpet. Separate electorates were accepted and the separate identity of the Muslims was recognized. The League was acknowledged as the only authoritative body entitled to speak and negotiate on behalf of the Muslims. A minority's fears for the future were allayed. The minority, on its part, gave up its policy of relying on Governmental favours and threw in its lot with the majority.

This was a moment of triumph for nationalist India and of dismay for the Imperialists. The Viceroy, Lord Chemsford, punctiliously keeping mum on the Congress-League rapprochement, picked on the 'Memorandum of the Nineteen' for suggesting a 'catastrophic change'. In England, Lord Sydenham, a former Governor of Bombay, called it 'revolutionary proposals'. He started a campaign about 'the danger in India', warning that 'German intrigue was at work' and condemning 'some Mohammedans under the influence of Extremists (who) are demanding a Revolution.' His call for repressive measures found an echo in the pronouncements of provincial governors in India such as Sir Michael O'Dwyer of the Punjab and Lord Pentland of Madras. They were already denouncing the proposed changes: O'Dwyer even considered them as subversive like the activists of the 'Ghaddar Party'¹.

The British had reason to be worried. The divisions in Indian society were a source of great comfort to them, but now the Congress and the League had reached a concordat announcing unity of policy and action. Jinnah, in moving the resolution for the appointment of a League negotiating Committee, had said that with an agreed scheme of reforms they could demand its acceptance 'in the name of United India'. Only a few weeks before the Lucknow session, Jinnah had said that no power on earth could resist 'Hindus and Muslims, united and firm', and his prophecy was fulfilled. The British Government could not

¹See next chapter, p. 124.

stand before the concordat, and the entire scheme regarding the Hindu-Muslim problem was later incorporated in the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms.

The Lucknow Pact has no parallel in the history of Hindu-Muslim relations in India. It was the first time—and unfortunately it proved to be the last—that the two communities agreed, in a spirit of goodwill and co-operation, on long-standing political disputes and ushered in, as the League Secretary Wazir Hasan said in his report, a ‘new era of brotherhood between the Hindus and the Musalmans, pregnant with enormous potential for the future’.¹ That these hopes were not realized was because the Congress, under Gandhi’s influence, later reversed itself, denying the Muslim identity, rejecting separate electorates and refusing to negotiate with the League in its representative capacity.

But in 1917 Jinnah was the hero, the ‘Muslim Gokhale’, forging and strengthening unity of minds and action, leading a new India on the path of progress and self-rule. He was the apple of the eye of the nationalists and their hope for the future.

Jinnah did not rest on his laurels. He had planned further steps to have the Lucknow Pact implemented. He had advised the League at its session ‘to have a Bill drafted by constitutional lawyers—and a deputation of leading representative men from both the bodies should be appointed to see that the Bill is introduced in the British Parliament and adopted. For that purpose we should raise as large a fund as possible to supply the sinews of war until our aim and object are fulfilled.’² In support of this suggestion, he had also had two resolutions passed by the League session, both carried by acclamation.

Jinnah drove both the Congress and the League hard in pursuit of the common goal. In July 1917, a joint meeting of the All India Congress Committee and the League Council decided to send to England, in September, a four-man delegation, consisting of Jinnah, Wazir Hasan, Srinavasan Sastri and Tej Bahadur Sapru.³ However, on 20 August the Secretary of State for India, Edwin Montagu, made the historic announcement in Parliament about the British policy of ‘increasing association of

¹Pirzada, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 379.

²Mohammad Umar, *op. cit.*, pp. 151-2.

³Sitaramayya, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

Indians in every branch of the administration' leading to 'the realization of responsible government.' There was again a joint session of the two bodies in Allahabad in October, which decided instead to send an All-India deputation to the Viceroy and the Secretary of State. The deputation saw the two officials in November 1917.

Next month the Congress and the League met at the same time in Calcutta, and both organizations passed resolutions demanding 'immediate' enactment of a Parliamentary statute embodying 'the Congress-League Scheme' of reforms, 'setting a time limit in the statute itself' for the establishment of full self-government. Jinnah himself moved the resolution at the League session. It was almost the same as the Congress resolution, except that it had, significantly, a proviso—'provided always that the principle of adequate and effective representation of the Muslim community is made a *sine qua non* in any scheme of reforms'. By another resolution a committee was appointed to work out matters of details concerning the reforms, 'in conjunction with' a Congress committee. Jinnah was doing everything to carry the Muslims along the national line by protecting their interests and giving them a feeling of security. He considered it to be his duty as a *nationalist*, but an equal duty was to exhort the Muslims not to harbour undue suspicions of the Hindus and play into the hands of the Third Party.

He said, 'It is said that we are going at tremendous speed, that we are in a minority, and that it (India) might afterwards become a Hindu Government. I want to give an answer to that. I particularly wish to address my Mohammedan friends on this point. Do you think, in the first instance, as to whether it is possible that this country could become a Hindu Government? Do you think that the Government could be conducted by ballot boxes? Do you think that, because the Hindus are in the majority, therefore, they would carry on a measure in the legislative assembly and there is the end of it? If seventy millions of Musalmans do not approve of a measure, which is carried by a ballot box, do you think that it could be enforced and administered in this country? Do you think that Hindu statesmen, with their intellect, with their past history, would ever think of...when they get self-government...enforcing a measure by ballot box? Therefore, I say to my Muslim friends not to fear.

This is a bogey, which is put before you by your enemies to frighten you, to scare you away from the co-operation with the Hindus, which is essential for the establishment of self-government. If this country is not to be governed by the Hindus, let me tell you in the same spirit, it is not to be governed by the Mohammedans either and certainly not by the English. It is to be governed by the people and sons of this country.¹

The Make-up of a Nationalist

This was the authentic voice of a true nationalist—'India for the Indians', without prejudice or favour. Jinnah's nationalism was based on robust patriotism. He was neither a slogan-monger nor a visionary. He appreciated that the peculiar conditions of India and its pluralist society were very different from those in the nation-states of Europe and demanded a practical solution of their own. A hard realist and the cold-blooded logician that he was, he considered it the duty of a nationalist to take the bull of Indian realities by the horns, and solve the Hindu-Muslim issue on a fair and equitable basis. This was a precondition for united Indian action against foreign masters, from whom freedom had to be wrested. He would have liked the Muslims to renounce separate electorates and support the Congress unconditionally, but he soon realized this was just not possible. He knew how the problem of minorities had convulsed Europe in the last half century, and he appreciated the fears of Indian Muslims and their anxiety regarding the future shape of things. So he worked to remove the mistrust between the two communities and create an atmosphere in which the two could follow identical policies while maintaining their respective personalities. To insist on a single organization, as was done by Hume and Tyabji before, and was to be done by Gandhi and Nehru afterwards, would be self-defeating. The pragmatic way was to induce the Congress and the Muslim League to go hand in hand co-operating on issues that 'required united and concerted action'. That was not possible without acceptance of separate electorates which, his personal view notwithstanding, were, in the Muslim view, not

¹Mohammad Umar, *op. cit.*, pp. 175-6.

open to discussion. The question of the number of seats for either community was a minor issue which paled before the far more important and fundamental question of freedom.

The Lucknow Pact was the fruit of Jinnah's tireless efforts. From the time he persuaded the Congress and the League to have simultaneous sessions in Bombay, up to the repeat performance in Lucknow, he did not let the grass grow under their feet. He relentlessly pushed the two organizations towards unity. His speeches and pronouncements during this period throw a flood of light on his political thinking and the character of nationalism and the duties of a nationalist as he saw them.

In his address to the League, over which he presided, Jinnah said, as he had said earlier at the Ahmedabad Provincial Conference, 'A new spirit is abroad', a spirit of 'earnestness, confidence and resolution.' 'In all directions are visible the stirrings of a new life,' and 'the Musalmans of India would be false to themselves and the traditions of their past, had they not shared to the full the new hope that is moving India's patriotic sons today, or had they failed to respond to the call of their country.'

There were, Jinnah pointed out, 'two cardinal facts about the Indian situation which practical statesmanship will have to take into account while addressing itself to the study of the problem and its adequate solution.' There was first, through the British connection and contact with western thought, 'a great and living movement for the intellectual and moral regeneration of the people.' Secondly, 'there is the fact of the existence of a powerful, unifying process...creating out of the diverse mass of race and creed a new India, fast growing into unity of thought, purpose and outlook, responsive to new appeals of territorial patriotism and nationality.'

But India had '...a set of social, ethnological and cultural conditions unparalleled in recorded history. We have a vast continent inhabited by 315 million people sprung from various racial stocks, inheriting various cultures, and professing a variety of religious creeds. This stupendous human group, thrown together under one physical and political environment, is still in various stages of intellectual and moral growth. All that means a great diversity of outlook, purpose and endeavour.' But 'every Indian Nationalist who has given close and anxious thought to the problem of nation-building in India, fully realizes the

magnitude of his task. He is not afraid of admitting frankly that difficulties exist in his path. Such difficulties have no terror for him. They are already vanishing before the forces which are developing in the New Spirit.'

'The most significant and hopeful aspect of this spirit is that it has taken its rise from a new-born movement in the direction of national unity which has brought Hindus and Muslims together involving¹ brotherly service for the common cause.' The 'Hindu-Muslim rapprochement within the last few years' was 'the first great sign of the birth of united India.'

The Hindu-Muslim question, he said, had hitherto been '...as a colossal riddle athwart the numerous unifying forces that make for the evolution of a common Indian nationality', but '...the new temper that we witness today is the measure of the change that has happily come over Hindu-Muslim relations.' The League was founded because the Muslims, who had till then abstained from all manner of political agitation, felt 'and rightly' the need to organize themselves 'lest the impending changes initiated by a liberal Secretary of State should swamp them altogether as a community.' But it had travelled far from that 'frame of Muslim mind'. Its 'creed has grown and broadened with the growth of political life and thought in the community,' and today 'in its general outlook and ideals as regards the future, the All-India Muslim League stands abreast of the Indian National Congress and is ready to participate in any patriotic efforts for the advancement of the country as a whole.'

This readiness of the educated Muslims, 'only about a decade after they first entered the field of politics, to work shoulder to shoulder with the other Indian communities for the common good of all, is, to my mind, the strongest proof of the value and need of the separate Muslim organization *at present*.

'...I have been a staunch Congressman throughout my public life, and have been no lover of sectarian cries,' said Jinnah, 'but it appears to me that the reproach of "separatism" sometimes levelled at Musalmans, is singularly inept and wide of the mark, when *I see this great communal organization rapidly growing into a powerful factor for the birth of United India.*'

¹The text given both by Mohammad Umar and Rafique Afzal reads: '...Hindus and Musalmans together involving and brotherly service...'

Talking about Muslim fears, Jinnah said: 'A minority must, above everything else, have a complete sense of security before its broader political sense can be evoked for co-operation and united endeavours in the national tasks. To the Musalmans of India that security can only come through adequate and effective safeguards as regards their political existence as a community. *Whatever my individual opinion may be*, I am here to interpret and express the sense of the overwhelming body of Muslim opinion, of which the All India Muslim League is the political organ.'

The Muslim communal position in this matter had been 'recognized and met in an ungrudging spirit by the leadership of the great Hindu community' by the Lucknow Pact and, 'I rejoice to think that a firm settlement has at last been reached which sets the seal on Hindu-Muslim co-operation and opens a new era in the history of our country. A few irreconcilable spirits in either camp may still exist here and there, but the atmosphere has on the whole been rid of the menace of sectarian thunder... Just as I have no sympathy with a member of my own community who even with an assured communal existence would not extend the hand of fellowship to his Hindu brother, so I cannot appreciate the attitude of the Hindu patriot who would insist on his pound of flesh, though, in this struggle, the entire future of the country for the sake of a small gain to one side or the other may be marred for ever.'

Jinnah advised the Muslims to have self-respect, and adopt an attitude of 'goodwill and brotherly feelings' towards the Hindus. 'Co-operation in the cause of our Motherland should be our guiding principle. India's real progress can only be achieved by a true understanding and harmonious relations between the two great sister communities.'¹

These rather long excerpts have been given because the full text of the Lucknow address is not easily available—even Sharifuddin Pirzada's collection of Muslim League documents in two volumes does not contain more than half the text. But this address provides the key to Jinnah's thinking and political philosophy.

Jinnah's critics who defame him for recanting nationalism and turning into a narrow communalist later, attributing all sorts of

¹Mohammad Umar, op. cit., pp. 139-57. (Emphasis added).

motives for the transformation, will find that nowhere in the address did he say that Indians had become a nation. What he said was that there was a *movement in the direction* of nationalism, that the Hindu-Muslim problem lay in its path, and the recent *rapprochement* between the two communities augured well for the *evolution* of a common nationality. Yet he was then considered to personify nationalism, the one man who could be called 'Mr Nationalist' and 'Mr India'.

The Congress and the League were then speaking in one voice, and continuously holding joint consultations for common action. Jinnah was the common factor. He was, in addition, using his membership of the Imperial Legislative Assembly to accelerate and consolidate the process of unification of political struggle. In the summer of 1917, he also joined the Home Rule League of Mrs Annie Besant. Mrs Besant had been carrying a roaring campaign which made the Government so uncomfortable that it decided to intern her. Jinnah was scandalized, and as an act of defiance he not only joined the Home Rule League but also became the President of its Provincial Branch in Bombay. A little later, in October, (Sir) Fazl-i-Husain (1877-1936) convened a special Provincial Conference at Lahore and invited some nationalist leaders including Jinnah. But the Government prohibited the entry of Jinnah and Surendranath Bannerji into the Punjab.¹

Next year he walked out of a war conference against the attitude of the presiding Governor, Lord Willingdon, towards the Home Rule League, and later in the year organized a protest against an attempt by some British lackeys, supported by high officials of course, to honour Willingdon on his retirement. His courageous stand earned him such popular esteem that a one-rupee public fund was spontaneously opened to construct a public hall in his honour. No politician had been shown such esteem in his lifetime before. The People's Jinnah Hall still stands in Bombay in the compound of the Congress Building, but it is called P. J. Hall, never referred to by the name of the man in whose honour it was erected.

Jinnah's popularity among Indians of all communities knew no bounds. He was the leader of all Indians, guiding them along

¹Azim Husain, *Fazl-i-Husain*, Longman, Bombay, 1946, p. 88.

the road to freedom. He believed in constitutional methods, although in response to the country's temper in 1918, he allowed himself to participate, in a limited way, in street politics on rare occasions. These were essentially meant to support the constitutional struggle which showed every sign of bringing a rich reward. The 'war to end all wars' was coming to an end. It had been fought, according to British leaders, against Prussian militarism and to save civilization and democracy. The right of self-determination for all nations had been accepted as the fundamental principle for the new world after the war. Britain herself was already committed to granting India 'responsible Government'. India was bound to get self-government, in essence if not in every detail, and get it without bloodshed, without mass agitation, without dislocation of normal life, without bitterness, and in an atmosphere of mutual communal trust and brotherhood. Everything seemed rosy and bright.

But then came Mr Gandhi.

CHAPTER 5

ENTER MR GANDHI

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born at Porbandar, Kathiawar in 1869, qualified for the bar, and returned from England in 1891. He was a shy and awkward boy, without any social graces or elegance of manner at school, and felt even more awkward and self-conscious in England. His three years' stay there was a period of misery and mental torture. In the beginning he tried to play the English gentleman, even taking lessons in ballroom dancing, but soon gave up the attempt. He kept mostly to himself and took no interest in British traditions and institutions. He never went to Parliament or attended political rallies, never went to theatres or a club, an opera or musical concert, never visited Oxford or Cambridge, Lord's or Epsom or the British Museum. High society was closed to him, but he made no attempt either to absorb British culture or even understand the British way of life or living.

His stay in England did little to broaden his outlook or mental horizon. He always suffered from a terrible inferiority complex—even when he had become the great Mahatma—and sought shelter behind his rustic ways, which he called simple and unpretentious. Back in India, he was a brief-less lawyer, until an Indian Muslim offered him a job in South Africa.

Gandhi went there in 1893. The Indian community in that home of the colour bar was living in wretched conditions and was woefully devoid of any educated or professional classes, and Gandhi, in the absence of any local leadership, quickly became their guide and philosopher. He took up their cause, and organised passive resistance. This ingenious method nonplussed the local government and brought him unexpected success and immense popularity among the Indian community. His fame spread throughout the British Empire, particularly in South Africa, Britain and India.

He stayed in South Africa until 1914. But his return to India after a stay of twenty years, and while he was at the peak of his power and popularity, was for no immediate reason. Why did he do it? What motivated it?

The question has never been answered. In fact, it has hardly ever been posed.

In his autobiography Gandhi has said: 'At the conclusion of the *satyagraha* struggle in 1914, I received Gokhale's instructions to return home via London. So in July Kasturbai, Kallenbach and I sailed for England.'¹ He has tried to give the impression that Gokhale had some job lined up for him, and so in response to his call, Gandhi gave up everything, and reported post-haste to his leader. But there is no evidence to support this thesis at all.

Gandhi first met Gokhale in 1896, when he had gone to India after a stay of three years in South Africa. At that time, 'I had established a fairly good practice, and could see that people felt the need of my presence. So I made up my mind to go home, fetch my wife and children and then return to settle out there'.²

During this visit he met various Congress leaders, including Gokhale, to apprise them of the conditions of the Indians in South Africa. Gokhale gave him 'an affectionate welcome', showed him over his (Fergusson) College, 'assured me that he was always at my disposal', and advised him 'whom to approach and how to approach them'.³ Soon after, Gandhi returned to South Africa with his family.

In 1901, however, '...on my relief from (Boer) war-duty, I felt that my work was no longer in South Africa but in India,' says Gandhi. 'Not that there was nothing to be done in South Africa but I was afraid that my main business might become money-making.' Moreover, 'friends at home were also pressing me to return, and I felt that I should be of more service in India.'⁴

So Gandhi returned home. 'Gokhale was very anxious that I should settle down in Bombay, practice at the bar and help him in public work,'⁵ and, after a brief stay in Rajkot, he did settle

¹M. K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmadabad, 1945, p. 275.

²Ibid., p. 132.

³Ibid., p. 142.

⁴Ibid., p. 175.

⁵Ibid., p. 195.

down in Bombay. He never made a mark as a barrister, but, 'I prospered'. He attended the annual session of the Congress at Calcutta and although the Congress leaders received him with kindness, he does not seem to have made any favourable impression on any of them.

The Calcutta Congress passed Gandhi's resolution on South Africa. He mentions in his autobiography how Pherozeshah Mehta, D. E. Wacha and Gokhale helped him in getting the resolution through the subjects' committee and at the open session. Five years earlier, Mehta and Wacha had similarly helped him by arranging a public meeting at Bombay which Gandhi could address. It was presided over by Mehta, and when Gandhi's courage failed him, Wacha read out his speech.¹ Mehta had met him 'as a loving father would meet his grown up son',² Gandhi records. But what Mehta and Wacha really thought of him is revealed from a letter that Wacha wrote to a Madras politician, G. A. Natesan. 'Pherozeshah and I,' wrote Wacha, 'never gave Gandhi credit for even an iota of political sagacity and political circumspection. The man is full of overweening conceit and personal ambition...'³

As for Gokhale, Gandhi devoted three chapters of his autobiography exclusively to 'A month with Gokhale' during this period, but there is nowhere any indication that Gokhale had any particular job for Gandhi in mind. They only bring out Gokhale's charitable disposition and his paternalistic attitude towards, and encouragement of, a young admirer. The most we find was an occasion when Gokhale chided him for his reserve, which was a hindrance for a public worker. 'Gandhi,' he said, 'You have to stay in the country, and this sort of reserve will not do. You must get into touch with as many people as possible. I want you to do Congress work.'⁴

'Thus,' writes Gandhi about his Bombay days, 'whilst on the one hand I began to feel somewhat at ease about my profession, on the other, Gokhale, whose eyes were always on me, had been

¹Ibid., p. 140.

²Ibid., p. 138.

³Sir D. E. Wacha to G. A. Natesan, 6 October 1920, *G. A. Natesan Papers*, cited by Judith Brown in *Gandhi's Rise to Power*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1972, p. 274. Wacha was president of the Congress in 1901.

⁴M. K. Gandhi, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

busy making his own plans on my behalf.' What were those plans on Gandhi's behalf? Gandhi says in the very next sentence: 'He peeped into my chambers twice or thrice every week, often in company with friends whom he wanted me to know, and he kept me acquainted with his mode of work.'¹

Gokhale gave Gandhi no Congress work, and when a request was received from South Africa for Gandhi to return, Gokhale did not try to dissuade him. He did not even ask how long Gandhi would stay away, and did not mention what he had in mind for him.

Back in South Africa, Gandhi soon sent for his family. The bungalow he had kept at Bombay was given up. So were all hopes of an Indian career. One no more hears of any Gokhale plans for him. 'I had now given up all hope of returning to India in the near future.'² He settled down in South Africa and made it his home. He began his 'experiments with truth', diet, fasting, and earth and water treatments. He even established a model settlement at Phoenix with the idea, '...gradually to retire from practice, go and live at the settlement, earn my livelihood by manual work there, and find the joy of service in the fulfillment of Phoenix.'³

But after a dozen years, in July 1914, he received Gokhale's message, and, casting everything aside, left South Africa for good.

What was it then that Gokhale wanted? And why did his younger admirer so readily give up everything, and for what?

Gandhi reached London on 4 August, but Gokhale was not even there. He was in Paris '...where he had gone for reasons of health, and as communication between Paris and London had been cut off, there was no knowing when he would return.'⁴ What was Gandhi to do?. He did not want to go home without seeing Gokhale, but no one could say definitely when he would arrive.

So Gandhi stayed on in London, waiting for Gokhale. It was something totally out of Gokhale's character to be away from London when he knew somebody was arriving, from across the

¹Ibid., p. 199.

²Ibid., p. 245.

³Ibid., p. 243.

⁴Ibid., p. 277.

seas, in response to his call. But even if it was just an accident—and Gokhale, although he could have seen in the last days of July that war was coming, was unexpectedly stranded in Paris—one does expect that when the *guru*¹ and the *chela*² had their reunion they would have held long sessions discussing, arguing, planning, and perfecting the programme for their future work together. But when Gokhale returned to London, in due course they met and constantly discussed—what? Let Gandhi describe it himself: ‘Gokhale returned to London soon after. Kallenbach and I used regularly to go to him. Our talks were mostly about the war, and as Kallenbach had the geography of Germany at his finger tips, and had travelled much in Europe, he used to show us on the map the various places in connection with the war,’ and, ‘when I got pleurisy this also became a topic of daily discussion.’³

This is all they discussed! Not a word of politics—nothing about the position of India and how it was affected by the war; nothing about Gokhale’s vision of the India of tomorrow; no mention, not even a hint, of what Gokhale’s future programme was, and where Gandhi fitted into it; or even why Gokhale had called him.

The only other thing Gandhi mentions about ‘Gokhale’s charity’ in the chapter on their London meetings is the latter’s unsuccessful pleading with Gandhi to take milk, which Gandhi humbly declined. ‘Meanwhile Gokhale left for home, as he could not stand the October fogs of London.’⁴

It is odd for two politicians to meet and not discuss a word of politics, impossible if they meet so regularly; and in this case one was the foremost Indian politician of the day, and the other had made a name for himself fighting for the cause of Indians in a foreign land. The absence of any political discussions between them is all the more amazing because of Gandhi’s claim that in 1901, ‘he (Gokhale), seemed to keep nothing private from me.’⁵ But in 1914, when, according to Gandhi, he had gone in response to Gokhale’s summons, Gokhale said nothing,

¹*Guru*, guide and philosopher.

²*Chela*, follower.

³M. K. Gandhi, op. cit., p. 284.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 285.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 186.

discussed nothing, gave no orders or instructions, not even advice. He just left.

But why did Gokhale not discuss any politics? It was so unnatural that it could not have happened unless Gokhale wanted it not to happen.

Perhaps Gokhale never thought very highly of Gandhi's opinions and methods and Gandhi misunderstood his innate kindness. 'He was deeply impressed with my habits of tending for myself, my personal cleanliness, perseverance and regularity, and would often overwhelm me with his praise.'¹ This praising for his personal habits, and Gokhale's deep interest in the plight of Indians in South Africa, may have been mistaken by Gandhi as an interest in building him up personally in Indian politics.

At their first meeting in Poona, Gokhale had 'closely examined me, as a schoolmaster would examine a candidate seeking admission to a school,'² Gandhi recalled later. Obviously Gokhale found the stuff interesting, and worth watching, but as he had the occasion to examine it more closely, he was gradually disappointed.

Earlier Pherozeshah Mehta had met him 'as a loving father,' and Gokhale had 'treated me as though I were his younger brother,'³ but the father did not credit Gandhi for 'even an iota of political sagacity or political circumspection,' and the brother—who fervently shared Mehta's political beliefs and methods—evidently formed the same opinion, only Gokhale was more tolerant than the flamboyant Mehta.

Gokhale might have been impressed with Gandhi's habits but, his public praises of Gandhi notwithstanding, he was certainly not impressed with his ideas and techniques. When *Hind Swaraj*, embodying Gandhi's political philosophy, appeared in the *Indian Opinion* (later published in book form as *Indian Home Rule* in 1910), all of Gokhale's misgivings about him were confirmed. 'When Gokhale read it,' records Gandhi's official biographer, 'he thought it so crude and hastily conceived that he prophesied that Gandhi himself would destroy the book after spending a year in India.'⁴

¹Ibid., p. 186.

²Ibid., p. 142.

³Ibid., p. 186.

⁴D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, Publications Division, Ministry of Information, Government of India, 1969, p. 109.

Some years later Gandhi said that except for one word ('prostitute', used in connection with the British Parliament), he would make no change at all. But such attitudes were all the while disillusioning Gokhale.

Whatever illusions Gokhale might still have nursed, were shattered when he toured South Africa in 1912. During this tour 'Gokhale tried to acquaint Gandhiji', says Kanji Dwarkadas 'with the political situation in India, but found him hopelessly out of touch with the conditions. Gokhale became cautious, and extracted a promise from Gandhiji that on his return to India he would not express himself upon public questions for a year which was to be a year of probation.'¹

Had Gokhale, who in 1912 become 'cautious' in South Africa, become totally disillusioned, and a year and half later in London, would not even bother to 'acquaint' Gandhi either with his 'mode of work' or with the political situation?

Shortly before Gokhale died, M. R. Jayakar asked him what he thought of Gandhi. Gokhale's reply, according to Jayakar, was:

Gandhi is going to be in the vanguard of a great movement, when some of us are gone. Remember, that on occasions when the passions of the people have been raised to great heights of emotion and sacrifice or to be brought into close vision of high ideals, Gandhi is an admirable leader. There is something in him which at once enchains the attention of the poor man and he establishes, with a rapidity which is his own, an affinity with the lowly and the distressed. 'But be careful', said Gokhale, 'that India does not trust him on occasions where delicate negotiations have to be carried on with care and caution and where restraint and tact will make for success, acting on the principle that half a loaf is better than no bread. He has done wonderful work in South Africa, he has welded the different sections of Indians into one united and patriotic community, but I fear that when the history of the negotiations, which it was his privilege to carry on at one stage, is written with impartial accuracy, it will be found that his actual achievements were not as meritorious as is popularly imagined.'²

It was during his visit to South Africa, two years after the publication of *Hind Swaraj*, and after watching him work from

¹Kanji Dwarkadas, *India's Fight for Freedom*, Popular Parkashan, Bombay, 1967, p. 81. Kanji Dawarkadas was a Home Rule League activist who maintained very close relations with Annie Besant, Jinnah, Gandhi, Patel and all the top national leaders of Bombay Presidency.

²M. R. Jayakar, *The Story of My Life*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1958, Vol. I, p. 317.

close quarters, that Gokhale wrote off Gandhi as a promising politician. Gokhale arrived in Cape Town on 22 October 1912, and received a warm welcome from all sides throughout his stay. The whites were as hospitable as the Indians. Every public reception in his honour was presided over by the local mayor. The Government put at his disposal a state railway saloon, and attached an officer with him to look after his needs. In mid November he was received by General Botha and General Smuts. The meeting lasted over two hours and the first thing he did on coming out of the meeting was to tell Gandhi: 'You must return to India in a year. Everything has been settled.'¹

On return to India, Gokhale would still pay glowing tributes to Gandhi's spirituality, simplicity, and selflessness, but none to his policies or methods.

Next year, during the *satyagraha* movement, the widening gulf between Gokhale and Gandhi became almost unbridgeable. When Gandhi, on release from prison, indicated that he would restart the movement, Gokhale sent him an immediate cable advising against it, and urging him not to boycott the Inquiry Commission set up by the Government. Gokhale had always taken a deep interest in the plight of Indians in South Africa, and constantly helped Gandhi morally, politically and financially. He was now alarmed by Gandhi's rejection of his advice, and rushed two emissaries, C. F. Andrews and W. Pearson, to him. He also persuaded the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, to intervene—he sent his own emissary, Sir Benjamin Robertson, Chief Commissioner of the Central Province, to the South African Government. The matter was finally settled by the Smuts-Gandhi agreement, but Gokhale was certainly not happy with the Gandhian way of politics.

When a settlement in South Africa was in sight, Gandhi tried very hard to placate Gokhale. He wrote him a number of letters telling him of his intention to return to India and throwing himself at Gokhale's feet. On 27 February, he wrote that if there was a settlement, he would leave with a party of twenty for India in April, but '*...I do not know whether you still want me to live at Servants of India Society quarters at Poona or how...Please do not consider yourself bound to keep me at the Society quarters*',

¹D. G. Tendulkur, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 130.

he said, and continued, 'I am entirely in your hands. I want to learn at your feet and gain the necessary experience. No matter whether I am staying somewhere under your guidance or not, I shall scrupulously observe the compact of silence after my arrival in India.' The letter further said: 'My present ambition you know. It is to be by your side as your nurse and attendant. I want to have the real discipline of obeying someone whom I love, and look up to. I know I made a bad secretary in South Africa. I hope to do better in the motherland if I am accepted.'¹

Two months later, hearing of Gokhale's illness, he wrote: 'How I would like to be by your side during your illness'. Gandhi's own wife was so ill during this period that a month earlier all hope of her recovery had been given up, but Gandhi was very anxious to be with Gokhale. 'Mrs Gandhi is now much better,' he assured Gokhale, and added: 'If her progress continues, in a month's time she should again regain most of her former health. In that case and *in any case* I could come to London taking her with me. And after consultation with you, we may both proceed to India directly and the rest of the (Gandhi) party may leave here after we have left. This will enable me to reach India without any loss of time. At the outside it can only be three weeks. Please therefore cable if I may *still* come...I should much like to come. It would be a disappointment if you do not let me come. Unless therefore, you are leaving for India to reach there before me, I do hope that your cable will authorize my coming to you.'² This was followed by another letter saying that a settlement with the Government of South Africa was in sight. 'In that event I should leave for London about the middle of July and even earlier if I can.' Mrs Gandhi was 'much better but still weak,' but, 'if she comes I will bring her with me.' Then came the plea, 'If you will not allow me to be with you as your nurse, I would like to go away to India immediately after our consultations.' There was also a request that Gokhale cable the state of his health to the worried Gandhi.³

¹*The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (will subsequently be referred to as CWMG), Publications Division Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, New Delhi, 1979, Vol. XII, pp. 360-1. (Emphasis added).

²*Ibid.*, p. 414. On 6 May 1914. (Emphasis added).

³*Ibid.*, Vol. XII, p. 422. On 5 June 1914.

Gandhi's last letter was sent on 1 July in which he mentioned that he had already sent a cable, a day before, that everything was settled, that he was making desperate efforts to leave on the eighteenth, and that '...my one desire is now to meet you and see you, and take orders from you and leave at once for India.'¹

It was to these earnest pleas that Gokhale succumbed—he could not in any case prevent Gandhi from coming to England. But as to the consultations and discussions they held in England, we have seen Gandhi's own testimony about their nature and importance.

In a farewell speech on 13 July at Johannesburg, Gandhi confessed that he did not know India and '...he did not know what impelled him to go to India.'² When, after having had his 'consultations' with Gokhale in London, Gandhi finally arrived in Bombay, this is what he told a reporter of the *Bombay Chronicle* on 9 January 1915: 'Questioned as to his future movements, Mr Gandhi said he had come to India to settle here, and he would not go back to Africa unless circumstances rendered it necessary. He did not know what he would do here, but he would be at the service of Mr Gokhale, whom he had for years recognized as his guide and leader, and his movements would be largely controlled and directed by him.'³

But Gokhale did not get Gandhi admitted even to his Servants of India Society. According to Gandhi's version, 'Gokhale was very keen that I should join the Society, and so was I,' but there were strong objections from the members. 'I am hoping,' Gokhale told Gandhi in Poona, where he went immediately after meeting his family members in Kathiawar, '...that they will accept you, but if they don't, you will not for a moment think that they are lacking in respect or love for you.'⁴ Gokhale died in February and Gandhi, left to his own resources, '...without hesitation and with firmness...began the wooing'⁵ of the Society's members. But they remained unimpressed. 'When Gandhiji came to know that his application for this membership

¹Ibid., p. 440.

²Ibid., p. 478, quoting a report by *Indian Opinion*.

³Ibid., Vol. XIII, p. 2.

⁴M. K. Gandhi, op. cit., p. 301.

⁵Ibid., p. 310.

would be *unanimously* rejected...Gandhiji thought it wise to withdraw his application.¹

So Gandhi could not become even an ordinary member of the Servants of India Society when Gokhale was alive, nor after his death. Earlier, his Phoenix party, about which he had intimated Gokhale a year earlier, was not accommodated at the Society quarters but had to find refuge in Gurukul, Kangra and Shantinaketin, Bengal. It is also noteworthy that, *even before the rejection of his application*, when Gandhi mentioned that he wanted to have an ashram on the Phoenix model, Gokhale jumped at the idea, told Gandhi not to worry about the expenses, and gave an *immediate* order '...to open an account for me in the Society's books and to give whatever I might require for the ashram.'²

Does it not indicate that Gokhale was anxious to have Gandhi off his hands? And was Srinivas Sastri—who was soon to succeed Gokhale as Chief of the Servants of India—not reflecting Gokhale's views when, on 10 January 1915, he wrote to his brother: 'If he (Gandhi) drops his anarchica' views and takes ours, he joins S.I.S. If not, he *eschews politics* and becomes an exclusively social worker.'³

When Gandhi finally left the shores of South Africa, it was with the knowledge that his political prospects in India were bleak indeed. He had alienated the one important leader who had always stood by him and glorified him, and on whose coat-tails he had hoped to make his entry on the national scene. He had no work waiting for him; there was no call to duty. Nor could he claim that he was leaving because he had completed his work in South Africa. He had gone to India in 1896, but returned with his family because, '...people felt the need of my presence.' Surely the Indian community felt the need of his presence in 1914 much more than in 1896. The Smuts-Gandhi Agreement had only solved some immediate, not fundamental, problems. Before starting the *satyagraha*, Gandhi had said: 'The real object of our fight must be to kill the monster of racial prejudice in the heart of the Government and the local whites.'⁴ Did he think the Agreement had killed that 'monster'?

¹Dwarkadas, *op. cit.*, p. 82. (Emphasis added).

²M. K. Gandhi, *op. cit.*, pp. 301-2.

³Dwarkadas, *op. cit.*, pp. 81-2. (Emphasis added).

⁴CWMG, *op. cit.*, Vol. XII, p. 187. 13 September 1913.

Had it banished racism from South Africa? On his own admission, '...while it was a settlement of the present difficulties, it was not a complete settlement,' and, 'there were many questions which would require patience to solve.'¹ But so anxious was Gandhi to leave that he was then advising his community not to raise the question of franchise rights.²

Nor could Gandhi fear, as he did when, in 1901, he decided to leave South Africa for the first time, that 'my business might become money-making'. On the contrary, in 1914 he was successfully running the Phoenix settlement and the Tolstoy farm, and had collected round him a band of followers who shared his ideas, and had adopted his way of life. He was experiencing spiritual fulfillment. He had adopted South Africa—where two of his sons were born and all of his children brought up—as his home and was looking forward to retiring at Phoenix.

Yet he gave it all up—spiritual bliss, political glory, dreams of a retired life at Phoenix—to return to India. In South Africa he was a force to be reckoned with. He was the undisputed leader of the Indian community, his voice carried weight in Pretoria and London, his activities were reported in the Empire Press and evoked admiration. But in India, after the first few weeks of reception, he would be a non-entity. Why then did he throw away a glorious present and happy retirement in South Africa in favour of an uncertain future in India? Why did he burn his boats so readily? What or who prompted it? Why did he do it?

The Departure

A mystery has surrounded Gandhi's departure from South Africa. One could understand it if Gandhi was a sentimentalist, say, like Mohammed Ali or Subhas Chandra Bose, and had yielded to some sudden impulse; but Gandhi was never the one to be swayed by emotions. A *bania* by caste, by temperament, and by training, he was calculating in the extreme. Speaking of his London days he says: 'I kept account of every farthing I spent, and my expenses were carefully calculated. Every little item, such as omnibus fares

¹Ibid., p. 463. On 11 July 1914 at Durban.

²Ibid., p. 438.

or postage or a couple of coppers spent on newspapers, would be entered, and the balance struck every evening before going to bed. That habit has stayed with me ever since...'¹ This calculating habit was not restricted to finances alone; it extended to all other matters as well. All through his life, whether private or public, he acted after due deliberation. Every movement he organized—whether political, social or religious—every campaign he launched, in fact every move he ever made, was coolly planned.

It is inconceivable then that he should have returned to India, giving up all he had gained after twenty years' struggle, without working out carefully the profit and loss sides, the pros and cons, of his decision. Surely he knew what he was doing.

He knew that Gokhale, if he had ever thought of using Gandhi in the Congress, was by 1914 sharing the assessment of his close political colleagues, Pherozeshah and Wacha, about him. If he had ever planned to use Gandhi to counterbalance the militant nationalism of the 'extremists', he was too disappointed in him to use him now. But if Gokhale had no plans for him, it did not mean that Gandhi had none himself.

After the passage of the Indian Relief Bill, Gandhi wrote to the Interior Secretary that it 'finally closes the passive resistance'.² Why did he give such a categorical assurance while the 'monster' of racism was still there? Was it part of some unwritten understanding? Had Gandhi made his personal plans for the future in concert with someone other than Gokhale?

And could that someone be the British and Lord Hardinge—who had an excellent relationship with Gokhale and with whom he had worked closely on South Africa—who picked up what Gokhale discarded, because they thought that what Gokhale considered harmful for nationalist India would be very useful for the British?

It is not only probable, it is the only possible explanation.

The British Government wanted Gandhi out of South Africa as much as the Colonial Government. As Lord Willingdon, then Governor of Bombay, declared on 16 December 1913, the South African question was 'in its very essence, a highly Imperial

¹M. K. Gandhi, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

²*CWMG*, *op. cit.*, Vol. XII, p. 438.

question.'¹ Gandhi had created problems, and could have created many more if he had stayed on and extended his influence to the 'natives'. Although Gandhi had shown no sympathy to the Africans—he had actually supported the British in the Zulu war—there was no guarantee that he would not instigate them later. His technique, then and as it developed in subsequent years, with its strikes, boycotts, non-co-operation and passive resistance, could have been much more menacing to the Empire in South Africa than in India. For the Whites of South Africa, it was their home, and the revolt of the Africans, even though non-violent, would have been disastrous for them, especially economically.

Gandhi in India, on the contrary, would be of little consequence. With all his spreading fame, he enjoyed no special position in his native land and could not be expected to get any during the life time of Gokhale, Tilak, Pherozeshah Mehta, and Surindranath Bannerji. He had no personal following, and his sainthood, though respected, would be nothing extraordinary in a country which abounded with holy men of all orders, schools, description, castes, colours and creeds. In any case he was considered a 'safe politician',² and posed little threat in India.

It is striking how British interest in Gandhi was suddenly aroused in 1913, and continued unabated for a number of years. When in that year Gandhi launched his *satyagraha* in South Africa, the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, thirteen days after Gandhi was sentenced, publicly expressed, '...the deep and burning sympathy of India and also of those, who like myself, without being Indians, sympathize with the people of this country'. He further said, 'We have seen the widest publicity given to allegations that passive resistance is dealt with measures which would not be tolerated for a moment in any country claiming to be civilized. These allegations were met by categorical denial by the responsible Government of South Africa, though even the denial contains admission'. He went on, 'I feel that if the South African Government desires to justify itself in the eyes of India and the world, the only course open to it is to appoint a strong impartial committee, whereon Indian interests will be represented, to conduct the most searching inquiry, and you

¹Ibid., p. 660.

²Dwarkadas, op. cit., p. 81.

may rest assured that the Raj will not cease to urge these considerations on the Imperial Government.¹

Strong words indeed. Nothing like such public denunciation of one Dominion Government by another part of the Empire—and India was not even a Dominion...had ever taken place.

In 1910, when in the Imperial Legislative Council Jinnah had criticized, '...the harsh and cruel treatment that is meted out to Indians in South Africa,' he was immediately called to order by Lord Minto, who was presiding. He thought that 'cruel' was 'too strong a word' when 'talking of a friendly part of the Empire', and had asked Jinnah to 'adapt his language to the circumstances.'² But now, three years later, Minto's successor himself was using harsh language about the same 'friendly part of the Empire' and questioning its claim to be called civilized.

Seventeen days after Hardinge's speech, the South African Government announced the appointment of a Commission of Inquiry. A week after that Gandhi was released.

When Gandhi, on release, desired to boycott the Commission and restart the *satyagraha*, Hardinge despatched a personal emissary to South Africa and Smuts invited Gandhi for talks. The Smuts-Gandhi agreement was reached on 22 January 1914. Four days later the Solomon Inquiry Commission held its first sitting and completed its work in record time: the first sitting was held on 26 January, and by 7 March it had heard witnesses, made inquiries, concluded proceedings, and written and submitted its report to the Government. The three-man Commission was boycotted by Gandhi and the Congress because the two members sitting with the president, Edmond Esselen and J. S. Wylie, were considered 'notoriously' anti-Asiatic. They 'could not divest themselves of their anti-Asian views which they had expressed times without number,'³ said Gandhi in the course of a public speech at Durban on 21 December. The same day he had written a long letter to the Minister of the Interior criticizing their appointment which, '...intended to give the Commission a partisan character, for it is within our knowledge that Mr Esselen had expressed anti-Asiatic views in very strong language,

¹CWMMG, op. cit., Appendix XVI, Vol. XII, pp. 602-3.

²Mathubul Hasan Saïvid, *Mohammad Ali Jinnah*, Elite Publishers, Karachi, 1962, p. 29.

³CWMMG, op. cit., Vol. XII, p. 275.

and that Col. Wylie not only done likewise, but he has even recently given his opinion that the £3 tax levied on ex-indentured Indians should be retained.¹ But in its report the *Commission recommended compliance without delay of all Indian demands including repeal of the £3 tax*, and 'the grant of some trifling concessions in addition.'²

It was most unusual: a colonial Commission—and a Commission in South Africa for that matter—showing so much sympathy to the Indians, and submitting its report so quickly. Even more unusual was that the government accepted all of its recommendations. No less unusual was the speed with which a bill incorporating these recommendations was drafted, presented to the legislature, rushed through all the readings in both Houses, given assent, and made into law. On 5 June 1914 the Governor-General in a despatch to the Colonial office said that, 'I have reason to believe that General Smuts is anxious to complete the second reading stage as soon as possible,' but 'considerable opposition from Natal members on both sides of the House is anticipated.'³

The opposition did come, but General Botha intervened and threatened to resign if the bill was not passed.⁴

In the three-quarters of a century since then nothing like that had ever happened in South Africa. It was also a few years earlier that the Union of South Africa was formed. The British were then following a policy of reconciliation and healing the wounds of the Boer War. They would not have taken a strong line for the sake of the Indians on an issue on which the South Africans were very sensitive, and which would, in addition, have exposed them to the charge of interfering in the internal affairs of the Union even after the grant of self government. Things could not have moved in the direction and with the speed they did unless an understanding about Gandhi had been reached between the governments of India, Britain and South Africa.

A close study of these events chronologically would reveal that on 13 January the two parties were at a dead end. The Inquiry Commission had been appointed but it had not yet held any sitting, and Gandhi was denouncing and boycotting it, and was

¹Ibid., p. 278.

²D. G. Tendulkar, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 149.

³CWMG, op. cit., Vol. XII, Appendix XXIV, p. 622.

⁴Ibid., p. 441.

committed to re-starting passive resistance. On that date, Gandhi saw Smuts. So far Smuts had refused even to talk to Gandhi on the telephone. Now he met him, but would still not discuss anything; he would rather wait for the arrival in Pretoria of Hardinge's emissary Benjamin Robertson, who had reached Durban two days earlier. But once Robertson had reached Pretoria and talked to South African ministers and Gandhi, things took a sudden turn.

On 21 January, the day Gandhi met Robertson, he wrote to the Ministry of Interior that passive resistance would not be renewed. Next day he met Smuts and an agreement was promptly reached between the two. Four days later, the Inquiry Commission held its first sitting, and this 'packed body which intended to hoodwink the Government and the public both in England and India,' as Gandhi called it, quickly gave a verdict in favour of the Indians.

That so highly prejudiced¹ a Commission should adjudicate so strongly in favour of the Indians, and so quickly, can only be explained by the existence of a pre-arranged plan. The Commission was indeed in touch with the Government, as can be gleaned from the despatches of 31 December and 21 January from the Governor-General to the Colonial Office.² Moreover, we have an indirect admission to that effect from General Smuts himself, who on 16 January told Gandhi: 'We have decided to grant your demand, but for this we must have recommendation from the Commission'³.

¹Ibid., p. 607. In a statement on 13 December 1913, on objections to the members of the Commission, Gokhale quoted Gandhi as saying: 'Mr Esselen has emphatically declared from public platforms on many occasions extreme anti-Asian views, and he is so intimately related politically to Union Ministers that he is regarded here practically as a non-official member of the Ministry. Only recently he expressed himself privately most offensively about the Indians to a member of the Union Parliament, named Mr Mevler, who has publicly protested against his appointment. Col. Wylie has been our bitter opponent in Natal for more than twenty years. So far back as in 1896 he led a mob to demonstrate against the landing of Indians who had arrived at Durban in two vessels, advocated at a public meeting the sinking of the ships with all Indians on board and commending a remark made by another speaker that he would willingly put down one month's pay for a shot at the Indians, asked how many were prepared to put down similarly a month's pay on those terms.'

²Ibid., pp. 605-6 & 609-10.

³D. G. Tendulkar, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 148.

But if the Solomon Commission was so obliging to the Government, what about the Government itself? Why this sudden change of heart? Is it not a strange coincidence that the situation changed drastically after Robertson's arrival in Pretoria? Does then Robertson provide the clue to the mystery of Gandhi? What was the secret message from Hardinge that he was carrying? What did he tell the South Africans that immediately converted them into accepting all Indian demands and rushing a bill through the Parliament, with Botha's resignation threat if it was not passed immediately?

On 26 March 1914, the Secretary of State for Colonies had written to the Viceroy: '...the best possible outcome would be if Gandhi will return to his native land.'¹ Five months later General Smuts recorded with satisfaction: 'The Saint has left our shores, I sincerely hope, for ever'²

Smuts, significantly, was writing not to Hardinge, as he normally would have done, but to Robertson, and one is left wondering whether it was not in the context of some secret understanding which they had reached?

Anyhow, Smuts was happy that Gandhi had left. But for the British it was the best possible outcome, not only because he had left South Africa, but also because he was coming to India, for they had in mind a new role for Gandhi in India.

Return to India

The situation in India had been seriously worrying the British for some time. The partition of Bengal had caused a public agitation of such scale and intensity as they had never seen or even imagined before. The wars that they had fought and won in India had been against the Chiefs of States, but this was, like the Great Revolt, a peoples' war: the agitation could spill over and inflame the whole population in the rest of the country as well. The problem was aggravated because, as the Viceroy wrote to the India Secretary, '...we can no longer count on the loyalty of the Mohammedan

¹Lord Crewe to Lord Hardinge. Cited by Judith Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

²General Smuts to Sir Benjamin Robertson, 21 August, W. K. Hancock, *Smuts, The Sanguine Years, 1870-1919*, Cambridge University Press, 1962, p. 345.

³Hardinge's letter on 14 August 1913, Hardy, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

community as a whole.³ Seven years earlier, when Minto and Kitchener had warned the Government against a *rapprochement* with Russia at the expense of Turkey, Morley had rebuked them in no uncertain terms. The new policy was not open to question, he told them. This was '...the policy resolved upon deliberately by us,' he affirmed, and 'it is for their (Government's) agents and officers all over the world to accept it.'¹ The Government was so determined to follow this policy that Kitchener's views on its effect on India cost him the job of Viceroy that he so passionately coveted. Morley passed him over in favour of Hardinge, a comparatively unknown figure but committed to the new policy.

Hardinge was a career diplomat who had spent thirty years in this line before coming to India in 1910. From 1898 to 1903 he had worked as a Secretary in the British embassy in Petrograd. After a short tour of duty as Assistant Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office in 1903-4, he had returned as British Ambassador to Russia. From 1906 to 1910 he was Permanent Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign Office, a post he was to re-occupy after the Indian interlude. For twelve years before coming to India he had been directly involved in Russian affairs, participating in and contributing to the change in the Anglo-Russian relationship which created the Triple Entente. No Viceroy before or after him was so conscious of the fall-out of international affairs on India as Hardinge. Others, including Curzon, had not looked beyond the threat of Russian Imperialism to the north-west of India, but Hardinge kept a close watch on the European situation. He knew from inside information what the price of a British *rapprochement* with Russia was going to be. He could also, with his trained diplomatic eye and four years' work as the head of the Foreign Office, see that the era of armed peace in Europe was about to end; that a European war was coming; and that in that war Russia and Turkey would be ranged against each other, while Britain would be the ally, not of Turkey but of Russia. This would create difficulties with the Indian Muslims. But that could not be helped, so instead of wasting energies on winning over the Muslims, which would be impossible, why not concentrate on weaning the Hindus away from the Muslims, and softening the Hindu attitude towards the Government?

¹Morley's letter to Minto dated July 1906, *Morley Collection*, op. cit.

The annulment of the partition of Bengal without any regard to Muslim reaction, and the rejection of the scheme for a Central Muslim University, were two facets of the same policy. The British at that time had so much despaired of reconciling the Muslims that they had even given up trying, and the Secretary of State Lord Crewe had, as we have seen, refused to see the Muslim League delegation that had travelled to England for this purpose only. The Congress, on the other hand, was assiduously cultivated by Hardinge, and he had succeeded in establishing an excellent relationship with Gokhale.

Gokhale, Mehta and the Moderates dominated the Congress at that time, the Extremists having been virtually expelled after the Surat session in 1907. Moreover, the three leading lights of the Extremists, 'Bal, Pal and Lal,' were out of India. Bal Gangadhar Tilak was deported to Mandalay for a six year term in 1908, while Bipin Chandra Pal and Lala Lajpat Rai had betaken themselves to England and the United States respectively. But neither they nor their militant message had been forgotten by their followers. All three had preached terrorism. Pal had justified it because it was, 'not an unnatural outcome of repression.' Lajpat Rai had told young men that, 'the tree of the nation calls for blood. It is watered with blood.' Tilak had called it, 'exasperation produced by the autocratic exercise of power' whose sole remedy was the immediate grant of *swaraj*. He had called the bomb 'the magic', 'the sacred formula' and the 'amulet', and had once rebuked Bengali youths for not having the courage to 'break the heads' of East Bengal Governor Fuller and other officials who, he said, were terrorizing the people.

Terrorism was a legacy of the partition of Bengal when Bengali youth, till then reputed to be gentle and artistic by nature, had established secret *samities* all over Bengal. They were inspired by Nihilists and Sinn Feinners, and murdered individual Europeans, manufactured bombs to throw at high officials and looted Government treasuries. From Bengal, the cult of the bomb had spread to Maharashtra, the home of Tilak. After partition was undone terrorist activity had slackened, but had not disappeared altogether. Terrorism had actually gained respectability, for much credit was given to the terrorists for forcing the Government to reverse its decision. Such activities had increased in Maharashtra, and from there spread to the Punjab.

What was worrying the Government most was the activities of Indian revolutionaries abroad. Several such groups were in the field, particularly in the United States, under different names and different leaders, and had won the sympathy of the general American public and especially of the Irish-Americans. But when Hardayal joined them in November 1913, the Government of India was truly alarmed.

Hardayal had been a brilliant student who had gone from St. Stephen's College, Delhi, to Government College, Lahore, and then won a scholarship to Oxford. There he came under the influence of terrorists and joined them. Back home, he was under constant police surveillance. He quietly slipped out of India, ultimately reaching the United States in 1911. He toured the US extensively, giving lectures and drawing large crowds. At a meeting in San Francisco on 1 November 1913, he was successful in merging the different groups into a single organization. The Ghadar (mutiny) Party was thus born and Hardayal became its moving spirit. A sum of 15,000 dollars was collected at the meeting. A weekly magazine *Ghadar* soon started to appear. The zeal with which Hardayal held meetings, arranged lectures, collected funds and made various plans infused new life into the Indian revolutionary activity in America. He invited the German Consul to one of the meetings, on 13 December 1913, and seated him as an honoured guest on the dais.

The Ghadar Party had plans to smuggle arms and train terrorists in India who, with the help of new supporters enlisted in the country, were to carry out an elaborate programme which included:

- (1) inciting Indian soldiers to mutiny;
- (2) murdering Government officials and loyalists;
- (3) breaking of jails and release of convicts;
- (4) looting of Government treasuries;
- (5) robberies;
- (6) attacks on police posts; and
- (7) destruction of railway and telegraph lines.

The Party's main strategy was to paralyse the administration by assassinating key officials, and to seek an armed conflict with the British with the help of deserting Indian soldiers.

This sudden burst of activity by the revolutionaries occurred by chance at the same time as Gandhi's *satyagraha* in South Africa. Both Hardayal and Gandhi were engaged in foreign countries in fighting for the rights of Indians, but with different

and contrasting methods. Hardayal was a menace in any case and had to be dealt with firmly and forcefully, but couldn't Gandhi's methods be also applied as an antidote? Gandhi, like the Government of India, was himself 'perplexed' by the terrorist tendencies spreading among his compatriots. His *Hind Swaraj* was written 'in answer to the Indian school of violence' and preached 'the gospel of love in place of hate. It replaces violence with self-sacrifice. It pits soul force against brute force.'¹ How wonderful if such ideas could replace those of Hardayal! But that could be possible only if Gandhi came back and preached his gospel from the Indian soil. If such ideas occurred to the British, it was but natural.

On 25 March 1914, on a complaint of the British Consul in California, Hardayal was arrested and deportation proceedings against him were started. But Haryadal jumped bail and escaped to Switzerland, and from there to Berlin. Germany was already involved in many anti-British conspiracies in India, some of them in concert with the Turks. Hardayal himself went to Constantinople in 1915 and met Enver Pasha. Enver Pasha had been in touch with Shiekh Mahmudul Hasan, Principal of the Muslim seminary at Deoband. But the 'movement of silken handkerchiefs' was discovered by the British, and Mahmudul Hasan was arrested with the help of the Sharif of Makkah, Husain. His disciple, Obaidullah Sindhi, however, reached Kabul and with the help of some other revolutionaries was able to set up the German-inspired 'Provisional Government of India' under Mahindra Pratap.

The Indo-German Mission in Kabul and the Indian Independence Committee in Berlin functioned throughout the war. In their attempt to instigate a revolt in India several efforts were made to smuggle arms through the east coast from places like Honolulu, Shanghai and Singapore. A German sub-marine, *Emden*, reached Indian waters within a few weeks of the declaration of war.

The 'internal situation in India gave cause for anxiety,' Hardinge told the Parliament later. He referred to 'the conspiracies at Delhi and Lahore and the efforts made by revolutionary agents to undermine the loyalty of Indian troops,' and to the

¹D. G. Tendulkar, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 106.

return to India from the US and Canada of '7,000 revolutionaries', and to 'the German conspiracy to organize rebellion in Bengal.' 'The attitude of Afghanistan,' he said, 'was for a long time doubtful... The situation on the frontier was very disturbing.'¹

None of the Turko-German plans succeeded in the end, but when the reports started coming in in 1913, and were followed by other intelligence of increasing activities, they sounded very ominous. They looked even more menacing when viewed against the rising temper of the country. The League had changed its creed to self-government and its Young Turks had brought it close to the Congress. The Congress itself had changed. Although still controlled by the moderates, it had outlived the phase when it met simply to reiterate loyalty, and petition and pray. It had been pushed by the Extremists to justify boycott of foreign goods and to support *swadeshi*. The mild 'Grand Old Man of India,' Naoroji, had raised the cry of *swaraj*, and Tilak was now demanding it as his 'birth right'. The public influence of the moderates was on the decline, and that of the extremists growing rapidly. Tilak had become the most popular Hindu leader of the day: it was his views and his methods, and not those of Gokhale, however respected he personally was, that moved the masses. And he was due to be released, after completing his internment, in June 1914.

The danger loomed large—an outbreak of terrorist activity, on a much bigger scale than had ever been in Bengal, in all parts of the country, and supported by hostile external forces. Hardinge had had a personal taste of the terrorist methods when he made a State entry into Delhi, the new capital, on 23 December 1912. A bomb was thrown at his elephant, killing his umbrella-holder instantly and wounding the *mahout*. Hardinge himself was injured, but survived. 'I literally wept,'² records Hardinge, when he contemplated how all his efforts were, and would be, frustrated by this act.

This was a year after King George V had announced that partition was annulled and the Bengali-speaking areas would be

¹Hardinge's speech in the House of Lords on 13 July 1917, *The Parliamentary Debates* (official Reports), Fifth Series, Vol. XXV, columns 727-43.

²Lord Hardinge, *My Indian Years*, John Murray, London, 1948, p. 81.

united. The 'improvement' in the situation that Hardinge had noticed was not as real as he thought. Terrorism had come to India, and while one cause had disappeared, another and greater cause, with wider appeal, had appeared.

What could be done? The seditionists would of course be dealt with by the law, but that was not enough. Between the 'extremists' in India and the 'revolutionaries' abroad, they could cause anarchy and chaos in the country, which, among other things, would seriously jeopardize the war effort. Something more than military and police effort was required; something that could induce the people to keep away from acts of sabotage and terrorism, to abstain from violence; something that would keep the Indians, particularly the Hindus, pacific and non-violent.

That is where Gandhi came in. If he could be persuaded to come to India, he would be preaching non-violence as a creed. There was a kind of halo round him and his method of *satyagraha*, and with the prestige he had lately gained the Hindus would listen to him. He would be the antidote to the terrorists and the extremists. There would be, at the same time, the added advantage that South Africa would be rid of him. It would be killing two birds with one stone.

What if he failed? No harm done. He would be lost in the horde of *sadhus*, *sanyasis* and *swamis*; and South Africa would still be rid of him. But if he succeeded he would make non-violence respectable. In any case, he would be a new factor in Indian politics, always striking a discordant note, frustrating efforts at national unity. That would be an additional bonus.

In this context, Gandhi's evidence before the Hunter Commission becomes very significant indeed. Appearing before the Commission on 9 January 1920 he said: '*satyagraha* movement alone can rid India of the possibilities of violence spreading throughout the length and breadth of the land for redress of grievances, supposed or real.'¹ And: 'Our *satyagraha* must, therefore, now consist in ceaselessly helping the authorities in all the ways available to us as *satyagrahais* to restore order and curb lawlessness.'²

¹*Evidence before the Disorders Inquiry Committee, presided over by Lord Hunter, 9 January 1920; CWMG, Vol. II, pp. 107-32, op. cit., Vol. XVI, p. 378.*

²*Ibid.*, p. 427.

So the British saw to it that Gandhi not only returned to India, but returned with laurels. From the day he was to leave South Africa he was lionized and glorified. On 18 July, before he sailed, a grand farewell was held at the Town Hall of Durban presided over by the mayor, and messages were received from Botha and Smuts.¹ When he reached London a reception was held at the Cecil Hotel. On account of the outbreak of the war some dignitaries could not attend, but messages were received from such personalities as the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for India, and that arch-imperialist, Lord Curzon.² It was at this reception that he urged Indians to 'think imperially'.

When Gandhi had pleurisy and stayed on in London after Gokhale's departure, Lady Cecillia Roberts, wife of Charles Roberts, Under-Secretary of State for India, was a regular visitor: and one day Roberts himself visited Gandhi and told him: 'I would strongly advise you to go to India, for it is only there that you can be completely cured.'³ It was unheard-of in the Imperial days of 1914 for an Under-Secretary of State to call on an Indian 'subject'. Even receiving an Indian was no ordinary matter.⁴

And why was Roberts so anxious that Gandhi should go back to India without delay?

Considering British interest in Gandhi during the previous year, the reason becomes obvious. They wanted Gandhi in India early. The Indians Relief Bill was passed on 24 June 1914, and Gandhi's trip to London was useful in building him up. But why prolong his stay? That was wasting valuable time. Gandhi must get back to India, pleurisy or no pleurisy.

The time factor is very important here, and the key date is 17 June 1914. That was the day when Tilak was to be released. His release would give new life to extremism and the cult of violence, and Gandhi's help was needed in countering Tilak's influence. If Gandhi's return could not coincide with that of Tilak's, there should at least not be much delay. Gandhi would need time to establish himself, and the sooner he was in India the better. Time was precious and could not be wasted.

¹D. G. Tendulker, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

²*Ibid.*, p. 152.

³M. K. Gandhi, *op. cit.*, p. 287.

⁴A year earlier the Muslim League delegation was not received.

So 'I accepted his (Roberts') advice and began to make preparations for return to India',¹ duly arriving in Bombay on 9 January 1915.

The British Connection

'The moment I reached Bombay,' Gandhi recalled, 'Gokhale sent me word that the Governor was desirous of seeing me.'² The governor of a province, and a presidency to boot, was too high and mighty in those days to receive an Indian, except rarely, let alone be 'desirous' of seeing one, but Gandhi had, for certain reasons, become an exception, and Willingdon, for all his imperial airs, was keen to see him. When Gandhi saw him, Willingdon, according to Gandhi, told him: 'I ask one thing of you. I would like you to come and see me whenever you propose to take any steps concerning the government.' Willingdon also asked Gandhi to 'come to me whenever you like.'³

Gandhi's name appeared in the King's birthday honours in June 1915 receiving, along with Lady Willingdon, the Kaiser-i-Hind Gold medal. But he could find no place in the nation's higher councils. In December 1915 he was defeated in the elections to the Subjects Committee of the Congress and had to be nominated, as a gesture of courtesy, by the President under his special powers.⁴ In December 1916, again he was voted down, 'but Tilak declared that Gandhi was elected'.⁵

Gandhi was slowly sliding into obscurity, and something had to be done to boost him up. This was done in Champaran. The story need not be repeated here. Briefly, in April 1917, 'when Mrs Besant's Home Rule Movement was at its height'⁶, Gandhi went there to investigate the grievances of the tenants against the European planters of indigo. The Government, *like the Government of South Africa three years earlier*, ultimately appointed a commission of inquiry which submitted '...a unanimous report

¹M. K. Gandhi, op. cit., p. 287.

²Ibid., p. 301.

³Ibid.

⁴Sitaramayya, op. cit., p. 210.

⁵Ibid., p. 215.

⁶Ibid., p. 234.

practically accepting the complaints of the tenants as valid¹, and made recommendations which were implemented through an Act.

Between the arrival of Gandhi and the appointment of the Commission, however, the government acted in a strange way. When Gandhi came, he was, soon after arrival, served with a notice asking him to leave the district, although he was 'not on any list of agitators'². He disobeyed the order, returned his Kaiser-i-Hind gold medal, and pleaded guilty. His defiance of the government, his readiness to fight a powerful band of European planters, his courage and humility, his 'motives of rendering humanitarian and national service',³ and his bold statement before the court, created a sensation. It was reported across the country, along with his claim, '...to have considerable experience in such matters.'⁴ The limelight was taken away from Mrs Besant and temporarily focused on Gandhi and his methods.

Despite Gandhi's plea of guilty, he was not sentenced. The magistrate postponed judgment, pending consultations with higher authorities. The case was later withdrawn.

Why one may well ask, was he prosecuted in the first instance, if it was intended that he would not be punished. The answer is simple: the idea was not to send him to jail, because a jail term, though it would help to build his image, would also mean taking him out of public life and allowing him to be forgotten. Moreover he needed to be built up now, for use against Mrs Besant and others. In any case the object was to project him, and this could be done by a mere show of prosecution.

Those aware of the workings of a colonial administration know how difficult, almost impossible, it was for such administrations to revise their orders. A matter of prestige was involved which was particularly important in the East. The British Administration in India was even more inflexible in this respect than any other colonial government. In this case, however, the prosecution of Gandhi was dropped, and he was released, as in South Africa. The Government also immediately agreed, again as in South

¹Ibid., p. 237.

²*Police Report* cited by Judith Brown, op. cit., p. 65.

³M. K. Gandhi, op. cit. Statement before the Magistrate, p. 333.

⁴Ibid., p. 333.

Africa, to the appointment of a Commission—and accepted almost all of its recommendations. And the orders came—in a matter concerning so remote and insignificant a district—from the Viceroy himself.¹

Gandhi's victory was hailed throughout India. The sensational news was splashed by the Press. It was a highly successful propaganda coup. Gandhi went up in public esteem and became, for a moment, a national hero. 'God bless Mr Gandhi and his work,' wrote the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. 'How we wish we had only half a dozen Gandhis in India to teach our people self-abnegation and selfless patriotism.'²

This was the general feeling. Jawaharlal Nehru, for instance, recorded his impressions of their first meeting in December 1916 at the Lucknow Congress: 'All of us admired him for his heroic fight in South Africa, but he seemed very distant and different and unpolitical to many of us youngmen.' But, 'Soon afterwards his adventures and victory in Champaran, on behalf of the tenants of the planters, filled us with enthusiasm. We saw that he was prepared to use his methods in India also, and they promised success.'³

After Champaran, Gandhi was involved in two other matters. The one in Ahmedabad was a labour dispute with the mill-owners to which the government was not a party, but where on the occasion of celebrations for the settlement of the dispute, the Divisional Commissioner told the crowd: 'You should always act as Mr Gandhi advises you.'⁴ The other was for remission of revenue in Khadda (Gujrat). This time the Government could not afford to give a clear victory to Gandhi, as it had done at Champaran, without exposing itself. But when Gandhi was 'casting about for some graceful way of terminating the struggle',⁵ the authorities were quick to provide it.

By then, early in 1918, Gandhi's image had brightened, thanks to the Government. He had become a Bapu and later a Mahatma;

¹This comes from various sources, some of which have been listed by Judith Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

²*Ibid.*, p. 67.

³Jawaharlal Nehru, *Autobiography*, John Lane the Bodley Head, London, 1936, p. 35.

⁴M. K. Gandhi, *op. cit.*, p. 348.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 354.

but he had still not become an established all-Indian figure. His influence, because of Ahmedabad and Khadda, was largely confined to Gujarat and Bombay, his home province. Even there he was not important enough. In August 1917, for example, when the Bombay provincial Congress Committee appointed a sub-committee to consider passive resistance to the Government's internment of the leader of Home Rule League, Mrs Annie Besant, Gandhi was invited by the sub-committee, but he was consulted only as an experienced passive resister and was not given a seat in the committee itself.

The arrest of Mrs Besant had been resented by the whole country, and different sections of people were considering how to express their feelings and secure her release. When some people from Bombay met Gandhi initially, they experienced a shock. Kanji Dwarkadas has recorded:

Umar Sobani, Shankerlal Banker, Indulal Yajnik, Jamnadas Dwarkadas and myself (I was the junior most) approached Gandhiji for assistance to get Mrs. Besant out. It was then that Gandhiji first talked of Passive Resistance in India. He wanted a hundred volunteers, true and faithful, to walk from Bombay to Coimbatore (about hundred miles) where Dr Besant was transferred from Ootacamund for internment and he said that this would help in her release: We were sceptical about this kind of political agitation and were disappointed at Gandhiji's unhelpful evasive reply. Gandhiji did not take an active part in the agitation for her release and did not tell us that he had written a private letter to the Private Secretary to Lord Chelmsford, on 10 July. This was the amazing letter:

'In my humble opinion the internments are a big blunder. Madras was absolutely calm before then, now it is badly disturbed. India as a whole had not made common cause with Mrs. Besant, but now she is in a fair way towards commanding India's identity with her methods...I myself do not like much in Mrs. Besant's methods. I have not liked the idea of political propaganda being carried on during the war. In my opinion our restraint would have been the best propaganda. And no one could deny Mrs. Besant's great sacrifice and love for India or desire to be strictly constitutional. But the whole country was against me...The Congress was trying to capture Mrs. Besant. The latter was trying to capture the former. Now they have almost become one...'

It is hardly necessary to comment on Gandhiji's letter. Gandhiji in his letter refers to 'our restraint' putting Government and himself on the same side; and he does not like the internment of Mrs. Besant, not because it was fundamentally wrong, but because it brought Mrs. Besant and the Congress together! It is not surprising that Gandhiji did not take his friends into his confidence about this letter and did not hand over a copy of this letter to the

Press for publication. Fortunately, in the interests of History, this letter is recorded in the Government of India files of this period.¹

Gandhi seems, during this period, to have had special lines of communication with the highest British authorities. The Governor of Bombay, Willingdon, had already given him a blank cheque, on the first meeting in 1915. His opening of his doors completely to an Indian who had as yet no political standing was extraordinary and unheard of in that age. Sixteen years later, when Gandhi was an international figure and the most important Indian leader, the one who had led two mass civil disobedience movements against the Government, and had just returned from the Second Round Table Conference in England, where he was the sole representative of the Congress, the same Gandhi was refused, in spite of requests, an interview by the same Willingdon (now Viceroy)!

As for Gandhi's relations with the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, not much is known, although in his autobiography Gandhi does refer to 'the cordial relations between Lord Chelmsford, the Viceroy, and myself.'² We do know, however, that in Champaran it was due to the intervention of Chelmsford that Gandhi won the laurels, and we now also know of his secret communication with Chelmsford about Mrs Besant. We do not know of any other secret communications, but we do know that in April 1918, Chelmsford invited him to a war conference. Important leaders like Tilak and Annie Besant (then free), were not invited to this conference, but Gandhi was. What place the preacher of non-violence had in a war conference is hard to explain. Furthermore, Gandhi had not yet reached the level of all-India politics. Despite his three campaigns in Champaran, Ahmedabad and Khadda, his influence was limited. He could not be much use to the Government in its war efforts, but by inviting him, Chelmsford was according Gandhi an all-India status, and boosting his position in political circles.

Another act to raise the status of Gandhi was his nomination by Willingdon to the Beggars' Relief Committee. The nomination was of little consequence and Gandhi seemed a perfect choice.

¹Dwarkadas, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-7.

²M. K. Gandhi, *op. cit.*, p. 356.

Its significance, however, lay in the fact that nominations to such government-appointed committees and commissions carried great public prestige at that time; the choice of nominees was restricted to very eminent figures, holders of high titles or members of Councils, or both. Gandhi not only did not belong to either category; he had, on the contrary, returned the Kaiser-e-Hind medal. His act was then considered by the people at large as a slap in the face of the Government. Now the same Government, in fact the same Governor who had personally paid for the medal,¹ was honouring him.²

Willingdon also invited him to the war conference held in Bombay in June 1918. Unlike at Delhi, Tilak was invited this time. As Tilak rose to move a resolution, Willingdon ruled him out of order. Thereupon many of the nationalist leaders walked out. But, 'Jinnah stayed on and made a most thunderous speech of his life smashing...Willingdon to pieces for his outrageous behaviour towards Tilak and having made his speech, he also walked out.'³

Gandhi later presided at a public meeting organised by the Home Rule League, to protest against Willingdon's behaviour towards Tilak. In his speech he mildly criticized the Governor, but in the same breath, rebuked Tilak for lack of dignity. Five months later, when the citizens of Bombay organized a protest against a move to honour Willingdon on his retirement, Gandhi flatly refused to join the agitation.⁴

After the war conference, 'Gandhi threw himself wholehog in the recruiting campaign...He could not get a single recruit for the war.'⁵

Throughout this period, between 1915 and 1919, Gandhi's relations with the British authorities were, to say the least, curious. Two things, however, emerge with certainty. First, Gandhi had

¹Dwarkadas, op. cit., p. 81.

²It is interesting that on 25 June 1932, Willingdon, now the Viceroy, told the Secretary of State for India: 'In the past his (Gandhi's) influence has varied greatly with the treatment he had received from the Government', Mss EUR. E. 240(II). Cited by Judith Brown, *Gandhi and Civil Disobedience*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1977, p. 305.

³Dwarkadas, op. cit., p. 77.

⁴Ibid., p. 78.

⁵Ibid., p. 94.

failed to find a niche in the political temple. He had been cold-shouldered by Gokhale, and when he turned to Tilak, he could not go beyond becoming an ordinary delegate to Congress Sessions. He had launched three movements and made a name, but had not reached the front rank yet. He was still no more than a *sadhu* with curious habits and an expert exponent of *satyagraha*. But that was all. Second, he had been in touch secretly with the British also, and the British were anxious to help him and were trying to build him up politically.

He had a foot in each camp and his attitude hovered between loyalty to the Empire and the pose of a nationalist. He could defy the Government at Khadda, and yet publicly state that he would rather be away helping in the war effort. He could refuse to attend a war conference unless other important national leaders were also invited, yet attend it eventually in their absence, and follow it up with a campaign for recruitment to the army. He could keep mum at Willingdon's offensive behaviour towards Tilak at the war conference, but could then preside over a public meeting of protest. He could be inciting the Khilafat leaders to start a movement against the British, and yet a few days later fight at the Amritsar Congress for the acceptance of Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms.

All this—his sudden departure from South Africa, his curious relationship with the British, his changeable stand on national issues—are hard to explain away.

Did Gandhi then come from South Africa at the instance of the British? Had General Smuts reached some secret understanding with the Viceroy's¹ emissary in January 1914? Did Gandhi come to India as an instrument of the British or as an ally? and what inducements were offered to him? Was he, for example, persuaded that he could serve his community better in India than in South Africa, and promised help? And, did it prove to be a miscalculation?

¹It is significant that Gandhi is hardly mentioned in Hardinge's *My Indian Years*. The book was published after Gandhi had been acclaimed as the 'Father of the Nation' and had become a historic figure. It would have been most natural then for anyone having anything to do with Gandhi to stress and exaggerate that connection, and describe it graphically. Oddly enough, Hardinge mentions Gandhi in passing. The reader gets the impression that the author had been at pains not to mention it at all but, when he could not avoid it, mentioned him quietly and was in a hurry to move over to others.

It is impossible to answer these questions, as no written evidence can be produced. But many state secrets, even in these days of Freedom of Information Acts, must remain secret for all times. And in this case, those responsible certainly did not and could not prepare any documents or give any statements.

But all the evidence, however meagre, points in only one direction—that Gandhi, through some understanding, was brought back to India by the British, and it was through their help that he was established as a national leader. That later they fell out, and when he had fully entrenched himself, Gandhi broke the connection, is another matter. But his subsequent career—his movements against the Government, and his jail terms—should not blind us to the truth about his initial career, which alone explains what is otherwise a mystery.

The British, let us not forget, were also the founders of the Indian National Congress, the organization credited with waging the struggle for Indian independence.

CHAPTER 6

THE KHILAFAT MOVEMENT

Gandhi's opportunity in India came in 1919 with the passage of the Rowlatt Bill, which gave the Government sweeping powers of search, arrest and detention of those it suspected of seditious activity. It was universally condemned, and all the elected members of the Imperial Legislative Council opposed it, but the Government went ahead, caring little for the rising public hostility.

The introduction of the Bill was badly timed. Between 1917 and 1919, India had woken up to a new consciousness. The Lucknow Pact had removed Hindu-Muslim differences and brought political unity to the people as a whole, while the dynamism of Mrs Annie Besant had popularized the ideal of *swaraj* throughout the length and breadth of the subcontinent. She had insisted that the price of India's co-operation in the war was her independence while Tilak had popularized the doctrine of 'responsive co-operation'. Montagu's statement about 'responsible government' against the background of the Allies' proclaimed war aims and constant talk of self-determination, and the personal visit of the Secretary of State for India and his interviews with Indian leaders, had all led the people to believe that they would receive a large measure of self-rule when peace came. But the 'Montford' report (named after its authors Montagu and Chelmsford) fell far short of these expectations, and it was sharply criticized by both the Congress and the League. Tilak called it 'a good report, with a useless scheme,' while Mrs Besant reflected the general feeling when she said it was 'unworthy of England to give and India to take'. What caused general indignation was the assertion that the Indians were not yet fit to govern themselves. It was at that time that, adding injury to insult, came this Draconian law.

Both communities were disenchanted but the Muslims had an additional reason for their disillusionment. That reason was Turkey. Their interest in Turkish affairs had continued to increase: the war had enhanced, not diminished it. When Turkish entry into the war had seemed imminent, the community was worried as to its duty, and Mohammad Ali had given expressions to these feelings in his famous editorial in the *Comrade*, 'The choice of the Turks'. In this article he had given a long list of Britain's anti-Turkish acts and held her responsible for the existing relationship. If hostilities broke out between the two, Mohammad Ali had written, there would be no end to 'the mental anguish and the heart-pangs that will be ours'; the Muslims would however follow Syed Ahmed Khan's advice: 'Our attitude towards the Government established in this country must be governed by one consideration...the attitude of that Government towards ourselves'¹ (*Comrade*, 26 September 1914). When Turkey did join the Central Powers, the Government of India was quick to close down many Muslim newspapers and magazines, including the *Comrade*, and arrest a number of Muslim leaders (no Hindu leader of any prominence was detained). Among those interned during the war years, apart from Mohammad Ali, were Shaukat Ali, Hasrat Mohani, Abul Kalam Azad, Zafar Ali Khan, Mahmudul Hasan, and Husain Ahmad Madani. The community was so agitated that the League leaders, fearing that sentiment might prevail over reason and untoward incidents might happen, had not held that year's annual session.

The Government had, however, tried to reassure the Muslims about its intentions towards Turkey. As soon as war was declared, it issued a proclamation asserting that it was not a war of aggression and insisting that Britain had tried its best to avoid it but the Turkish Government had launched attacks and forced Britain to take up arms. It assured the Muslims that 'no question of a religious character was involved' and Britain and her allies would not do anything that would injure their religious sentiments, that all the holy places of Islam would be protected and that the Allies were fighting the Turkish Government which was under

¹Rais Ahmed Jafri (ed.), *Selections from 'Comrade'*, Mohammad Ali Academy, Lahore, 1965, pp. 498-524.

German influence, and not the Caliph or Islam.¹ This proclamation was not only published in the Press and issued in the form of hundreds of thousands of handbills, but was also read out in all the big cities and district even sub-district, headquarters.

Soon the Viceroy and responsible British leaders were themselves giving similar assurances. They repeated again and again that they had no imperialist designs against Turkey, and specifically promised that the position of the Sultan as Caliph would not suffer, and the holy places would be protected. As early as on 10 November 1914, Asquith had declared in his Guildhall speech that there would be no crusade against the Muslim faith. Lesser officials were even more reassuring. These pledges had not only kept India quiet for the British, but had also made it possible for Muslim soldiers to fight on their side, even in Muslim lands like Mesopotamia, with an easy conscience. In the last year of the war, Lloyd George had declared that the Allies were not fighting 'to deprive Turkey of the rich and renowned lands of Asia Minor and Thrace which are predominantly Turkish in race'; and Woodrow Wilson had expressed similar sentiments in his message to the Congress three days later, in January 1918.

But as the war drew to a close, the Muslims became increasingly suspicious of the Allies, particularly British intentions. They had, of course, no knowledge then either of the correspondence that had passed between the British High Commissioner in Egypt, Sir Henry McMahon, and the Sharif and Amir of Makkah, Hussain, or of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, or of the diplomatic notes exchanged between Britain, France and Russia—all of which distributed portions of a dismembered Ottoman Empire between the three Allies; but they had during a century and a half learnt, to their immense cost, the ways of British diplomatic wheeling and dealing; and warning signs were now not wanting.

The revolt of Husain, unanimously condemned by the Muslims in India, was, without doubt, engineered by the British. A year later, Arthur Balfour, as Foreign Secretary, had made his ominous declaration about Palestine. Reports had also trickled through that the Bolsheviks had released documents which gave Anglo-French agreement to the Russian share in the post-war distribution

¹*Government Proclamation* dated 1 November 1914.

of Turkish possessions. And now, one year later, Turkey lay prostrate in defeat, and apparently at the mercy of the victors, particularly the British. British forces occupied Palestine and Mesopotamia. Hijaz was under their henchman, Husain. The British fleet was in the Dardenelles. Constantinople was in British hands, and the Sultan-Caliph was a British captive. The fate of the Caliph and that of the Arabian peninsula was undoubtedly going to be decided by the British.

Both questions were of paramount importance in Muslim eyes. The Prophet had himself decreed that the Jaziratul Arab should be kept clear of non-Muslims: and Jaziratul Arab was believed to be the Arabian Peninsula, washed on three sides by the seas, reaching in the north to the Tigris and the Euphrates.¹

Now, after the war, all the three holiest places of Islam were in danger of being controlled by non-Muslims. Jerusalem was already occupied by the British, and the other two, Makkah and Madinah, were under the rule of their stooge. Would they all now become British possessions, directly or indirectly? Would the British divide the Arab lands into several petty states, breaking Muslim unity, and set up a number of puppets? And what would happen to the Caliph, the symbol of Muslim unity? Would he be reduced to a cipher, with only some outward trappings left intact? Would the Commander of the Faithful be made an instrument in the hands of British, a kind of Turkish Maharaja? The Khilafat manipulated by non-Muslims, and Makkah and Madinah under non-Muslim control? Even the thought was more than flesh and blood could bear.

While the World War was still many months away, the Ali Brothers and Maulana Abdul Bari had formed an Association of the Servants of the Kabah, *Anjuman-i-Khuddam-i-Ka'bah*, and when the League met for its first post-war annual session at Delhi in December 1918, the President almost began his address with a reference to 'The Great World War, which appears to be ending so happily and triumphantly for the Allies, has unfortunately brought deep and gloomy foreboding to Muslim minds.'² 'We cannot forget,' he said, 'that Turkey raises, for all Muslims, the

¹Abul Kalam Azad, *Masla-i-Khilafat*, Maktaba Ahab Lahore, (n.d).

²Pirzada, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 475.

question of Khilafat and the protection of our holy places,"¹ and warned the British that the Muslims' 'temporal loyalty is subject to the limitation imposed by our undoubted loyalty to our faith.'² The meeting passed a resolution demanding that '...the fullest consideration should be paid (at the Peace Conference) to the requirements of the Islamic law with regard to the full and independent control by the Sultan of Turkey, Khalifa of the Prophet, over the holy places and over the Jaziratul Arab as delimited in the Muslim books.'³ The League also demanded to be represented at the Peace Conference. During the war India had been represented at the Imperial War Conference by Sir Satyendra Sinha, Maharaja of Bikaner, and Sir James Meston. No Muslim had been included, through an act of calculated omission. Now the Muslims wanted at least to be represented at Versailles, where matters of direct interest to them were to be discussed.⁴

The British reply to the League demands was to proscribe the entire proceedings of the meeting.

It was at this session that the *ulema* participated in a League meeting for the first time. Since the failure of the Great Revolt a gulf had existed between the English-educated Muslims and the religious leaders. The latter had, as a class, remained irreconcilably hostile to everything English—English Raj, English education, English language, English dress, English manners and customs. The English-educated Muslims respected the *ulema* for their learning and character and for the sacrifice they were making, but considered them impractical and hopelessly out of date. Now adversity had brought them together. This reconciliation at Delhi was soon to develop into close co-operation between them and multiply manifold in the coming months.

The Muslim League, like the Congress in those days, used to normally meet once a year at Christmastime. This was obviously insufficient for such stormy times. The entire community was deeply perturbed over 'Khilafat'—the one word that summed up all their anxieties about the protection of the holy places, the future of the Jaziratul Arab, the division of the

¹Ibid., p. 476.

²Ibid., p. 497.

³Ibid, p. 500.

⁴Eventually Montagu and the Maharaja of Bikaner 'represented' India.

Middle East, the peace terms for Turkey and the future of the office and the powers of the Caliph.

The Muslim apprehensions were deep and they began to express themselves in numerous meetings held in different towns under different auspices. Khilafat committees sprang up throughout India almost overnight. This was a spontaneous action, not directed by any organization or leader. The future leaders of the Khilafat movement were still in detention, and the Muslim League rather cautious and hesitant. But the people were excited and anxious to do something.

Gandhi sees an opportunity and seizes it

It was in this atmosphere that the Government, in a fit of over-confidence born out of victory in the War, had recourse to the Rowlatt Act, and Gandhi saw a chance to make a bid for all-India leadership. He had been four years in India now and had so far failed to find a place on the national stage. He had failed to become a member of the Servants of India Society. He had not been able to get a position in the Congress, even failing to get elected to the Subjects Committee. He had carried out three campaigns but they were local in nature and had not done much to add to the reputation he already enjoyed at the time of his arrival. He had been trying very hard to find some issue of general importance which could raise him to the national level, but, as he wrote after Champaran: 'After much careful consideration, I am unable to suggest any other *act of universal application*, with a view to *inviting imprisonment*, save rigorous propaganda among the masses.'¹

Gandhi had not been able to find such an issue but he had been trying to slowly build up his image. He had discarded his western clothes, and his huge Kathiawari turban, and taken to a simple dhoti. He had established an ashram at Ahmedabad. He had travelled all over India in crowded third class railway compartments. He had fortified his image as a simple, selfless, unworldly man, an ascetic who had deliberately chosen to live in poverty. Champaran and Khadda had helped him keep in the

¹CWVG, op. cit., Vol. XIII, p. 453. Gandhi's letter, dated 30 June 1917 to J. B. Petit. (Emphasis added.)

news, sporadically and shown that this 'votary of truth and *ahinsa*' could some times get results, albeit on minor issues. He had refrained from joining any faction and so had maintained the advantage of having no political adversaries.

Yet he was totally isolated, and not taken seriously in the political arena. He had avoided taking a definite stand on most national issues of the day, biding his time and waiting for his chance. Now he thought he had found an opening. The country was seething with discontent. The Muslims were in a rebellious mood, and the Rowlatt Bill had been condemned by both Muslims and Hindus. Moreover, there was no leader in sight to convert these feelings into a mass protest movement. No moderate leader would do it, not even Surendranath Bannerji, despite his experience of agitational politics. Actually he had already left the Congress and was building a separate organization of the moderates, the Liberals Party. Jinnah and Mrs Besant, though fire-eaters, were opposed in principle to the defiance of law and of lawful authority. Tilak, the *Lokmanya*, was away in England, and Mohammad Ali in detention. So the hero of the passive resistance in South Africa stepped into the breach.

It was as if the role in search of an actor had at last found one.

Gandhi began by forming a *Satyagraha Sabha*, under his presidency, and enlisting members who had to take a pledge that in the event of the Rowlatt Bills becoming law 'and until they are withdrawn', they would 'refuse civilly to obey these laws and such other laws as a Committee to be hereafter appointed may think fit.' The propaganda and pledge-signing campaign went on till the Bill was gazetted. Gandhi then announced 6 April as a day of 'fasting and prayer' when all work should be suspended, and at Bombay he himself started it with a sea-bath as an 'act of self-purification'. If these antics were meant to attract the Hindu masses, they succeeded brilliantly, but the Muslims responded to his call even more enthusiastically. Unprecedented scenes of Hindu-Muslim fraternization were witnessed all over India. Both communities joined hands in organizing strikes, processions, demonstrations and meetings. In Delhi, Muslims invited Swami Shardhanand to speak from the pulpit of the Jamia Masjid, and in Bombay, Gandhi and Mrs Sarojini Naidu addressed them from the Grant Road Mosque.

The Rowlatt *satyagraha* did not last very long. It did not, indeed could not, remain non-violent. In many places, crowds

indulged in acts of violence and hooliganism. Gandhi personally witnessed these at Bombay, and saw unmistakable evidence at Nadiad (Gujrat). He realized his 'Himalayan miscalculation' and suspended the movement on 18 April. It was supposed to be resumed later but was instead formally abandoned in July.

Although the *satyagraha* petered out pathetically, two rather stupid acts of the Government helped Gandhi. It prohibited Gandhi from entering Delhi and the Punjab, and when his train approached Delhi, he was arrested and sent back to Bombay. This raised his stock and made him a hero. The second act was that of a wooden-headed Brigadier-General who decided to save the Empire by striking terror in the hearts of the natives through firing indiscriminately at a peaceful crowd, till his men ran out of ammunition and over 400 lay dead. The tragedy of Jallianwala Bagh, and the tales of brutality in various parts of Punjab, which were placed under Martial Law, shocked the country. Public opinion was inflamed. The anti-British sentiment was strengthened further, the movement of *satyagraha* found ample justification and its leader became the symbol of national protest.

Gandhi's selection of the Rowlatt Bill as the cause for an all-India movement seems strange. India in 1919 was concerned with far more important and pressing issues of a fundamental nature. For the Muslims, the immediate problem was that of Khilafat; and for both Muslims and Hindus, that of self-government. The Rowlatt Bill was, in comparison, a minor issue. It did not touch the mass of the people, who had in any case no idea of what it implied. Besides, the Government had already made a concession by dropping one of the two Bills originally proposed: the one about the change in the penal code and criminal procedure code had been withdrawn. But the *satyagraha*, even if it failed to remove the Bill from the statute book, served Gandhi's purpose beyond expectations. It sky-rocketed him to fame. He caught the fancy of the masses. His name became synonymous with sainthood, piety and patriotism—some of the witnesses before Martial Law courts confessed they did not know 'whether Gandhi is a man or a thing'.

Although *satyagraha* itself was suspended in April, the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh, the ferocity of the Martial Law in the Punjab, and the Government's clumsy attempt to defend it, shocked and outraged even moderate public opinion. The 'Punjab wrongs'

echoed and re-echoed throughout India for the next two years. Two enquiry committees were appointed, one by the Congress and the other by the Government, and their proceedings kept the matter in the public eye. Gandhi himself joined the Congress committee at a later stage and managed to keep himself in the limelight.

The *Satyagraha Sabha* had died out by July, but by then Gandhi had no use for it anymore. His first essay in *satyagraha* on an all-India scale had been successful as far as he was concerned, for the people had been won over to the idea of a peaceful non-violent struggle, as well as to his leadership of such a movement. The idea itself was, of course, not new in India. Bipin Chandra Pal had talked of 'passive resistance' as far back as in 1903. During the agitation over the partition of Bengal, Aurobindo Ghosh had drawn up a comprehensive scheme, and many of the methods later adopted by Gandhi, like boycott of foreign goods, use of *swadeshi*, closure of all work and business, courting arrest by defying some law, were actually practised then. As late as in 1917, 'India was...planning a campaign of Passive Resistance in order to secure the release of Home Rule internees.'¹ Gandhi was not even invited to the joint Congress-League meeting which had been called to consider it. But now Gandhi emerged as the expert who knew the technique inside out, who had actually and successfully practised it, and who had stirred the masses in India.

His Sadhu-like appearance and his religious ways made an impact on the Hindu mind, which recalled many occasions in Hindu mythology when a pious soul had come to the rescue in times of distress. It felt instinctively drawn to him.

Gandhi woos the Muslims

He then intensified his efforts to win over the Muslims. In South Africa, Gandhi had for the first time in his life come in close contact with Muslims. He then discovered that the Muslim by nature was open and not calculating, and when attached to a cause would spare neither money nor effort. The Muslims had supported and sustained him. His Muslim employers had helped

¹Sitaramayya, op. cit., p. 223.

him in every way in his fights for Indians' rights. When Gandhi founded the Natal Indian Congress, its Presidents and at least fourteen out of twenty Vice-Presidents were Muslims.¹ The Hamidia Islamic Society Hall at Durban was at the disposal of the Congress and Gandhi, and it was there that most of the meetings called by Gandhi were held.

Gandhi's South African experience had made him realize the value of Muslim support; and from the time he returned to India, he made it a point to seek out and establish contact with Muslim leaders. 'I was seeking the friendship of good Musalmans,' he says in his autobiography, 'and was eager to understand the Musalman mind through contact with their purest and most patriotic representatives.'² For this point of contact, his choice fell on the Ali Brothers, whom he had met 'only once or twice, though I had heard much about them.' He first wrote to them in 1916, and so began a long correspondence. He also tried to meet them in detention but his request was refused by the Government. In November 1917, he raised the question of their release both in the inaugural and the concluding speeches that he made at the Gujarat Political Conference, over which he presided, and henceforth made it a political issue. Later that month he again raised it at a public meeting at Aligarh, and, when visiting the College, declared that he had hoped to make the visit in their company. Three months later he was telling the Private Secretary to the Viceroy, 'how much disturbed I have been on this affair of Ali Brothers.'³ He even refused initially to attend the war conference at Delhi because Tilak, Mrs Besant and the Ali Brothers had not been invited.

In 1918, the one cause that Gandhi was fighting for was the release of Ali Brothers, but by the end of April he had extended it to the future of the Ottoman Empire. In a letter to the Viceroy, he said: 'I would like to ask His Majesty's Ministers to give definite assurances about Mahomedan states. I am sure you know that every Mahomedan is deeply interested in them. As a Hindu I cannot be indifferent to their cause. Their sorrow must be our sorrow. In the most scrupulous regard for the rights of these

¹Tendulkar, *op. cit.*, facsimile opposite p. 41, Vol. I.

²Gandhi, *op. cit.*, p. 356.

³CWMG, *op. cit.*, Vol. XIV, p. 280. Letter dated 25 March 1918.

states, and for the Muslim sentiment as to places of worship, and your just and timely treatment of the Indian claim to Home Rule, lies the safety of the Empire.¹

Through these efforts, whatever their worth, Gandhi 'endeared himself, as much to the Musalmans as to the Hindus,' and by the end of the year had made himself the 'dauntless champion of our rights,' as the President of the reception committee of the Delhi Muslim League's session, Dr M. A. Ansari, said.

All through 1919, and in 1920, Gandhi worked hard and assiduously to win over the Muslims, supporting, even inciting, them on Khilafat—not that the Muslims needed much inciting. Even before the Rowlatt *satyagraha*, he had met Maulana Abdul Bari of Farangi Mahal, an eminent religious leader and the spiritual guide of the Ali Brothers. Giving an account of this meeting, Abdul Bari wrote in the Urdu paper *Akhuwat* of 14 March that he not only supported *satyagraha* against the Rowlatt Bills but also conceived the possibility of *satyagraha* with regard to Khilafat itself.²

On 19 March, a Khilafat Committee had been formed at a public meeting in Bombay, and the Director of the Intelligence Bureau warned the Government that 'the feelings of Indian Muhammadans towards the Government are very bitter and the situation requires careful watching.'³

This was the state of Muslim feelings when the Rowlatt *satyagraha* was launched and provided an outlet. But there was a kind of lull after the *satyagraha* was suspended. Gandhi himself was without either a cause or a platform, but he had 'endeared' himself to the Muslims, and he now goaded them on the Khilafat issue. He was constantly in touch with Abdul Bari and wrote to him in August:⁴ 'The time for joint and firm action on our part is now...everything is possible now, nothing *after* the publication of terms. I feel most keenly the awful position and I feel deeply humiliated that we are seen to be so careless and negligent...In the dignity of *satyagraha*, in action lies the future of Islam, the future of India and parenthetically the future of the Ali Brothers.'

¹ CWMG op. cit., Vol. XIV, p. 379. Letter to Chelmsford, dated 29 April 1918.

² Brown, op. cit., p. 195, quoting government Intelligence reports.

³ Ibid.

⁴ CWMG, op. cit., Vol. XVI, p. 70. (Emphasis original.) Gandhi to Abdul Bari, 27 August 1919.

In his Gujarati paper *Navajivan* of 7 September, he spoke of Khilafat as 'a question that concerns nearly one-fourth of the nation must concern the whole of India', and wrote, 'if they (Hindus) regard the Muslims as their respected neighbours and brethren, they should extend their full support to the latter's demand which concerns their religion. All those born in India have to live and die together.'¹

Eleven days later he was in Bombay addressing a Khilafat public meeting. There he regretted that the Viceroy, in a recent speech at the Imperial Legislative Council, had given only one minute out of fifty-five to Khilafat although 'with it is bound up all that is most sacred in Islam.' But he also chided the Muslims for their levity on so serious a matter. 'Are you ready to sacrifice yourself for a cause?' he asked them. 'Are you ready to sacrifice your ease, comfort, commerce and even your life?'²

The resolution passed at the meeting was drafted by Gandhi himself.³

The Muslims decided to observe 17 October 1919 as Khilafat Day. On the 10th, Gandhi issued an appeal to Hindus to join in observing the strike, and in praying and fasting as the Muslims were going to do. On the 12th, he wrote in the *Navajivan* that, '...if Turkey is partitioned, the Khilafat will disappear. If the Khilafat disappears, Islam will lose its vitality. This the Muslims can never tolerate.'⁴

Up to the middle of October, Gandhi was not allowed to visit the Punjab. When the ban was withdrawn, he went there and joined the Congress Enquiry Committee. This kept the issue of Punjab atrocities alive, but even then he did not forget Khilafat, and on 1 November he wrote a letter to several newspapers saying that, '...the Indians can't participate in the (peace) celebrations, so long as the Khilafat question remains unsettled.'⁵

On 23 November 1919, the All-India Khilafat Committee met at Delhi. Gandhi—the only non-Muslim present—was there by special invitation. The Conference decided to boycott the peace celebrations as had been recommended by several earlier meetings of local Khilafat committees. It was also proposed that a

¹ CWMG, op. cit., Vol. XVI, p. 106.

² Ibid., pp. 151-2.

³ Ibid., p. 153.

⁴ Ibid., Vol. XVI, p. 230.

⁵ Ibid., p. 270.

boycott of foreign goods he started but Gandhi opposed the proposal and instead suggested withdrawal of co-operation from the Government. It was then that he used the term 'non-co-operation' for the first time.

In December, the Congress, the League, the Khilafat Committee, and the newly-formed organization of the *ulema*, the Jamiatul Ulema-i-Hind, met at Amritsar. Gandhi had so far attended the Congresses practically as an outsider, more or less like an observer, but he went to Amritsar as a leader with some standing. For the first time he took a stand on a controversial issue. He opposed a resolution tabled by C. R. Das that rejected the Montford Reforms, and moved an amendment that 'this Congress begs loyalty' and 'trusts that both the authorities and the people will co-operate.'¹ Finally, as a compromise, a paragraph drafted by Gandhi was added to the original resolution accepting to work the reforms 'so far as may be possible.' Gandhi's expressions of loyalty to, and eagerness to co-operate with, the Government came just a month after his advice to the Khilafatists at Delhi to non-co-operate.

The release of the Ali Brothers in December 1919 brought a dynamic force to the Khilafat Movement. Their restless energy, singleness of purpose and fiery speeches inflamed an already indignant people. A Khilafat delegation called on the Viceroy with a memorandum, which Gandhi also signed. The interview was far from satisfactory and within a week, at a meeting at Meerut, the Khilafat committee accepted a non-co-operation programme drawn up by Gandhi.

Although on 1 February Mohammad Ali left for England with a delegation to see the British Prime Minister, Muslim feelings were so high that a Khilafat Conference in Bengal, in the latter part of the month, passed a resolution asking Muslims to abandon loyalty to the King-Emperor and instead to assist the Caliph if his pre-war dominions were dismembered. Abdul Bari almost declared *jihad* and talked of roasting the Christians alive.

Gandhi immediately sent a message of encouragement to the Bengal Khilafat Committee. In his telegram, Gandhi promised that he would support till death if the Movement does not drift into violence,² and on 10 March, barely ten weeks after the

¹Sitaramayya., op. cit., p. 305.

²CWMMG, op. cit., Vol. XVII, p. 77.

Amritsar Congress, he published his famous Manifesto in his newspaper *Young India*. 'England,' said the manifesto, 'cannot expect a meek submission by us to an unjust usurpation of rights which to Musalmans means a matter of life and death.' The Khilafat question, it said, 'overshadows the (Montford) Reforms and everything else', and it advised 'every Hindu and for that matter everyone else to cease to co-operate.'¹

'Gandhi,' says the official history of the Congress, 'once again appeared on the scene with the announcement that he would lead a movement of non-co-operation if the terms of peace with Turkey did not meet the sentiments of the Muslims in India.'² He proposed that 19 March be observed as Khilafat Day, and suggested a programme of non-co-operation. The programme envisaged four different stages. The first stage called for the renouncing of titles and honorary offices and resignation from legislative and municipal councils. The second stage envisaged resignation from the civil services, and the third from the Police and the Military. In the fourth phase, non-payment of taxes was to be resorted to. This programme was adopted by the Khilafat Committee meeting at Bombay between 11 and 14 March.

Mohammad Ali's mission to England failed, and when he returned the indignation of the Muslims was at a high pitch. Public meetings were being held all over the country denouncing the British and talk of *jihad* between Islam and Christianity was common. Muslim leaders had been constantly conferring with Hindu leaders to find a way for a joint struggle. These parleys and activities were going on when the Treaty of Sevres was announced. Gandhi promptly called it 'a staggering blow to the Indian Musalmans' for whom there was no option now but to start non-co-operation. Before the month of May was out, the *ulema* had issued a *fatwa* declaring India as *Darul Harb*, and the Khilafat Committee had called for implementing the first two stages of the non-co-operation programme.

The All India Congress Committee (AICC) met on 30 May at Allahabad, five days after the release of the report of the Government's Hunter Committee on the Punjab. Although angry

¹Ibid., pp. 73-6. (Emphasis added).

²Sitaramayya., op. cit., p. 322.

at the report, the AICC refused to accept Gandhi's programme of non-co-operation and decided to consider the matter at a special session in September. But the Khilafat Committee, meeting two days later, decided to go ahead. The Committee had invited Hindu leaders and solicited their support. When this was not forthcoming, it decided to go ahead alone. Over 500 *ulema* gave a *fatwa* in favour of non-co-operation. An ultimatum was sent to the Viceroy that, unless Muslim demands were conceded, the Movement would start from 1 August. Gandhi in a separate letter to the Viceroy told him that he had advised the Muslims to take the fateful step.

The Calcutta Congress, in September, decided in favour of non-co-operation and this decision was confirmed by the annual session at Nagpur in December. At the next Congress, at Ahmedabad in December 1921, Civil Disobedience was decided upon and Gandhi was appointed the 'sole executive authority of the Congress'. Gandhi announced that a Civil Disobedience and No-tax campaign would start in Bardoli (Gujrat), but it was never undertaken. In February 1922, after some policemen were burned alive by an excited mob in Chauri Chura, he called off the entire Movement.

This rather detailed account has been given to show the real character of the Non-co-operation Movement and the ladder that Gandhi used for his rise to power. The 'anti-British feeling' at this time 'was stronger among the Musalmans than among the rest of the population,' as even Subhas Chandra Bose admits, and Gandhi fully exploited it. He espoused their cause, demanded the release of the Ali Brothers, and established contact with Abdul Bari. He took up the Khilafat issue with an earnestness that puzzled the Hindus and pleasantly surprised the Muslims. At first he sympathized with Muslim sentiments; then he felt the need of helping them; and lastly it became a call of duty to share their sufferings. In April 1918, he merely wanted the Viceroy to give some assurances; in September 1919, it was a question that concerned one-fourth of the nation, which could not but affect the rest of the three-fourths, but by January 1920, it had become the most important question of all. He published his Manifesto on 10 March and by June¹ considered himself to be 'an unworthy son of India if I did not stand by them (Muslims) in this hour of trial.'

¹ CWMG, op. cit., Vol. XVI, pp. 502-4. Letter to Viceroy.

By the time the Ali Brothers were released, Gandhi had already 'endeared' himself to the Muslims, suggested *satyagraha* for the redress of the wrongs and proposed the Non-co-operation Movement. Here was a Hindu leader, the one and the only one, who had identified himself with a cause that was exclusively Muslim and had nothing to do with the Hindus. Yet he stood by them, was prepared to suffer with them, and was appealing to his co-religionist to join them. The Muslims realized their weakness: unarmed and in a hopeless minority, they could not by themselves achieve much. But if the majority community also joined them, then they could form a mighty force. Gandhi had given them a great weapon in the shape of non-co-operation. He was the specialist and they had to follow him. True, the Rowlatt *satyagraha* had not achieved anything, but it was on an issue that did not really concern the masses; and yet it had stirred them. How much more could then be achieved on Khilafat, especially if it became a joint Hindu-Muslim effort. And the only hope of winning over the Hindus was through Gandhi. As Mohammad Ali wrote to a friend: '...the essential thing was the unity of Hindus and Musalmans and even if Musalmans had been ready for violence, which they were not, they couldn't have succeeded without Hindu good-will. Hitherto the English had ruled over us by playing Hindu against Musalman, and Musalman against Hindu. This was their chief strength and our chief weakness. So long before we were free we had made up our minds to bring about a complete entente between Hindus and Moslems, even if the Moslems had to suffer many discomforts...and the best man among the Hindus to deal with was Mahatma Gandhi.'¹

Gandhi becomes a leader of the Muslims

It was for these reasons that the Khilafatists made Gandhi their guide, philosopher and supreme commander: he was drafting their resolutions; he was corresponding with the Viceroy on their behalf; he was planning and directing their Non-co-operation Movement; and he was negotiating with Hindu leaders to join the Movement.

¹*Reading Collection*, Mss. EUR. E. 238 (3), p. 304. Mohammad Ali to Dr Ahmed Said, 23 July 1921.

It was indeed as the leader of Muslims that Gandhi held talks with the Hindus. Until then Gandhi had neither any strong position nor any platform. He was just an individual, respected no doubt, but without any organized support behind him. All his *satyagrahas* up to that time had been as an individual; the Muslims gave him an issue, solid support and a powerful political position. As he wrote in May 1920, 'If I had not joined the Khilafat movement, I think I would have lost everything.'¹

Gandhi became the link between the Muslims and the Hindus. To the Muslims he was the only guarantor of Hindu support; to the Hindus he became the only leader who could bring the Muslims *en masse* to a common struggle for *swaraj*. So far he had generally been ignored by the Congress leaders, but the Rowlatt agitation had shot him onto the national stage. He could be ignored no more, particularly now that he had the Muslims at his beck and call, and was pleading that such an opportunity for joint action would never come again in a hundred years.

It was with this Khilafat leverage that Gandhi parleyed with the Hindus in June 1920 at Allahabad, where leaders of both communities had gathered. Gandhi had then refused to associate any issue with Khilafat, and the AICC had postponed the decision to the Calcutta session, three months later. But on 30 June he adopted the issue of the 'Punjab Wrongs' as well. It was only at the Calcutta Congress that the *swaraj* question was raised. Gandhi himself was reluctant to adopt it, but Mohammad Ali and his Khilafatists accepted it with alacrity. The Movement then became for 'Khilafat, *swaraj* and Punjab Wrongs'.

There prevails a general impression that the Non-co-operation Movement was the first great movement by Gandhi for *swaraj*, and that the Khilafat issue was just appended to it in order to attract the Muslims. The contrary is true: the Non-co-operation Movement was launched by the Khilafatists, and the Congress joined it later. The Movement may be said to have started on 17 October 1919, when Khilafat Day was observed all over India. Next month, at a Khilafat Committee meeting, the idea of non-co-operation emerged. This was accepted at Meerut in February

¹CWMG, op. cit., Vol. XVII, p. 386. Letter to Mangal Das Gandhi dated 4 May 1920.

1920. In March, the programme for non-co-operation was presented by Gandhi, and adopted. Hakim Ajmal Khan (1863-1927) returned his three gold and silver medals and the title of *Haziqul Mulk* that month. In May the Khilafatists held talks with Hindu leaders, but failing to persuade them to join, they sent the ultimatum to the Viceroy in June, and *formally* launched the movement from the first day of August. The Congress, on the contrary, did not decide in favour of non-co-operation till the Special Session in September,¹ and even that decision needed confirmation by a regular session at Nagpur at the end of December.

At the Special Session Gandhi saw 'an imposing phalanx of veteran warriors assembled for the fray at Calcutta, Dr Besant, Pandit Malaviyaji, Vijayaraghavachari, Pandit Motilalji, and the Deshbandhu being some of them.' But the Muslims now flocked to the Congress and tilted the balance in favour of Gandhi and the Non-co-operation Movement. As Willingdon, then Governor of Madras, reported to Montagu on 15 September 1920, 'the Muslims were so strong at the Congress that they swamped the result.'² A member of the CP Provincial Congress Committee, N. D. Lavangia, issued an appeal on 27 September to consider whether the Calcutta vote represented the national will, and demanded that the Congress president disclose how many of the votes cast were those of Muslims.³ From Bombay, G. S. Khaparde, a follower of Tilak, and his colleague Joseph Baptista complained that Gandhi had used 'the sword of Damocles wielded by the Khilafat Committee' in the Congress, and the latter 'practically accuses Gandhi of handing over the Congress, a Hindu preserve, to the Muhammadans.'⁴

If Gandhi's rise to the top of political leadership was due to solid Muslim support for him, the Congress too owed its conver-

¹Paragraph 4 of the resolution passed at Calcutta reads: 'This Congress is further of the opinion that there is no course left open for the people of India but to approve and adopt the policy of progressive non-violent Non-co-operation *inaugurated* by Mahatma Gandhi, until the said wrongs are righted and Swarajiya is established'.

²*Montagu Papers*, India Office, Mss. EUR. D. 523 (Emphasis added).

³AICC Files, 1920, No. 3, Part II. Cited by Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 269.

⁴Bombay Home Department Report for first half of September, 1920. Cited by Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 269.

sion into a mass organization to the Muslims rushing in to swell its ranks. When the early efforts of Hume and Tyabji had failed to attract Muslims, the Congress had, in 1908, by a provision in its Constitution, reserved 20% of seats in the AICC exclusively for them, but these seats had generally remained unfilled. Even at the Amritsar Congress, held in the charged atmosphere of December 1919, Muslim delegates numbered only 314 out of 7,031 or about 4.5% of the total. But within eight months, when the Congress was contemplating direct action, they had become the decisive force. The popularity of the Congress was spreading so fast that the number of its delegates had increased from 3,500 in September 1918 to 14,583 in December 1920. 'No Congress,' says its official historian, 'before or after Nagpur, can claim to its credit as many delegates as did Nagpur.'¹

All the Khilafatists were Congressmen as well. The Congress had virtually become an extension of the Khilafat Committee. The Khilafatists were its most prominent and enthusiastic supporters, taking the most active part and pushing it in the direction of a conflict with the Government. Before 1918, only two Muslims had ever become secretaries of the Congress after 1918, and even up to the thirties, there was never an occasion when one of its (two or three) secretaries was not a Muslim. Before 1918, in its thirty-three years the Congress had known only three Muslim Presidents—fewer than Britishers—but between 1918 and 1923 it had as many as five.²

Muslims formed the backbone of the Non-co-operation Movement. This was an obvious fact known to the Hindus as well as the British. Some high Government officials felt strongly that if the Muslims were reconciled that would be the end of the Movement. The Governor of Bombay, Sir George Lloyd, for example, in a private letter to Montagu, wrote on 1 January 1921: 'I still believe confidentially that if the Moslem question could be settled to the satisfaction of Islamic feeling that Gandhi propaganda would be

¹Sitaramayya, *op. cit.*, p. 346

²They were:

- (1) Hasan Imam, Bombay 1918.
- (2) Hakim Ajmal Khan, Ahmadabad 1921.
- (3) Dr M. A. Ansari (temporary president, in place of C. R. Das) 1923.
- (4) Abul Kalam Azad, Delhi 1923.
- (5) Mohammad Ali, Cocanada 1923.

practically smashed.¹ Seven weeks later, he was pleading: 'I wish we could get the Moslem question settled up in a reasonably satisfactory manner, for I feel sure the trouble out here would largely collapse if the Moslem feeling was met.'² Later in the year, despairing of the unrealistic attitude of the Government in London, he warned: 'They (British Cabinet) will surely lose India if Moslems really believe that England is hostile to Islam.'³

These were the days, however, when Hindus and Muslims spoke with one voice and acted as one people. The whole sub-continent reverberated with cries of 'Khilafat' and '*swaraj*', and 'Mahatma Gandhi *ki jai*' and 'Mohammad Ali-Shaukat Ali *zindabad*'; Gandhi was 'in the pocket of Shaukat Ali'; and the people ready and eager to make any sacrifice. The Government was on the defensive. Public morale was sky-high. *Swaraj* seemed round the corner. But suddenly Gandhi called a halt.

End of the Non-co-operation Movement

The Non-co-operation Movement was called off when it was at its peak, and the morale of the people at its highest. The decision was that of Gandhi alone: although a meeting of the working committee was called, the Khilafat Committee was never consulted. The reason given was that violence had broken out and the country was not yet ready for a purely non-violent struggle. But some violent incidents were bound to occur in a mass movement in a subcontinent as vast and as populous as India, and Gandhi could not but know it. He had had the experience of the Rowlatt *satyagraha*. It had started on the 6th of April 1919. On the 8th he learnt that, on hearing of his arrest, the crowds in the city had become violent and were rioting. He visited the scene of the riot and personally saw that the crowds had gone 'completely out of control and were stoning the police station'. Gandhi tried to speak to and pacify them. 'The crowd,' reminisces Kanji Dwarkadas, who had accompanied Gandhi, 'responded, shouted back *Mahatma Gandhi ki jai* and hurled more

¹ *Montagu Papers*, op. cit.

² *Ibid.*, letter of 26 February 1921.

³ *Ibid.*, letter of 14 October 1921.

stones.’¹ Gandhi returned, and left the next day for Ahmedabad, ‘where some English and Indian officers were killed’.² It was after what he had seen there and in the nearby areas that he had used the expression ‘Himalayan miscalculation’, and suspended the *satyagraha* on 18 April, twelve days after it had started.

Once bitten twice shy, and Gandhi should have been very, very careful after his experience of 1919, especially as this was going to be a movement on a much bigger scale. The Rowlatt *satyagraha* was of a limited nature, practiced by groups of selected *satyagrahis*, but this was a mass movement. Moreover, the issues were not transitory like the Rowlatt Act, but ones that stirred the people to their very depths. There was nothing to suggest that in a couple of years people had become votaries of non-violence; on the contrary, they were boiling with rage and were in a violent mood. That Gandhi did realize it is obvious from the letter he wrote to the Viceroy on 22 June 1920. ‘I admit,’ he wrote ‘that non-co-operation practised by the mass of people is attended with great risks. But in a crisis such as has overtaken the Musalmans of India no step that is unattended with large risks can possibly bring about the desired change.’³ Great nationalist leaders of the day, including Jinnah and Annie Besant, had also given grim warnings. If these were not enough, there was the Moplah revolt which broke out in August 1921, lasted a few weeks and cost between 4,000 to 5,000 lives. Even as late as on 17 November, when the Prince of Wales (later Edward VIII) arrived in India, there were, because of the Congress boycott, ‘...not merely clashes and conflicts in Bombay but rioting and bloodshed which extended over three or four days, resulting in the death of 53 persons and the wounding of 400 approximately, and which could not be put down in spite of Sarojini Devi, Gandhi and other leaders entering into the thick of the crowds and exhorting them to disperse.’⁴ Gandhi had then fasted for five days as a penance and ‘made the statement that *swaraj* stank in his nostrils.’⁵

¹Dwarkadas, op. cit., p. 109.

²Sitaramayya, op. cit., p. 278.

³CWMC, op. cit., Vol. XVII, p. 504.

⁴Sitaramayya, op. cit., p. 372.

⁵Ibid., p. 373.

Yet nothing deterred Gandhi from proceeding with the final phase of the Movement. This was due to start in Bardoli, under Gandhi's direct supervision. It had been postponed more than once, but on 1 February Gandhi sent an ultimatum to the Viceroy that if his demands were not accepted within a week, he would start 'Aggressive Civil Disobedience'. However, when on 5 February the mob violence caused twenty-two casualties—less than half of those at the time of the visit of the Prince of Wales, six weeks earlier—he found enough reason to call the whole thing off.

That Chauri Chaura was not the real reason for his decision is clear from the assurance Gandhi gave eight years later when starting another *satyagraha*. Jawaharlal Nehru records: 'Many years later, just before the 1930 Civil Disobedience movement began, Gandhiji much to our satisfaction...stated that the movement should not be abandoned because of the occurrence of sporadic acts of violence.'¹ This time *swaraj* would not stink in his nostrils!

Jawaharlal admitted that: 'As a matter of fact even the suspension of civil resistance in February 1922 was certainly not due to Chauri Chaura alone.' He attributed it to party discipline going to pieces. Gandhi's other apologists have found various grounds to justify his action, but it would be the limit of naiveté to accept that when he wrote to the Viceroy he found everything normal and under control, but five days later a single incident opened his eyes and *swaraj* was stinking in his nostrils.

The fact of the matter is that Gandhi did not want *swaraj*, certainly not in 1922. He had written to the Governor of Madras in October 1908 that, 'I should be uninterested in the fact as to who rules (India), the important consideration being how he ruled.'² In 1917, soon after Montague's historic announcement in the Parliament, he told the Gujrat political Conference that he wanted Home Rule as much as anybody, but considering the racial, religious and caste quarrels of the Indians and their inability to run civic affairs he thought they were not fit for *swaraj*.³ To Viceroy Reading he had written: 'I am not interested in freeing India from the English yoke.'⁴

¹Jawaharlal Nehru, *Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 85.

²R. C. Majumdar, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 12.

³CWMG, op. cit., Vol. XIV, pp. 48-66.

⁴Geoffrey Ash, *Gandhi: A Study in Revolution*, Asia Publishing House, 1968, p. 217, Tara Chand, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 2.

There were indeed some prominent leaders who had no faith in Gandhi's commitment to *swaraj*. One of them was Mrs Besant, of whom Dwarkadas records: 'I asked her: "Would it not be wonderful if you and Gandhiji would work together and *swaraj* would come much nearer?"' She answered without the slightest hesitation; "My dear, Gandhi will never work with me. He does not believe in *swaraj*; he does not want *swaraj*". Dwarkadas comments that he did not understand the full significance of those remarks then, but after a period of forty-five years, 'I now realize the full meaning of her words. It was true, Gandhiji did not want *swaraj*.'¹

But direct and damaging evidence comes from Gandhi himself. His secretary Mahadev Desai records in his diary on 16 July 1932:

One of us (Vallabhbhai or Mahadev) wondered why lawyers as well as other classes among our people did not understand that the whole administration would break down if only a single class non-co-operated with it *en masse*. Hoare was happy so long as the police and the army were with him. If these non-co-operated he might perhaps be shocked. In 1921 we were nearer our goal. 'No' said Bapu. 'It was all superficial. The fact is that we were not ready for *swaraj* even if it is offered today as on a plate. Its establishment would be signalized by a terrible civil war...The temple of *swaraj* is being built, brick by brick, stone by stone.'²

For Gandhi that temple needed many more bricks. In early 1922, after he had obtained dictatorial powers over the Congress, Gandhi was not looking forward to the start of any aggressive civil disobedience but for some excuse to suspend it. This pattern is clear in all his movements, before or after the Non-co-operation Movement. About Khadda, he has confessed in his autobiography that 'the people were exhausted' and I was casting about for some graceful way to terminate the struggle,³ and did so at the first opportunity. The Rowlatt *satyagraha* was suspended by him twelve days after it started, but the formal calling off came two months later. His subsequent movements were also similarly suspended abruptly.

The Non-co-operation Movement was started by the Muslims. It had brought Gandhi power and control of the Congress. He

¹Dwarkadas, op. cit., p. 77.

²*The Diary of Mahadev Desai*, Vol. I. 16 July 1932, cited by Dwarkadas, op. cit., p. 427-8.

³M. K. Gandhi, op. cit., p. 354. (Emphasis added.)

was now the joint leader of the Khilafatists and Congressmen, and both communities were participating in the Movement enthusiastically. But the enthusiasm and the share of the Muslims was far greater than that of the majority community.

Jawaharlal Nehru says in his autobiography that people 'lived in a kind of intoxication during the year 1921.'¹ He estimated that during the months of December 1921 and January 1922 'about thirty thousand persons were sentenced to imprisonment.'² But the 'intoxication' for the Muslims had started more than a year earlier, and the majority of those who had suffered was without doubt Muslim. As the Hindu historian Majumdar says: 'The Muslims as a general rule plunged into the movement with greater zeal and enthusiasm and consequently suffered, at the hands of the Government, a great deal more than the Hindus. It was indeed complained by the Muslims that while they formed only a small minority of the population they had to bear the greater share of the brunt on their shoulders. This was true to a large extent.'³

The Muslims had joined the Movement without any mental reservations. They took it as a *jihad*, albeit a non-violent one, and participated with all the spirit of *jihad*. They considered no sacrifice too great, so much so that when the Ulema declared India a *Darul Harb* in 1920, even a movement for *hijrat* took place, and thousands of Muslims⁴ from Sindh and Frontier areas sold everything they had for a song, and migrated to Afghanistan. It was only when the Afghans stopped them at the border and sent them back that the movement stopped. The Muslims were in the forefront of the struggle from the beginning, constantly pushing Gandhi to greater extremes. Titles and honorary offices had been relinquished, councils had been boycotted, civil services had been given up, law courts and government-controlled schools and foreign goods had been boycotted by them, but no civil disobedience had been started by

¹Nehru, op. cit., p. 69.

²Ibid., p. 80.

³R.C. Majumdar, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 114-5.

⁴According to Shariful Mujahid, *The Khilafat Movement in Mohammad Ali*, compiled by S. Moin ul Haq, Pakistan Historical Society, Karachi, 1978, p. 123.

Gandhi.¹ As Gandhi said in August, 1920: 'In their impatient anger, the Musalmans ask for more energetic and more prompt action by the Congress and Khilafat organizations...I would gladly ask for postponement of *swaraj* activity if thereby we could advance the interests of Khilafat.'²

Gandhi had promised '*swaraj* in one year' at Calcutta in September 1920, but had extended the date to one year from the Nagpur session in December. There was no indication at all that he would fulfill his promise, and the Muslims were goading him to force the pace. In July 1921 Mohammad Ali made a fiery speech at an All-India Khilafat Conference at Karachi. The Conference declared that it was *haram* for any Muslim 'to serve from that day in the army and help or acquiesce in their recruitment.' It also made 'a solemn resolve and determination' that if the British Government took any hostile action against the Angora Government, the Muslims of India would take to Civil Disobedience in concert with the Congress 'to establish an independent republic of India.' The Conference planned to proclaim complete independence and hoist the flag of the Republic at the next Ahmedabad session of the Congress.

Mohammad Ali and his brother were arrested soon afterwards and sentenced to a two-year jail term. The feelings of the Muslims were aroused further. Mohammad Ali's speech was repeated from the Congress platforms, though the flag of an Independent India was not hoisted at Ahmedabad.

Mohammad Ali was in jail when the Congress met, and the resolution on independence was moved in his absence by Hasrat Mohani, '...a person who had played a very gallant part in revolutionary and nationalist politics,'³ as Jawaharlal Nehru describes him. Hasrat Mohani was an old revolutionary who had first gone to jail on charges of seditious writing in 1908. It was he who had proposed a boycott of British goods at the Khilafat Conference in November 1919. 'It was only here that I discovered what a

¹For about two years the country had been astir with all manners of unrest, disaffection and defiance, but amazingly enough, the civil disobedience movement contemplated by Gandhi had yet to be formally declared,' Ram: Gopal, *A Political History of Indian Muslims*, Book Traders, Lahore, 1976, p. 372.

²CWMG, op. cit., Vol. XX, p. 522

³Jawaharlal Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1958, p. 40.

fighter he was,' says Gandhi in his autobiography. They had then clashed at Delhi and they clashed again at Ahmedabad. Mohani had sought to redefine *swaraj* as 'complete independence, free from all foreign control.' Gandhi opposed the resolution and charged that 'Mr Hasrat Mohani leads you into depths unfathomable.' 'A huge battle was about to take place,' says the official Congress apologist, and: 'Just then for a soldier to come up to a General of the army and say that the objective should be redefined was to disturb the forces arranged for the battle. There was no doubt that the time chosen was utterly inopportune and the spirit displayed unhelpful.'¹ So the soldier lost. The General won—only to surrender unconditionally six weeks later.

Gandhi was in no hurry for independence, not even for a large measure of self-rule. The latter was, in fact, there for him to take even before Ahmedabad. The Prince of Wales was scheduled to arrive in India in November. He was originally to have come to inaugurate the Montford Reforms, but in view of the hostile atmosphere then prevailing he was replaced by the Duke of Connaught. Now the atmosphere was even more hostile and the visit could not be postponed a second time. Imperial prestige was involved. At the same time, on account of the announced boycott by the Congress and Khilafat Committee, unseemly incidents took place as soon as he landed in Bombay. In order to make the rest of the visit a success, particularly his arrival in Calcutta during Christmas, the Viceroy, Lord Reading, indicated willingness to call a political conference. He promised that at the conference he would concede full provincial autonomy, discussions being held only about the powers to be transferred at the Centre, provided the boycott was not enforced. Negotiations were held through Malaviya and others, but, on account of Gandhi's refusal, they came to nothing. 'It need not be emphasized,' says Kanji Dwarkadas, 'that because of this bungling of Gandhiji full provincial autonomy which was promised to us in January 1922, came to us fifteen years later in 1937, and for responsibility in the Centre which was promised to us then, we had to wait for twenty-five years.'²

¹Sitaramayya, op. cit., pp. 384-5.

²Dwarkadas, op. cit., p. 196.

Gandhi could afford to wait. He had, like many other Hindu leaders, become scared by the over-enthusiastic response of the Muslims to the challenge against the Government. They were, in the second decade of the century, still a backward, down-trodden people, who had no power, no money, no education, and no prospects. They had not recovered from the loss of empire and had totally failed to adjust themselves to the changed times. The number of Muslim graduates coming out of Aligarh and other universities, though on the increase, was comparatively very small, and in any case, there was a wide gulf between them and those studying in traditional institutions. The Muslims had no unity and no organization—the League was not a party open to the masses. The Khilafat issue, however, had created an awakening among the masses, and united all Musalmans, irrespective of their sect, province, class, or other differences that had previously seemed deep and permanent. 'Khilafat' had been presented to the Muslims in purely religious terms, and had shown that on such issues Muslims could be aroused as one man, to do or die.

The Hindu leaders were overawed by the resilience of Islam. They began to see in 'Khilafat' a Pan-Islamic movement which boded ill for Hindu India. They started having nightmares of pan-Islamic armies descending down the traditional routes of invasion, through the Khyber and Bolan passes, and establishing a Muslim empire once again—fears which the third Afghan war in 1919 did little to set at rest. As Lajpat Rai wrote to C. R. Das: 'I am not afraid of the seven crores of Muslims. But I think the seven crores of Hindustan plus the armed hosts of Afghanistan, Central Asia, Arabia, Mesopotamia and Turkey will be irresistible.'¹

These fears tormented the Hindu mind when the Muslims appealed to them to join hands against the foreign Government. When they agreed, after a year of hesitation, it was because the Movement was to be non-violent and under the control of Gandhi. Even then they remained suspicious of Muslim intentions and behaviour. The Muslims had initially refused to bind themselves to non-violence as a creed, but Gandhi had persuaded them to try it. In his public speech at Bombay on Khilafat day,

¹B. R. Ambedkar, *Pakistan or Partition of India*, Thacker & Co., Bombay, 1945, p. 268. The letter was quoted by Jinnah in his presidential address at the League session on 22 March 1940.

19 March 1920, Gandhi had said: 'They (Muslims), therefore, reserve to themselves the right, in the event of the failure of non-co-operation cum non-violence in order to enforce justice, to resort to all such methods as may be enjoined by Islamic scriptures.'¹ And the resolution adopted at the meeting clearly declared that: 'In the event of failure of the joint movement, the Muslim reserve to themselves the right of taking such step as the exigencies of the situation might dictate.'² Gandhi was of course aware that '...the feeling on this Khilafat question runs so high and goes so deep that an unjust solution may, if peaceful means fail, land this country in a revolutionary movement, the like of which we have never seen before,'³ and many Hindu leaders even after they had joined Non-co-operation Movement had mental reservations. Typical was the attitude of Lajpat Rai, whose off-the-record interview immediately after the Nagpur Congress adopted Non-co-operation Movement was reported forty-nine years later. He privately expressed his diffidence about the Gandhian programme, but he would not go against the current. 'Do you realize,' he said, 'that in our effort to carry the Muslims with us we have adopted the Khilafat programme which, if successful, will make them more fanatical? I have this conflict in mind. We have to get rid of the British; we have to carry the Muslims with us. Maybe the gamble of the Mahatma will pay off. I shall watch and decide my course of action later.'⁴

Hindu leaders like Lajpat Rai kept their own counsel, but their true feelings were publicly expressed by the Theosophist, Mrs Besant, who lashed out at the 'Khilafat crusade', and blamed it for bringing out 'the inner Muslim feeling of hatred against the "unbelievers",' and reviving 'the old Muslim religion of the sword.' 'We have heard,' she said, 'Muslim leaders declare that if the Afghans invaded India, they would join their fellow believers, and would slay the Hindus who defended their motherland against the foe; we have been forced to see that the primary allegiance of Musalmans is to Islamic countries, and not to our motherland; we have learned that their dearest hope is to establish the "Kingdom of

¹ CWMG Vol. XVII, op. cit., p. 100.

² Ibid., p. 99.

³ Ibid., p. 102.

⁴ Durga Das, *India, From Curzon to Nehru & After*, Collins, London, 1969, p. 77.

God”, not God as Father of the world, loving all his creatures, but as God seen through Musalman spectacles.’ ‘If India were independent,’ she feared, ‘the Muslim part of the population...would become an immediate peril to India’s freedom. Allying themselves with Afghanistan, Baluchistan, Persia, Iraq, Arabia, Turkey and Egypt and with such of the tribes of Central Asia who are Musalmans, they would rise to place India under the rule of Islam...those (now) in British India being helped by the Muslims in Indian States...and would establish Musalman rule.’¹ At the Mahasabha session at Kanpur in December 1925, its president, Kelker, warned the Hindus that the Muslims aimed at ‘a coherent continuous chain from Angora to Saharanpur of Mahomedan power and influence.’² Even the poet Rabindranath Tagore considered Hindu-Muslim unity as something impossible because of the dubious Muslim loyalty to India. ‘The poet said that he had very frankly asked many Mohammedans whether, in the event of any Mohammedan power invading India, they would stand side by side with their Hindu neighbours to defend their common land. He could not be satisfied with the reply he got from them. He said that he could definitely state that even such men as Mr Mohammad Ali had declared that under no circumstances was it permissible for any Mohamedan, whatever his country might be, to stand against any other Mohamedan.’³

As the Non-co-operation Movement gathered momentum in 1921, the Khilafatists became increasingly more militant. This was reflected in their speeches, particularly those of Mohammad Ali. Gandhi then forced Mohammad Ali to apologize for those portions of his speeches which seemed to preach violence, but in July 1921, Mohammad Ali made the most violent speech yet, and was prosecuted and jailed. Meanwhile Hindu leaders had been meeting Gandhi and expressing their fears. As Gandhi wrote in *Young India*: ‘Many Hindus distrust Musmalans honestly. They believe that *swaraj* means Musalman Raj, for they argue that without the British, Musalmans of India will aid Musalman powers, to build a Musalman empire in India.’⁴ Mohammad Ali

¹Annie Besant, *The Future of Indian Politics*, London, 1922, pp. 300-4.

²*Indian Annual Register*, 1925, Vol. II, p. 35. Cited by Tara Chand, op. cit.

³*The Times of India* dated 18 April 1924. Cited by Ambedkar, op. cit., pp. 268-9.

⁴*Young India*, 11 May 1921, CWMG, op. cit., Vol. XX, p. 90.

had been asked about the Muslim attitude in case of an Afghan invasion, and his reply was that he would resist it if it was an act of aggression, but help it if it meant driving the British out. This had failed to satisfy Hindu leaders. Actually their suspicions deepened when, during his trial at Karachi, he said: 'Islam does not permit the believer to pronounce an adverse judgment against another believer without convincing proof, and we could not, of course, fight against our Muslim brothers without making sure they were guilty of wanton aggression...'¹

What would happen, the Hindu leaders asked Gandhi, if India became independent and Afghans and other Muslims invaded India? Would not the Indian Muslims join them if a jihad was declared, like those in the past by Sultans such as Mahmud of Ghazni? Would not the Hindus be enslaved once again and India become a Muslim empire?

The Hindu suspicions were deepened even further with the Moplah revolt and the stories of forcible conversions of Hindus that were so effectively spread by the British. It should then have caused no surprise to the Muslims to have been frustrated in their attempt at the Ahmedabad Congress to declare India an independent Republic.

The situation did not go unnoticed by observers such as the Governor of Bombay, who reported to the Secretary of State in November that he felt that at Ahmedabad, '...great pressure will be put on Gandhi to reintroduce *satyagraha*: at present he is reluctant but may be driven to do it by the Moslems'; that the 'Moslems are very bitter' and feel 'they have been let in'; and 'I am sadly afraid there is a good deal of mutual recriminations going on in the Hindu-Moslem brotherhood.'² The Hindu mind had by then become so obsessed with the prospects of an Islamic empire that even a man like Dr B. R. Ambedkar, the Untouchable leader and no friend of either Gandhi or the Congress, was convinced that this is what the Muslims and the Khilafatist were actually working for. Writing as late as in 1940 he says: 'And the Muslims in their impatience did exactly what the Hindus feared they would do, namely, invite the Afghans to invade India. How far the Khilafatists had proceeded in their negotiations with the

¹Jafri, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

²Sir George Lloyd to Montagu, 5 November 1921, *Montagu Papers*, *op. cit.*

Amir of Afghanistan, it is not possible to know. But that such a project was entertained by them is beyond question.¹

The Hindu apprehensions were fully shared by Gandhi. He was, after all, as he himself claimed, 'the Hindu mind'. Publicly he called the Afghan invasion a bogey, but after Ahmedabad he was just looking for an excuse to bring the Movement to a halt; and his assumption of dictatorial powers there was really for this purpose.

'Consider for one moment what can happen if the English were to withdraw all of a sudden and there was no foreign usurper to rule. It may be said that the Punjabis, be they Muslims Sikhs or others, will overrun India....,' he wrote. 'Thus if anybody has cause to keep the British rule for protection from the stronger element, it is the Congressmen and those Hindus and others who are represented by the Congress.'

Unbelievable as it may sound, Gandhi had written that on 21 October 1939.² If this is what he felt in 1939, (his mention of 'Sikhs or others' notwithstanding), one can well imagine his state of mind and fears eighteen years earlier, and understand his real reason for turning away from *swaraj* when it appeared within reach in 1921-2.

¹Ambedkar, op. cit., p. 144.

²CWMMG, op. cit., Vol. LXX, p. 260.

AFTERMATH OF THE KHILAFAT MOVEMENT

It was an extraordinary movement. The Indian Muslims had never been directly under any Khalifa. The conquest of Sindh had no doubt taken place under the Umayyids, but the link did not last very long; and in any case, it had no significance in the following centuries when the Muslim Empire established in 1192 was subsequently expanded.

Khalifa in Arabic means 'successor', and the term has come to denote the successors of the Prophet [PBUH]. The Khalifa is the head, ecclesiastical as well as temporal, of the community. But he has no divine sanction for his actions, is bound by the sharia and is responsible to the community. It is an elective office, open to every Muslim. Thirteen centuries ago, the simple folk of Madinah selected the Khalifa initially by consensus, confirmed by a referendum. The *Rashideen*, the first four successors of the Prophet, took office through the four established methods: the first, Abu Bakr, by acclamation; the second, Umar, by nomination by Abu Bakr; the third Usman, by selection through a committee appointed by Umar; and the fourth, Ali, by election. But in each case the Khalifa had to have *baia*, i.e., individual Muslims accepting the choice and pledging allegiance to him.

After the *Rashideen*, the Khilafat was converted by the Umayyids into a hereditary office. It passed from father to son or brother to brother and became, for all practical purposes, a monarchy. Yet the formality of *baia* was maintained. It was even kept by the Abbasids, who had absorbed many Sassanid customs and court ceremonials. After the last Abbasid Khalifa perished with the sack of Baghdad by Halaku Khan (1261), a phantom Khalifa lived in Cairo on sufferance of the Mameluke Sultans.

The office was wrested from him by the Ottoman Sultan Salim when he conquered Egypt (1517). Salim never really bothered about the *baia*, nor did his successors; but from then on the Ottoman Sultans also assumed the title of Khalifa.

The title itself had continued to enjoy tremendous prestige long after its holder had been reduced to an impotent, helpless nobody. This was truer in distant lands where the people in general had no idea of the evil days on which the Abbasids had fallen. Thus, in India, Sultan Iltutmash heartily welcomed an unsolicited investiture and the grant of the title of Sultan-i-Azam from Al-Mustansur Billah (1229) to strengthen his claim to the throne of Delhi; and Mohammad bin Tughlaq, in order to justify himself in his eccentric actions and counteract his rising unpopularity, had a fervent search made for any scion of the last Khalifa of Baghdad and did not rest till he had discovered one and had received recognition as Sultan (1343). Such recognitions became a profitable business for the impoverished fugitives in Cairo, and we find Mohammed bin Tughlaq's successor receiving recognition (1356) at the same time as the rebel Bahaman Sultan in the Deccan. As against this, there is also the fact of one of the most worthless of Delhi Sultans, Qutbuddin Mubarak Shah Khilji, himself assuming the title of Khalifa (1317).

The fiction of recognition by the Khalifas did not survive the Sultanate. The Mughal era started in India at about the same time as the Ottoman Caliphate, but the Mughals never recognized the superior status of the Ottomans. The Grand Mughal was the *Padishah* of all he surveyed and did not care one bit for his Ottoman counterpart. And if he recalled anything at all, it was the victory at Angora of his ancestor Tamerlane over the Ottoman's ancestor Bayazid (1402). The third Mughal Emperor, Akbar, even had an Infallibility Decree drawn up and signed by all the leading *ulema* of the day, declaring him, the *Amirul Momineen*¹, as the final arbiter in all religious matters. But when the Mughals themselves fell, the eyes of a dispossessed community turned towards Constantinople and it sought solace in reading *khutba* in the Khalifa's name.

When the Khilafat and the Ottoman Empire were in danger of disintegration, the Indian Muslims were the only ones who felt

¹ *Commander of the Faithful*, a title generally reserved for the Khalifas.

perturbed. No movement of any kind took place in any other country. The Muslim countries in black Africa were still very backward, but nothing happened even in North Africa. The argument that they were under French, not British, rule, does not hold water, because that made it easier, not more difficult, for them to register protest against Britain. This was equally true of the Dutch East Indies, where lived the second largest Muslim community after India. If British domination of a country was the real cause which had received fresh provocation, nothing happened in Malaya or Egypt either: the latter country did rise, but it was for its independence, not for Khilafat. Shia Iran, of course, could not care less—it had never recognized the Ottomans and had actually fought *jihad* against them. Sunni Afghanistan, on the other hand, signed a treaty of friendship with the British. As for the Arab countries of the Jaziratul Arab, they simply took advantage of the adversity of the Turks to throw off the Khalifa's 'yoke'.

Only Muslim India rose. It rose despite its shackles and although it had neither arms nor money, neither political clout nor hope to gain anything for itself. One historian has described the Khilafat agitation as 'a movement of passion' that was 'devoid of constructive thought' and 'purely negative in aims, methods and policy'; and was 'essentially a destructive force in which subconscious impulses, lofty idealism, youthful indiscretions and desire for power and leadership were mixed in a most incongruous manner.'¹ This is partly true, but not entirely. The Khilafatists were, by and large, utterly sincere in, and passionately devoted to, their cause, to which they brought a crusader's zeal. They were driven by religious fervour because they believed it was a religious question. In the last analysis, however, the Khilafat Movement was really a political movement.

It was a Muslim outburst of pent-up resentments, a mass expression of accumulated grievances against the British rule—the taking away of their Empire, the reduction of a ruling race to the status of subjects, the humiliations and degradations, the poverty and sufferings, the emasculation and the closing of the door to economic recovery, the renewal of British hostility as

¹Sir Shafaat Ahmad Khan, *The Indian Federation*, Macmillan, London, 1937, p. 330.

discerned in its policies towards the partition of Bengal and the establishment of a Central Muslim University. The Muslims had helplessly watched the changing British attitude towards the Ottoman Empire and boiled with impotent rage as it suffered defeat after defeat at Christian hands. But when it finally collapsed in World War I, they subconsciously saw in it the end of their own Empire, another 1857, and spontaneously rushed to save it from the enemy...their own tormentor.

It became more than a matter of help to the brother Turk: it became a call of duty. The Sultan of Turkey was more than the King of the Ottomans. He was, as Mohammad Ali believed, 'an Emperor and Pope in one, and combining in himself as the successor or Caliph of our Prophet...things worldly and other-worldly,'¹ and it was 'our religious duty to prevent the further disintegration of the temporal power of the Khilafat which was indispensable for the defence of our faith, to maintain the inviolability of the sacred regions of Islam.'²

Saving the Ottoman Empire thus became synonymous with the saving of Islam. The English-educated Muslims and the *ulema* joined hands for the first time, and the Hindus became allies in a common objective, *swaraj*. But as far as they were concerned, the Non-co-operation Movement was a religious movement for and in the name of Islam. This was not a deliberate distortion. The anxiety about the holy places was genuine and deep. Even before the war started, *Anjuman-i-Khuddam-i-Kabah* had been established, in 1913. After the seizure of Makkah and Madinah by a British stooge, Husain, and the occupation of Jerusalem by British troops, this anxiety became deeper and distrust of British intentions increased. This universal feeling among the Muslims began to be shared even by the Shias, whose fundamental difference with the Sunnis is on the nature of the institution of Khilafat itself. After the war, the whole thing boiled down to the issue of the custody of the holy places and keeping the Jaziratul Arab free from the influence of non-Muslims. The obvious solution was to maintain the *status quo*, i.e. leave them in the hands of the Khalifa, who prided

¹Letter to Chintamani dated 1 July 1916, Brown, op. cit., p. 193.

²Mohammad Ali, *My Life, A Fragment*, Ed. Afzal Iqbal, Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf, Lahore, 1942, p. 138.

himself on being *Khadimul Haramain ul Sharifain*,¹ (Servant of the Holy Places).

The Khilafatists maintained that Queen Victoria's proclamation after the Great Revolt guaranteed religious freedom to all her Indian subjects and that loyalty to the Khalifa transcended loyalty to the British sovereign. Emphatic statements were made and all kinds of arguments given in propagating the view that loyalty to the Khalifa as head of the *ummah* was a religious duty that no Muslim could avoid without going outside the pale of Islam. This was repeated so many times so vehemently that the propagators themselves started believing it sincerely.

In overstating their view, the Khilafatist leaders forgot that neither they nor their ancestors had ever performed any *baia* to the Turkish Khalifa. If they really considered him the 'Commander of the Faithful', they should have fought with him against his enemies during the war, not after the armistice. They also turned a blind eye to the state of debasement reached in the Ottoman Empire after a continued stretch of over two centuries of decadence and degeneration, and the 'Caliph', even if he had any claim on the loyalty of the Muslim peoples, had long lost it by virtue of the highly immoral and depraved nature of the set-up over which he presided: a repressive and irresponsible administration, greedy and corrupt Pashas, and an intriguing and lewd *harem*, with the Sultan himself setting the tone for debauchery and dissipation. The Ottoman Empire of the twentieth century could, by no stretch of imagination, come up to scratch as an Islamic state, nor its imperial head as the successor of Abu Bakr and Umar.

The Khilafat Movement was doomed from the very beginning. The Indian Muslims wanted, through an unarmed and non-violent struggle, the restoration to the Turks of what they had lost on the battle field. In that battle two empires were pitted against each other and the decayed and decaying empire had been beaten by the stronger and more virile party. But in their utter lack of realism, the Indian Muslims not only expected the victor to act like the vanquished, but were also trying to support a sick and tottering regime against liberal forces within the empire itself. The Sultan's claim to Khilafat itself had always

¹This title was adopted, a few years ago, by King Fahad of Saudi Arabia.

been dubious, and the Turks themselves quietly dropped all claims to non-Turkish areas during the negotiations at Lausanne, while the Indian Muslims' Movement was at its height. But the Khilafatists, oblivious to all this, continued their Movement, handing over its supreme command to Gandhi, who terminated it when it suited him without even informing them.

The Movement proved very costly to the Muslims. Whatever small gains they had made in government appointments and in the field of education were wiped out in one go. Aligarh itself, though it put up a stiff fight against Mohammad Ali's assault to close it down, never fully recovered from the departure of many of its students and teachers, and plans for its expansion had to be dropped. Muslim students similarly left other English schools and colleges. Other forms of non-co-operation also hit the Muslims hard economically. Their losses and sufferings were totally out of proportion to their share of the population. In return they got nothing, except perhaps a mass awakening. But the gain was too little and the price too heavy.

Jinnah, the brightest star in the Indian political firmament, suffered almost total eclipse during the Non-co-operation Movement. He tried to steer the League clear of the Khilafat movement by raising a technical objection at the League Council meeting in Delhi in December 1918,¹ but was vehemently opposed by an overwhelming majority of the members and over-ruled.

Six months later he was in England, on behalf of the League, to appear before the Joint Parliamentary Select Committee on the India Reform Bill. He took advantage of the occasion to address Lloyd George and apprise him of the strong Muslim feelings on the Khilafat issue. This was in keeping with his democratic character, which required that, while he had the right to hold and to propagate his personal opinion inside the organization, he had the duty outside the organization to express its collective view. This was also reflected in his evidence before the Joint Select Committee of Parliament on the subject of separate electorates.

When Jinnah returned in November, India was in a state of ferment. The Khilafat Committee had become the voice of the

¹Chaudhry Khaliquzzaman, *Pathway to Pakistan*, Longman, Pakistan, 1961, p. 43.

Muslims, the Muslim League had faded completely into the background, and its permanent president, the Maharaja¹ of Mahmudabad, who had succeeded the Aga Khan, had resigned. Commenting on the political situation, Jinnah said in a press interview that Chelmsford had failed and should be recalled, but he felt that Montagu would not fail the Indians and advised India 'to keep her head cool at this most critical moment'.

Next month at Amritsar Jinnah was elected permanent President of the League, whose importance and influence was dwindling fast, and it was he who chaired the extraordinary session which was held simultaneously with that of the Congress at Calcutta to consider the Non-co-operation Movement.

Gandhi succeeded in his advocacy of the Non-co-operation Movement at Calcutta, despite opposition by many Congress stalwarts; and at Nagpur, with even C. R. Das and Lajpat Rai joining him, his triumph was complete. But Jinnah opposed him each time. At Nagpur he was the one leader to go against the tide. His criticism that the Non-co-operation Movement, '...may be an excellent weapon for the purpose of bringing pressure upon the Government, but...will not succeed in destroying the British Empire'² was received with hoots and howls, ridicule and derision. Jinnah stood his ground with such courage and tenacity that Colonel Wedgwood, a member of the British Labour Party who was present, was moved to say that, 'If India had a few more men of Mr Jinnah's strength of character, she would be free before long.'³

This strength of character cost Jinnah his political career. He had to leave the Congress, which had been the centre of his political activities and aspirations.

Jinnah's opposition to the Gandhian programme was based on certain principles and practical considerations. He shuddered to think of the consequences of playing with the sentiments of the masses. He believed that the struggle for freedom, once the possibility of an armed revolt was ruled out, had to be carried out through constitutional methods. This did not mean merely passing

¹Ali Mohammed Khan got the title of Maharaja later, but he is referred to as Maharaja to distinguish him from his son, Amir Ahmed Khan, who is referred to as Raja.

²Jayakar, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 415.

³Jamiluddin Ahmad, *Glimpses of Quaid-i-Azam*, Educational Press, Karachi, 1960, p. 3.

resolutions: other methods had to be adopted as and when necessary. The Councils and other elected bodies could be used to great advantage in embarrassing and harassing the Government—tactics adopted by the Swaraj Party three years later. Even street politics could be resorted to once in a while, provided the crowds were kept in hand—as he had done in organizing the agitation against honouring Lord Willingdon. And the goal, the one and only goal, must always be *swaraj*, because only a free India could help Indians abroad and pull its weight in such international affairs as the fate of Turkey and the custody of the holy places.

While *swaraj* was the goal upon which the best efforts must be concentrated, Jinnah insisted that, '...we must in the meanwhile, promote, support and advance the commercial, industrial and agricultural progress and welfare in all their varied activities in the country.' Steps must be taken to organize labour, industrial as well as agricultural. 'We must enable them to take their place in their country's struggle for *swaraj*'. Mass education should be promoted; elementary education had to be made free and compulsory. Means should be devised to establish *swadeshi* industries, remove untouchability, and encourage settlement of disputes by arbitration. Many of the vital questions, administrative and otherwise, such as Indianization of civil and military services, railways and finance, organizing and educating the electorate, could be dealt with partly through political action and partly through legislation and provincial administration. The reforms of 1919 had fallen far short of Indian expectations, but they could be used for the welfare of the people, by exacting the maximum possible benefit out of them. All this should be done while pressing for self-government, and if the British response was negative, 'parliamentary obstruction and constitutional deadlocks' could be resorted to 'to make the Government by Legislature or through Legislature impossible.'¹

Jinnah was angry with the British that the Montford Reforms had not gone far enough due to 'the timidity of Montagu', but they were not the 'laws of the Medes and the Persians which could not change'. Meanwhile they did give a voice to the Indians in the Centre, transferred some powers to the elected repre-

¹Presidential address, League session, Lahore, 24 May 1924, Rafique Afzal, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

sentatives in the provinces, and had given an opportunity for real constructive work. But the Indians were ignoring the opportunity and instead of utilizing it for the good of the people and working for more, were starting a mass movement which was destructive in nature, and could only lead to anarchy and confusion.

Jinnah did appreciate that British duplicity had inflamed Indian public opinion: they had introduced the Rowlatt Act with its Punjab sequel while talking of reforms, and had shamelessly gone back on their promises with regard to the Ottoman Empire. The Indian anger was totally justified. He had himself vehemently opposed the Rowlatt Bills in the Council, and when one Bill was declared passed, he had resigned his seat in protest. 'It has clearly demonstrated,' he wrote in a strongly-worded letter to the Viceroy, that 'the constitution of the Imperial Legislative Council, which is a legislature but in name...a machine propelled by a foreign Executive.' 'The fundamental principles of justice have been uprooted and the constitutional rights of the people have been violated at a time when there is no real danger to the State by an overfretful and incompetent bureaucracy which is neither responsible to the people nor in touch with real public opinion... a Government that passes or sanctions such a law in times of peace forfeits its claim to be called a civilized government.'¹

He also fully appreciated the depth of, and the reasons for, the prevailing Muslim sentiment. He had as early as in December 1916 felt that he 'would be failing in my duty towards my people' if he did not warn the Government against treating the 'delicate question' of Khilafat lightly. In the summer of 1919 he had pleaded their case before the Parliamentary Select Committee. And in November 1919, when the Khilafatists decided to boycott the Peace Celebrations, he fully supported them. 'Participation in the Peace Celebration is impossible while the Punjab is crying for redress. We cannot rejoice a peace which means the dismemberment of Turkey,' he had said.²

Jinnah's commitment to constitutional methods, however, was entirely different from the 'cringing policy' of the Indian

¹Rafique Afzal, *op. cit.*, pp. 112-13.

²Dr Naeem Qureshi, *Jinnah and the Khilafat Movement*, 1976, p. 221. Cited by Aziz Beg in *Jinnah and his Time*, Babur Ameer Publications, Islamabad, 1986, p. 347.

'liberals'.¹ He had, however, no illusions that freedom could come without sacrifices. Obviously constitutional methods alone were not sufficient. They had failed even in the case of the Rowlatt Bill, which had been opposed by all the elected members. In the circumstances something more and bolder was required. Jinnah thought that the policy of non-co-operation with the Government had become inevitable. But he was opposed to Gandhi's programme as it stood.

Jinnah presided at the League session held at Calcutta, at the same time that the Special Congress met and decided in favour of the Non-co-operation Movement. In his address, Jinnah lashed out at the Government policies since the Armistice. 'First came the Rowlatt Bill...accompanied by the Punjab atrocities...and then came the spoliation of the Ottoman Empire and the Khilafat. The first attacks our liberty, the other our faith,' he said.

'One thing there is which is indisputable, and that is that this Government must go and give place to a completely responsible Government. Meetings of the Congress and the Muslim League will not effect this. We shall have to think out *some course more effective than passing resolutions* of disapproval to be forwarded to the Secretary of State for India. And we shall find a way, even as France and Italy did...and the new-born Egypt has. We are not going to rest content until we have attained the fullest political freedom in our own country.'

Referring to Gandhi's programme, he said: 'Mr Gandhi has placed his programme of non-co-operation, supported by the authority of the Khilafat Conference, before the country. It is now for you to consider whether or not you approve of its principles; and approving of its principles, whether or not you approve of its details. The operations of this scheme will strike at the individual in each of you, and therefore it rests with you alone to measure your strength and to weigh the pros and the cons of the question before you arrive at a decision. But once you have decided to march, let there be no retreat under any circumstances.'

¹In 1916 he told the Muslim League at Lucknow: 'Our clear duty (to the Government) is to be loyal and respectful, without stooping to a cringing policy. We want no favours, and crave for no partial treatment... The Musalmans must learn to have self-respect.' Rafique Afzal, op. cit., p. 62.

He referred to 'one degrading measure upon another, disappointment upon disappointment, and injury upon injury' which had resulted in 'a dangerous and most unprecedented situation. The solution is not easy and the difficulties are great. But I cannot ask people to submit to wrong after wrong. Yet I would still ask the Government not to drive the people of India to desperation, or else *there is no other course left open to the people except to inaugurate the policy of non-co-operation, though not necessarily the programme of Mr Gandhi.*'¹

But Gandhi's programme was finally adopted by both the communities, and Jinnah was left with a situation he was later to face again and again—the British following offensive policies, and the Indian leaders responding with answers that injured the country, leaving him standing alone and unable to support either party, and hated by both. His views on the Non-co-operation Movement were expressed in a letter he wrote to Gandhi, in reply to the latter's invitation to 'share in the new life that has opened up before the country.' Jinnah said: 'If by "new life" you mean your methods and your programme, I am afraid I cannot accept them: for I am fully convinced that it must lead to disaster. But the actual new life that has opened up before the country is that we are faced with a government that pays no heed to the grievances, feelings and sentiments of the people; that our own countrymen are divided; the Moderate Party is still going wrong; that your methods have already caused split and division in almost every institution that you have approached hitherto, and in the public life of the country not only among Hindus and Muslims but between Hindus and Hindus and Muslims and Muslims and even between fathers and sons; people generally are desperate all over the country and your extreme programme has for the moment struck the imagination mostly of the inexperienced youth and the ignorant and the illiterate. All this means complete disorganization and chaos. What the consequences of this may be, I shudder to contemplate; but I for one am convinced that the present policy of the Government is the primary cause of it all and unless that cause is removed, the effect must continue. I have no voice or power to remove that cause; but at the same time I do not wish my countrymen to be dragged to the brink of

¹Pirzada, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 542-4.

a precipice in order to be shattered. The only way for the nationalists is to unite and work for a programme which is universally acceptable for the early attainment of complete responsible government. Such a programme cannot be dictated by any single individual, but must have the approval and support of all the prominent nationalist leaders in the country; and to achieve this end I am sure my colleagues and myself shall continue to work.’¹

Jinnah had formed a poor opinion of Gandhi from the first time they met in London in 1914, (did some remarks of Gokhale, giving an estimate of Gandhi, in private, also influence Jinnah?), and as he came to see more of him and his mysterious ways, his doubts were confirmed. He did not trust either the man or his pronouncements, either his methods or his policies. Furthermore, he was horrified at the deep religious colouring that the movement had been given. He had an entirely secular outlook, and strongly felt that bringing religion into politics in a big way might help the movement initially, but would do incalculable harm to the country in the long run. Even the antagonists of secular politics will have to admit that, whatever the evils in their view of such politics, this was the only healthy possibility in India, with its many beliefs and the trigger-happy nature of their followers on matters they considered affected their religion.

Not only was the Khilafat Movement run on a religious basis, Gandhi himself injected a big dose of religion into politics, right from the time of the Rowlatt *satyagraha*. The Khilafatists had dragged the *ulema* into politics and were happy at their success in winning the support of the Muslim masses through them. The new role of the *ulema* did not broaden their outlook; on the contrary, Mohammad Ali himself became a *mullah*. Mohammad Ali and Gandhi, both deeply religious and both justifying their policies and politics by their different religions, did not create a ‘Federation of Faiths’: they created a temporary and fragile unity which was bound to be shattered and to prove counter-productive, dependent as it was on different and mutually hostile beliefs. Mohammad Ali, even when on the best of relations with Gandhi, used to say that ‘the worst Muslim sinner and criminal was better than Mahatamaji.’ This was naturally resented by

¹Saiyid, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

Gandhi's Hindu followers, but Mohammad Ali's own followers applauded him for his courage. This courage was no substitute for a solid political base for Hindu-Muslim unity.

A Bharti journalist, Durga Das, met Jinnah after the Nagpur session. He records: 'Well, young man', he remarked, 'I will have nothing to do with his pseudo-religious approach to politics. I part company with the Congress and Gandhi. I do not believe in working up mob hysteria. Politics is a gentleman's game.'

Jinnah talked more in sorrow than in anger. He was not prepared to engage in a fight with the Congress; he would honour its mandate and abstain from contesting the coming elections for the reformed legislatures. But he expressed the hope that before long Gandhian magic would lose its potency and the Congress revert to the path of constitutional agitation.

Jinnah particularly deplored the Khilafat agitation which had brought the reactionary *mullah* element to the surface. He was amazed, he said, that the Hindu leaders had not realized that this movement would encourage the Pan-Islamist sentiment that the Sultan of Turkey was encouraging to buttress his tottering empire and dilute the nationalism of the Indian Muslims. He recalled how Tilak and he had laboured to produce the Lucknow Pact and bring the Congress and the League together on a common platform. The British, he added, were playing a nefarious game in bypassing the pact and making it appear that the Muslim could always hope for a better deal from them than from the Congress. 'Well,' he concluded, 'I shall wait and watch the developments. but as matters stand I have no place in Gandhi's Congress.'¹

Six weeks later, in an address to Gokhale's Servants of India Society, he blamed the Government for deliberately following policies that had wounded Indian pride, and Gandhi for taking the country in the wrong direction; otherwise, he said, he would have been the first person to join his movement. He wished that in its place there had been a real political movement, but Gandhi's was based on soul force and destructive methods which did not take human nature into account, and could get out of hand any time. He felt sure that if Gokhale were alive he would not have endorsed the Non-co-operation Movement.²

¹Durga Das, *From Curzon to Nehru and After*, Collins, London 1969, pp. 76-7.

²Saiyid, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

But Gokhale was dead and his 'moderates' had not only not joined the Non-co-operation Movement, they had gone over to the Government camp. Tej Bahadur Sapru had become a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, and Srinivas Sastri was acting as an 'Imperial Envoy', visiting the Dominions and the United States and pouring scorn on the Non-co-operation Movement and the struggle against the Raj. Even a man like Surendranath ('surrender-not') Bannerji, whose whole political life was one long career of anti-government agitation, had become a provincial minister. The Non-co-operation Movement had polarized the country, as a result of which those who were not in it were siding with the British. *Jinnah was the one honourable exception*. Although he did not agree with Gandhi's programme, he did respect the feelings it reflected. He even felt that, as the Government had behaved abominably, some form of non-co-operation was necessary. Late in 1921, when the Government, in a bid to enlist the support of those who were against the Non-co-operation Movement, approached him, he rebuffed them with the words: 'The Non-co-operation Movement is only an expression of general dissatisfaction, owing to the utter disregard of public opinion and outstanding grievances.'¹

Jinnah, respecting the Congress and the Khilafat Committee's boycott of the Councils, had earlier refused to stand for the election to the Imperial Legislative Council. Later, he had tried to bring about a *rapprochement* between Gandhi and Reading. In January 1922—a month before Gandhi actually suspended the Movement—Jinnah arranged an All-Parties Conference at Bombay which condemned Government repression, advised the Congress to abandon mass *satyagraha*, and recommended the convening of a Round Table Conference with authority to settle *swaraj* and Khilafat questions. This provided an honourable way for Gandhi to call off the Non-co-operation Movement, but Gandhi preferred the other way.

In 1920-1 Gandhi was the hero of the day, and Jinnah—the author of Lucknow Pact, the spirit behind the 'Memorandum of the Nineteen' and the hero of the fight against Willingdon—had been upstaged. In 1917-18, Jinnah was the foremost patriot, the most prominent leader simultaneously of the Congress, the Muslim League, the Home Rule League, and the Imperial Legislative Council. Three years later, he had lost each and every

¹Saiyid, op. cit., p. 95.

position, and, although he had not changed, was considered by 'Nationalist India' as a fallen Lucifer. The Council seat he had resigned himself in protest against the Rowlatt Act. He had also resigned from the Home Rule League, but for different reasons. There, Gandhi had taken over from Mrs Besant as president and had arbitrarily¹ changed both its name and its aims. Jinnah had objected because such drastic changes could constitutionally be brought about only by the Council, and then only with a majority of three-fourths. But Gandhi had overruled the objection, and in reply to one member had said that it was open to the objectors to resign. Thereupon Jinnah and his colleagues had tendered their resignations. As for the Congress, Jinnah had suffered the most humiliating experience of his life at Nagpur. That left him only with the Muslim League, but the League, at that time, was more dead than alive. A dazzling political career, then at its peak, seemed to have come to a sudden end.

After the Storm

If the Khilafat-*swaraj* movement had created unparalleled unity between the Hindu and Muslim masses, the period following its suspension was one of unprecedented mutual hostility in peace time. Unity gave place to violent confrontation; the allies of yesterday became the sworn enemies of today.

Starting with 1922, India was the scene of bloody riots between the two communities for the next seven years. They usually occurred at the time of the Hindu festival of Dusserah, when Muslims objected to processions playing music while passing by mosques during prayer time, or at the time of the Muslim festival of Eid-ul-Azha, when Hindus objected to the slaughter of cows by Muslims. But as relations between the two communities deteriorated and mutual suspicions increased, a permanent state of war between them seemed to have come to stay. Any small incident, any little pique caused to an individual by a member of the other community, could produce an explosion resulting in deaths and injuries, destruction to property and assaults on women.

¹'But Gandhiji has seldom cared for the letter of a constitution when this has come in his way,' says Jawaharlal Nehru in his autobiography, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

These riots were the symptoms of a deep-seated disease, not the disease itself. They had occurred in India before, but the ferocity and the frequency with which they occurred in this period were a reaction to the Non-co-operation Movement. The Movement had created a temporary alliance in which the Hindus thought they were using the Muslims in the struggle for *swaraj*, and the Muslims thought they were using the Hindus for their Khilafat aims. When it was suddenly called off, both were disappointed, frustrated and angry. The Muslims were made even more bitter by Ataturk's abolishing of Khilafat, and, realizing that all their sacrifices had been for nothing, became inward-looking and anxious about their own position in a free India; all their distrust of the majority community was revived. The Hindus, on their part, had become alarmed at the Muslims' insistence that non-violence was a matter of expediency, not a creed, for them. They began to have visions of India being attacked by Afghanistan and other Muslim countries, with the Indian Muslims making common cause with the invaders.¹ This was an old fear but suddenly it was revived: the possibility of 'a coherent continuous chain from Angora to Saharanpur of Mahomedan power and influence'² did not seem remote any longer.

It became more important for the Hindus to take steps to deal with this 'menace', and prevent a repetition of history while the British were still there with their powerful army, than to attain *swaraj*. *Swaraj* could wait: the Muslim problem had to be solved first.

For a genuine nationalist like Jinnah, the right solution would have been a new inter-communal agreement, like the Lucknow Pact, guaranteeing a fair share to the Muslims in representative institutions and services, and providing statutory safeguards for their religion and culture. But most of the Hindu leaders were rabid communalists behind a veil of Indian nationalism. For them India meant Hindu India, *swaraj* meant Hindu raj, and Indian nationalism meant Hindu nationalism. It was all very well to talk of Indian nationalism while they needed the Muslims in the fight against the British, but now that they had decided to organize their own community on pseudo-religious lines for a confrontation with the Muslims, they discarded that outer garb.

¹See Lajpal Rai's letter to C. R. Das, p. 163.

²N. C. Kalkar's Presidential Address at the Hindu Mahasabha session, Kanpur, *Indian Annual Register*, Calcutta, 1925, Vol. II, p. 351.

'I declare that the future of the Hindu race, of Hindustan and of the Punjab,' said an article published in 1925, 'rests on these four pillars: (i) Hindu *Sanghtan*; (ii) Hindu Raj; (iii) *Shuddhi* of Muslims; and (iv) Conquest and *shuddhi* of Afghanistan and the Frontiers. So long as the Hindu nation does not accomplish these four things, the safety of our children and great-grandchildren will ever be in danger, and the safety of the Hindu race will be impossible. The Hindu race has but one history, and its institutions are homogenous. But the Musalmans and Christians are far removed from the confines of Hinduism, for their religions are alien and they love Persian, Arab and European institutions. Thus, just as one removes foreign matter from the eye, *shuddhi* must be made of these two religions... Just as there is Hindu religion in Nepal, so there must be Hindu institutions in Afghanistan and the frontier territory; otherwise it is useless to win *swaraj*... At present English officers are protecting the frontiers; but it cannot always be.'¹

The author of this article was Hardayal—none other than the terrorist who had planned a revolt in India during the war with German and Ottoman help. But terrorist² or non-violent, Hindu leaders, by and large, had the same mentality and Hardayal had merely put it bluntly.

Madan Mohan Malaviya, Congress President in 1901 and 1918, one of 'Our Indian Patriarchs' and 'great leaders and founders of the movement for emancipation', as the official history of the Congress calls him, resurrected the Hindu Mahasabha. The Hindu Sabha and the Akhil Bharatiya Hindu Sabha were amalgamated to form the bigger organization, and Malaviya presided over its first session at Benaras in August 1923. It was at this conference that he first raised the cry of *sanghtan* (organization).

In organizing the Mahasabha, Malaviya was joined by another 'Patriarch', Lajpat Rai, and Gandhi's friend Swami Shardhanand.

¹*The Times of India*, Bombay, 25 July 1925. Cited by Emily Baroñ, *Hardayal*, Manohar Book Service, New Delhi, 1975, p. 233.

²Abul Kalam Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, Vanguard Books, Lahore, 1989, p. 5. Speaking of his experiences, Abul Kalam Azad, who came in close contact with the terrorists during the agitation on the partition of Bengal, writes: 'In those days the revolutionary groups were recruited exclusively from the Hindu middle classes. In fact all the revolutionary groups were actively anti-Muslim... The revolutionaries felt that the Muslims were an obstacle to the attainment of Indian freedom and must, like other obstacles, be removed'.

While Malaviya concentrated on Mahasabha affairs, Lajpat Rai attended to Arya Samaj activities, and Shardhanand on *shuddhi*. In a later session, Malaviya, according to his biographer, 'stressed the need of taking back those Hindus in its fold who were converted through mistake, force or other allurements...He also pressed hard for physical and military training.'¹

Shuddhi and *sanghtan* were both started in right earnest in 1923, while the stress on physical and military training goes back to the earliest revivalist movements. The Hindu masses, for historical reason, suffered from a terrible inferiority complex *vis-a-vis* the Muslims, in physical courage and physical contests. Every revivalist Hindu movement, whether that of Rajanarain Bose and Nabagopal Mitra in Bengal, or of Tilak in Maharashtra, or of the Arya Samaj in Gujrat and the Punjab, encouraged martial arts. Physical contests and displays of physical prowess by individuals were an indispensable item in all Hindu *melas* arranged by these societies, and *akharas*² were established to teach these arts.

'Do not pass the life of women,' Malaviya had urged his followers at a meeting in Amritsar. 'When you are forced and coerced, use your power.' This was a call, meant and understood as such, to browbeat the Muslims. The Hindus were now physically strong enough to challenge the Muslims. The experiment of the eighties had not been very satisfactory, but with more preparations, or its 'intensely nationalist' activities as the official biographer and devout follower of Gandhi, Pittabhai Sitaramayya, puts it, the Arya Samaj had at last 'developed a virile manhood in the Nation.'³ The large number of *akharas* had imparted training in martial arts to hundreds of thousands, and the paramilitary RSSS (Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangha) had been organized.⁴

¹Sitaram Chaturvedi, *Madan Mohan Malaviya*, Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1972, p. 43.

²*Akhara*, a physical training centre where wrestling, boxing and martial arts are taught.

³Sitaramayya, *op. cit.*, p. 21. Sitaramayya, it may be recalled, was Gandhi's nominee for the presidentship of the Congress against Subhas Bose in 1939. He became President of the Congress and Governor of a province after independence.

⁴Though established early, the RSSS was re-organized by Dr B. S. Moonje in 1927. It was affiliated to the Mahasabha officially in 1932.

In this explosive atmosphere it was not difficult to start a riot any time, anywhere, but a favourite method of the Arya Samajists was to make obscene verbal or printed attacks on Islam and the person of its Prophet. Never before had so many sacrilegious writings about Islam appeared in India as during this decade. This inevitably created tension and occasionally provoked individual Muslims to take the law into their own hands and dispatch the perpetrator of the crime, creating more tension. As Sir Mohammad Iqbal, the poet-philosopher, once said in a letter to Jinnah: 'There have also been a few cases of burning of the Quran in Sindh. I have carefully studied the whole situation and believe that the real cause of these events is neither religious nor economic. It is purely political, i.e. the desire of the Sikhs and Hindus to intimidate the Muslims even in the Muslim provinces.'¹ Iqbal's letter was written in 1937, when the Arya Samaj had become emboldened by the success of its strategy, but in the 1920s it carefully selected only those cities for clashes where the Hindus were in an overwhelming majority.

Never was the Arya Samaj more active than during this period while the Mahasabha was becoming popular by leaps and bounds. 'The Hindu Mahasabha,' says Malaviya's biographer, 'soon gained momentum and its principles and aims were generally agreed upon by all. It did not aim at pursuing any kind of ill-will against any community but merely sought to organize the Hindus into one powerful community.'² The powerful community was to be built, of course, on the four pillars of Hardayal!

The Muslim reply to *shuddhi* and *sanghtan* came in the shape of *tabligh* and *tanzim* (preaching and organization). The Muslims, frustrated over the Khilafat fiasco, had broken ranks. Some became 'nationalists' or outright Congressmen; others, considering that the interests of their community would be better served by co-operating with the Government, went over to the British; while the masses, shaken by the activities of neo-Hinduism, became more concerned with fighting the Hindu communalists than having any confrontation whatever with the Government.

Gandhi came out of jail in February 1924. The British had imprisoned him soon after he had suspended the Non-co-operation

¹Iqbal's *Letters to Jinnah*, Shaikh Mohammad Ashraf, Lahore, 1943 (letter dated 21 January 1937).

²Chaturvedi, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

Movement, and had thus saved him from the attacks of his angry critics and saved his all-India leadership. He had been sentenced to a six-year term but released four years in advance. On release, he found the morale of his compatriots at a very low ebb and the country rent by Hindu-Muslim dissension. As the self-appointed apostle of Hindu-Muslim unity, who considered such unity as the *sine qua non* to *swaraj*, restoration of good relations between the two communities should have become his first priority. Instead, he adopted a strange attitude. He did make the right noises and once even undertook a twenty-one-day fast, but he made no serious attempt to address the issue.

A number of 'Unity Conferences' were organized, but in the absence of any will to find a solution, they proved to be mere exercises in futility. How serious the Congress was in this unity effort can be gauged, as a Hindu writer points out, from the fact that '...the Committee appointed by the Belgaum Session in December 1924 (over which Gandhi presided) to report on the Hindu-Muslim problem had Lajpat Rai as Chairman, with such members as M. R. Jayakar, C. Y. Chintamani, Rajendra Prasad, Jairamdas Daulatram and others who were intimately associated with the Hindu Mahasabha movement even as Congressmen.'¹

For Gandhi, his two great objectives had already been achieved through the Non-co-operation Movement: he had brought power and influence to the Congress which it could never have attained without wholesale Muslim participation; and he had established himself as the most important leader of the Congress and of India. Now he withdrew into the background, on the pretext that he was morally bound to take no active part in politics until the period for which he was sentenced was over, i.e. until February 1928, although he did become the president of the Congress, for the only time in his life, from December 1924 to December 1925. Then he went on 'a year of silence'. He did condemn communal violence now and then, but he refrained from condemning the Hindu leaders responsible for it. Mohammad Ali, who, on his part, never spared Muslim Leaders, moaned: '...today... Mahatmaji is in retirement, and has neither the same influence on Hindus as before nor does he condemn them for their

¹B. P. Misra, *The Indian Political Parties*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1978, p. 164.

changed mentality, as we, ever since our release, have condemned and continue to condemn the Muslims for theirs.¹

Gandhi's real feelings were, however, revealed when on 29 May 1924, three months after release from prison, he said that: 'There is no doubt in my mind that in the majority of quarrels the Hindu comes out second best,' and pronounced the verdict that, 'the Musalman as a rule is a bully, and the Hindu as a rule is a coward'. He added that 'where there are cowards, there will always be bullies,' and, '...I, as a Hindu, am more ashamed of Hindu cowardice than I am angry at the Muslim bullying.' As for *ahinsa*, he made it clear that: 'Between violence and cowardly flight I can only prefer violence to cowardice.'² His attitude towards communal riots was summed up in one sentence: 'If fate has decreed that we should fight a few battles among ourselves, let us.'³

Jinnah was practically the only nationalist leader to come out unblemished from these testing times. There was not the slightest change in his outlook, refusing, as he did, to compromise either with the Government or with communal politics, as was then fashionable. He believed, as he had always believed, in communal harmony, and joint action by Hindus and Muslims for freedom of the motherland. But he had no following, and practically no platform. Gandhi had succeeded in driving into oblivion both the topmost surviving leaders of 1918—Annie Besant and Jinnah. India had now completely forgotten Mrs Besant, but Jinnah, though ineffective, was still a force. He was respected in the highest political circles, and still popular among the people of Bombay. This popularity enabled him to return to the Central Legislative Assembly when the elections were held in 1923. It was characteristic of Jinnah that, when appealing to the voters, all of whom were Muslims, he refrained, in spite of the charged atmosphere of the day, from arousing their communal sympathies, and said that, 'My sole objective is to serve the cause of the country as best as I can.' He was duly returned unopposed.

¹Editorial, *Hamdard*, Delhi, 20 April 1927. All quotations from *Hamdard* are taken from Mohammad Sarwar's compilation *Mazamin-i-Mohammad Ali*, Vol. I, 1938, Vol. II, 1940, Maktaba Jamia, Delhi.

²CWMG, op. cit., Vol. XXIV, pp. 141-2. *Young India*, 29 May 1924.

³CWMG, op. cit., Vol. XXIX, p. 335. *Navajivan*, 12 December 1925.

The policies that Jinnah had been pleading for, as against Gandhi's programme, were vindicated when no less a person than the President of the Congress, C. R. Das (1870-1925), himself proposed that the Congress ban on Council entry be lifted. As early as in May 1922, his wife, Basanti Das, had made the suggestion in her presidential address at the Bengal provincial conference at Chittagong, and Das made the formal proposal at the Gaya Congress. His proposal was defeated. He resigned from the presidentship and formed a new party called the 'Congress Khilafat Swaraj Party.' Motilal Nehru and a number of prominent Congressmen joined it.

Das was originally against the Non-co-operation Movement. He had opposed Gandhi at Calcutta, but was converted at Nagpur. He was, however, greatly disappointed by Gandhi's rejection of the Reading offer in November-December 1921 and his abrupt calling off of the Movement in February. 'Deshbundhu was besides himself with sorrow and anger at the way the Mahatma was repeatedly bungling,'¹ recalled Subhas Bose. 'The proudest Government did bend to you,' he said in Madras in June 1923. 'The terms came to me through Lord Ronaldshey, the Governor of Bengal, and I forwarded them to the Headquarters (Gandhi in Ahmedabad) because at that time I was in jail. If I had not been in jail, I would have forced the country to accept them. After they had been accepted you would have seen a different state of things.'² When he came out of jail the opportunity had been lost, but Das decided that the Gandhian policy of total non-co-operation, even after the suspension of the Non-co-operation Movement, had to change.

Motilal was as much opposed to the Non-co-operation Movement at Calcutta as Das, and had even approached Jinnah to make a common front against Gandhi. Kanji Dwarkadas records: 'Jinnah, Mrs Jinnah, Jayakar, Umar, Jamnadas, Shankerlal and myself went to Calcutta by a Congress Special. Motilal Nehru, who had come to meet Jinnah at the Howrah Station, told him in my presence that Gandhiji wanted to pass a non-co-operation resolution and that this would mean boycott of the legislatures and he (Motilal) suggested to Jinnah that all of

¹Dwarkadas, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

²*Ibid.*, p. 196.

them together, i.e. Jinnah, Malaviya, C. R. Das, Lajpat Rai, Motilal Nehru, Mrs Besant and others should combine to defeat the resolution. When the resolution was passed ten or twelve days later, Motilal, influenced by his son Jawaharlal, voted in favour of the resolution along with Gandhi.¹ This was not the only time Motilal was to let Jinnah down.

After the failure of the All-Parties Conference in Bombay in January 1922, which had been convened to arrange a compromise between the Government and Gandhi, Jinnah had given up any hope of releasing Congress from Gandhi's strong grip. He then tried to form a new nationalist party of those who were prepared to work the Monford reforms—'extract all the good we can from the Government by and through the Legislature by means of such limited powers and influence as is permitted.'² Jinnah had hoped to succeed with the help of Motilal and Jayakar, who strongly believed in this policy. But they did not have enough courage to go against the current, and Jinnah had to abandon the idea.

In 1923, however, watching the turn of the tide, and banking on the prestige of Das, Motilal decided to join the Swaraj Party. He became one of its Secretaries, with Das as President. The party participated in the elections and won spectacular success. Das preferred to stay in the provinces, but Motilal became the leader of the party in the Central Assembly. Jinnah, who had formed his own Independent group, extended the hand of co-operation to the Swaraj Party. The two parties working together inflicted defeat after defeat on the Government in the Assembly, to the delight of the country at large.

Das was meanwhile scaling great heights. A true nationalist and a patriot, his honesty of purpose, dynamic personality, and the readiness to admit mistakes and to find other and more practical methods for the attainment of *swaraj*, was swinging the country to his side.

Das won over the Muslims by a practical demonstration of his sincerity in solving the Hindu-Muslim question in Bengal. The

¹Ibid., pp. 151-2.

²Presidential speech at the Muslim League Session, Lahore, 24 May 1924, Latif Ahmed Sherwani, *Pakistan in the Making*, Quaid-e-Azam Academy, Karachi, 1987, p. 370.

Muslims of that province had been the special target of a combined Anglo-Hindu offensive since 1757, and their economic and political conditions had been deteriorating continuously. Although in a majority in the province, they were far behind the Hindus in every walk of life. Land was overwhelmingly in the hands of the Hindus, as were commerce and industry. The Hindus had continued to hold the monopoly in education, government jobs, and in the professions. Efforts made by the 'have-nots' were always frustrated by the 'haves', and this was done under the cloak of 'nationalism'.

When faced with the problem, Das immediately saw the justice of the Muslim case. He perceived its economic side also, and realized that the question could not be solved without a positive approach, and that without such a solution all talk of Hindu-Muslim unity and a common struggle for *swaraj* was sheer nonsense, and he acted decisively. He announced that the Swaraj Party agreed, *inter alia*, that in Bengal:

(i) Representation in the Provincial Legislative Council should be on population basis, with separate electorates, subject to such adjustments as it might be found necessary to make in a National Pact (like the Lucknow Pact) between the Congress and the Khilafat Committee.

(ii) Representation on local bodies should be in the proportion of sixty to the majority community and forty to the minority, in every district; the question of separate or mixed electorate to be decided by ascertaining the wishes of the two communities.

(iii) Fifty-five per cent of government posts should go to Muslims; but until this percentage was reached all government appointments should go to qualified Muslims.

(iv) There should be no interference with cow-killing, but this should be done in such a manner as not to wound the religious feelings of the Hindus.

(v) No music should be played before the mosques.¹

The Das declaration shocked the so-called nationalists and a campaign was started against him. But Das stood his ground and took a whirlwind tour of the province to explain his plan. It was a unique spectacle, anywhere in India, for a Hindu leader to stand up and fight for the just rights of the Muslims, with a positive

¹Sherwani, *op. cit.*, p. 369.

plan, not just vague promises, and it made a deep impression on Muslims all over the country. Despite resistance by many leaders of his own community and many of his own followers, Das won in the end, and in December 1923 the Swaraj Party adopted this 'Bengal Pact', as it was called, and recommended it to the All India Congress.

The Bengal Pact was not endorsed by the Congress and thus another opportunity for Hindu-Muslim unity was lost. Commenting on this, Abul Kalam Azad says: 'It is a matter of regret that, after he (Das) died, some of his followers assailed his position and his declaration was repudiated. The result was that the Muslims of Bengal moved away from the Congress and the first seeds of partition were sown.'¹

Das was providing positive leadership to the country. He was gradually moving away from non-co-operation to co-operation. He had been criticizing Gandhi and his methods, but in March 1925, he also unreservedly condemned violence for political purposes. Since Das had long been suspected of being in sympathy with the terrorist movement, this came as a pleasant surprise to the Government, and the Secretary of State for India, Lord Birkenhead, speaking in the House of Lords on 31 March, urged him 'to take a further step' and co-operate with the Government. Three days later, Das gave a conciliatory reply, expressing willingness to devote the rest of his life to eradicating violence, but pointing out the futility of his efforts if the Government did not remove the deep-rooted political and economic causes. On 2 May 1925 he made his famous Faridpur speech in which he strongly supported dominion status. He also gave his ideas about the future shape of India. He said: 'I seek a federation of the States of India, each free to follow, as it must follow, the culture and tradition of its own people, each bound to each in the common service of all...a great federation within a great federation of free nations.'²

Meanwhile, in the new Legislative Assembly, the Swaraj and the Independent parties worked in perfect harmony. 'Jinnah's attitude towards all problems of India was one of progress and reform. He supported all labour and social reform legislations

¹Abul Kalam Azad, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

²Dwarkadas, *op. cit.*, p. 288.

that came before the Assembly...Jinnah was never a reactionary in politics and social reforms.¹ He continued to be the 'great nationalist and not only led the progressive section of the Muslims but also had a large Hindu following.'²

This co-operation stood in bright contrast to the otherwise dismal communal situation in India and augured well for the future. In February 1924, Motilal and Jinnah had co-operated in carrying a resolution in the Assembly calling for a Round Table Conference to frame a scheme for Full Responsible Government in India. Two months later, Jinnah, presiding over the annual session of the League at Lahore, had warned the Government against any delay in reform and demanded that it 'scrap the present constitution and devise a constitution in consultation with the representatives of the people.'³

Jinnah had not attended any session of the League since 1920⁴—the League was, in any case, in a state of suspended animation—but it was the only instrument of public policy-making available to him then and he decided to resuscitate it and make it play its proper part in the political life of the country.

In his presidential address Jinnah refrained from any petty 'I told you so' remarks. He did not indulge in any taunts or sarcasm, did not criticize any policy or person; he merely referred to the failure of a policy. 'Since 1920,' he said, 'owing to the most extraordinary and exceptional events...the policy and programme of non-co-operation enunciated and formulated by Mahatma Gandhi was the order of the day,' and the League, 'had perforce, in view of a very powerful volume of public opinion that rallied round Mahatma Gandhi's policy and programme, to go into the background.' Many mistakes had been made and a great deal of harm done, 'but there has come out of it a great deal of good also.' 'The result of the struggle of the last three years had this to our credit,' he readily admitted, 'that there is an open movement for the achievement of *swaraj* for India. There is a fearless and persistent demand that steps must be taken for the immediate establishment of Dominion Responsible Government in India.'

¹Ibid., p. 323.

²Ibid., p. 320.

³Rafique Afzal, op. cit., p. 136.

⁴Jinnah was present at the Lucknow session the previous year, but it was abruptly adjourned *sine die*.

While that demand was just and natural, said Jinnah, it must not be forgotten that the '...one essential requisite condition to achieve *swaraj* is the political unity between the Hindus and the Muhammadans...' '*Swaraj*,' he said, 'is almost an interchangeable term with Hindu-Muslim unity,' and appealed for a solution to be found to the differences between the two communities. 'I have no doubt that if the Hindus and Muhammadans make a whole-hearted and earnest effort, we shall be able to find a solution as we did at Lucknow in 1916.'¹

Six resolutions at this session were moved from the Chair. While one mourned the death of a former President, Ghulam Mohammad Bhurgi, and two—one about internal solidarity and social reforms among Muslims, and the other about the implementation of the Wakfs Act—dealt with purely internal matters of the community, the other three concerned the general political situation then prevailing. One viewed 'with great alarm the deplorable bitterness of feeling' existing between the Hindus and Muslims, strongly depreciated 'the tendency on the part of certain public bodies to aggravate them,' and expressed its 'firm conviction' that the interests of the country demanded 'mutual sacrifice and an intensive spirit of give and take on the part of *all* communities.'² Another resolution suggested setting up inter-communal conciliatory boards in all districts, with a Central Board at the provincial level, to settle communal differences and to investigate 'acts of aggression on the part of *any* particular community.'³ The third resolution urged the organization of workers and peasants, and appointed a committee to meet a similar committee of the Congress to draw up the necessary programme.

Of the other resolutions, one demanded that immediate steps be taken to establish *swaraj*; another enunciated the basic principles of its constitution; and a third appointed a sixteen-member committee to frame a scheme of constitution for a free India 'in consultation with the committee or committees that may be appointed by other political organizations in the country.' The constitution, the League demanded, should be based on these

¹Rafique Afzal, op. cit., pp. 131-3.

²Pirzada, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 580. (Emphasis added.)

³Ibid., p. 581. (Emphasis added.)

principles: (i) A federal structure, with 'complete' provincial autonomy; (ii) No territorial redistribution 'shall in any way affect the Muslim majority of the population in the Punjab, Bengal and the N.W.F.P.'; (iii) Effective representation to minorities in elected bodies but 'no majority shall be reduced to a minority or even to an equality'; (iv) Separate electorates to continue 'as at present', but 'it shall be open to any community at any time' to abandon them in favour of joint electorates; (v) No bill affecting any community to be passed by any elected body if opposed by three-fourth members of that community.

Jinnah was inaugurating an era of reconstruction after the fiasco of the Non-co-operation Movement. He had taken no sides in the communal warfare then going on, had not depicted his community as the target of the other community's aggression, and had unreservedly condemned the offender, no matter who. The Lahore session had denounced those who were trying to aggravate the communal situation and had suggested the setting up of conciliation boards. At the same time it had struck at the root of the trouble by making positive suggestions to settle Hindu-Muslim differences.

Jinnah was a nationalist to the core but he did not believe in regimentation. He had realized, a decade earlier, that nationalism demanded that Hindus and Muslims worked side by side for freedom; that results could best be obtained by insisting that they belonged, not to the same organization, but to two organizations representing each community, co-operating freely and closely. That this was not only possible and practical, but also desirable, had been shown at Lucknow. It could be done again.

But the *status quo ante* could not be restored. Too much had happened in the intervening years. The Lucknow Pact had served its purpose and had been overtaken by events. It had dealt only with the instalment of constitutional reform that was due ten years after the Minto-Morley scheme. It has visualized, for example, a Governor-General's Executive Council which was to be only half Indian. But since then the world had been stirred by the principle of self-determination, and India itself shaken by a movement for *swaraj*. The need in 1924 was for a new agreement for a constitutional scheme for a free India.

Both communities were feeling dissatisfied with the Lucknow Pact. The Hindus, who had accepted separate electorates at

Lucknow after a decade of negotiations, were once again condemning them as anti-national. The Hindu members of Delhi Municipality went so far as to give a verdict on this all-India issue and recommended, against the solid opposition of the Muslim members, the abolition of separate constituencies. Such behaviour made the Muslims cling to the system all the more. They were upset by the rising tide of Hindu chauvinism, and were realizing that they had conceded far too much at Lucknow, and that whatever little they had gained then was being repudiated by the majority community. Such action as at Delhi, or in UP, where in 1922 the Provincial Legislative Council reduced Muslim representation to twenty-five per cent from thirty per cent, as envisaged by the Pact, convinced them of the need for a fresh settlement: a new agreement which must restore their majorities in the Legislative Councils of the provinces where they were in excess of the rest of the population. The Lucknow Pact had allotted Muslims 50% of seats in the Punjab Legislature and 40% in Bengal, in spite of their clear majorities in those two provinces. They now demanded seats according to their proportion in the population.

In 1924, however, it was not possible to steer Muslim public opinion through the League alone. In 1916, the Muslim League was the only Muslim political organization; now there was also the Khilafat Committee, no less, in fact much more, important than the League. Jinnah worked to remove the internal difference among the Muslims at the same time as narrowing down Hindu-Muslim differences. For the former purpose a League Committee was appointed to confer with the Working Committee of the Central Khilafat Committee and to organize various 'public activities' together; for the latter, another committee was appointed, as in Bombay before the Lucknow Pact, to act in consultation with other organizations. He was trying, on the one hand, to unify Muslim public opinion on the constitutional safeguards it wanted, and on the other, to open a dialogue with Hindu leaders in quest of a fair and lasting communal settlement.

Jinnah had given a lead to the country by translating Muslim feelings into concrete terms—no mere talking in clichés and the abstract, but definite suggestions on which to start a dialogue. In order to create an atmosphere of friendship and cordiality, the League accepted the Congress movement for organizing workers

and peasants, and appointed a special committee to draw up a common programme. Co-operation in one sphere could obviously lead to co-operation in others.

The Lahore session was important because it was the start of a drive by Jinnah for a new Hindu-Muslim concordat. The situation might have changed, but the need for a National Pact had not. What is remarkable is not that Jinnah started it, but that he was able to get the League to agree to the *possibility* of abandoning separate electorates. That would give free scope to both sides to discuss and negotiate, without any sacred cows. If separate electorates was the *bête noire* of the Hindus, let them suggest other measures that would give confidence and hope to the minority community. Surely the problem was not too big for the best brains of India, driven by the spirit of Lucknow, to find a practical solution on the basis of give and take.

The picture, in spite of communal tensions, was not all dark. Motilal and Jinnah were co-operating closely in the Central Assembly. Das had concluded the Bengal Pact and was pleading for a similar pact for the whole of India. The Muslim League and the Swaraj Party seemed to have had a meeting of minds. Jinnah at Lahore and Das at Faridpur were speaking on the same wavelength. Both were in favour of Dominion Status, of a federation of self-governing provinces, of a generous inter-communal agreement, and of a constitutional struggle. It seemed that soon a new National Pact, to end all communal-political controversies for all time, would emerge.

But on 16 June 1925, Das died.

CHAPTER 8

THE TWISTS AND TURNS

The death of Das at this juncture was disastrous for India. Historians have failed, often wilfully, from making a proper assessment of his personality or its impact on India. He possessed great vision and practical statesmanship and had the courage of his convictions. He was the only Hindu leader who, after Gandhi's rise to power, dared to defy him and show the error of his ways. Fourteen years later, his follower, Subhas Bose, tried to emulate him, but failed. But Das was brilliantly successful: Gandhi had to accept the Swaraj Party and let it follow its programme, as he could not afford a break with the great 'Deshbandhu'. Das rose like a meteor, eclipsing even Gandhi, and passed away like a meteor.

There is no doubt that had he lived, Das would have taken the country away from Gandhi, and to a practical and more fruitful course of political activity. But his passing created a void that could not be filled. After Das, the most important man in the Swaraj Party was now Motilal Nehru, but Motilal had neither the vision nor the strength of character of Das. Under his leadership, the Party soon broke apart and within a few years ceased to exist.

In September 1925, within three months of Das's death, the Congress decided that its work in the legislature would be carried out by the Swaraj Party; candidates were to fight elections and members to sit in the Councils as Congressmen. 'The party was no longer a wing of the Congress...It was the Congress itself.'¹ In October, however, the Swarajist leaders in Bombay and CP—Jayakar, Kelkar, Moonje, Aney—defied Motilal, and before long formed a party of 'Responsive Co-operationists.' Lajpat Rai from

¹Sitaramayya, *op. cit.*, pp. 486-7.

the Punjab also deserted Motilal and aligned himself with Malaviya, who fought the elections in December under the banner of a new Nationalist Party.

The Swaraj Party suffered a heavy defeat at these elections and was never able to recover from it. In the Central Assembly it lost a few seats, still capturing forty, which was not bad, but Malaviya's Nationalists returned in large numbers, and Jinnah's Independent Party disappeared due to the reaction of Muslim voters to increasing Hindu communalism. The Swarajists were no longer the dominant party they had been.

It was in the provinces that the party was really mauled. Although it did well in Madras, and was able to maintain its position in Bengal, it was swept off the board in other provinces. Bihar and Orissa did elect Congressmen but they were openly Responsivists in policy and attitude; while in Bombay, CP, UP and the Punjab, the Swarajists were completely wiped out. 'There has been a veritable rout of the Swarajists,' admitted Motilal at the Gauhati Congress, "defeat" is no word for it.¹

What irked Motilal most was the humiliation in his own province. Here three Muslims were elected on the Swarajist ticket but all the Hindu seats, except two, were captured by the 'Nationalists'. He would have lost his own seat if Malaviya had gone through with his original intention of standing against him. When Motilal heard of Malaviya's plan he had flown into a rage, and threatened to teach him a lesson. But mutual friends intervened and Malaviya selected another constituency, sparing Motilal the humiliation of possible defeat.

However, it was not Motilal who taught Malaviya a lesson. He learned one himself—that Hindu communalism, masquerading as Indian nationalism, was deep-rooted and strong. 'Panditji won the election,' says Chaudhry Khaliqzaman, who was personally and politically very close to him, and one of the Secretaries of the Sawaraj Party, 'but Pandit Motilal Nehru lost himself, because after these elections he became despondent about the mentality of the Hindu nation. As a thinker he had made the right estimate of the religious thinking of his people. He stayed on in politics but was lost; and could never again deal with any step concerning

¹Ibid., p. 519.

the Hindu-Muslim question with his inborn courage and fearlessness.¹

From that time onwards Motilal was a changed man. He had lost the guiding hand and dynamism of Das. He had lost important leaders of his party, even the party itself. He had lost the elections. He had lost that confidence in himself and his capabilities for which he was well known. Above all he had lost the will to fight for his beliefs and policies.

Delhi Proposals

The political horizon of India, which had brightened temporarily with the glow of Das's personality, had darkened again, even more than before, with his death. Not only had Das gone, his party was breaking up; his successor, Motilal, contrary to his reputation as a masterful personality, was proving to be a broken reed; and the 'Nationalists' were in the ascendant. But things could not remain as they were: India could not remain in slavery for ever, and if she was to become free, she had first of all to settle the Hindu-Muslim question.

Jinnah's initiative at Lahore had received no recognition from the Hindu leadership. He had succeeded there at last in persuading the Muslims, for the first time, to consider the possibility of abandoning separate electorates under certain conditions and, with some give and take, the mixed electorates so passionately demanded by the Hindus could have been agreed to. 'I am not, as is well known, one of those who are enamoured of separate electorates and separate representation,' Jinnah had said some time after the session. 'But the Muslim opinion is so strong on this question that we might take it as a settled fact for the time being...The percentage, the ratio of the population, can only be fixed by mutual goodwill and consent, in order to secure the success of any scheme that may come in force for representation to the municipalities and legislatures. I, therefore,

¹Chaudhry Khaliqzaman, *Shahrah-i-Pakistan (Urdu)*, Anjuman-i-Islamia, Karachi, 1987, p. 461. In the English version of the same book, Khaliqzaman merely says '...won the election but lost considerably himself. It was a great tragedy.' (*Pathway to Pakistan*, Longman, Pakistan, 1961, p. 87).

hope that the Hindus will not misunderstand me, as *I still stand a tried nationalist and if the Muslims ought to be organized it is not with a view to prejudicing national advance, or national interests, but, on the contrary, to bring them into line with the rest of India.*'¹

This was exactly the same position that he had adopted in 1916-17, earning him the title of 'Ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity', but now in 1924-6 he was branded, for similar efforts, a communalist. All his pleadings at the Unity Conferences were in vain. Several such conferences were held but they did not go beyond platitudes and expressions of noble sentiments. No serious attempt was made to face the real issues and find clear-cut answers. Vague verbal assurances and declarations of goodwill, which solved nothing and satisfied nobody, were preferred to formal, definite agreements. Gandhi, who felt that 'in the prevailing conditions the framing of a united scheme was not possible',² did not encourage efforts in that direction.

While the country was in such difficulties, facing communal differences in the councils and communal riots in the streets, Gandhi declared 1926 his year of silence. Das was already dead and Motilal, sullen and morose, was licking his election wounds. The political scene was dominated by the leaders of *shuddhi* and *sanghtan* like Malaviya and Lajpat Rai, who were proclaimed 'Nationalist' while Jinnah was called 'the leader of communal strife'. When this charge was made by a member of the Central Assembly, Jinnah, replying to it on the floor of the House, called it 'absolutely false and Mr Jamnadas ought to know that.' 'I am,' declared Jinnah, '*a nationalist first, a nationalist second and a nationalist last.*'³

Jinnah was in an unenviable position. The Hindus were accusing him of having strayed away from the path of nationalism and becoming a communalist. The Muslims, alarmed as 'some of the Hindu leaders have talked publicly of driving out the Muslims from India as the Spaniards expelled the Moors from Spain, that is, unless they perform *shuddhi* and become Hindus or submit to their full political programme,'⁴ were in no amicable mood. They

¹Saiyid, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

²Tara Chand, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 20.

³Sherwani, *op. cit.*, p. 397. (On 16 March 1925.)

⁴Sir Abdur Rahim, Presidential address, League Session, 30 December 1925, Pirzada, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 42.

looked with suspicion at his attempts to scrap the settled and agreed system of separate electorates, were not prepared to make any concessions for the sake of a new pact, and blamed him for the concordat at Lucknow.

The British Government was also active behind the scenes, quietly trying to spread the impression among the Muslims that they could gain much more by co-operating with, and being loyal to, it. Many Muslim leaders, apart from the Anglo-Mohammedan School, had come to believe this sincerely.

For Jinnah, the task of making the Muslims themselves agree to any future constitutional safeguards was no less difficult than making the two communities come to an agreement. But he realized that a lasting agreement had to have the real support of a large majority, and in the post-Non-co-operation Movement period this seemed impossible, with the community divided into a thousand factions, each vying with the other in suggesting new demands. He worked hard on this aspect of the problem and between the Lahore session and the Delhi session, in December 1926, prepared Muslim public opinion on a set of demands which could become the starting point for negotiations.

At the same time he was also trying to impress upon the Hindus the need for a new national pact, fair and reasonable, which alone could remove Muslim suspicions. He even tried, once again, to create a temporary political organization of 'all nationalists, irrespective of their party labels', on the basis of neither non-co-operation nor responsive co-operation but of 'honourable co-operation', but did not succeed. Nor did he succeed in getting the Hindus to respond to the gestures of the League.

In December 1925, the League, meeting for its annual session at Aligarh, demanded the appointment of a Royal Commission to formulate, 'after due enquiry and investigation', a scheme for a permanent Indian constitution. At the next session, at Delhi in December 1926, Jinnah himself moved a resolution which, while reiterating the previous ones, appointed a Central Committee and several Provincial Committees to formulate a constitutional scheme for submission to the Royal Commission. The scheme was to be prepared—a typical Jinnah touch—'so far as possible in consultation with a committee or committees that may be appointed by other political organizations.'

In moving the resolution Jinnah said that the Lucknow Pact was the finest temporary solution of the difficulties of the time, but now no responsible Congressman or Hindu leader was coming forward with any concrete proposal with regard to the future of the Muslim community. Communalism was a fact of life in the country. Nationalism could not be created simply by having a mixed electorate; and separate electorates had not proved an obstacle in the progress of representative government. He appealed to both Hindu and Muslim leaders to meet and formulate a common demand. That would be 'more than half the battle won for responsible government.' If, unfortunately, that were not possible, then the Muslims must prepare their case for submission to the Royal Commission.¹

Muslim political aims had by now crystallized into the formation of Muslim majority provinces; but there was still great scope for discussion and agreement on many of its implications, e.g. the powers of the provinces *vis-a-vis* the federation, the proportion of communal representation in the legislative councils and the mode of the elections. Inter-party and inter-communal committees were formed several times, but failed to produce anything. The Hindus did not seem interested in a concord. It was not the India of a patriot like Gokhale or a practical politician like Tilak, but the India in which nationalism had become the monopoly of Gandhi, who was silent, and of Malaviya and Lajpat Rai, who had run amok with Hindu jingoism. For them the only thing that could solve all dissension and constitutional problems was the repudiation of separate electorates. The question of the provinces was put off on one pretext or another, e.g. Sindh was financially too poor to be made into a separate province, or NWFP too backward to be at par with other advanced provinces. When a Muslim member of the Swaraj Party moved a resolution on 18 March 1926 in the Central Assembly recommending immediate introduction of reform in the NWFP, his own party refrained from supporting him. As for the 'Nationalists', Lajpat Rai would rather partition the Punjab and Bengal than have them under Muslim majorities.²

The Hindu obsession with separate electorates had become so great that on 16 March 1927 Sankaran Nair moved a resolution

¹Pirzada, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 101-5.

²*See*, pp. 216-17.

in the Council of State recommending that the Government take no further step towards responsible government until the Hindus and Muslims had agreed to do away with separate electorates.

Whether Sankaran Nair was being dogmatic, sarcastic or cynical, he was certainly putting the Indian leadership to shame. It did not move the 'Nationalists' in the Central Assembly, who after their election victories were more arrogant than ever, and saw in it a vindication of their stand, but it did affect some sensitive souls. One of these was the Deputy Leader of the Swaraj Party, S. Srinivasa Iyengar, President of the Congress for the year 1927.

Iyengar was a comparative newcomer to the Congress. He was Advocate-General of Madras Presidency until the early part of 1920, and had resigned from his job to join the Non-co-operation Movement. He could not understand how Hindus and Muslims, both wanting freedom, could indulge in mutual squabbles and tolerate the presence of foreign rulers. He thought that the differences between the two communities had been exaggerated, and could certainly be solved if properly tackled. He believed that, as a South Indian and a non-partisan, he could, with a fresh and neutral outlook, help resolve a northern problem that had plagued national politics for years. His one ambition in life, as he often said, was to find a formula for Hindu-Muslim unity; and now that he was Congress President, he had the best opportunity.

He had known Jinnah in the Central Assembly and had come to respect and admire him. He had seen in the Lahore decisions of the League, and their reiteration in subsequent sessions, a great opening that could lead to a Hindu-Muslim settlement. On return from the Gauhati Congress he had, with the authority of the office he now held, expressed to Jinnah a willingness to meet Muslim demands if joint electorates were accepted.

Jinnah needed no excuse to make a fresh try for a Hindu-Muslim settlement, and this was too good an opportunity to be missed. The difficulty lay in persuading the Muslims to abandon something which had been the sheet-anchor of their politics. He had steered the League into accepting mixed electorates, under certain conditions, but the League at that time was not the sole representative organization of the Muslims. There were several others, and they had not accepted the League policy in this

respect. The decision on so vital a matter had to be taken by the Muslims as a body; one taken by one organization, however important, could not bind all, and any settlement reached on this basis could later be subverted by other sections in the name of Muslim national interests. This would have made matters worse and retarded the chances of a settlement. Foreseeing all this, Jinnah had, in December 1924, had the League call for an all-party conference of Muslims in Delhi 'at an early date', but there was no response, and the conference was never held.

Jinnah now called an informal meeting of about thirty Muslim leaders, of all shades of opinion: if an all-party conference was impossible, at least important leaders could meet as individuals. The meeting, presided over by Jinnah, met in Delhi on 20 March and, after a free and frank discussion, agreed to the institution of joint electorate, if certain conditions with regard to the future constitution of India were fulfilled. These conditions were: (i) Muslim representation at the Centre to remain unchanged at one third; (ii) Sindh to be separated from Bombay and constituted into a separate province; (iii) Reforms to be introduced in Balochistan and NWFP on the same footing as in any other province; (iv) the proportion of representation in the Punjab and Bengal to be in accordance with population; (v) Hindu minorities in Sindh, Balochistan, and NWFP to receive the same concessions that the Hindu majorities would make to Muslim minorities in other provinces.

The Delhi Proposals, as they came to be known later, were made by a gathering that included not only representatives from all over India, but also diverse and conflicting elements. It contained revolutionaries like Mohammad Ali, pro-British politicians like Sir Muhammad Shafi and Sir Abdul Qayyum, hardened Congressmen like Dr Ansari, staunch Muslim Leaguers like Abdul Matin Chaudhry and Ghazanfar Ali Khan, nationalists like the Maharaja of Mahmudabad, Khilafatist like Syed Murtaza and Nawab Ismail Khan, conservatives like Muhammad Yaqub, and religious leaders like Shafi Daudi and Imam Syed Ahmad of Jamia Mosque, Delhi. And now they were all committed to the Delhi Proposals. To make all of them agree on a set of proposals that included abandonment of separate electorates and weightage was a breath-taking achievement. Separate electorates had come to India because of Muslim demands and effort, and they had

been accepted by the Congress. They had become the most important article of political faith of the Muslims. Jinnah himself was opposed to them, but realized the depth of Muslim feeling and the near unanimity on the issue and considered them as a 'mandate' from the community. His own view had remained unchanged; but he felt the Muslims should not be coerced into giving them up, and that such an attitude would make them more adamant and suspicious of the majority community. The separate electorates existed because they gave Muslims a sense of security, but if a settlement was reached in other constitutional fields which provided equal security, they could be induced, of their own free will, to part with them. However, to succeed in making the Muslims do it, in the heavy atmosphere of 1927, was almost a miracle.

'Jinnah, a true and a great nationalist that he was then, made a valiant effort to solve the Hindu-Muslim communalist problem after obtaining with great effort a consensus of Muslim opinion of all shades. For India's sake, if not for his own, Jinnah deserved success,' says Kanji Dwarkadas, '...but mischievous elements to prevent such *rapprochement* became extraordinarily active,' and he mentions from personal knowledge how extracts from selected Muslim Urdu papers were translated into English in the office of the Oriental Translator of the Government of Bombay and then published in the British-owned newspaper, the *Times of India*. He also mentions how the *Bombay Chronicle*, the Congress paper 'with an amiable and mild editor, Syed Abdullah Brelvi...started a crusade against Jinnah, dubbing him a rank communalist.' Dwarkadas adds: 'Jinnah, I submit, was not a communalist, but Brelvi, to curry favour with the Congress High Command, attributed all kinds of base motives to Jinnah...The consequences were, however, what the reactionaries on both sides and the Government wanted. And these misunderstandings and misrepresentations went on for years and years.'¹ The Delhi Proposals, which Mohammad Ali called a 'historic decision', find scant mention in history books of the era. The official history of the Congress, for example, deals with it in only 20 lines, in a book of over a thousand pages, and does not 'pause to give the details of this formula'² as it is a matter of a 'academic' interest only.

¹Dwarkadas, op. cit., p. 326.

²Sitaramayya, op. cit., p. 529.

But it was a historic decision. The Muslims had, for the sake of a communal settlement, volunteered to give up the two constitutional provisions they had obtained after a great effort in order to preserve their identity and safeguard their interests—separate electorates and weightage. In return they had demanded no special privileges, only the rights they were entitled to under any democratic set-up: representation in provincial assemblies according to their population, equality of all provinces, and any adjustments to be strictly on a reciprocal basis.

Only in the Centre they asked for a few more seats, but it was a matter of mutual adjustment, and in any case these too were to be through the mixed electorate. These were simple and straightforward proposals and cut through all safeguards and protective clauses, and gave to the Hindus what they had been demanding for two decades.

One might have thought that the Hindu leaders would jump at this offer and seize it eagerly with both hands. But amazingly, this is what they did not do. They welcomed the abandonment of separate electorates but showed no enthusiasm for the other proposals. Jinnah thereupon issued a statement clarifying that the offer was 'interdependent': to be 'accepted or rejected in its entirety'. The most notable feature of the offer, he pointed out, was 'its recognition that separate electorates can only be got rid of by a thorough adoption of a system of give and take.' 'The end view,' he said, 'is that Musalmans should be made to feel that they are secure and safeguarded against any act of oppression on the part of the majority, and that they need not fear that during the transitional stage towards the fullest development of national Government the majority would be in a position to oppress or tyrannize the minority, as majorities are prone to do in other countries.'

Jinnah felt that in the prevailing conditions it was essential that the political equipoise be maintained, and it was to maintain this balance that the Muslims had suggested a simple and just method with a reciprocity clause. 'If this main proposition were accepted by the Hindus, then I feel that it will lead to a hopeful atmosphere and settlement is within reach.' He was, he said, 'personally not wedded to separate electorates', although the overwhelming majority of the Muslims was; yet he did not believe that they were 'an effective bar to the growth and development

of representative government'. On the other hand, a mixed electorate would not 'create complete Nationalism the next day'. The question of separate or mixed electorates was 'more a question of methods and means to an end.' 'The real issue is how to give a real sense of confidence and security to the minorities.'¹ If the main proposals were accepted, other questions could be solved easily.

'Jinnah's bold and patriotic initiative had at last interjected a ray of light into the encircling gloom,' says the official history of the Freedom Movement in India. 'The way seemed to be opened to communal understanding and *swaraj*.'² But it only seemed: the proposals were not received warmly everywhere. The Hindu Mahasabha restricted its approval to the abandonment of a separate electorate only. A section of the Muslims was strongly critical. Sir Fazl-i-Husain was bitterly opposed to them. Ten Muslim members of the Madras Legislative Council issued a joint public statement criticizing them. A conference of Muslims of Bihar and Orissa passed a resolution expressing similar sentiments.

Jinnah had, however, planned the next step 'as soon as I receive a definite answer to the offer from the Hindu leaders'. He intended to call a joint meeting of the Central Committee of the League, the Committee appointed by the Khilafat Committee, the executive members of the Jamiatul Ulema, and Muslim members of the Central Assembly and the Council of State, and form a small committee at the meeting to hold discussions with similar committees of the Congress, the Mahasabha and other political organizations. But the matter never reached that stage, and the advantage of prompt action, which was essential in the circumstances, was lost.

Nevertheless, the Congress under Iyengar welcomed the proposals as soon as they were made. Its Working Committee accepted them. The final seal of approval was given in December at the Madras Congress with a standing ovation. The Congress also authorized the Working Committee to draft a *Swaraj* Constitution for India, in consultations with other political bodies. The Muslim League session at Calcutta similarly adopted

¹Sherwani, op. cit., p. 402-4.

²Tara Chand, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 107.

the Delhi proposals. But this was a divided League, one that had split on the question of Simon Commission.

Simon Commission

The constitutional Act of 1919 contained a provision whereby at the end of ten years a commission was to be appointed to inquire into the working of the reforms. India had for some years been demanding the immediate appointment of this commission, and the British Government had been ignoring this demand. But in 1927, encouraged by Hindu-Muslim dissension in India, and fearing the return of a Labour Government in the next British elections, the Conservative Government of Baldwin decided in November to pre-empt Labour by appointing a commission two years before it was due. The Commission was to consist of six Members of Parliament representing both Houses and all the three parties, and would be presided over by Sir John Simon.

The announcement created an uproar all over India. It was an affront to inquire into India's fitness for freedom. To say that the Commission would also find out Indian opinion was humbug as, apart from anything else, the Central Legislature had twice, in February 1924 and September 1925, passed resolutions demanding self-government. But what was even more insulting was its all-white composition. No Indian was considered qualified enough to sit on it; and a 'jury'—as the Secretary of State for India, Lord Birkenhead, called it—of seven foreigners was to decide on the birthright of a people.

Jinnah acted immediately to forge a united front to boycott the Commission. He prepared a short statement, circulated it telegraphically among important leaders all over the country, and issued it under their joint signatures within a week of the announcement of the Commission. The statement said that the underlying principle of the scheme was of 'such a character that Indians cannot with any self-respect acquiesce in it', and declared that 'unless a commission on which the British and the Indian statesmen are invited to sit on equal terms is set up we cannot conscientiously take any part or share in the work of the commission as presently constituted.'

Among the signatories to Jinnah's manifesto were Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sir Purshuttomdas Thakurdas, Mrs Annie Besant, Sir Ali Imam, Sir Abdur Rahim, Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, Bipin Chandra Pal, Sir Shivaswamy Aiyar, Saifuddin Kitchelew, Satyendra Sinha, C. Y. Chintamani, H. P. Mody and Mrs Sarojini Naidu. The names of the Congress President and the President-elect were not included in the list because they wanted something more to be added in the draft, but their replies were released simultaneously. The Hindu Mahasabha supported the boycott, but preferred to issue its own statement.

The decision to boycott the Simon Commission was taken the next month by both the Congress and the Muslim League at their annual sessions at Madras and Calcutta respectively. The Congress decision was expected, but the League's took the Government completely by surprise. In appointing the Commission, the British had calculated that the Muslims would be eager to co-operate with it, and that this would force the Congress, however reluctantly, to do the same, thus ensuring the smooth working of the Commission. The Viceroy, Lord Irwin (later Lord Halifax), had assured Birkenhead in April that the Muslims were 'our best friends' and would not boycott, and this would necessarily affect the decision of the Hindus.¹ He had, with all his power of observation and political insight, promised that 'a general boycott is in the highest degree impossible',² and he would break it with the help of the Muslims, the Liberals and Indian States. He suggested to Birkenhead to have the Aga Khan put pressure on Muslims, and in August informed him that the Home Member of his Executive Council, Malcom Hailey, was succeeding in his efforts to win Muslims over to the idea of the Commission.³

Birkenhead himself believed that the Hindus and the Muslims could never resolve their differences. 'All the conferences in the world cannot bridge the unbridgeable,'¹ he had told the Viceroy. Irwin's reading of the political situation had further strengthened his views. But Jinnah's initiative upset all British calculations.

¹*Birkenhead Collection*, letter dated 3 April 1927, from Irwin.

²*Ibid.*, 26 May 1927.

³*Ibid.*, 18 August 1927.

⁴The Second Earl of Birkenhead, *The Life of F. E. Smith, First Earl of Birkenhead*, Eyre and Spottiswood, London, 1960, p. 507.

This lean, thin man, though opposed and obstructed by right-wing Muslims and branded as a communalist by the Hindus, was always trying to thwart the policy of 'divide and rule', and instead kept on working to 'unite and get self-rule'.

'We have', Birkenhead wrote to Irwin after the League's decision to boycott, 'always relied on the non-boycotting Moslems, on the depressed community, on the business interests, and on many others to break down the attitude of boycott. You and Simon must be the judges whether or not it is expedient in these directions to try to make a breach in the wall of antagonism.'¹ Jinnah had said at Calcutta that: 'A constitutional war has been declared on Great Britain. Negotiations for a Settlement are not to come from our side. Let the Government sue for peace...Jallianwallah Bagh was a physical butchery, the Simon Commission is a butchery of our souls.'² Birkenhead answered by advising New Delhi, '...to see at all stages important people who are not boycotting the Commission, particularly Moslems and the depressed classes. I should widely advertise all his interviews with representative Moslems. The whole policy is now obvious. It is to terrify the immense Hindu population by the apprehension that the Commission is being got hold of by the Moslems and may present a report altogether destructive of Hindu position, thereby securing a solid Moslem support and *leaving Jinnah high and dry*.'³

The British were not successful in 'leaving Jinnah high and dry', but they did succeed in making a breach in the Muslim League—Sir Muhammad Shafi (1869-1932), President-elect for the next session of the League, came out strongly in favour of co-operation with the Commission. The League had, in its last two sessions at Aligarh and Delhi, demanded the appointment of a Royal Commission to go into the constitutional question, and now that it had been appointed, he felt that its boycott would only invite an *ex parte* judgment against the Muslims. He was supported by a large group of people who were all feeling uneasy at the abandonment of separate electorates. When Shafi returned

¹Ibid., p. 515, Birkenhead to Irwin, 9 January 1928.

²Pirzada, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 127.

³Birkenhead to Irwin, 9 February 1928, The Second Earl of Birkenhead, op. cit., p. 516. (Emphasis added.)

to Lahore after the Delhi meeting of 20 March, he was severely rebuked by Sir Fazl-i-Husain and bluntly told that he (Shafi) had made a terrible mistake, and separate electorates would not be given up at any cost. Shafi himself was having second thoughts¹ when the announcement came about the Statutory Commission, co-operation with which he believed to be in the best interests of the Muslims. He thus found himself in opposition to Jinnah and was joined by the Punjab Provincial Muslim League, as well as a large number of Muslim Leaguers from other provinces.

Shafi's supporters included not only the Anglo-Mohammedan School—Sir Zulfiqar Ali, Sir Feroze Khan Noon, Sir Zafarullah Khan—but also old revolutionaries like Hasrat Mohani. They all believed passionately in separate electorates and in co-operating with the Commission. They passed resolutions urging co-operation with the Commission and condemning the Delhi Proposals. They denounced the activities of the 'Jinnah League', claimed to be the rightful All-India Muslim League, announced that Jinnah was no more president, and elected Shafi instead. The universally-respected poet Mohammad Iqbal was elected as General Secretary, and Hasrat Mohani as Joint Secretary. The Muslim League thus split in the middle. Jinnah had, since 1924, been trying hard to unify Muslim political activities, and bring the Muslims as a community to a united front with the Hindus; instead there was division in the ranks of his own organization. But Jinnah did not flinch. At Calcutta, he had the League resolve that 'the country should have nothing to do with the Commission at any stage or in any form', and from Calcutta he went straight to Bombay, where members of the Commission were due to arrive on 3 February 1928, to organize the boycott. So successful was the boycott that even Gandhi felt that, 'it did my soul good' to see this hour of unity.²

Birkenhead was greatly angered by the unexpected boycott. Although a brilliant lawyer and endowed with a powerful intellect,

¹Shafi almost began his presidential address at Lahore with the words: 'I am sincerely convinced that in the existing political conditions in this country, joint electorates, whether with or without reserved seats, would be certain to furnish a periodical cause of friction between the two communities, and would, in consequence, be in the highest degree injurious to the cause of Indian nationalism.' Pirzada, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 129.

²*CWMG*, *op. cit.*, Vol. XXVI, p. 15.

he was a Tory of the old school, in the mould of his close friend, Winston Churchill. Like Churchill he had a blind spot as far as the Empire was concerned. Mohammad Ali called him 'Brokenhead', and he was certainly pig-headed in thinking that Britain's Indian Empire would last for ever. To him it was 'inconceivable that India will ever be fit for Dominion self-government.'¹ He was convinced that the Indians could never rise above their quarrels and resolve their difference. He charged the Indian leaders with indulging in destructive criticism only, and, speaking in Parliament, asked them to produce an agreed constitution themselves, if they could.²

Birkenhead's arrogant challenge stirred all India. 'National honour demands that we give an effective answer to this rank Imperialist. We must get together and produce an agreed constitution. We must show him what we are capable of'—these were the universal feelings. The Simon Commission was soon being received, wherever it went, with black flags and shouts of 'Simon go back', but a show of constructive statesmanship had yet to be made, and India picked up with alacrity the gauntlet thrown down by Birkenhead.

The Delhi Proposals were accepted not only by the Congress but ultimately by the Hindu Mahasabha as well. The Mahasabha was at heart opposed to any Muslim majority provinces, but the offer of abandoning separate electorates and weightage was too good to be rejected outright. On 16 May 1927, a day before the AICC meeting in Bombay at which were present such big Mahasabha guns as Dr Moonje (the sitting President), Kelkar (the preceding President), Jayakar and Aney, Moonje had issued a press statement saying: 'Hindu Mahasabha emphasizes the principle of joint electorates *and* reservation of seats on a population basis.'³ Kelkar had, in addition, been advocating the separation of Sindh since 1912. And on the occasion of the Madras Congress, Malaviya accepted the Delhi Proposals on behalf of the Mahasabha. 'When Malaviyaji endorsed the Bombay AICC resolution, he was embraced by the Ali Brothers.'⁴

¹To Lord Reading on 4 December 1924, The Second Earl of Birkenhead, *Halifax*, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1965, p. 206.

²Speech in the House of Lords, 24 November 1927.

³Khaliquzzaman, *op. cit.*, p. 90. (Emphasis added.)

⁴*Ibid.*

The Madras Congress, while deciding to boycott the Simon Commission and endorsing the Delhi Proposals, also decided to draft a 'Swaraj Constitution' in consultation with other political parties. The 'Jinnah League', meeting at Calcutta during the same week, also formally endorsed the Proposals, authorized its Council to appoint a committee to confer with the Congress and other organizations, and decided to participate in the All-Parties Conference that the Congress had called to frame the *Sawaraj* Constitution. Jinnah, winding up the League session, welcomed 'the hand of fellowship extended to us by Hindu leaders from the platform of the Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha.' 'For me', he said, 'this offer is *more valuable than any concession which the British Government can make*. Let us then grasp the hand of fellowship. This is indeed a bright day; and for achieving this unity, thanks are due to Lord Birkenhead.'¹

Indeed. Birkenhead, by wounding India's pride, had made her take a course that Jinnah had been urging throughout his political life. The wretched country had once again been given a chance to bring about inter-communal harmony and united face the foreign rulers.

The Nehru Committee and its Report

A conference of all the important political parties, called by the Congress Working Committee, met at Delhi on 12 February 1928. In May, it appointed a committee under the chairmanship of Motilal Nehru, (Jawaharlal was Secretary) to determine the principles of the constitution which were to be submitted for approval by the conference.

All groups agreed that India had to be free; all, apart from some hot-heads like Jawaharlal and Mohammad Ali, even agreed that it should be a dominion in the British Commonwealth. The real differences were about Hindu-Muslim issues, and the power and structure of the provinces, which in fact was another dimension of the communal problem.

It may be recalled that, when representative institutions were introduced for the first time by the Morley-Minto Reforms in 1909, and the Muslims got the right to elect their representatives

¹Pirzada, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 127.

to a specified number of seats reserved for this purpose, through exclusively Muslim votes, they could also side by side vote in the 'general' constituencies, which too could have Muslim candidates. The 'weightage', which was the other feature of these Reforms, gave them more seats than their number justified at the Centre and Muslim minority provinces.

In the euphoria of 1916, the Muslims, for the sake of Congress acceptance of separate electorates, gave up their right to the 'general' seats, reducing them to practically Hindu seats. They also let themselves become minorities in the Punjab and Bengal, then the only two Muslim provinces where reforms were introduced. When, in the aftermath of the Non-co-operation Movement's failure, the Hindus repudiated the Lucknow Pact, the Muslims had a second and more critical look at it and realized that it was they, and not the Hindus, who had made the most vital concessions. In return for separate electorates, which they already enjoyed, they had converted their majorities into permanent minorities and surrendered their right to influence 'general' constituencies. If, for example, they could vote in the 1926 elections in the 'general' constituencies, as they actually did before the 1919 Reforms, the 'Nationalists' of Malaviya and Lajpat Rai could not have trounced Motilal's Swarajists.

The provincial question was also connected with the general all-India question. A few extra seats in Madras or Bombay or UP had not helped the Muslims there. They had remained in the minority, while those in the Punjab and Bengal had lost their majorities.¹ With a majority in these two provinces, as was natural, the Muslims could have had greater influence, even outside those provinces. In any case, circumstances had changed since Lucknow. The age of reforms had passed: now was the time to draw a permanent constitution for a free country. The Muslims were a minority and would always remain so, but fortunately they were in a majority in some areas, and they must insist on having their natural rights in those areas. Not only Bengal and the Punjab must have their natural majorities, Balochistan and the NWFP must also enjoy the same rights and powers as other provinces. Also, Sindh, which was linguistically, ethnically and culturally different from the rest of the Bombay Presidency, should be separated and constituted into a

¹In the Punjab Muslim reserved seats were 50%, and in Bengal 40%.

full-fledged province of its own. Thus there would be five Muslim provinces out of a total of a dozen, enjoying autonomy under a federal structure. This would create some communal balance and assuage Muslim fears.

These two questions—separate electorates and the provinces—were at the heart of the constitutional tangle in 1928. The Delhi Proposals had found a solution and provided a ground on which Hindu-Muslim unity could be built. The Congress had accepted the proposals, but the Mahasabha leaders, despite outward approval, had not. Although they could see the logic of the Muslim demands, they could not bear the thought of having any province in India run by Muslims—‘communal provinces’, they called them. They welcomed the Muslim gesture as far as the abandoning of separate electorate was concerned, but would not accept the other proposals, which were really part of a package deal. The daily *Hindustan Times* of Delhi, controlled by Malaviya and Lajpat Rai, was expressing this view when, commenting on the Delhi Proposals, it asked: in what way was the institution of a mixed electorate connected with the separation of Sindh and the introduction of constitutional reforms in Balochistan and the NWFP? It added that if the Muslims wanted separation of Sindh in order to ensure their dominance in Sindh, there were Hindus who wanted to re-adjust the boundaries of Bengal and the Punjab to eliminate Muslim majorities from those two provinces.

Lajpat Rai had already reached the conclusion that partition was better than Muslim dominance. He said: ‘My suggestion is that the Punjab should be partitioned into two provinces, the Western Punjab with a large Muslim majority to be Muslim-governed province, and the Eastern Punjab with large Hindu-Sikh majority to be non-Muslim province...I will not make the same suggestion in their (Bengalis’) case, but if Bengal is prepared to accept Mr Das’s Pact, I have nothing to say...Under my scheme the Muslims will have four Muslim States: (i) The Pathan Province or the North-West Frontier, (ii) Western Punjab, (iii) Sindh, and (iv) Eastern Bengal.’

Comments Dr Tara Chand: ‘The partition of India was not the product of the fertile imagination of Muslim undergraduates of the Cambridge University, nor even poet Iqbal’s fancy, but the brain-child of a hypersensitive Hindu stalwart.’¹ While Lajpat Rai

¹Tara Chand, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 110.

was thus working on partition, and Gandhi, unconcerned¹ with it all, was prescribing the *charkha* as the panacea for all the ills of India, Jinnah was persevering with his efforts for Hindu-Muslim harmony. He had in 1916 tolerated separate electorates as a necessary evil because they gave the Muslims a sense of security, but he had hoped that, in the 'unifying process' which the 'New Spirit' had started, they would, with increasing inter-communal amity, lose their appeal and the Muslims would be persuaded to give them up. This process had received a great set-back with *shuddhi* and *sanghtan* and the counter-movements of *tabligh* and *tanzim*. The Muslims had become convinced, more than ever, of the need for separate electorates, particularly after the elections of 1926.

What drove the lesson home spectacularly was the defeat in Delhi of Asaf Ali,² the Swarajist candidate. The ancient Mughal capital was the one city, more than any other, where a common Indian nationality, whatever it meant, was supposed to have developed. It had only one seat in the Central Assembly, and a mixed electorate. Asaf Ali belonged to an old Delhi family and was a Syed (descendant of the Prophet), a barrister, an old Non-cooperation Movement activist, and married to a Hindu lady.³ He was opposed by two Hindus. One was Shiv Narain, who was respected for his public service, having been Secretary of the Delhi Hindu College and being, at that time, the treasurer of the Delhi University. The other was an obscure lawyer, Rang Bihari Lal, who came to notice because he defended without fee a mischief-maker, Loton Singh, who had created a law and order situation by announcing that on the occasion of the Muslim festival of Eid-al-Azha, he would not allow Muslims to take cows for slaughter. Malaviya and Lajpat Rai jilted Shiv Narain and adopted Rang Bihari Lal as the 'Nationalist' candidate. And Barrister Asaf Ali, with all his ability, his high social position and family background, his Hindu wife, and his political record as a nationalist, was soundly defeated.

¹'Hindus and Muslims are going more and more away from each other. But this thing does not disturb me,' Gandhi wrote to Jawaharlal on 23 April 1926, Jawaharlal Nehru, *A Bunch of old Letters*, op. cit., p. 46.

²Asaf Ali was the Congress nominee in the Interim Government of India, and the first Indian Ambassador to the United States.

³Mrs Aruna Asaf Ali herself became the Mayor of Delhi in the post-independence era.

'The real defeat in Delhi has been suffered by common nationality and joint electorate,' wrote Mohammad Ali, who was still with the Congress and still not disillusioned with Gandhi, 'and the real victory has been achieved by that disunity and schism in whose presence no Muslim in his senses can give up separate electorate.'¹

If this is how Mohammad Ali felt, one can well understand the feelings of those to whom separate electorates were a sacred cow. The Anglo-Mohammedan school believed in it as much as in loyalty to the British. They were disgusted with Jinnah's national approach and his view of the electoral system. This was perhaps the only political sentiment they shared with the former Khilafatists, who had never forgiven Jinnah for opposing them on the Non-co-operation Movement, and for having been proved right.

Viewed against this background and the swing of Muslim opinion in favour of retaining separate electorates, one cannot but admire Jinnah's perseverance and ultimate success in persuading the Muslim leaders to agree to the Delhi Proposals. One is equally astonished at the attitude of the nationalist leaders who did not strike while the iron was hot, but let precious time pass, allowing the right-wing Muslims to regroup and renew faith in separate electorates. Nevertheless, the decisions at Madras and Calcutta and the meeting of all parties was promising. One could look forward to the emergence of a democratic constitution, based on the agreed Delhi Proposals, out of these deliberations. That would, indeed, be a fitting reply to Birkenhead's challenge.

Jinnah had participated in the first All-Parties Conference held in Delhi in February, but he was away when the final report of the Nehru committee was framed. In March, however, when all the parties met again, the League representatives had, in view of the Mahasabha opposition to accepting the Delhi Proposals as the basis of a settlement, withdrawn, and took no further part in the proceedings. Motilal was so disgusted at the Mahasabha that on 1 May he wrote to the Congress President, Ansari, that '...the Hindu Mahasabha should have been kicked out in Delhi, but if that was not done so there, there is no reason why we should not adopt a stronger attitude in Bombay. To repeat an old story it is

¹*Hamdard*, op. cit., 3 November 1926.

no use allowing a disabled limb to dangle by your side and obstruct your movements.’¹ He felt that he should have told the Muslim leadership that he and the Congress stood by the Madras Resolution.

When the Nehru committee met at Lucknow on 7 July, it had specifically invited a number of prominent leaders from both communities to participate in its discussions. This meeting adopted a resolution providing for seats in the legislatures on a population basis. But the very next day the resolution was modified, nullifying this principle.²

The final report envisaged India being a Dominion in the Commonwealth. It was to be a single state: provinces there would be, but only as administrative units, with very limited powers; the structure was to be like that of 1919, with the all-powerful Centre tightly controlling the units. Separate electorates and weightage were to go. There was to be no reservation of seats, except for the minorities in a province or at the Centre. Muslim representation at the Centre was to be reduced from one third to one fourth. Fundamental rights were to be guaranteed, but there was no provision guaranteeing that if three-fourths of the members of a community objected to any legislation as affecting their religion or culture, it could not become a law.

This was a total negation of the Delhi Proposals. Not only were separate electorates and weightage discarded, but also reserved seats. In the name of democracy and nationalism, the report had abolished what the Hindu Mahasabhaites called ‘Communal Provinces’.

The authors of the report had defended their recommendations by ingenious arguments. They even tried to prove that through the system they were recommending, the Muslims would gain many more seats in the provincial legislatures than they would get if these were reserved on a population basis.

The reverse was, of course, true. The Committee was not defending pure democracy but the privileged position of the Hindus, who were not only richer and more educated, but also entrenched in commerce and the professions in both the Punjab

¹*Ansari Papers*, op. cit., Uma Kaura, p. 40.

²Uma Kaura, *Muslims and Indian Nationalism*, South Asian Books, Columbia, Mo. 1977, pp. 36-7.

and Bengal. The Muslim community in these provinces consisted mainly of agriculturists, who were heavily in debt to Hindu *mahajans* and vulnerable to their pressure. Pressure was also to come from the strongly entrenched Hindu-Sikh bureaucracy. Then there were the *zamindars*. Bengal had few Muslim *zamindars*. Even in the Punjab, where the position was comparatively better, almost all the big landlords were Hindus and Sikhs; and although the number of Muslim cultivators in the Punjab was twice the number of Hindu cultivators, among the landlords and the urban middle classes the Muslims were less than half the non-Muslims. To claim that through adult franchise 'on a conservative estimate Muslims are highly likely to have 58%'¹ of seats, was mere eye-wash. Muslim peasants were not only poor and had a higher rate of illiteracy, they could also be bullied into voting as told by the *mahajans*, the *landlords*, and the local officials; nor could the advantage of adult franchise be fully availed of by them because of the Muslim custom of *purdah*, or seclusion of women. Not even 10% of Muslim women were expected to go to the polling booths, and the majority of those actually casting votes could never be Muslim, except in a few constituencies.

In any case, when the Muslims were content to have less why be so generous and break an agreement? There were two Muslims in the Nehru Committee of nine members. One member, Sir Ali Imam, was sick and attended only one meeting. When the report was ready, 'He signed the report because at that stage he could hardly do otherwise.'² The other member was Shuaib Qureshi, an old Khilafatist and, at that time a, Secretary of the Congress. He vehemently fought for reservation of seats for the Muslims, was overruled, and refused to append his signature. Jinnah and Mohammad Ali were both away in Europe when the Committee was drawing up its recommendations, but, when released, it had a very hostile reception from the Muslims. Apart from a well-organized and vociferous band of Congressite Muslims, all other sections of the community rejected it indignantly. They included not only the Shafi group and its allies, but also such pro-Congress leaders as Shaukat Ali.

¹*Nehru Report.*

²Tara Chand, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 14.

Jinnah returned to India at the end of October 1928 after an absence of about six months. He had laid the firm foundations of unity at Delhi, and even brought about unity of action by his uncompromising stand on the Simon Commission. But now he found the country divided into hostile camps. The Hindus had gone back on their agreement and the Muslims were highly agitated.

He also found that many Muslim Leaguers who had stayed with him against the Shafi League had now joined the chorus of the Shafi faction that the Nehru Committee would have never dared to make its anti-Muslim recommendations if Jinnah had not shown weakness over separate electorates.

Much dismayed by this change of scene, Jinnah still tried to defuse the situation. He did not criticize the authors of the report; on the contrary, he said that they had made 'a serious effort', and appealed to those who disagreed with it, 'not to rebel but to keep calm'. He asked the Muslims not to be alarmed but unitedly to 'press every reasonable point for the protection of the community.' There was only one hope for India, he said, and that was unity between Hindus and Muslims. Hindus should show a more generous and liberal mind and Muslims ought to show more trust.¹

The Nehru Report was to be submitted for final approval to an All-Party Convention that was due to meet in Calcutta from 22 December 1928, (the Congress session was also to be held there in the last week of the year.) The League had, like other parties, been invited to the Convention, but Jinnah thought it only proper that before sending its representatives the League should itself consider the report and decide on its stand. He asked Motilal for a short postponement, but the latter did not agree. Meanwhile, the Bombay Provincial Muslim League rejected the recommendations of the report at a meeting of its Council, but Jinnah refused to be bound by it because, being an all-India matter, it was outside the purview of a provincial unit. He decided to hold the League's annual session at Calcutta about the same time that the Convention was to be held.

The League session was held under the presidentship of the Maharaja of Mahmudabad, who favoured acceptance of the Nehru Report as it was. So did a large number of delegates. But

¹Saiyid, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

the other section was equally vehement in its denunciation. Faced with this dissension within dissension, Jinnah had a resolution passed nominating twenty-three delegates to represent it at the Convention to 'endeavour to bring about an adjustment of the various outstanding questions.' 'Never before in my life,' says Khaliqzaman, who was one of the twenty-three, 'had I seen a more meaningless and vague direction given by a political party to its delegates, there being a clear-cut division between the members of the Council.'¹ Khaliqzaman's comment obscures the fact that this was not a lapse but a deliberate act. Jinnah did not want to close the door on agreement. He did not want the League to commit itself to a position from which it could not withdraw. He wanted to keep alive the possibility of a compromise. He was neither a non-co-operator, nor an obstructionist, but an honourable co-operator. He wanted to make one last attempt to give India's answer to Birkenhead.

The League delegation formulated some suggestions to be incorporated in the draft Constitution of the Nehru Committee. The three main amendments proposed were: (i) Muslim representation at the Centre should remain fixed at one-third; (ii) the form of constitution should be federal, with residuary powers vesting in the provinces; and (iii) in the event of adult suffrage not being established, the Punjab and Bengal should, for a period of ten years, have seats reserved for the Muslims in proportion to their population. With these three amendments, Jinnah was prepared to accept the entire Nehru Scheme, *including* joint electorates.

In his address to the Convention, Jinnah emphasized that, '...it is absolutely essential to our progress that a Hindu-Muslim settlement should be reached,' and that no country had either wrested freedom from another or succeeded in establishing representative institutions 'without giving guarantees for the security of the minorities.' No constitution, however idealistic in theory, 'will ever receive the support of the minorities unless they can feel that they, as an *entity*, are secure under the proposed constitution.'

He said: 'I am asking you for this adjustment because I think it is the best and fair for the Musalmans. Look at the

¹Khaliqzaman, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

constitutional history of Canada and Egypt. The minorities are always afraid of majorities. The majorities are apt to be tyrannical and oppressive and particularly religious majorities, and the minorities therefore have the right to be absolutely secure. Was the adjustment between French Canadians and British arrived at on population basis or on the ground of pure equity? Was the adjustment between the Copts, Christians and Musalmans in Egypt regulated by such considerations?

He reminded the Convention that they were there ‘...for the purpose of entering into a solemn contract and all parties who enter into it will have to work for it and fight for it.’ He wanted Hindus and Muslims to march together to their common objective and said, ‘I am not speaking as a Mussalman but as an Indian.’¹

It was a voice in the wilderness. It was, in a way, Nagpur all over again. But in 1920 his audience was seized by a frenzy, while in 1928 it was coolly considering constitutional issues. The treatment meted out to Jinnah on both occasions was, however, the same. The irony was that this time it was he who, with his ‘bold and patriotic initiative’ twenty months before, had started the process that ended with the drafting of a *Swaraj* Constitution.

All his pleadings were in vain. All his amendments were summarily rejected. Jayakar even went to the extent of questioning his right to speak on behalf of the Muslims. ‘Mr Jinnah,’ he said, ‘represents a small minority of Muhammadans.’

That was the most unkind cut of all.

¹Sherwani, op. cit., pp. 415-22.

CHAPTER 9

THE FATHER, THE SON AND THE MAHATMA

No single person was responsible for the Calcutta catastrophe more than Motilal Nehru. India had come so near a settlement, and yet remained so far. The Nehrus were destined to destroy the possibility of Indian unity—the father in 1928, the son in 1946.

There was a strange irony in the situation, for no one in 1928 was more capable of bringing about Hindu-Muslim unity than Motilal himself. He had the opportunity, he had the authority, and he seemed cut out for the role. Reared in Mughal culture, he was a fine specimen of the common Hindu-Muslim heritage. He had learned Arabic as a child, and maintained a lively interest in Persian and Urdu poetry up to the end. In his preference for food, dress, in fact the whole way of living, he was closer to Muslims than any other Congress leader. He had no communal bias, and found communal dissensions most irritating, but when the time came to settle them, and although he was in a position to do so, he threw away the chance.

Some writers have been puzzled by it, others have charged him with committing a stupendous folly. But was it really an act of folly? Or was it committed after cool deliberation?

The rout of the Swaraj Party in 1926 had, we have seen, left a deep impression on Motilal, and brought about a considerable change in him. 'Pundit Motilal Nehru', wrote Mohammad Ali of the man he once called 'The Pearl among the Pundits', 'who next to himself worships only one god or goddess called 'majority'...stated that during election time he should never be expected to publicly denounce the Hindu Mahasabha or its unbecoming activities.'¹ He had adopted this attitude after a

¹*Hamdard*, op. cit., 10 January 1929.

careful study of political trends and the immense appeal of Hindu revivalism to the Hindu voter.

The outstanding feature of Motilal's political career was opportunism. He never hesitated to act against his political beliefs, if it served his purpose. He opposed and ridiculed *satyagraha* and *charkha*, and ended by adopting both. In 1920, he had approached Jinnah¹ and suggested the formation of a united front against Gandhi's plan of non-co-operation, and within days had gone over to Gandhi completely. In 1922, when Gandhi was in jail, Das's bold initiative gave him the courage to adopt the programme he really believed in. When Gandhi was released, he travelled with Das to Bombay to try to convert him to their point of view. Having failed, Motilal said: 'The honest thing to do is to admit failure and frankly give up the triple boycott. The Swarajists would have done it, had it not been for their belief that they had no chance of success with the masses against Mahatma's teachings.'²

In 1924, he was also enthusiastically participating in the parleys for the formation of an all inclusive party. Jayakar recorded in his diary:

Sunday, 4th May: Conference at Jinnah's bungalow about formation of a new inclusive party. Jinnah, Motilal, Purshuttamdas Thakurdas and myself present. Adjourned till the 5th.

Monday, 12th May: Conference at Juhu with Motilal, Vithalbhai Patel, regarding formation of a new party. Motilal against. A strange volte-face.³

All these turns and twists, though not 'the honest thing to do', can be explained away by his admirers, but nothing except self-interest and personal ambition can explain his volte-face on the communal issue. He had throughout his life stood for communal harmony and decried Hindu chauvinism. He had strongly opposed the formation of the Hindu Mahasabha, and wrote to his son: 'Another new feature of the Congress had been that it had given birth to an All-India Hindu Mahasabha, which in my opinion, will not only minimize the chance of the Hindu-Muslim Committee doing any good, but sap the foundations of the

¹See, pp. 189-90.

²B. R. Nanda, *The Nehrus*, Allen & Unwin, London, 1965, p. 237.

³Jayakar, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 264.

Congress itself. I opposed the formation of the Sabha, brought round Surendranath Bannerjee and Bhupendra Basu, but the great majority of the so-called leaders of upper India, specially from the Punjab, had worked themselves to a high pitch and could not be made to listen to reason.¹ He despised Mahasabha politics and was worried by Malaviya's influence on Gandhi. Early in 1920, he wrote to Jawaharlal that 'his [Gandhi's] constant association and general agreement with Malaviya are not good omens for our party.'² The election tactics of Malaviya and his colleagues in 1926 so disgusted him that he had begun to think of retiring from politics. He wrote to Jawaharlal: 'Communal hatred and heavy bribing of the voters was the order of the day. I am thoroughly disgusted and am now seriously thinking of retiring from political life...The Malaviya-Lala gang aided by Birla's money are making frantic efforts to capture the Congress.'³

But he did not retire, and six months later enthusiastically supported Jinnah's Delhi Proposals. Actually he was the one to propose the resolution for acceptance at the meeting of the All-India Congress Committee in May 1927. In his speech he said that 'nothing better could have been proposed under the circumstances to remove the unfortunate communal rancour and animosity.'⁴

In August 1927 he went to Europe, but returned in February 1928, convinced that his end was near. In May he became chairman of the constitutional committee and within three months, casting away the political beliefs of a life-time, produced a report on the lines that Lajpat Rai, Malaviya and the Mahasabha wanted.

It was a premeditated act by a cool, calculating and ambitious man.

¹Nanda, *op. cit.*, p. 114, (letter dated 6 January 1911).

²Jawaharlal Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters*, *op. cit.*, p. 6 (letter of 27 February 1920.) A corroboration of Motilal's opinion of Malaviya in 1924 is given by Mohammad Ali in his letter of 15 June to Jawaharlal: 'I had discussed the matter frankly with your father and he told me that he largely agreed with me that Malaviya was *out* to defeat Gandhism and to become the leader of *the Hindus only* since he could not be the leader of *Muslims as well as Hindus*, and that Hindu-Muslim unity *was not* his ideal.' (*A Bunch of Old Letters*, p. 37).

³*Ibid.*, p. 50, (letter dated 2 December 1926).

⁴Khaliquzzaman, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

‘Motilal,’ says his biographer, ‘was severely rational, logical, impervious to emotion.’¹ ‘...His practical senses, stern level-headedness and worldly wisdom never forsook him,’ says Jayakar, who was one of the leading lights of the Swaraj Party in its first phase, and knew him well. According to Jayakar, Motilal was ‘cool, calculating, precise, unimpulsive with a thorough knowledge of men.’² Jawaharlal’s estimate of his father was: ‘He was not in the habit of being swayed away by new proposals; he thought carefully of the consequences before he took any fresh steps.’³ ‘Compared to him [Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, the Moderate leader] my father seemed cold-bloodedness itself.’⁴

Motilal was also, according to his son, ‘too obstinate to change from one position to another until he was convinced that there was no other way.’⁵ And a cold-blooded reappraisal of the political situation convinced him that, with the political ambitions he was harbouring, there was, in 1928, no other way for him. He could not hope to beat the Hindu communalists on his own. The Swaraj Party was tottering, and, what was even worse from his point of view, a challenge from within the Party had come to his own leadership. Srinivasa Iyengar was the rising star, and in 1926 the thumping success of the Swarajists in Madras, while it was almost wiped out in Motilal’s own province, was entirely due to him. Iyengar was President of the Congress for the year 1927 as well as the Deputy Leader of the Party in the Central Assembly. He was an ambitious man, but Motilal could neither dominate him nor get rid of him. Differences between them had become so acute that they had stopped sitting next to each other in the Assembly, and ‘Rangaswami Iyengar had to sit between them as a buffer.’⁶

While the Swaraj Party appeared to have no future, ‘the Congress itself was forfeiting its claim to be treated as the country’s one catholic national organization, free from religious and communal bias: its Belgaum session (under Gandhi’s presidency in 1924) was definitely Hindu in composition and political behaviour. It was moving into a position of identity “with

¹Nanda, *op. cit.*, p. 204-5.

²Jayakar, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 348.

³Jawaharlal Nehru, *Autobiography*, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶Jayakar, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 328.

the political complement of the Hindu Mahasabha". By 1926 the Congress Party and the Hindu Mahasabha had become so indistinguishable that the erstwhile Muslim members of the former fought elections as Muslims, not as Swarajists.¹

The ground was fast slipping under the Nehru feet. Cool calculation and worldly wisdom showed the easiest way out to protect self-interest: adopt a communal position that would take the wind out of the Mahasabha sails, and form an alliance with Gandhi.

Swarup Affair

The Nehrus first met Gandhi at the Lucknow Congress in 1916. Motilal was totally unimpressed; to Jawaharlal also he seemed very 'distant' and 'unpolitical'. Soon afterwards, however, Gandhi's adventure in Champaran filled him with enthusiasm. When, two years later, Gandhi announced his plan for *satyagraha* against the Rowlatt Bill, Jawaharlal's reaction was 'one of tremendous relief'. Here was, he thought, a method of action which might prove effective. He was 'afire with enthusiasm and wanted to join the Satyagraha Sabha immediately,'² but Motilal was dead against it. Both father and son were adamant, and both were distressed.

Motilal then requested Gandhi to come to Allahabad and help. Gandhi came and talked Jawaharlal out of it. Motilal felt grateful.

Motilal came to know Gandhi more intimately during 1919 as a fellow member of the Congress Inquiry Committee on the Punjab. About this time another family crisis took place and Gandhi was able to help Motilal again. This time it concerned Motilal's second child, his elder daughter Swarup (later Vijaya, Lakshmi Pandit).

Motilal had started publishing an English daily, *The Independent*, from Allahabad from February, 1919. For its editorship he selected Syud Hossain, then Assistant Editor of the *Bombay Chronicle*. Hossain came from a distinguished Muslim family of Bengal. His father, Nawab Syud Mohammad, was an eminent

¹Misra, *op. cit.*, p. 227.

²Jawaharlal Nehru, *Autobiography*, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

Urdu writer of the era, whose humorous articles in *Oudh Punch* were widely read. His maternal grandfather was Nawab Abdul Latif, the founder of the Muslim Literary Society of Calcutta. He was educated at Aligarh and had then gone to England for the bar. But journalism had a greater lure for him than law, and after seven years' stay in London he returned to India to join what was then one of the leading English-language nationalist newspapers in the country.

Tall, dark and handsome, Hossain was a fluent speaker and an engaging conversationalist. Urbane and elegant, he lived in princely style and the nineteen-year old Swarup was captivated by him. Defying the family, she walked into Hossain's house one morning, embraced Islam, and married him.

It created a sensation. The daughter of a Kashmiri Brahmin marrying a Muslim! It was inconceivable even in those glorious days of Hindu-Muslim unity. Hindus and Muslims may belong to the same nation, they may even be brothers, but a line had to be drawn beyond which nationalism could not be allowed to go, and certainly not to the extent of letting a high-caste Hindu girl marry a *malech*. The Pundits, Kashmiri and non-Kashmiri, led by Malaviya, ganged up on Motilal, threatening him with social ostracism and political annihilation.

Motilal did not have a narrow communal outlook. He was fond of Hossain and did not have any objection to the match as such. What he resented was not being taken into confidence, and a surprize being sprung on him. Motilal's wife and other ladies of the family were, of course, against the marriage, and they were also joined by Jawaharlal, who was otherwise very much in favour of inter-communal marriages.¹

Politically, it was the key year for Motilal. It was the year of Jallianwallah Bagh; it was the year when the Khilafat Movement was gaining momentum. Motilal had been appointed as a

¹When, in 1942, the engagement of his daughter Indira to a Parsi, Feroze Gandhi, was announced, Jawaharlal issued a press statement. 'A marriage is a personal and domestic matter affecting chiefly the two parties concerned and partly their families,' it said. 'I have long held the view that though parents may and should advise in the matter the choice and ultimate decision must lie with the two parties concerned. That decision, if arrived at after mature deliberation, must be given effect to and it is not the business of parents or others to come in the way.' *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, 28 February 1942.

member of the Congress Inquiry Committee on the Punjab and had been playing a prominent part in the talks for Hindu-Muslim co-operation for political action. He had also been chosen to preside over the coming Congress. The road to the political summit seemed open for him.

The Swarup affair could not have come at a worse time. He was caught between pressures from within—the family—and pressures from without—the Pandits. He was at a loss as to what to do, when Gandhi came to help him out.

Gandhi came and talked to Motilal, to the young couple, and to some political leaders. Nationally, he took the line that it would be very injurious if a single marriage should destroy the Hindu-Muslim unity that was just building up. As for the young lovers, they must prove their love. This could only be done, he said in his sugar-coated way, if they separated and lived apart for a sufficiently long time. Consequently, Hossain had to leave *The Independent*. He was made a member of the Khilafat delegation which under Mohammad Ali's leadership left for Europe on 1 February 1920, while Swarup was despatched to Gandhi's ashram at Sabramati.¹

So parted Syud and Swarup, not to meet again till seventeen years later. Hossain did not return to India with the Khilafat delegation. He stayed on in England, looking after the London Committee of the Congress and editing its mouthpiece, *India*, jointly with Fenner Brockway. Later, he moved to the United States and stayed there until 1946.² He never married again. Swarup stayed in Sabramati ashram for quite some time, where Gandhi and his wife personally looked after her. She was brought back to the Hindu fold after *shuddhi*. The marriage was dissolved, through either divorce or annulment. With Hossain thousands

¹Interestingly, a month after Syud Hossain's departure, the *Independent* published, on 3 March 1920, an article by Gandhi on its front page, under the heading 'Hindu-Muslim Unity'. He dealt with the question whether the Hindus and the Muslims should inter-dine and inter-marry and adjudged against both. 'The fact is that inter-marriage and inter-dinning are not necessary factors in friendship and unity though they are often emblems thereof. But insistence on either the one or the other can easily become and is today a bar to Hindu-Mahommedan unity,' he said. 'I hold it to be utterly impossible for Hindus and Mahommedans to intermarry'.

²Syud Hossain later became Bharat's first Ambassador to Egypt. He is buried in Cairo.

of miles away in self-exile and beyond her reach, Swarup compromised with the situation. In May 1921, she was married to a Kashmiri pundit whose father Gandhi knew well, and who was introduced to Swarup by Gandhi's secretary, Mahadev Desai.

Gandhi's handling of the Swarup affair was highly satisfactory to everybody, except to the two young people most directly concerned. For the pundits their 'national' honour had been saved. The Khilafatist leaders were happy that what had posed as a threat to the Hindu-Muslim alliance against the British had been averted. For Jawaharlal and the ladies of *Anand Bhawan*,¹ family honour had been preserved. Motilal had been spared a great scandal and social odium. Everything had worked smoothly and turned out fine in the end. His family, his name, his social status and political position were all safe and secure, thanks to Gandhi.

Father and Son

Gandhi was also a source of comfort to Motilal politically when he was feeling forlorn after the death of C. R. Das. Gandhi was president of the Congress that year and he made a number of friendly gestures to Motilal. 'Slowly, then, Gandhi by a series of *obiter dicta* adopted Swarajists as his attorneys and political representatives, shortly after Das's demise.'² He even offered to vacate the presidential chair in favour of Motilal. 'In the mood in which we found Gandhi at that time,' says the Congress historian, 'all that Pundit Motilal had to do was to ask and it was given forthwith, and given wholesale.'³ This was unexpected help and very welcome indeed. Motilal, for all his imperious ways, was not a man of iron. His was a domineering, not a dominating, personality, as the Swarajist rebels, the Responsive Co-operators, were to prove. He always needed a prop. The death of Das had deprived him of that prop, but now Gandhi, political differences notwithstanding, was providing it. Motilal had thoroughly enjoyed his leadership of the Swaraj Party in the

¹The Nehru home in Allahabad.

²Sitaramayya, *op. cit.*, p. 481.

³*Ibid.*, p. 489.

Central Assembly. His whole background was legal and he relished fighting constitutional battles on the floor of the Assembly rather than participating in mass rallies in the streets. He was virtually the leader of His Majesty's not-so-loyal Opposition and had visions of one day crossing over to be the Leader of the House. In the first part of the third decade of this century it was not a wild dream. The grant by Britain of a constitution whereby India would enjoy restricted responsible government, with an Indian 'Prime Minister', was very much in the realm of possibility. But by 1927-8, the possibility had faded away.

In 1928 Motilal was in his 68th year, rather old in a country where 'turning sixty' means 'becoming senile'. He was also ill, and the doctors whom he had consulted during his visit to Europe in 1927-8 had diagnosed various ailments. With his health broken, and seeing the end coming, his greatest and only wish, before he went, was to see his only son succeed to the position he never attained.

'An only son of prosperous parents is apt to be spoiled, especially so in India.' With these words Jawaharlal starts his autobiography. This is no exaggeration, either about himself or about other only sons, prosperous or poor. Easterners are, as a rule, partial to male children, but nowhere has a son such a position of honour and importance as in Hindu society. He 'waters the family tree' and assures continuance of family name. He protects the family estate and the family honour, and continues family traditions. He is needed even after death, for many funeral rites, without which *nirvana* is not possible, can only be performed by a son.

Motilal was not a religious man, but as far as the son was concerned he was more Hindu than the most orthodox Brahman. He had lost two sons before Jawaharlal, and when Jawaharlal was born it was as if all his prayers had been answered. One more son was born sixteen years after Jawaharlal's birth, but he too died in infancy. This made Jawaharlal even more precious—'the dearest treasure we have in this world, and perhaps in the other world to come,' Motilal once wrote.¹

¹Nanda, *op. cit.*, p. 68, letter to Jawaharlal, 20 October 1905.

A father's love for his children is a natural feeling, but Motilal's love for Jawaharlal knew no bounds. 'Asked to describe Motilal's greatest quality, Gandhi said: "Love of his son". "Was it not love of India?" the Mahatma was asked. "No," he replied. "Motilal's love for India was derived from his love for Jawaharlal."' ¹

Motilal spared no expense or effort to give Jawaharlal the best of everything. He was weighed on each birthday in grain—to be later distributed among the poor—had English governesses, and an Irish resident teacher; he even had a private laboratory for experiments in elementary physics and chemistry. For further education he was sent to Harrow and Cambridge.

Motilal had planned that Jawaharlal should join the ruling ICS, the Indian Civil Service, but as the time approached to take the competitive examination, he could not bear the thought of separation from him, for Government service would have meant postings in distant places. Consequently Jawaharlal qualified for the bar and returned to his parents.

'Motilal's ambition had been all for his son,' says their biographer.² As early as in 1905, he had told Jawaharlal: 'I think I can without vanity say that I am the founder of the fortunes of the Nehru family. I look upon you, my dear son, as the man who will build upon the foundations I have laid and have the satisfaction of seeing a noble structure of renown rearing up its head to the skies.'³ Jawaharlal, on return from England, started legal practice as his father's junior, but made no mark in law. He was more interested in politics. Motilal himself was drifting towards more active politics and had crossed the Rubicon by 1919, but he was all the time awake to building up the political career of his son. In 1920, he was planning Jawaharlal's election. He advised Jawaharlal 'to select a constituency from which you are sure to be returned. I am more keen on your going into the Council than mine.'⁴ The plan did not then get off the ground because of the Non-co-operation Movement. In 1923, when the Swaraj Party entered the Councils, Motilal would have very much

¹Ibid., p. 343.

²Ibid., p. 342.

³Ibid., p. 68.

⁴Sarvepali Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1975, Vol. I, p. 37, letter from Motilal to Jawaharlal, 13 June 1920.

liked to have Jawaharlal by his side in the Central Assembly. But Jawaharlal was not interested: he did not believe in the Swarajist programme. However, Motilal's dream persisted. Seeing two members in the Assembly who were Jawaharlal's contemporaries at Cambridge, he wrote to him: 'What I feel on seeing these men is that you should have been *in my place*. This would have been more in the fitness of things than my being there. I do not know why the idea recurs to me repeatedly on seeing your contemporaries.'¹

The original idea to have Jawaharlal by his side had, by 1927, transformed into having Jawaharlal in his place. After his trip to Europe, it had become his sole mission in (the rest of his) life.

By that time, however, the leadership of the Assembly party had lost its allure. There seemed no chance of an Indian becoming the Prime Minister, the programme of obstruction from within had failed, and the Swaraj Party itself was in tatters. The road to future power and glory passed through the presidential chair of the Congress, and Motilal resolved to seat his son on it during his life time.

Jawaharlal had secured his first important position in the Congress when Motilal's (then) friend, President Mohammad Ali, appointed Jawaharlal as a General Secretary. Next year Gandhi, as the succeeding president, had renewed the appointment. But a year later, when Srinivas Iyengar became president, Motilal decided it was time to put forward Jawaharlal's name for the top post.

The Congress President was elected through a long and complicated process, but Gandhi, despite his virtual retirement from active politics, was, in effect, the king-maker, and it was him that Motilal tackled. 'Jawaharlal's presiding has an irresistible appeal for me,'² he wrote. But Gandhi thought that 'it was not yet time for Jawaharlal to shoulder the burden.'³

Next year he repeated the suggestion, but in the meanwhile Vallabhbhai Patel had emerged as a heroic Congress figure. He had successfully organized a civil disobedience campaign in Bardoli. Bardoli is in the same *taluka* in Gujarat where Gandhi

¹Nanda, *op. cit.*, p. 273, letter to Jawaharlal, 27 January 1927. (Emphasis added.)

²*Ibid.*, p. 273-4.

³*CWMG*, *op. cit.*, Vol. XXXIV, p. 30, Gandhi to Motilal, 19 June 1927.

had announced he would start a civil disobedience campaign during the Non-co-operation Movement. Although postponed a number of times, it was never started. Patel's movement had thus removed a stigma, and he had become a Congress hero and a natural choice for the 1928 Congress. Keeping that in mind, Motilal had suggested Patel's name, and 'failing him', Jawaharlal. But with the Nehru Report as the focus of political attention, and the session due in Calcutta, where the Bengali leaders wanted Motilal, Gandhi decided in his favour.

Motilal had felt no embarrassment at all in asking for 'the Crown'—as he called the presidency—for his son in two successive years. He justified himself on the ground that Jawaharlal's '...habit of playing the role of the humble soldier in the presence of his great general may check the necessary assertiveness required for the occasions.'¹ As for himself, Motilal said: 'I feel that I have lost much of the confidence I had in myself and am more or less a spent force.'² It was only when the son could not get it that the father had accepted 'the Crown'.

Gandhi and the Nehrus

While Motilal was persevering in his efforts to elevate Jawaharlal to the Congress presidency, Jawaharlal himself was drifting to the left. Unlike Motilal, who believed in constitutional methods, Jawaharlal believed in mass movements and revolution. He had read a good deal of revolutionary and Marxist literature, in early 1927 attended the Congress of Oppressed Nationalities in Brussels, and in November visited the Soviet Union. He came back greatly impressed by what he heard and saw, and his speeches at that time had a definite radical ring. At the Madras Congress he was in the forefront for changing the Congress creed to 'Complete National Independence'. When, in August 1928, the All Parties Conference was held at Lucknow to consider the Nehru Report, he had opposed the acceptance of Dominion Status, and along with Subhas Chandra Bose formed the India Independence League, under the presidentship of Srinivasa Iyengar.

¹Nanda, *op. cit.*, p. 275.

²Jawaharlal Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters*, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

The demand for 'Complete Independence', as against Dominion Status, became immediately popular, particularly among the youth. Today the controversy and the intensity with which it was carried may sound silly, but in the twenties it was a highly sensitive and emotional issue. The younger generation, represented by Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose, wanted to have nothing whatever to do with the British Empire. To them Dominion Status was a badge of slavery, just another instalment in the process of constitutional reforms. They would accept nothing short of full and complete independence, and insisted that the Congress was already committed to it after Madras.

Motilal on his part 'was full of All-Parties Conference and its report.'¹ He had worked hard on it and was determined to have it approved by the Congress. He had made it known that if he failed, he would resign from the presidency. But he felt powerless against the opposition from his own son.

Father and son had, more often than not, differed politically in the past, but this time the gap seemed too wide to bridge. 'I was not prepared to compromise on the Independence issue,' records Jawaharlal, '...there was a definite feeling of mental conflict between us, and attempt to pull different ways. Differences of opinion we had often before, vital differences which had kept us in different political camps. But I do not think that at any previous or subsequent occasion the tension had been so great.'²

Motilal's drift from a moderate politician to a Non-Co-operator was, in no small measure, due to the influence of Jawaharlal. On the Independence issue too, although all his political and legal instincts were entirely in favour of Dominion Status, he would have surrendered before his son, but he himself was the author of the report, and his pride was involved. He might even have swallowed his pride, but there was another difficulty. Srinivasa Iyengar was busy manoeuvring against Motilal. It was he who, during Motilal's absence in Europe, had encouraged Jawaharlal to present the Independence resolution at the Madras Congress, a year earlier, and, in summer, had formed the Independence League. He was using Motilal's son against him. If he succeeded,

¹Jawaharlal Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters*, op. cit., p. 184-5.

²*Ibid.*, p. 184-5.

Jawaharlal's political career would be jeopardized, and all the great plans that Motilal had for him would crash to the ground.

Motilal could not make Jawaharlal see all this. But there was one person to whom he would listen: Gandhi.

Gandhi's relations with the Nehrus had continued to grow after the Swarup affair, and he had, despite Motilal's gigantic ego, become the patron saint of the family. He had taken special interest in Jawaharlal, whose political potential he was not slow to realize, and through whom, he knew, he could win over Motilal himself. Jawaharlal, on his part, felt intellectually, temperamentally and politically closer to the Mahatma than to his father. He admired Motilal but was overawed by him, while with Gandhi he could talk freely. Unlike his epicurean father, he was simple and austere by nature and habit. This created yet another bond between him and Gandhi. He had also convinced himself that India could get freedom by mass movements alone, and, although he did not believe in non-violence as a creed, he considered it the only effective weapon.

Gandhi had continuously taken an interest in the personal and family affairs of Jawaharlal. Whether it was the question of the selection of a school for Jawaharlal's little daughter, Indira, or of a private income for him, Gandhi would never fail to write, offering advice and help. He would even mediate between father and son, pleading for Jawaharlal, 'one of the loneliest young men of my acquaintance in India'.¹ He would, Motilal felt, not allow Jawaharlal's political interests to suffer, and Jawaharlal would not go against him—even on the Independence issue. At the time of the Rowlatt *satyagraha*, it was Gandhi who had persuaded Jawaharlal not to go against the wishes of his father. He could do the same again, or at least find some way out of the deadlock. If anyone could untangle the problem faced by Motilal, it was him. In sheer desperation Motilal turned to Gandhi.

Gandhi, living the life of political self-retirement, had taken no part in either the boycott of the Simon Commission or the All Parties Conference. On the subject of Dominion Status, too, he had been conveniently vague. He had, however, rebuked Jawaharlal for 'going too fast',² and called the Independence

¹ CWMG, op. cit., Vol. XXV p. 65, Gandhi to Motilal, 2 September 1924.

² Jawaharlal Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters*, op. cit., p. 56.

resolution as 'hastily conceived and thoughtlessly passed', and denounced the Madras Congress for being reduced to 'the level of a schoolboys' debating society'.¹ Jawaharlal wrote to him defending his action, claimed a large measure of public support, took exception at being chastised by an angry school master, and even said that he missed in Gandhi the man of courage and action of the Non-co-operation Movement days.² But when Gandhi offered to publish their correspondence, Jawaharlal drew back. He did not want a break with Gandhi.

Gandhi had no intention of going to Calcutta, which was then the venue of the All-Party Conference and the sessions of the Congress, the Muslim League and the Khilafat Committee, but when he received the SOS from Motilal, he proceeded thither forthwith. The official historian of the Congress records:

We must now tell the reader how Gandhi was drawn to Calcutta from his comparative retirement. It may be remembered that he was imprisoned soon after the Ahmedabad Congress in March, 1922, and was absent from the Congress at Gaya, 1922, the Special Session at Delhi (September, 1923) and the annual session at Cocanada, 1923. He was released on the 5th of February, 1924 and presided over the Belgaum Congress. He attended the Kanpur Congress only to ratify the Patna decisions of partition, or partnership... whatever you may call it...with the Swaraj Party. Then he took a vow of a year's political silence which he broke at Gauhati. At Gauhati his participation in the Congress deliberations was active. But in Madras he was absolutely unconcerned and did not even attend the sittings of the Subjects Committee. It was doubtful whether he would have taken any interest in the Calcutta Session. For some years previously he had been spending a month at the Wardha Ashram on the eve of the annual sessions of the Congress. This year too when the Calcutta session was about to meet in December, 1928, he was at Wardha and Pandit Motilal Nehru, who was given a grand reception in a carriage drawn by thirty-six horses, found himself in the midst of a somewhat intricate situation. The protestants who had signed a letter at Lucknow (All-Parties' Conference) advocating Independence as against the Dominion Status on which the Conference had framed a constitution were there (Jawaharlal being one of them), having formed an Independence League. The Bengal friends had a league of their own. Subhas Chandra Bose was at its head.³

In the demand for Independence, Gandhi saw the revolt of the youth. Everywhere youth associations and student

¹*CWMG*, op. cit., Vol. XXXV, p. 438.

²*Ibid.*, pp. 540-4.

³Sitaramayya, op. cit., pp. 564-5.

organizations had been springing up. They were dissatisfied with the old leadership, and itching for action. Unrest was spreading all over the country. The peasant and the labour classes were also astir. Trade union activity had never been more popular, and there was a spate of labour strikes in mills from the east to the west: one strike, that of cotton mills in Bombay, involving 60,000 hands, had lasted five months. The Communists were also active and were trying to penetrate various forums. Terrorism too was raising its head.

As the discontent was spreading, Gandhi's stock was touching new depths. 'I have heard,' recalls the Indian writer Nirad Chaudhuri, 'typical Bengali nationalists call Gandhi *napumsaka*, a word which has no exact English equivalent, but means, literally, a man who is born without virility, and, figuratively, a feeble and ineffectual person, a dud in fact. Even more outrageously abusive language was used by the Bengalis about him.'¹

Gandhi was fully alive to his weakening hold on the educated youth. In July 1925, he had written: 'Popular opinion with the Congress means the opinion of the educated class. The Congress is the creation of this class. It, which means the educated class, has rendered many services to the country. I cannot forget these, merely because of my differences with that class. As I look at the matter I must carry the educated class with me in my attempt to convert the Congress into a mass organization...I must have patience and make it as easy as possible for the educated class to join the Congress.'² But the prospects seemed so bleak that one month later he wrote: 'I must, therefore, no longer stand in the way of the Congress being developed and guided by educated Indians rather than by one like myself, who has thrown in his lot entirely with the masses, and who has fundamental differences with the mind of educated India as a body. I still want to act upon them, but not by leading the Congress; on the contrary, by working my way to their hearts silently so far as possible, even as I did between 1915 and 1919...The best way in which I can help that activity is by removing myself out of the way.'³

¹Nirad Chaudhuri, *Thy Hand, Great Anarch*, Chatto & Windus, London, 1987, p. 503.

²CWMG, op. cit., Vol. XXVII, pp. 421-2.

³Ibid., p. 456.

Gandhi's forte was, of course, a mass movement, and he would have started it then if it had served his purpose, but, as he told the Kanpur Congress that December: 'Today I would commence Civil Disobedience if the necessary fire and fervour were there in the people. But alas they are not.'¹ He could therefore do nothing except watch, and wait for his opportunity. He was still doing it in May 1927, when he wrote to Jawaharlal: 'The outlook here is not at all happy... We have lost hold upon the masses.'² Nor had the situation changed a year later, for in May 1928 he wrote to Dr B. C. Roy of Bengal that: 'I am biding my time and you will find me leading the country in the field of politics when the country is ready. I have no false modesty about me. I am undoubtedly a politician in my own way, and I have a scheme for the country's freedom. But my time is not yet and may never come.'³

But on reaching Calcutta and surveying the scene, Gandhi discovered that his time had come. When he had written to Dr Roy in May, the Bardoli *satyagraha* was still on, but by August it had achieved its objective. This had given Gandhi a new feeling of self-confidence, for the campaign, though led by Patel, was guided by and conducted under his instructions. This had not only renewed his faith in his methods, but also assured him that the country was ready for a mass movement. During his lean years Gandhi had tried to keep in touch with the masses through his campaign for *khaddi*. This, in its way, served the same purpose for him that, many years later, the cultural revolution did for Mao Tse Tung. Still, Gandhi could not be sure as to how much hold had he retained. It was the success at Bardoli that had reassured him. So Gandhi evolved a formula that would be a compromise between the positions adopted by the old and the young, but whose sanction would be the mass movement. He proposed that the Nehru Report be accepted, with Dominion Status and all, and the British Government given notice to implement it within two years, failing which a civil disobedience movement would be launched. Later, as a further concession to the youth, the period of ultimatum was reduced to one year.

¹Sitaramayya, op. cit., p. 498.

²Jawaharlal Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters*, op. cit., pp. 54-5.

³CWNG, op. cit., Vol. XXXVI, p. 287.

With this formula, Gandhi, in one master stroke, lassoed Motilal and the older generation and Jawaharlal and the younger generation, and re-established his authority as the leader of the Congress. The old leaders were left with no alternative. Their face had been saved: the ball had been thrown in the British court. The youth were not so happy, but they had been outmanoeuvred. They wanted action, and that had been promised. All they had to do was to wait just one year, and then the Mahatma, no *napumsaka*, would personally lead them to the battle. Bose fought a last ditch battle, but Jawaharlal's opposition, as he admits, was 'half-hearted'.

No one at Calcutta, then or later, believed for a moment that the British would surrender to the ultimatum. So a year later, the Lahore Congress consigned the Nehru Report to the Ravi, adopted complete Independence as its creed, and decided to start the Civil Disobedience Movement. The President for the Lahore Congress was Jawaharlal.

Jawaharlal's claim to 'the Crown' had been taken up by Motilal, for the third time in succession, midway through his own term. On 13 July 1929, he wrote to Gandhi: 'The revolt of the youth has become an accomplished fact...It would be sheer flattery to say that you have today the same influence as you had on the youth of the country some years ago, and most of them make no secret of the fact. All this would indicate that the need of the hour is the head of Gandhi and the voice of Jawahar. There are strong reasons for either you or Jawahar to wear the crown.'¹

Gandhi agreed, and set about the task in his usual roundabout way. Ten provincial Congress Committees had voted for him, five for Vallabhbhai Patel, and only three for Jawaharlal. Gandhi was virtually elected, but at the last moment he refused and had Patel also withdraw his name, thus forcing the choice of Jawaharlal. 'I did not come to it (the presidency) by the main entrance,' admits Jawaharlal in his autobiography, 'or even a side entrance: I appeared suddenly by a trap-door and bewildered the audience with acceptance.'²

The Triple Alliance formed at Calcutta worked to the advantage of all the three partners. Adversity had brought them

¹Nanda, *op. cit.*, pp. 312-13.

²Jawaharlal Nehru, *Autobiography*, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

together: each needed the other two. Gandhi needed Jawaharlal, to win over the educated class and the youth, and Motilal, to carry the old guard. Motilal needed Gandhi to save his face, and more importantly, make his life's dream come true. Jawaharlal did not want to break with his father and yet, spoiling for a fight with the British, needed Gandhi for mass support, which, he knew, he could never get, despite his increasing popularity with the educated classes.

The arrangement was dictated by self-interest alone. In the context of national good it was a disaster, for it alienated the Muslims from the Congress as a community. But that worried neither the father, nor the son, nor Gandhi. Gandhi, for whom Hindu-Muslim unity was his life's mission, did not even mention the communal problem in either of the two speeches he made at the Subjects' Committee and the open session of the Congress. He did not care that the two most important Muslim leaders, namely, Jinnah and his closest Muslim ally and the other part of the duo of the Non-co-operation Movement days, Mohammad Ali, had been estranged. What mattered to him was that he was able to come out of his political hibernation and assume, once again, the supreme leadership himself.

Jawaharlal was happy that a new Independence movement was to be launched, and his sense of history was tickled by the thought that it would be during his presidency. He was, despite his protests, glad to be president. Although he kept up his pose of disinterestedness even later, yet when Gandhi suggested that Srinivasa Iyengar and Subhas Bose be dropped from the Congress Working Committee, he willingly played the game. His two potential rivals were thus eased out. Iyengar soon faded out of Indian politics. Bose lasted longer, but was ultimately hounded out of the Congress. And Jawaharlal became the undisputed heir to the Mahatma.

A Bharti journalist writes: 'It is certain that Gandhi's decision marked a turning-point in the history of modern India. A dying man, Motilal was naturally eager to see Jawaharlal Congress president in his own lifetime. Azad expressed to me the feeling that Jawaharlal would make a great appeal to Muslim youth. But the effect of Gandhi's decision was to identify the Nehru family with the nation. There is little doubt that this identification was a factor in the choice of Nehru as the first Prime Minister of free

India and of his daughter Indira as the third.'¹ And of Rajiv Gandhi, one may add.

Before he died, six weeks before the Jawaharlal presidency ended, Motilal thus had the satisfaction of seeing that on the foundations he had laid, his son was building 'a noble structure of renown rearing up its head to the skies.'

It was with this feeling, and unbounded joy, that Motilal, with his wife by his side, stood at a window in Lahore's Anarkali Bazaar throwing flower-petals on the Congress president as his procession passed. And the next day, when handing over the presidency to Jawaharlal, he could not have expressed his feelings better than by quoting the Persian saying:

اگر پدر نتواند پسر تمام کند

(What the father cannot accomplish, the son does.)

CHAPTER 10

ALONE

Birkenhead, whose overbearing attitude and insolent statements had aroused general indignation in India, had, to the shame of a genuine nationalist, been proved right. The Indians had demonstrated that they were incapable of producing an agreed constitution for their country. The All-Parties Convention at Calcutta, instead of confuting him, had created confusion and greater disunity among themselves.

Muslim India, Dr Ansari and a few of his 'nationalist Muslims' apart, had reacted strongly. Even the supporters of the Delhi Proposals had been disenchanted with the policy of appeasement towards Hindu leaders. The Shafi group felt vindicated, and the Anglo-Mohammedan School, in general, elated. As an answer to the Calcutta Convention, they had called a conference of all Muslim parties at Delhi, and the Aga Khan was specially called from England to preside over it. With the failure of the Convention the importance of this Conference suddenly rocketed. The humiliation suffered by Jinnah strengthened the hands of the organizers¹; and Muslim leaders from every province and every faction flocked to Delhi. Although the Muslim League had declined the invitation and refused to send any representatives, many League leaders, including Mohammad Yakub, who had presided over the previous session of the Jinnah League, participated. So did the pro-Congress Jamiatul Ulema and the Khilafat Committee.

The most important of these leaders was Mohammad Ali, with whose participation the Conference became completely

¹Speaking at the Conference, Shafi said: 'This is the first time that any Muslim association has been so treated, and I consider this an insult not only to the League but to all Muslims.' (*Times of India*, Bombay, 2 January 1929.)

representative of all sections of Muslim public opinion. Mohammad Ali had been becoming disenchanted with Gandhi and the Congress for some time. 'I had hoped,' he wrote in 1926, 'that Mahatma Gandhi's leadership would release brother Hindus from avarice and cowardice, but alas this hope was not fulfilled.'¹ Even a year later he still had faith in Gandhi's 'righteousness and freedom from prejudice'.² But doubts kept creeping in because of Gandhi's close relations with Malaviya, and his failure to denounce the activities of Hindu communalists; and Calcutta—where he was hooted throughout his speech—proved to be the last straw on the camel's back. He went from Calcutta to Delhi, took part in the Conference with his usual enthusiasm, and announced that he had left the Congress.

The All-Parties Muslim Conference celebrated New Year's Day with a manifesto, proposed by Shafi and seconded by Mohammad Ali. Adopted unanimously, it demanded continuation of separate electorates and weightage and the establishment of a federal system 'with complete autonomy and residuary powers vested in the constituting States', where the Muslim majority in any province should in no way be affected; and no change in the constitution be made 'except with the concurrence of all the States constituting the Indian Federation'. It also demanded a communal veto, whereby no bill could be passed if a three-fourths majority of the members of either community opposed it.

The manifesto was no doubt a backward step in the *rapprochement* between the Hindus and Muslims, 'but it was a reaction to Calcutta. If Birkenhead had earlier brought about unity among the Indians in general, Motilal had succeeded in negating it by alienating the Muslims. The Conference reflected the general consensus of Muslim opinion at that time, and could rightfully claim to fully represent all sections of the community.

Jinnah was the only Muslim of any consequence who had kept away from the Conference. He was the odd man out: disowned by Calcutta and too much of a nationalist to be *persona grata* at Delhi. His intense and undiluted nationalism had brought him this isolation. Twenty-two years earlier he had come to Calcutta

¹*Hamdard*, op. cit., 22 February 1926.

²*Ibid.*, 7 January 1927.

with Dadabhai Naoroji, full of hope and the fire of a young nationalist. Now at the very same Calcutta his dream had been shattered. He had remained faithful to his nationalist creed, but the Congress was no longer in the hands of nationalists like Naoroji. He was seen in tears, for the only time in his public life, when leaving Calcutta.

A Voice in the Wilderness

If Jinnah's heart was broken, there was every reason for it. For over two decades he had dreamt of and worked for a free, united India. True, he was not listened to at Nagpur: that was a difference over methods. But here, at Calcutta, the very fundamentals had been torn asunder. He had always worked for communal understanding, and for Calcutta he had worked very hard. He had gradually, step by step, brought his people round to abandon what they considered their most prized constitutional privilege: he had persuaded them to give it up under some other constitutional formula. The Hindu leaders had agreed to that formula, and he had co-operated with them actively, despite strong opposition from a large section of his own party. He had even gone to the extent of having the party broken into two. Yet all his efforts came to naught, and he—the one man who had made the assembly at Calcutta possible—was summarily dismissed at the convention.

Twelve years earlier, Jinnah had declared at Lucknow that, 'A minority must, above everything else, have a complete sense of security before its broader political sense can be evolved for co-operation and united endeavour in the national tasks.' At Calcutta, he pointed out that, 'Majorities are apt to be oppressive and tyrannical,' and asked for 'guarantees for the security of the minorities'. At Lucknow, he 'rejoice(d) to think that a final settlement' had been reached, and that the League stood 'abreast of' the Congress and 'ready to participate in any patriotic effort'. At Calcutta he insisted that, 'it is absolutely essential to our progress that Hindu-Muslim settlement should be reached,' so that both felt that 'their interests are common and they are marching together for a common goal', under a 'solemn contract'.

In Lucknow he was hailed as the ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity, and in Calcutta denounced as a communalist.

At Lucknow, he had read 'in the Hindu-Muslim *rapprochement* within the last few years the first great sign of the birth of united India'. At Calcutta, he had not only found such signs sadly missing, but those of an entirely different and contrasting nature ablaze. He had, 'not speaking as a Musalman but an Indian,' told the Convention that 'these two communities have got to be reconciled,' and had made a passionate appeal to it to rise to 'the highest order of statesmanship and political wisdom,' but the Convention was not animated by the 'New Spirit' of Lucknow, and turned him down with disdain. All that he could then do was to warn: 'If you do not settle this question today, we shall have to settle it tomorrow, but in the meantime our national interests are bound to suffer.'

Nothing availed. He was rejected and humiliated. This time his humiliation was far greater and deeper than even at Nagpur eight years earlier. His sincere and persistent efforts as the 'arch compromiser'—as Mohammad Ali once called him—had been defeated, and he was left high and dry, not on account of anything that Birkenhead did, but because of his own 'nationalist' compatriots. Not only had he been humbled personally and his policy been repudiated, his country had been disgraced. Birkenhead and his Conservatives, in fact the whole British people and the world must be laughing up their sleeves at the sordid spectacle staged at Calcutta. The very idea hurt his pride as an Indian and pained him deeply.

As for him personally, he had been abandoned by all his political friends. To the Hindus he was a 'communalist', and in Muslim eyes he had been discredited for following a policy which gave away basic Muslim rights and got nothing in return. He was distressed, dejected, frustrated, hurt and lonely.

In those lonely hours he meditated deeply on India's problem. What was basically wrong? Why had nationalist sentiments changed so much? He had not changed. He was still the same nationalist, pursuing the same objective. But why were others not with him now? What had happened? Where had the national spirit gone? Why had the national leaders been behaving in the way they did? There was not one Hindu leader like Gokhale anymore. Was Gokhale an exception then? Those who called

themselves nationalists were out and out communalists. Was there no Indian nationalism, just communal nationalism? And was there no nationalism because there was really no nation, only different communities? The Aga Khan, in his presidential address at Delhi, had said that 'the Moslems of India are not a community, but in a restricted, special sense a nation composed of many communities.' Was he right? His policy of kowtowing to the British may be disgraceful, but he may have made the correct diagnosis. Where did he then belong?

There was no getting away from the fact that the 'New Spirit', about which he had spoken so enthusiastically at Lucknow, was dead. 'The unifying process' about which he was so optimistic then had been put into reverse gear at Calcutta.

He was unhappy because Hindu-Muslim union had remained a distant goal. Now it had receded further. Was it impossible, after all? Was it just a mirage? Hindus and Muslims, though converging now and then for short periods, went about their separate ways. Were they like the two banks of the same river over which he had been trying to build a bridge? He had succeeded temporarily, but as soon as the work proceeded from the initial stage, the whole thing collapsed. Was he building on sand? Was he deluding himself? Was Birkenhead right after all? The British did not, for obvious reasons, want this bridge, but why were the Indians opposed to it? India may be multilingual, multi-racial and multi-religious, but it should have been possible for its people to adjust their differences and live together happily. Were their differences much more deep-rooted than he had realized? Were they much more than communities? They were certainly more different than the French and English Canadians; much more than the French and the British in Europe, or for that matter the British and the Germans, or the Spaniards and the Russians. Were they, in fact, not mere communities, but nationalities or even nations?

Vision of Pakistan

Syed Hasan Riaz, who was editor of the Muslim League newspaper *Manshoor*, has described an interview he had with Jinnah in 1938. He recalls:

I asked the Quaid-i-Azam: 'What is the Muslim League struggling for now? To get some more "safeguards" for the Muslims?' He cast a look of surprise at me and said, 'What do you mean? I didn't get you.' I said 'Under the Government of India Act of 1935, we got safeguards: and safeguards we obtained even before; but the Muslims and their interests could not be protected by these safeguards before, nor are they protected now. So, I think that if we are only struggling for safeguards, it is an effort wasted.'

Quaid-i-Azam said: 'Then what do you want?' I said 'the power to protect our rights and interests...' 'Safeguards are power', said the Quaid-i-Azam emphatically. I then said 'But the use of this power and its implementation is up to the governors and the Viceroy, and they have not used it.'

Quaid-i-Azam became interested, and asked, 'What then, do you think is the option?' 'None other than that the Muslim majority areas are self-governing and independent completely,' I answered promptly. Quaid-i-Azam, in a tone of worry, said: 'But how will the Muslims be protected in minority provinces?' I said: 'Through friendly treaties and balance of power between the government of Hindu majority areas and Muslim majority areas.'

'Have you read the Sindh Muslim Conference resolution?' 'Yes Sir,' I said and added, 'But neither the Sindh Muslim Conference nor any of its announcements can fix the goal for the Musalmans. This is for the All India Muslim League. It should fix some goal, keeping in view the present situation, or you, as the President of the Muslim League can say something for the guidance of the nation.'

'I was there, at the Sindh Muslim Conference', said Quaid-i-Azam, a smile playing on his lips.

'Yes, you were there. You were there because of some legal case. The Conference happened to take place at this time, and you also participated. And it is also possible that the Resolution was passed merely to find the reaction of the Hindus.' No sooner had I said this then Quaid-i-Azam bent at an angle and with a severe look said: 'We do not pass resolutions just for show.' I then said 'Then please tell me whether that Resolution was presented and passed with your approval.'

Quaid-i-Azam tried to put me off. 'Tell me, did you hear the Presidential address of Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan at Meerut?' 'Yes I did,' I admitted, and said, 'the Sindh Conference was the Conference of a province, and the Meerut Conference, that of a (administration) Division. The Resolution and the speeches there cannot have any value in all-India affairs. As President of the All India Muslim League, you tell me what is your opinion. That will be enough for me to go ahead, (in taking the right line for the *Manshoor*).'

Quaid-i-Azam rose. He stretched out his hand towards me. I gave my hand in his. Both the hands joined, and Quaid-i-Azam said, 'Come, let us pledge today that as long as we live, we will struggle for this goal.'

Quaid-i-Azam then sat down and spoke for a long time, with great emotion and enthusiasm. 'It is ten years since I decided to do this. The Hindus have made it impossible to live together.'¹

¹Syed Hasan Riaz, *Pakistan Naguzeer Tha*, Karachi University, Karachi, 1967, pp. 241-3.

That was in late 1938, i.e., ten years after the Calcutta fiasco.

According to Evelyn Wrench, Jinnah told him that he first got his vision of Pakistan in 1930.¹ The Aga Khan says that the All Parties Muslim Conference 'marked the return...long delayed and for the moment private and with no public avowal of his change of mind...of Mr M. A. Jinnah to agreement with his fellow-Muslims'.² There can be no doubt that Jinnah had learnt a great and bitter lesson at Calcutta. He had to learn and, what was more difficult, to unlearn still more, but Calcutta was, as he told a friend, 'the parting of the ways'.³

He must have seen then that the Hindu leaders had, by their short-sighted policy at Calcutta, dug the grave of a united India. His last speech before the convention provided some clues to the direction in which his mind had already started working. 'No constitution', he told the convention, '...will ever receive the support of the minorities unless they can feel that they, *as an entity*, are secured under the proposed constitution...'⁴ The key words are 'as an entity', something about which Jinnah had much more to say at Lahore in 1940. Even at Calcutta, he had pleaded 'not (to) create more bad blood' and to '*part as friends*'. But he still felt that 'nothing will make me more happy than to see the Hindu-Muslim *Union*'.⁵

Jinnah was a nationalist of the highest order, but he was not a doctrinaire. He had always been a realist, and Calcutta drove home the reality of Indian 'nationalism'. After Calcutta Jinnah had foreseen the partition of India, but it seems that he still thought that a compromise could be found in greater powers for the provinces. If the provinces became all-powerful, all the three issues he had raised at the Convention, viz. residuary powers, reservation of seats and representation at the Centre, would at once be solved. The Sindh Conference of 1938 which is referred to in Hasan Riaz's interview had passed a resolution demanding that 'India be divided into two Federations, viz. the Federation of Muslim States and the Federation of non-Muslim States'.⁶ The

¹Evelyn Wrench, op. cit., p. 133

²The Aga Khan, op. cit., p. 210

³Hector Bolitho, *Jinnah: Creator of Pakistan*, Oxford University Press, Karachi 1964, p. 95.

⁴Sherwani, op. cit., pp. 419-22. (Emphasis added.)

⁵Ibid. (Emphasis added.)

⁶Ibid., p. 592.

two Federations, or perhaps three or four if the princely states were included, could still work in harmony, with friendly treaties. Perhaps some link would be inevitable if there were a number of Federations—a link acceptable to all. Did he have this in mind when he talked of parting as friends, and the Hindu-Muslim *Union*?

The Aga Khan had already advocated independence for the provinces and said that the position of each province must be akin to that of Bavaria in the former German Confederation—‘rather than to that of an American State or a Swiss Canton.’¹ Perhaps completely autonomous and independent provinces, with some common acceptable link, would be the answer.

Jinnah kept these thoughts to himself. For the moment he was concerned with the divisions in his own community. The Muslims had no doubt put up a show of unity at Delhi, but the All-Parties Muslim Conference had no organization, and its members had dispersed after the meeting. There could be nothing in common, politically, between such diverse elements as Mohammad Ali and the Aga Khan, other than opposition to the Nehru Report. The Muslim League itself was divided. The Shafi League was still alive and kicking, and was particularly strong in the Punjab. In the Jinnah League, some elements sympathized with the policy of the Muslim Conference, others still adhered to the Delhi Proposals, while another section actively propagated acceptance of the Nehru Report. This section was very soon to set up an organization of its own, the ‘Nationalist Muslims’.

The Fourteen Points

Muslim leaders, though conscious of the damage that this disunity was causing their national interest, did not know what to do. However, when Jinnah went to New Delhi to attend the budget session of the Central Assembly, several of them met him. After discussions with him, they realized that the Muslim case was suffering because, while the Hindus had in the Nehru Report an important and well-drafted document on their political objectives, the Muslims had none. In the Assembly, Jinnah had debunked

¹*The Times*, London, 12 & 13 October 1928.

the Nehru Report as Hindu counter-proposals to the Muslim Delhi Proposals and said that the attempt to draft an agreed constitution had become a dead issue. This clarified the Muslim stand, but the Muslim leaders felt the need of having a Muslim counter-document, and Jinnah undertook to prepare a formula which would include the demands of all sections of the community. Consequently Jinnah formulated his famous Fourteen Points, bringing together all the major Muslim demands, including weightage, separate electorates, the powers of the provinces, etc. 'Mr Jinnah's Fourteen Points' were, however, as he explained, 'not my personal ideas'. He had, after consulting various schools of thought, put together 'the majority's opinions'. He nevertheless succeeded, here too, in making a provision for the abandonment of separate electorates.

There was no response to the Fourteen Points from the Hindu side, except denunciation of Jinnah as having gone over completely to the reactionaries and communists.

The Round Table Conference

In May, there was a dramatic development in Britain, where Labour emerged as the largest party from the general elections; and on 5 June 1929, Ramsay MacDonald formed his second Labour Government. MacDonald was committed to the grant of self-government to India. He had, at the previous Labour Party Conference, visualized India as a new Dominion 'within a matter of months rather than years'. India expected much from him.

Almost immediately, Jinnah travelled from Bombay to Simla and saw the Viceroy, Lord Irwin. He urged the Viceroy, who was due to leave for England shortly on leave, to have the British Government make a declaration reiterating that India was to be granted Dominion Status, and to call a round-table conference of British and Indian leaders. He followed it up with a letter on 19 June to MacDonald personally. In this letter, Jinnah analysed the Indian situation at length, pointed out that 'India had lost faith in the word of Great Britain', and suggested that the only practical way to break the deadlock was to take these two steps. There was nothing in that long letter about the Muslim demands. It was

simply a letter from an Indian nationalist leader and could as well have been written by any Hindu leader, like Sapru or Sastri.

Irwin, when in London, discussed Jinnah's suggestions with the new India Secretary, and the two agreed that it was the best course of action to take. The only flaw, from the British point of view, was that this would destroy whatever little prestige was still enjoyed by the Simon Commission, now finalizing its report. The difficulty was solved by making it appear that the suggestion for a Conference had emanated from the Commission itself.

Irwin made the announcement on return to India in October. It thrilled the Indians. The general reaction was friendly and enthusiastic, but the Congress had some misgivings and put forward certain conditions. Thereupon Jinnah personally went to Sabramati to persuade Gandhi not to boycott the Round Table Conference. On 30 November, he had the Speaker of the Central Assembly, Vithalbhai Patel, saw the Mahatama, and a Gandhi-Irwin meeting to discuss their differences was soon arranged.

Jinnah and Patel, along with Sapru, were present when Irwin received Gandhi and Motilal three weeks later. These two demanded that, as a pre-condition for their participation, a clear declaration be made that the Conference would discuss not the issue of Dominion Status but a constitution of the Dominion. The Viceroy found himself unable to give such a categorical assurance. Jinnah and Sapru argued that it was unnecessary: the matter could and should be raised and pressed at the Conference itself, and insisting on it in advance would only jeopardize the chances of the Conference, and was against India's interests. But nothing would convince the Congress leader—Gandhi and the Nehrus had made up their minds to start a mass movement.

Jinnah watched helplessly all his great efforts go to waste and success turn into failure. India was missing, because of the intransigence of the Congress leaders, a great opportunity to achieve its goal peacefully. The Congress boycott of the Conference, followed by a civil disobedience movement four months later, embarrassed the Labour Party and gave a handle to the reactionaries in the Conservative and Liberal Parties who were not reconciled to the policy of MacDonald and Irwin. MacDonald's position was weakened by the Congress attitude, and later, when, as the head of the National Government, he himself was at the mercy of others, he could hardly push through

Parliament the kind of bill he would have liked and could have got passed earlier. The British reactionaries then managed to hold back what they would have given, albeit reluctantly, in 1930.

If the Congress had adopted a policy of co-operation and participated at Irwin's invitation, says Kanji Dwarkadas, 'the First Round Table Conference would have been a great success and India would have had responsible self-government with Dominion Status through a new Government of India Act passed by the British Parliament by 1932.'¹

The First Round Table Conference opened on 12 November 1930, without the Congress. Among its fifty-seven delegates from British India, however, were such Hindu stalwarts as Moonje, Jayakar, Sapru, Srinivas Sastri and Chimanlal Setalvad. The Muslim contingent included Jinnah, Mohammad Ali, the Aga Khan, Shafi and Zafarullah Khan. The Aga Khan was chosen as the leader of the Muslim delegation.

'Someone, no one knew exactly who it was, had started the idea of an All-India Federation'² at the Conference, and the idea caught on. Jinnah was strongly opposed to it. The incongruity of lumping together democratic provinces and autocratic princely states was obvious enough, but there was also the danger that the princes, the overwhelming majority³ of whom were Hindu, would become a factor to further adversely affect the Muslim position at the Centre. Speaking in the Federal Structure Sub-Committee on 1 December he pointed out that it was not clear 'as to what kind of Federation there will be in British India,' and that 'one view is that the provinces should be made sovereign States'. He was speaking about the position adopted by the princely states, which claimed, in the words of the Maharaja of Bikaner, to be 'already sovereign and autonomous',⁴ while in the case of the provinces, sovereignty lay in Whitehall. The common base of a federation was thus missing. 'If they (the provinces) are made sovereign,' Jinnah argued, 'they come to the Federation in the same way as the Indian States. Then there will be one Federation, and not a

¹Dwarkadas, *op. cit.*, p. 379.

²Viscount Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years*, Collins, London, 1954, p. 47.

³Out of a total of 118 ruling Indian Princes entitled to salutes of between nine and twenty-one guns, only twenty were Muslim. Terence Creagh Coen, *The Indian Political Service*, Chatto & Windus, London, 1971, pp. 262-5.

⁴*Proceedings of the Indian Round Table Conference, First Session, 1931*, p. 172.

Federation within a Federation or two Federations.¹¹ On 5 December he again said that 'in order to consider the federation of all India, we must start with some basis, and this basis can only be that for the purpose of federation we also treat them (the provinces) as sovereign States, and see just how much they will surrender.'¹² But in subsequent speeches, he did not press for the sovereignty of the provinces; he contented himself with pointing out the need for having a proper foundation for setting up a federation. He even '...welcome(d) this idea of All-India Federation, and nobody will be more glad than I shall be if it materializes,' but they had not come to any decisions; all that had happened was that 'We have touched certain points, we have explored each others' minds, and we know that there are many potentialities of this All-India Federation developing into a reality.'¹³ He had 'serious doubts', but if the idea did not materialize the British should then 'go ahead with a Federation of British India, of the provinces',¹⁴ subject, of course to safeguards for the minorities.

Why did Jinnah not pursue the idea of the sovereignty of the provinces? We know that he had by this time had the vision of Pakistan, and if this right of the provinces was conceded, it would have become the stepping stone to the formation of a federation of Muslim provinces (and another of the Hindu provinces). We also know from Jinnah's political life that he was a master tactician, and his sense of timing was superb. And this was the golden opportunity. The Princes wanted a federation. The Hindus wanted a federation. The British wanted a federation. As for the Muslims, they had by now crystallized their demand into self-governing provinces. The Aga Khan had been pleading for independent provinces on the pre-war German model. The Muslim Conference had laid stress on 'complete autonomy' of 'the constituent States', who alone would decide what powers to entrust to the federation, and was soon (in April 1931) to specifically ask that 'all transfer of power shall be from Parliament to the provinces.'¹⁵ If Jinnah had persisted in the demand for the

¹¹Ibid., p. 17.

¹²In the Federal Structure Sub-Committee, 5 December 1930.

¹³Ibid., 7 January 1931.

¹⁴Ibid., 13 January 1931.

¹⁵*The Indian Annual Register, 1931, Calcutta, Vol. I, pp. 287-8.*

sovereignty of the provinces, a major step towards Pakistan would then have been taken. His argument that a federation between the princely states and British provinces was not possible unless both sides were treated equally as sovereign units was irrefutable. No constitutional lawyer had a valid answer to it. Yet Jinnah did not press it.

The reason can be found in the account given by the Aga Khan in his memoirs. The Muslim delegation decided to accept 'the principle of a federated and not a united India', with joint electorates, provided the Hindus accepted Jinnah's Fourteen Points. If such an agreement was reached, all the delegates, Muslim and Hindu, could, along with the Princes, go to the British as a united team and demand transfer of power.

Nothing could have pleased Jinnah more. Despite the shabby treatment he had received at Calcutta, he would not desist from making one more effort for a settlement. If the initiative appeared to come from the Aga Khan, so much the better, for he was then leader of the Muslim delegation and could not be taunted with representing nobody.

Negotiations then started between the Hindu and Muslim delegates, in which Jinnah took a prominent part, but no agreement could be reached. The accounts given by two of the participants, the Aga Khan and Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, substantially agree in this respect. 'After we reached London well in advance of the date fixed for the Round Table Conference,' says Setalvad, 'it was arranged that some representatives of Hindus and of Muslims should meet to consider the question of a communal settlement. Sapru, Sastri, myself, Jayakar, Moonje and Ambedkar, were deputed for this meeting and the Aga Khan, Jinnah and one other gentleman represented the Muslims.'

Setalvad further says: 'The Muslim demands were based on Jinnah's Fourteen Points, and the Aga Khan gave the assurance that: "...if you satisfy our demands on all other matters we would agree to joint electorates with reservation of seats for Muslims." Sapru, Sastri and myself would have agreed immediately to these demands and secured joint electorates. We were, however, seriously disappointed in the attitude of Jayakar and Moonje.'¹

¹Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, *Recollections and Reflections*, Padma Publications, Bombay, 1946 (Pref.) pp. 357-8.

According to the accounts of both Setalvad and the Aga Khan, the latter had even offered that, in case of a settlement, the Muslims would place themselves under the command of a chosen Hindu leader and carry out his orders. But the Hindu leaders hedged and hesitated, and the discussions dragged on and on. 'In the meantime, reactionary elements among the Muslim delegates in London as well as reactionary Muslims in India, getting the scent of what was happening at our meeting got busy and pressure was brought to bear upon the Muslim representatives at our small Conference.'¹ The Aga Khan found that the matter was no longer in his hands and he could not bind the Muslims to any agreement.

Later, various formulae were proposed to replace joint electorates. Mohammad Ali proposed from his death bed that no candidate should be declared elected unless he obtained, of the votes cast, (a) at least forty per cent of his community, and (b) five per cent of the other. Shafi submitted this, on behalf of the Muslims, to the Minorities Sub-Committee on 14 January. He also offered to accept fifty per cent of seats in the legislatures of the Muslim-majority provinces of the Punjab and Bengal. But the Hindu leaders accepted neither.

Shafi and the Aga Khan deserve credit for their conciliatory efforts, but the main drive for a settlement with the Hindus came from Jinnah. He was the only one who had always pleaded for the acceptance of joint electorates, while the rest had blind faith in separate electorates. His success in converting the Aga Khan, of all people, to this view was nothing short of a *coup*. The Aga Khan not only sincerely believed that separate electorates were absolutely essential for the Muslims, he was very proud of the fact that he was the leader of the delegation to Lord Minto which had demanded and obtained them. To persuade him to abandon it was a great feat. But the Hindu leaders once again failed to appreciate it. 'A great opportunity was lost. If Sapru, Sastri and myself could have helped it, we would have at once conceded the demands of the Aga Khan and made him and other Muslim representatives sign for joint electorates. If this had happened, the subsequent political history of India would have taken a different turn.'²

¹Setalvad, *op. cit.*, p. 359.

²*Ibid.*

Jinnah had always considered the Hindu-Muslim settlement as the '*sine qua non* before any constitution can be completed'—a constitution that provided a 'complete sense of security' to the Muslim minority. He continued to express this belief at the Round Table Conference as well. In his speech at the plenary session of the First Conference, he declared that on the question of India there were four parties: 'There are the British party, the Indian Princes, the Hindus and the Muslims.'¹

This statement, historians have noted, assumed great importance later on.

But another significant statement has generally escaped attention. This was on the question of the separation of Burma from India, which also came up for consideration before the First Conference. Speaking on this question, Jinnah, 'as representing British India', said that 'we have no objection to Burma being separated provided the people of Burma desire it',² and it was 'not just a decision of the British government.'

If Burma could be separated from India and set up as a separate country because of the wishes of its people, why could not the Muslim-majority provinces of India be separated similarly and formed into a sovereign and independent State?

But Jinnah did not give expression to any such thoughts, and went on trying for some kind of inter-communal settlement, fair and practical. His attitude to the idea of a federation was determined by that single consideration. Records the Aga Khan: 'I am happy to think that when within the Muslim delegation we had made our decision in favour of federation, Mr Jinnah who had been its doughtiest opponent, was an inflexibly loyal and irreproachably helpful colleague throughout all the subsequent discussions and negotiations.'³

This was entirely in keeping with Jinnah's character and approach to politics. He felt bound by a party decision. Moreover, and more importantly, although he felt convinced that the Hindu leadership would not agree to any fair settlement, and the partition of India could not be avoided, he would not let pass any opportunity for maintaining some form of unity. If it could

¹*Proceedings*, op. cit., p. 137.

²*Proceedings*, op. cit., p. 349.

³The Aga Khan, op. cit., p. 217.

come through some kind of a federal structure, just as well, and if that could be set up through an agreement between the two communities, all the better.

The Lone Nationalist

Jinnah tried very hard for that agreement. Putting all the bitterness caused by the All Parties Convention behind him, he had striven to forge a united Indian front against the British in London. At the conference itself his speeches reflected the feelings of a true nationalist. During the general discussion at the plenary session he said that, 'India now expected translation and fulfillment of these (British) declarations into action,'¹ and later that, 'there is not one section in India that has not emphatically declared that India must have a full measure of self-government.'² 'India wants to be the mistress in her own house,'³ he declared, and followed up this theme in subsequent meetings. He opposed the principle of nominated members in the Councils. He attacked the preferential treatment in favour of British business in India. He demanded Indianization of the army. He warned against using difficulties on federation as an excuse for delaying action. He became the voice of nationalist India, putting in a good word even for the Congress. 'I have ceased to see eye to eye with the Congress since 1919, but before that I was a very active member of that great body,' he told the conference.⁴ 'Believe me, today, the strongest supporters of the Indian National Congress are not reckless men or irresponsible men, but let me tell you, and I say this without fear of contradiction, that you have got among them the stable, solid element and the commercial classes.'⁵ The Congress Party in the Central Assembly consisted of 'men who are very capable men and who rendered the greatest assistance to the Legislature.'

But such gestures received no appreciation from the Hindus and were disfavoured by the Muslims. He remained a lone figure

¹*Proceedings*, op. cit., p. 17.

²*Ibid.*, p. 137.

³*Ibid.*, p. 138.

⁴At the Federal Structure Sub-Committee, 7 January 1931.

⁵*Ibid.*

at the conference. He was all alone in a gathering that was broadly divided into two groups viz., the nationalists and the toadies. The nationalists were Hindu communalists, while the Muslim communalists fawned upon the British. Jinnah, although he remained faithful to the Muslim delegation, could hardly ever feel at home in the Anglo-Mohammedan School.¹ They, on their part, were suspicious of Jinnah's efforts to enlist Hindu cooperation, and were afraid that his independent outlook might bring upon them the anger of the British.

These fears were not unjustified, for Jinnah's speeches and activities caused immense displeasure to the British. Here was a dangerous nationalist who, if successful, would bring an end to the Empire. Kanji Dwarkadas says:

Jinnah who throughout the conference took a bold nationalist stand against the reactionaries of both sides, further offended the Conservatives by strongly attacking commercial safeguards in India for the British, sponsored by the Conservatives.

Pressure was brought on Jinnah by the Conservative Party through Aga Khan but Jinnah did not budge and stood strongly for the Indian cause. Ramsay MacDonald sent for Jinnah and told him that in the new order of things that would come in India, the British Prime Minister would have to look for prominent Indians to take up the Governorships of provinces, obviously implying that Jinnah would have an excellent chance if he proved to be a good boy. Jinnah asked MacDonald if this was an attempt to bribe him to get his support on the British Government's compromise suggestions, particularly commercial safeguards.

The Aga Khan also tried to bring pressure on Jinnah, but Jinnah remained firm. At a midnight meeting Aga Khan put it to Jinnah that if he (Jinnah) would persist in his opposition to the commercial safeguards and would continue to come to settlement with Sapru, Sastri and Setalvad on the Hindu-Muslim question, the Muslims of India would lose the support of the British Conservative Party for the special privileges for Muslims of India.²

¹The Muslim delegation consisted of sixteen members, fifteen men and one woman. Of the fourteen other men, one (Mohammad Ali) died during the Conference. Of the remaining thirteen, ten were, or a little later became, knights; one was a 'Khan Bahadur', and another a 'Raja'. The only woman member, Begum Shah Nawaz, was her father's (Shafi's) daughter. She continued with her loyalist policies, and was expelled from the Muslim League in 1941 for joining, in defiance of the League, the War Council set up by the Government.

²Dwarkadas, *op. cit.*, p. 385.

The First Round Table Conference ended on 19 January 1931. All that emerged out of it was a kind of broad agreement on two things, viz. India should be a federation, and there should be safeguards for the minorities; but both meant different things to different people. The Hindu-Muslim differences were the main stumbling block, and it was felt that had the Congress participated, a solution might have been found. So hopes rose when the Congress decided to attend the Second Conference in September.

The Second Conference

The Congress had, after rejecting Irwin's offer, changed its creed to *Purna Sawaraj*, or Complete Independence, in December 1929. The Nehru Report was considered lapsed and was thrown into the dustbin of history. It was also decided to start a mass civil disobedience movement to achieve its goal.

The movement started three months later with Gandhi's famous march to Dandi to make salt in defiance of the government monopoly. It attracted world-wide attention. The Wall Street crash had occurred a few months earlier, and the general depression was increasingly enveloping the rest of the world. The daily newspapers were dull. Hitler had not yet captured power in Germany, nor had the trials of Communist leaders for treason started in Russia. Italy had not yet attacked Abyssinia and the Japanese attack on China was still to come. The news was not only without cheer, it was also without sensation. Every newspaper editor was hard put to make his paper interesting. Gandhi's *satyagraha* came to him as a god-sent. During the First World War, when there was a stalemate on the Western Front, it was the Press which had made a hero out of Colonel Lawrence, wrapping around him a thrilling tale of romance and adventure out of the pages of the Arabian nights. The Gandhi story provided even greater potential. It had all the elements of drama. Any national struggle for freedom can be presented with fascinating description, but here was a unique struggle—through non-violence. Long reports were carried about the police lathi charges on men and women, who received them cheerfully and without protest, and fell down on the ground with their injuries, often in

a state of unconsciousness, and their place taken over by other *satyagrahis*, ready to receive the same treatment. What made it more intriguing was that the thousands of these people who were offering themselves for this punishment believed that they would get their freedom by manufacturing salt. And the leader of the strange movement in the mysterious East was a 'naked fakir' who lived in poverty in an ashram, frequently went on fasts of long duration, and observed a weekly day of silence.

All this made good copy for the newspapers. Consequently Gandhi had an extremely good Press, all round the world, much better than in 1920-1. He was hailed by the anti-imperialists on the one hand, and the pacifists on the other. His stature rose immensely and he became a leading world figure.

This had a rather unhealthy effect on the Congress and on Gandhi personally, and Gandhi began to claim that the Congress was the only party in India and he was its sole leader.

His movement having failed to achieve anything specific, Gandhi made peace with Irwin and, waving aside his previous objections, agreed to participate in the Round Table Conference. On 6 March 1931, a day after the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, he told a press conference that he regarded the rights of the minorities as a 'sacred trust' and would accept safeguards in this respect. He also said that he desired to solve the Hindu-Muslim question before going to the Conference, and it would not be 'worth our while going to the Conference without solving the question.'¹

Many then thought that Gandhi might make a grand effort to solve the communal issue and present the British with a united front. But Gandhi would not be Gandhi if he stuck to his word; he soon began to add 'ifs' and 'buts' to his previous statement. As Subhas Chandra Bose pointed out: 'In private and in public he began to say that his going to the Round Table Conference depended on his ability to solve the Hindu-Moslem question beforehand. Along with this statement he also began to say that if the Moslems made a united demand on the question of representation, electorate, etc. in the new constitution, he would accept the demand...Soon after this, the Mahatama issued a public statement saying that he could not accept the demand

¹Sitaramayya, *op. cit.*, pp. 755-63.

made by *communalist* Moslem leaders, since Nationalist Moslems were opposed to them.¹

Jinnah tried to clarify the issues when speaking at the UP Muslim Conference at Allahabad on 8 August 1931, three weeks before Gandhi's departure for London. Jinnah said that: 'I honestly believe that the Hindus should concede to the Muslims a majority in the Punjab and Bengal, and if that is conceded, I think a settlement can be arrived at in a short time.' He said that he would personally prefer a settlement on the basis of joint electorates, but the Muslims were holding on to separate electorates so tenaciously that, 'I would rather have a settlement even on the footing of separate electorates, hoping and trusting that when we work our new constitution and when both Hindus and Muslims get rid of distrust, suspicions and fears and when they get their freedom, we would rise to the occasion and probably separate electorates will go sooner than most of us think.'²

Again next month, on the eve of the Second Round Table Conference, he said in Bombay: '*I am an Indian first and a Muslim afterwards. But at the same time I agree that no Indian can ever serve his country if he neglects the interests of the Muslims.* It was foolish to think that the minorities could be held under bondage and perpetual subjugation.'³ 'I have said this openly. I have no eye on any party. I have no mind for popularity. I can tell you honestly that the Hindus are foolish, utterly foolish in the attitude they have adopted today.' He referred to the Hindu tactics over the question of statutory Muslim majorities in the Punjab and Bengal, and said that: 'I like straight play. Tell me that I do not want to give you a majority in the Punjab and Bengal. Hindus do not say that. They say, you can have a majority with joint electorates. Hindus know well that Muslims have got only forty per cent of voters in these provinces.' Unless certain reasonable safeguards and brakes were provided for the purpose of preventing any undue mischief, Jinnah concluded, the constitution would never work.⁴

¹Subhas Chandra Bose, *Indian struggle 1920-1942*, Asia Publishing House, New York, 1964, pp. 214-15. (Emphasis added.)

²Ram Gopal, *op. cit.*, p. 234.

³Saiyid, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 156-7.

But Gandhi was not interested in settling issues, only in playing politics. He began to use the 'Nationalist Muslims' card against the Muslims, in the same way as the British used their yes-men against Nationalist India as a whole. These tactics were used by Gandhi and the Congress right up to the time of freedom and caused great bitterness, but they were started in 1931. The result was that Gandhi left India without any settlement. He went to London as the sole representative of the Congress, with the authority of the entire Congress behind him, and with the unique influence he had on the other Hindu delegates he could, if he had wanted, still have brought about a settlement in London itself. But he started on the wrong foot.

Gandhi at the Conference

Gandhi had reached England on 12 September 1931. Nine days later, England went off the Gold Standard. The Government of India thereupon delinked the Rupee from the Pound. The very next day the Secretary of State for India, Sir Samuel Hoare, asked New Delhi to re-establish the Pound-Rupee link, whereupon the British Viceroy and all the Members of his Executive Council, including Britishers, offered to resign *en bloc*. Hoare then got hold of Birla, the close friend and financier of Gandhi, who was in London for the Conference. The latter had a press interview arranged, in which Gandhi advised that nothing should be done in a hurry, and that the *status quo* in respect of Pound and Rupee be maintained. Hoare then cabled the Viceroy about the view of the premier nationalist Indian leader and persuaded him to withdraw the resignations and relink the Rupee with the Pound.¹

Starting with such an anti-national step, Gandhi claimed to represent all India, including the Muslim population. The Muslim delegation, led by the Aga Khan, tried to negotiate a deal with him but without success. Sir Zafarullah Khan depicts the scene:

All the members of the Muslim delegation were waiting on time anxiously for Gandhiji. The door opened and Gandhiji entered. All present stood up in his honour. On behalf of all of them His Highness Sir Aga Khan welcomed the

¹Dwarkadas, *op. cit.*, pp. 398-9.

honoured guest and offered a comfortable seat, but Gandhiji shook his head in refusal, smiled and said that he preferred to sit on the floor. In his right hand was a beautiful box of teak, which he placed before him on the floor and sat down on the carpet. Some of those present also seated themselves on the carpet as a show of respect to the honoured guest; but there was not enough room for all to sit on the floor, so the others sat down on chairs and sofas. With deliberate slow motion, Gandhiji opened his box. I was very anxious to see what comes out of the box. On opening the box out came a beautiful small brass spinning wheel. Gandhiji carefully put it on the floor, and quietly started to spin it. After he had spun a string or two, he looked up and smilingly indicated that he was ready for the talks.¹

The conversation was opened by the Aga Khan, 'by saying to Mahatmaji that, were he now to show himself as a real father to India's Muslims, they would respond by helping him, to the utmost of their ability, in his struggle for India's independence. 'Mahatmaji turned to face me. "I cannot in truth say," he observed, "that I have any feelings of paternal love for Muslims. But if you put the matter on grounds of political necessity, I am ready to discuss it in a co-operative spirit. I cannot indulge in any form of sentiment." This was a cold douche at the outset; and the chilly effect of it pervaded the rest of our conversation.'²

Shafi's daughter, Begum Jahan Ara Shahnawaz, who was herself one of the delegates to the Second Round Table Conference records:

Negotiations continued from day to day and went on for over two months; protracted talks with Mr Gandhi, as he sat spinning, with Father and Jinnah and sometimes the Agha Khan discussing the points raised by him, and the hours would drag on. At last the negotiations were concluded, Muslim demands were brought down to the minimum, and on the last day even Mr Gandhi agreed that it was not possible for him to ask the Muslims for any further reduction, and that the safeguards asked for by them, and as settled with him, were just and reasonable. After this last talk, we all returned very happy at the prospect of a settlement in sight. Even people all round came to know that there was a chance of success, and a wave of happiness spread over Conference circles and amongst the responsible Indians in London. We of the Muslim delegation waited anxiously for four days, little thinking that, after our having come down to the very minimum and having satisfied Mr Gandhi, there could be any question of breakdown in the negotiations. A message was received after four days that Mr Gandhi would be meeting the

¹Zafarullah Khan, *op. cit.*, p. 286.

²The Aga Khan, *op. cit.*, p. 227.

delegation in the evening. We were so sure of success that Father ordered sweets and drinks and asked two or three of his close friends and some reporters to come to the flat for celebrations, and we left for the meeting. With what joy and happiness we went to the Agha Khan's rooms on that memorable evening! Mr Gandhi arrived, and as usual sat down with the Agha Khan on one side and Father and Jinnah on the other. Gandhi said: "Gentlemen, I am sorry to report that I have failed in my efforts for a settlement. The Sikhs and the Mahasabhites are not prepared to accept the terms decided upon by us." There was a hush in the room; the unexpected had happened and most of us felt like shedding bitter tears. Nearly a whole year's work for settlement had been wasted and even the Congress representative, and no less a person than Mr Gandhi himself, had failed to bring about a settlement. There did not seem to be any hope left for the country. Father was very cut up, for he had pinned all his hopes on the success of these efforts. Whenever he had spoken in England during the First Round Table Conference, he had told the audiences that had the Congress representatives been there, a settlement would have been arrived at between the different sections. Father suddenly folded his hands before Mr Gandhi and said: "Gandhiji, you are the sole representative of the Congress here. If the Mahasabhites and the Sikhs are not prepared to accept the terms settled between us, which you yourself said were just and reasonable, let us, the Muslims and the Congress, come to a settlement tonight on those very terms. Believe me, there would be a wave of happiness all over India, and the Agha Khan, Jinnah and myself will take our marching orders from you from tomorrow. We Muslims do not fold our hands before anyone except before Allah, but I know that the Almighty will understand and forgive me, because I am doing it in order to avoid bloodshed and terrible suffering in India." Mr Gandhi replied: "Shafi, I know my own limitations and I cannot do it." The meeting broke up, and when we reached our flat, Father broke down completely and fainted.¹

Shafi and his colleagues may have had high hopes of reaching an agreement, but with the benefit of hindsight, one can say that it was obvious from the beginning that Gandhi was not at all anxious for any settlement. In his speeches at the Conference, he questioned the credentials of the delegates, 'almost all' of whom were 'not elected representatives' of the people, but 'nominated by the Government.'² He claimed that the Congress represented eighty-five per cent or ninety-five per cent of the population not merely of British India but the whole of India.³

¹Jahan Ara Shah Nawaz, *Father And Daughter*, Nigarishat, Lahore, 1971, pp. 129-31.

²*Proceedings of the Indian Round Table Conference (Second Session)*, pp. 530-1.

³*Ibid.*, pp. 534-44.

On the communal question, he changed the position he had held for over a decade and said it would be solved, not immediately but after the attainment of *swaraj*. 'The iceberg of communal differences will melt under the warmth of the sun of freedom,' he said, and proposed that the Minorities Committee be adjourned *sine die*.

This had been Gandhi's favourite method—adjournment *sine die* of all committees dealing with issues, like that of Hindu-Muslim differences, he did not want solved. He had always insisted that the *swaraj* could not be attained without Hindu-Muslim unity. Now he denied the need of a prior settlement.

Jinnah watched all this with distaste. Unlike Shafi, he had come to know Gandhi far too well to expect anything. His talk with an Indian journalist on the eve of the Second Round Table Conference is revealing. 'The Congress will not come to terms with me because my following is small. The Muslims do not accept my views, for they take their orders from the Deputy Commissioner (district authority)', he said. What did he think of the forthcoming conference? 'His answer came pat: "What can you expect from a jamboree of this kind? The British will only make an exhibition of our differences...They (the British) will make a fool of him (Gandhi) and he will make a fool of them."' But couldn't he get together with Gandhi, Sapru and others, and work for a communal settlement, asked the journalist. Suppose he did, replied Jinnah, but there were the Aga Khan, Fazl-i-Husain and their henchmen.¹

Sir Fazl-i-Husain had been the moving spirit behind the All-Parties Muslim Conference, and his belief in separate electorates as well as loyalty to the British was unshakable. He was an Executive Councillor of the Viceroy at that time and was constantly pulling wires, first, in the selection of Muslim delegates, and then in pressing for continuance of separate electorates. When the Hindu leadership repeated the blunder of Calcutta and failed to accept an agreement on the basis of joint electorates at the First Conference, Jinnah's position in the Muslim delegation weakened considerably, and the Anglo-Mohammedan School took control. In the Second Conference, he could play no prominent part in the Hindu-Muslim negotiations, but

¹Durga Das, op. cit., p.155.

watched helplessly as the two sides discussed and discussed fruitlessly.

Exit of a Nationalist

The Third Round Table Conference held its session in November-December 1932. Its task was to prepare the draft of a constitutional scheme, something for which Jinnah was best equipped. But he was not even invited to attend it. Sir Zafarullah Khan, who was then temporarily a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, records in his memoirs:

The Secretary of State for India disagreed about two of the names I had suggested. About (Quaid-i-Azam) Mr Jinnah he wrote that, 'he criticizes everything severely, but does not propose any positive solution. He has now taken up permanent residence in London. He has no more any direct contact with Indian affairs.' About Allama Dr Sir Mohammad Iqbal, he wrote that, 'he came for the Second Round Table Conference, but did not utter a single word during the Conference.' I insisted on the inclusion of both the names, and the Viceroy sent my submissions to the Secretary of State for India. Ultimately he agreed to include Doctor Sahib but my efforts about (Quaid-i-Azam) Mr Jinnah proved unsuccessful.¹

The British were annoyed with Jinnah, and could safely drop him now that he was totally isolated and his exclusion from the Conference would not lead to any protest. They had always felt uncomfortable in dealing with his uncompromising nationalism, the ruthless logic and the clear-cut analysis with which he exposed their imperialist game. He had continued with the same national song at the Conference, even saying that Hindu-Muslim differences should not be used by the British for withholding transfer of responsibility to Indian hands. Although he had again been jilted by the Hindu leadership, he had not adopted the policies of other Muslim delegates. Writing from London, Sir Malcolm Hailey, a former member of the Viceroy's Executive Council and a former provincial governor, who had been attached to the Conference, reported to Irwin about the Muslim delegation: 'Jinnah is of course a good deal mistrusted; he did

¹Zafarullah Khan, *op. cit.*, p. 314.

not at the opening of the Conference say what his party had agreed to, and they are a little sore in consequence. He declined to give the Conference Secretariat a copy of his speech in advance as all the others had done. But then Jinnah of course was always the perfect little boulder and as slippery as the eel which his forefathers purveyed in the Bombay market.¹

Hailey's letter was written only two days after the First Round Table Conference had opened, when the delegates were still paying compliments and exchanging sweet words, but it reflected the general British feelings of hostility towards Jinnah. Hailey himself could not forget how in 1924, when he was the leader of the Treasury benches in the Central Assembly, he had to bear the onslaught of the brilliant parliamentarian that Jinnah was, and he himself had cut a sorry figure in contrast. Before coming to the Conference he had been the Governor of the UP and had been plotting against Jinnah.

Fazl-i-Husain was then, from his position of vantage as a member of the Viceroy's Council, trying to keep Jinnah out of the Conference. The British too did not want him, but they thought it imprudent not to invite so prominent a leader, and the one who was almost the author of the idea. Couldn't something be done to make him less effective?

On 20 May 1930, Husain wrote to Hailey that: 'Frankly I do not like the idea of Jinnah doing all the talking,'² and suggested that Shafaat Ahmad Khan, a professor at Allahabad University and a politician of no standing whatsoever, be also nominated a delegate. Hailey did not rate Shafaat highly, '...but if someone of the type of the Nawab of Chhatari were to go, then I would withdraw my preference for Hidayat Husain and support the claims of Shafaat Ahmad, who, I know, would be useful to Shafi and also form a somewhat effective counteraction to Jinnah.'³

But such methods could hardly check Jinnah, and as the Conference progressed he increasingly became the object of British aversion. His nationalistic approach to all problems, and

¹Hailey to Irwin, 14 November 1930, India Office Library, London, *Hailey Collection*, Mss. EUR E. 220-34.

²Dr Wahid Ahmad, (ed.) *Letters of Fazl-i-Husain*, Research Society of Pakistan, Lahore, 1976, p. 77.

³*Ibid.*, p. 80.

his efforts to forge a united front with Hindu leaders, denying the British the opportunity to exploit the situation to their advantage, were all extremely annoying to them.¹

No wonder Sir Samuel Hoare would not agree to Jinnah's nomination. How strongly he felt about Jinnah is evident from a letter he wrote to the Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, on 5 April 1934. '*Of all the Indians I have met,*' wrote the Secretary of State for India, '*I think I have disliked Jinnah the most.* Throughout the Round Table discussions he invariably behaved like a snake, and no one seemed to trust him. I greatly hope that he is not getting a following among the Moslems.'¹

The British hostility did not bother Jinnah. After all, what else could an Indian nationalist expect from them? What pained him was the attitude of his own countrymen. He was caught between Hindu communalists on the one hand and Muslim communalists on the other. The former, speaking in the name of nationalist India, depended on mass movements to achieve their aims; the latter cringingly prayed for British favours. The Round Table Conference had more than exposed the mentality of the two groups. In Sub-Committee III of the Committee of the Whole Conference, for example, Jinnah was the *only* member who opposed the motion that 'the existing right of the European community in India in regard to criminal trials should be maintained.'² But Shafi, speaking immediately after, said that it was the 'personal opinion' of Jinnah, and that he accepted that right 'on behalf of the rest of Muslim group.'³ On the other extreme there was the Hindu delegate, Pundit Nanak Chand Naz, who almost demanded that the Punjab be excluded from the grant of autonomy because, 'Provincial autonomy frightens me when it is based upon communal majorities in the Legislatures', and who pleaded that in an All-India Federation the Punjab be so constituted that the 'people of one religion may not be subjected to the hardship of living with others of different religions.'⁴

¹ *Templewood Collection*, India Office Mss. EUR. E. 240. Vol. IV, Hoare's letter to Willingdon.

² *Proceedings (First Session)*, op. cit., p. 337.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, (*Third Session*), pp. 114-22.

What could Jinnah do with people of such disposition and character? He had indeed brought the two communities together at Lucknow, and had rid the Muslim League of the reactionary element, but neither was possible now. He was now a solitary figure, without supporters, distrusted and disowned, though secretly admired, by both sides. He could only grieve and agonize at the sad spectacle of his country's politics.

He had been deeply hurt at Calcutta. Then two months later his wife had died, bringing gloom in his private life as well. Shouldn't he just retire from it all and go away? Shuaib Qureshi had. Shuaib had taken to politics while still a student. He had gone to Turkey during the Balkan Wars as a member of a medical mission, and after that had been an active member of the Khilafat Committee and the Congress. He and Jawaharlal had together been Secretaries of the Congress. But he was so embittered by his experience in the Nehru Committee that he had left India to settle in England.¹ Jinnah could have done the same, and spared himself all that anguish. But with Ramsay MacDonald becoming Prime Minister things moved fast, and Jinnah was caught in the Round Table Conference.

The Conference had come like a ray of hope in the encircling gloom. If a united Indian front could be presented, the British would be forced to make major concessions, and with the composition of the Parliament as it then was, a bill on self-government could have been passed. That opportunity was lost by Gandhi's boycott, but Jinnah nevertheless strained every nerve to come to an understanding with the Hindu leaders present. He failed in this, as he had failed in persuading Gandhi to attend the First Conference, and was to subsequently fail in making Gandhi come to terms with the Muslims.

Instead of united action, the Indians had advertised their dissension. This pained Jinnah as no other Indian leader. All his political life he had fought against it, and had striven for a common front against the common enemy, but the Conference had proved the veracity of Mohammad Ali's statement at the plenary session: 'It is the old maxim of "divide and rule". But

¹Qureshi was later persuaded by the Nawab of Bhopal to come to his State, which was outside 'British India', and serve as a minister. He never re-entered politics.

there is a division of labour here. We divide and you rule.’¹ The Indian leaders had made so important an occasion ‘the *dhobi talo* (washerman’s tank) of Indian Communalism.’²

Jinnah found this most degrading. He felt disgraced as a nationalist, but the most humiliating day came when Ramsay MacDonald, tired of communal quarrels, asked the members of the Minority Committee: ‘Will you, each one of you, every member of the Committee, sign a request to me to settle the community question, and pledge yourself to accept my decision?’³ and Indian leaders, including Gandhi,⁴ duly signed that petition and pledged.

Speaking many years later, Jinnah said:

Many efforts had been made since 1924 till the Round Table Conference to settle the Muslim-Hindu question. At that time there was no pride in me and I used to beg from the Congress. I worked so incessantly to bring about a *rapprochement* that a newspaper remarked that Mr Jinnah is never tired of Hindu-Muslim Unity. But I received the shock of my life at the meetings of the Round Table Conference. In the face of danger, the Hindu sentiment, the Hindu mind, the Hindu attitude led me to the conclusion that there was no hope of unity. I was very pessimistic about my country. The position was most unfortunate. The Musalmans were like the No Man’s Land; they were led by either the flunkies of the British Government or the camp followers of the Congress. Whenever attempts were made to organize the Muslims, toadies and flunkies on the one hand, and traitors in the Congress Camp on the other frustrated the efforts. I began to feel that neither could I help India, nor change the Hindu mentality, nor could I make the Musalmans realize their precarious position. I felt so disappointed and depressed that I decided to settle down in London. Not that I did not love India: but I felt utterly helpless.⁵

What else could he do? ‘I displeased the Muslims,’ he said later. ‘I displeased my Hindu friends because of the “famous” Fourteen Points. I displeased the Princes because I was deadly against their underhand activities and I displeased the British Parliament because I felt right from the beginning and I rebelled against it and said that it was all a fraud. Within a few weeks,

¹*Proceedings*, op. cit., p. 95.

²Mohammad Ali’s letter to Ramsay MacDonald, 1 January 1931, Jaffery, op. cit., p. 147.

³Sitaramayya, op. cit., p. 833.

⁴*CWMG*, op. cit., Vol. LXX, p. 318.

⁵Jamiluddin Ahmad, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 41-2.

I did not have a friend left there.¹ He was alone and helpless. He could neither influence those who were shaping India's destiny nor remove them. This was the end of the road for him. He accepted self-exile.

¹*Civil & Military Gazette*, Lahore, 3 March 1936.

CHAPTER 11

OLD NATIONALIST AND NEO-NATIONALISM

Jinnah's self-exile started in London in 1931 when he bought a house in Hampstead and called his daughter and sister to join him there. He began practising law at the Privy Council, where he rose quickly adding handsomely to his financial fortune. It was a comfortable and luxurious life—in a magnificent villa, situated in the middle of eight acres of garden and pasture, and attended by half a dozen live-in servants—but it was a quiet life, away from the hustle and bustle of politics.

While Jinnah was living in England, the Congress Movement of Civil Disobedience was going on, intermittently and in varied forms, in India. Gandhi's march to Dandi had a dramatic effect, and the people had taken to the illegal manufacture and sale of salt all over the country, both as an adventure and as a source of profit. The Movement had been suspended after the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, but re-started on Gandhi's return from the second Round Table Conference. As the salt *satyagraha* could really only be practised in areas close to the sea, new issues were found to fight the Government. The Provincial Congress Committees were authorized to take up 'civil breach of all non-moral laws', and to defy 'all unjust orders'. *Satyagraha* was thus carried on in different provinces on different issues, each with a strong local appeal. In Gujarat and UP the issues were agrarian, while the boycott of foreign cloth and liquor, though more popular in port towns, had a countrywide appeal. The bonfires of foreign cloth were a great *tamasha* with particular attraction for the youth; while the picketing of liquor shops, applauded even by the Muslims who had kept out of the Movement, was joined by women, particularly of the labour and poor classes who had long

suffered from their husbands' habit of throwing away their meagre earnings for the pernicious drink.

The Movement failed in achieving its declared aims, but it did wonders for popularizing the Congress among the masses. The name of the Congress spread to the rural areas, securing the support of the peasants, thanks to 'no-tax campaigns' in several provinces, and for the first time in India women in large numbers took part in an agitation.

The popularity of the Congress rose to a new high. Those who had ridiculed Gandhi and his salt *satyagraha* were overawed and now looked upon him with reverence. Although there were many acts of terrorism during this period, particularly in the Punjab and Bengal, the militants generally thought they had found their leader in Jawaharlal. His insistence on complete independence—breaking every link with Imperial Britain—his tirades against *jagirdars* and *talukdars*, his constant talk of a socialist state, and his aggressive stance against imperialism and capitalism, coupled with his comparative youth and the halo of sacrifice round him and his family—all this made him the darling of the youth. Because of Jawaharlal, they were prepared to tolerate Gandhi; because of Gandhi, the rightists and the conservatives were prepared to tolerate Jawaharlal. And both of them insisted that the Congress was the only party in India. Gandhi had claimed that in England, and Jawaharlal was claiming it now in India.

The Congress had not only absorbed all the shocks of the twenties—Chauri Chaura, the division between the 'pro-changers' and the 'no-changers', the debate on Dominion Status versus complete independence—it had emerged in the thirties as a strong, solid party, with a good organizational structure and mass support. Consequently its claim that it alone could speak on behalf of all Indians became louder and louder, particularly because the Muslims, who could have challenged this claim, were themselves divided and frustrated.

The Muslim League, with the departure of Jinnah, was as good as dead. Back in 1924 Jinnah had revived it, but it was the force of his personality that had kept it going. Then it had split into the Jinnah League and the Shafi League, but Jinnah had brought about a reconciliation between the two wings, who merged into the All-India Muslim League. However, soon after his departure there was a split again—one section holding the annual session

at Howrah under the presidentship of Mian Abdul Aziz, and the other at Delhi under Hafiz Hidayat Ullah.

These divisions were not caused by any differences on principles or policies; they were simply the result of personal ambitions or group rivalries. The League had become an assembly of the landed gentry and political reactionaries, to whom politics was nothing more than a hobby, and who looked upon the British for guidance and patronage. Between 1924 and 1936 all of its presidents, except in 1933, were knighted gentlemen. In 1924 it was Sir Reza Ali; in 1925, Sir Abdur Rahim; in 1926, Sir Abdul Qadir; in 1927, Sir Mohammad Yakub at Calcutta and Sir Muhammad Shafi at Lahore; in 1928, Sir Ali Muhammad Khan of Mahmudabad; in 1930, Sir Mohammad Iqbal; in 1931, Sir Zafarullah Khan; in 1933, Mian Abdul Aziz at Howrah and Khan Bahadur Hafiz Hidayat Hussain at Delhi; and in 1936, Sir Wazir Hasan.¹

There had always been a large number of conservatives and reactionaries in the League, but after Jinnah took charge many left, and the others were kept in check by him. They captured the League again after Jinnah's self-exile, but had no interest in either its objectives or its organization. Its Central Office at Delhi had neither money nor staff, and existed solely because of the ardour of its devoted Assistant Secretary, Syed Shamsul Hasan. In 1932-3, for example, its total income came to Rs. 1,739-8-0 (subscriptions: Rs. 875-12-0, donations: Rs. 863-12-0), and the total expenditure was Rs. 1883-5-3.² Even members of the Council did not bother to pay the annual fee, which had been reduced to Rs. 1 only. 'Regularity in the payment of subscriptions is especially solicited,' entreated the Honorary Assistant Secretary in his report for the year.³ The Council consisted of 310 members, and a meeting required a quorum of ten.⁴ Very often Council meetings

¹Some of these gentlemen had not received their knighthoods at the time they presided, but received them soon after. There were no sessions in 1929, 1932, 1934 and 1935.

²*Annual Report of the All-India Muslim League, 1932-3*, prepared by the Honorary Joint Secretary, S. M. Abdullah, for the Twenty-third Session, Central Office, Muslim League, pp. 10 and 9 respectively.

³Ibid.

⁴*Constitution and Rules of the All-India Muslim League 1932*, Sections 21 and 17 respectively.

could not be held for lack of quorum; nor did the annual sessions evoke any enthusiasm. The start of the 1930 session at Allahabad was delayed for the same reason, although it was presided over by no less a person than the national poet, Iqbal. The next session at Delhi, for which the quorum was reduced to fifty¹ (for the session), was held inside the bungalow of a local building contractor in New Delhi.

The only other party of the Muslims with an all-India claim was the Muslim Conference, but it had not been organized on any level, and by the time the British proposals for constitutional reforms were being embodied in the shape of a bill, it had disappeared totally. There did, however, exist a Nationalist Muslim Party under the direction of Dr Ansari and Abul Kalam Azad, but it was no more than a rubber stamp of the Congress.

A number of Muslim organizations functioned in the provinces, or were run on religious or semi-religious lines. But there was no all-India party to stand up for their political rights. The existing parties spent their time and energy in factional fights, and were not interested in combining for a common cause. Nor was there any all-India leader to inspire confidence and organize them. Mohammad Ali had died in 1931, and Shafi two years later. Jinnah was in self-exile and the Aga Khan had long since returned to his European haunts. The Indian Muslims were without a leader, without an organization, and without any goal or programme. They were like a ship without a rudder or a captain; they were no more than a mob without any sense of direction, dispirited and divided, without any will or hope.

Small wonder then that the Congress thought it could ignore the Muslims as a factor in Indian politics. As early as in August 1929, Motilal Nehru had told Gandhi not to worry about Jinnah and Mohammad Ali as they had been 'totally discredited'.² Four months later, when the question of starting civil disobedience was under consideration, the nationalist Muslims tried to dissuade Gandhi from launching it without first settling the Hindu-Muslim question. But Gandhi did not listen. According to Khaliqzaman, the atmosphere at the Lahore Congress was 'very secretive', and

¹Ibid.

²Uma Kaura, *op. cit.*, p. 51, quoting Motilal's letter to Gandhi, 14 August 1929, *Motilal Nehru Papers*.

'when in private talks the leading Congressmen decided to throw the Nehru Report in the Ravi, even Dr Ansari was not consulted.' Consequently, Dr Ansari, Tasadduq Ahmad Khan Sherwani and Khaliqzaman, 'humbled, disappointed and angry', felt that 'we could not take the responsibility of shouldering the burden of fighting for the independence of India, for the Muslims were bound to consider it to be purely a Hindu fight,' and decided to resign from the membership of the All-India Congress Committee.¹

A few days later a shocked Khaliqzaman read in the papers that Sherwani had been present at a Congress meeting. When they met soon afterwards, Sherwani explained to Khaliqzaman that Motilal had personally gone to Sherwani and appealed to him to attend the meeting, complaining that in his old age he (Motilal) had been deserted by his Muslim friends and he was feeling very lonely. Sherwani admitted he had shown great weakness, but he felt such pity for the old man that he just could not refuse.

As for Ansari and Khaliqzaman, they were also roped in. During the Civil Disobedience, each 'Dictator'—as the current Chief of the Movement was called—nominated his successor on arrest. When Ansari was so nominated, he thought it unchivalrous to refuse, as did Khaliqzaman, when he was similarly nominated.

'I could never have imagined that I would be nominated as Dictator of the Congress after having resigned from the presidency of the Lucknow City Congress and the membership of the All-India Congress Committee,' recalls Khaliqzaman. 'When the news was brought to me early in the morning by Ramachandra Sinha, an ex-MLA, I was astonished. Nevertheless I did not want to let down the Congress...'²

But such chivalrous behaviour created an entirely different kind of impression on Gandhi and the Congress. They had launched their movement despite the strong opposition of the League, the Khilafat Committee and the Nationalist Muslims,³

¹Khaliqzaman, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

²*Ibid.*, p. 107.

³Ansari's letter to Gandhi, 13 February 1930, insisting that the Hindu-Muslim question be given priority, *Ansari Collection*, *op. cit.*

and it had, in many ways been successful. This proved that they could now do without the Muslims, and the ultimate participation of the nationalist Muslims showed that the Muslims, whether they liked it or not, were obliged to follow the Congress. This conviction continued to grow all the while in the 1930s, and was strengthened by the continued state of political lassitude in the Muslim camp.

The Act of 1935

While the Congress and the Muslims were in those contrasting positions, the third part of the Indian triangle, the British, after having successfully suppressed the Congress movement, were complacently proceeding with another instalment of constitutional reforms. After the Round Table Conferences a White Paper was issued, containing proposals for a new constitution. These were considered at length by a Joint Parliamentary Committee and then embodied in a bill which was passed into law in August 1935.

The Government of India Act 1935 was a masterpiece of political and constitutional juggling: it strengthened parliamentary institutions, yet kept ultimate power in the hands of the British. The Act was divided into two parts, one for the Centre and the other for the provinces. At the Centre, a federation with the Princely States was envisaged. There was to be an elected legislature, but with limited powers; the ministers had to be from among the members of the legislatures, but not responsible to it, holding office 'during the pleasure' of the Governor-General, who was the Chief Executive Authority.

The Governor-General had sweeping powers over the government as well as the legislature. He could veto any bill passed, and 'certify' any bill rejected by the legislature. In addition, certain matters like defence, foreign affairs and the excluded areas directly administered, were reserved to him, and his authority was unquestioned. In acting 'in his discretion' or 'in his judgment', or in the interest of 'peace and tranquillity' in India, he had powers that any Russian Czar would have envied.

This part of the constitution was to be introduced after the Princely States had acceded and the federation was established. But as that stage was never reached, it remained in abeyance and

the Centre continued to be governed by the Montagu-Chelmsford constitution.

The other part concerned the provinces, and was brought into operation from 1 April 1937. Here, considerable advances were made: the provinces were treated not as mere subordinate units but as autonomous parts of a federation. Dyarchy was abolished, and the whole field of administration became the responsibility of a Council of Ministers selected from an elected legislature. The provincial Governor was bound by the advice of the Council's cabinet, but had some special responsibilities and could act 'in his individual judgment' and 'in his discretion'. He was to act under the general control of 'the Governor-General in his discretion'.

Communal Award

So far as the Muslim demands were concerned, the 1935 Act was based on the arbitration of Ramsay MacDonald, called the Communal Award. The Muslims had succeeded in retaining separate electorates, one-third representation at the Centre, and weightage in minority provinces. Sindh had been separated from Bombay and set up as a new province, and the NWFP brought at par with other provinces. Although no reforms had been introduced in Balochistan, and in the Punjab and Bengal Muslims were denied majorities according to their population of 57 per cent and 55 per cent respectively, they had obtained 86 seats out of a total of 175 in the legislative assembly of the Punjab, and 119 out of a total of 250 in Bengal.

The Muslims had thus obtained most of their demands, and, although disappointed that reforms had not been introduced in Balochistan, and that the Punjab and Bengal had been denied Muslim majorities, they were, on the whole, quite satisfied with the Communal Award. But the Hindus were angry for this very reason. They had expected Ramsay MacDonald—nicknamed Ramji Mucandlal, for his pro-Hindu leanings, by Mohammad Ali—to do away with separate electorates and turn down other Muslim demands, and were shocked by the Award as announced. It was condemned by the Congress, the Mahasabha, and Hindus in general, on 'national' grounds, of course; and it was now

considered disgraceful that the British should arbitrate in the domestic quarrels of the Indians. A campaign was started against the Communal Award, and to have it replaced by a pact between the two communities. Malaviya, who had impeded the way for a communal settlement at the Second Round Table Conference, and who had taken the lead in sending a letter to MacDonald requesting him to arbitrate, now suddenly felt 'shame and sorrow' at the exhibition of differences amongst Indians, and was in the forefront of organizing unity conferences to find a formula to replace the Award. Several such conferences were held, but the Hindu attempt to make the Muslims drop separate electorates without any compensatory advantage failed, and the Muslims could not be won over by offers which gave much less than what they had already obtained.

Meanwhile, Jinnah continued to live in Hampstead, away from it all—though not entirely. His admirers in India kept on writing, asking him to return. Visitors to England would go to see him, making the same request. 'I don't see what I can do there at present,' he would tell them, as he told Abdul Matin Chaudhry, his faithful follower from Assam in the Central Legislature, '...there is no room for my service in India yet.'

This was also his answer to all similar requests made in India when he was there during this period, for personal or professional reasons. During one such visit, in the winter of 1933-4, his very presence inspired the two factions of the Muslim League to end their quarrel, hold a joint meeting in March 1934, and decide that the two presidents resign and their two parties amalgamate into one All-India Muslim League under the presidency of Jinnah. Jinnah accepted, and a meeting of the council of the reunited League was held under his presidency in Delhi next month.

After the meeting, Jinnah stated in a press interview that he felt that 'the Muslim will not lag behind any other community in securing the very best interests of India.' He condemned the constitutional scheme as outlined in the White Paper, and said that 'the problem of problems which still confronts us is how to avert the scheme being foisted upon India. That cannot be

¹Sharifuddin Pirzada, (ed.), *Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah Correspondence*, East & West Publishing Co., Karachi, 1964, p. 23, letter dated 30 March 1933.

achieved until there is unity between Hindus and Muslims.' Jinnah looked forward to a 'real, solid, united front'. 'Can we even at this eleventh hour bury the hatchet and forget the past in the presence of imminent danger, and close our ranks to get sufficient strength to resist what is being hatched both at Downing Street and in Delhi?' he asked. 'It is up to the leaders to put their heads together, and nothing will give me greater happiness than bring about complete co-operation and friendship between Hindus and Muslims'.

Regarding the Communal Award against which Malaviya and the Hindus in general were carrying out a crusade at that time, the meeting had passed a resolution accepting it 'so far as it goes, until a substitute is agreed upon by various communities'. Explaining it Jinnah said that: 'The emphasis which the Moslems place on the Communal Award is only an indication of their desire to make sure that any national demand which they join to put forward on behalf of the country will incorporate the safeguards which the Moslems consider to be a minimum. Moslems are in no way behind any other community in their demand for national self-government. The crux of the whole issue, therefore, is: Can we completely assure Moslems that the safeguards to which they attach vital importance will be embodied in the future constitution of India.'¹

Jinnah returned to England soon after, according to his pre-arranged schedule. The Hindus had totally ignored his appeal to bury the hatchet, as well as his offer to replace the Communal Award with a mutually agreed formula. The Muslim League had, however, given him a warm reception, and many speakers had appealed to him to stay on in the country. In reply, Jinnah had said that he could return any time by air if his services were needed.

In October, when the elections to the Central Legislative Assembly were held, the Muslims of Bombay returned him unopposed, and Jinnah came back to attend its first session. Characteristically, his first political act was to meet the Congress President, Rajendra Prasad—later to become Bharat's first president—and discuss the question of the Communal Award. Negotiations in quest of an alternative formula went on for a

¹*The Indian Annual Register, 1934, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 318-19.*

month, but came to nothing. The Hindus, even at that late hour, were not prepared to agree to any terms that would reassure the Muslims about their future constitutional position.

Obviously the Congress was not serious about solving the problem; it was only anxious to secure Jinnah's support in defeating a Government motion in the Central Legislative Assembly that the Report of the Joint Parliamentary Committee be considered. The Congress was as keen to reject it *in toto* as the Government was eager to have it accepted, but neither side commanded a majority in the House. There were 144 members in the House, of whom 40 were Government-nominated and 44 belonged to the Congress Party. The eleven members of Malaviya's Nationalist Party normally voted with the Congress, while the Government could normally get the support of the eleven Europeans. In this position Jinnah's Independent Party of 22 (19 of whom were Muslims) held the balance, and could sway the result one way or the other.

The motion was duly made on 4 February 1935. The leader of the Congress Party, Bhulabhai Desai, moved an amendment that the British Government should not proceed with any legislation based on the proposed scheme. With regard to the Communal Award it proposed that the Assembly refrain from expressing any opinion at all. This was a change of tactics, but, if successful, would have had practically the same effect that the Hindus were aiming for—telling the British that the Award had not been accepted by the Indians, including the Muslims. But Jinnah's amendment caught the Congress in its own trap.

Jinnah's amendment was divided, for the purpose of voting, into three parts, and all three parts were carried. One amendment, which the government opposed and the Congress supported, rejected the scheme of federation, which, Jinnah said in his speech, was 'thoroughly rotten, fundamentally bad and totally unacceptable'. He was 'not opposed to an all-India Federation but what kind of all-India Federation?' 'No province has been consulted as such,' he pointed out, and the scheme 'is devoid of all the basic and essential elements and fundamental requirements which are necessary to form any Federation.'¹

His second amendment called the provincial part 'most unsatisfactory and disappointing', and attacked its objectionable

¹Jamiluddin Ahmad, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 9-12.

features but did not reject it. The Congress opposed but the Government supported it.

The third amendment, on which the Congress was forced to remain neutral, and which the Government had to support, was about the Communal Award. It accepted the Award 'so far as it goes until a substitute is agreed upon by the various communities concerned'. Jinnah devoted a considerable part of his speech to this amendment. He pointed out that the Muslims too were not satisfied with the Award and affirmed that it was accepted only until such time as a substitute was agreed upon. '...My self-respect will never be satisfied until we produce our own scheme,'¹ he said. He appealed to the Hindus to deal with the Hindu-Muslim question in the same spirit in which they had dealt with, and won over, the Depressed Classes.² 'Show us the same spirit, join hands with us and we are ready,'³ he said.

Jinnah's success in having the Assembly pass all the three amendments, with only twenty-one followers in a House of 144, not only showed what a master parliamentary tactician he was, but also proved the soundness of the policy he had always advocated—make the best of any constitutional reforms granted, and strive to get more; settle your mutual differences and present a united front. Such a possibility gave the British sleepless nights. On this occasion, the stakes were not high and no danger appeared to the Imperialist hold, yet the bitterness of the British can be gauged from the report of Viceroy to the India Secretary: 'Jinnah and his eighteen or nineteen friends...are out to make things as difficult as they can for us, for they are joining up with Congress on almost every occasion...The leader of the Congress brought up a direct rejection amendment to our Resolution, which was defeated as you know; after which Jinnah, with the guile of the serpent, put forward an amendment which the president decided to divide into three parts.'⁴

¹Ibid., p. 4.

²This was a reference to the Poona Pact, arrived at by Hindu leaders, after Gandhi had undertaken a fast unto death, in protest against the separate electorates for the Depressed Classes provided for in the Communal Award. The Pact generously gave more Council seats to the Community than the Award, was accepted by the Depressed Classes, and separate electorates for them were revoked.

³Jamiluddin Ahmad, op. cit., p. 6.

⁴*Templewood Collection*, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 240.

Jinnah returned to London after the Assembly session with renewed prestige. He was again becoming more and more involved with Indian politics, and at the same time becoming convinced that he and he alone could save the Muslims from political extinction. Wherever he went, he heard the same plea: 'Please come back. Please. Only you can save us.' These pleas became louder and louder with each passing day. The Muslim League had showed its confidence by uniting under his presidency, and the Muslims of Bombay had returned him unopposed to the Assembly while he was in self-exile. Such a show of faith in his leadership could not but move him. How could he not respond to them?

Meanwhile, things were moving fast. With the Royal Assent to the Government of India Act on 4 August 1935, India was on the threshold of drastic changes. The Muslims were divided, disorganized and without any programme or a leader. Were they to be left to their fate or should he go back and guide them?

He did not underestimate the magnitude of the task. The British hated his guts. The Congress considered him a thorn in its flesh. As for the Muslims, they lacked political consciousness as well as emotional stability. They were too individualistic to follow any leader for long, and tended to quarrel and divide on small matters. He could not move the masses, whose language he did not speak and who were under the influence of the *ulema*; and he would be opposed equally by the nationalist Muslims as by the Anglo-Mohammedan School. He may receive a few bouquets initially, but they would soon be replaced by brickbats. But he was a born fighter. The odds never frightened him. His people needed him. It was his duty to go and save them. He wound up in England and sailed for India in October 1935, 'on a grand mission.'¹

Return of a Nationalist

The Mohammad Ali Jinnah who returned to India in 1935 was essentially not different from the young Jinnah who had returned in 1896. He was the same old nationalist, free from any communal

¹Bolitho, op. cit., p. 106.

prejudices, who yearned for the independence of his country. But experience had convinced him more than ever that this could not be achieved without Hindu-Muslim unity. This was a complex problem but it had to be solved in the light of the realities of the situation. He had spent over twenty years in search of this solution, and on more than one occasion had almost succeeded.

To Jinnah the Hindu-Muslim question was *a national question which had to be solved in a national way*. He did not consider, as he had stated in 1916, the organization of Muslims under the Muslim League as anti-national at all. On the contrary, he believed that this way the Muslims could be organized better, and brought *en masse* into the national mainstream. What was required was the closest possible co-operation between the Congress and the League, and the adoption of identical policies. In the pursuit of this aim, he had often been sabotaged, sometimes by the Anglo-Mohammedan School, at others by the Hindu leaders. But he had not given up. Now he returned with a new resolve to follow it up vigorously.

Before Jinnah left on self-exile he had declared: '*I am an Indian first and a Muslim afterwards.*'¹ Now, after his return from exile, he was to say:

Whatever I have done, let me assure you, there has been no change in me, not the slightest, since the day when I joined in the Indian National Congress. It may be I have been wrong on some occasions. But it has never been done in a partisan spirit. My sole and only object has been the welfare of my country. I assure you that India's interest is and will be sacred to me and nothing will make me budge an inch from that position...I will not and I cannot give it up. *It may give me up, but I will not...*²

Jinnah said this in Lahore where he had gone in connection with a thorny inter-communal dispute. There, in the Punjab's capital, the Muslims and the Sikhs had been fighting over Shahidganj, the former claiming it to be a mosque and the latter insisting that it was a *gurdwara*, a Sikh temple. It was in possession of the Sikhs, and when, in the summer of 1935, the Sikhs started demolishing it, there were serious riots resulting in many

¹Saiyid, *op. cit.*, p. 156. In September 1931.

²*Civil and Military Gazette*, Lahore, 3 March 1936. (Emphasis added.)

deaths. The issue was explosive and the Muslims highly agitated. But Jinnah was able to bring about a truce and persuade his community to press its claim through legal and constitutional means. He was also successful in forming a multi-communal reconciliation board. This sudden change in atmosphere was welcomed by all communities, and a meeting of the citizens of Lahore was held under the presidentship of the Bishop of Lahore, where leaders of the Hindus and Sikhs vied with each other to pay handsome tributes to him.

Jinnah was not only free from any communal outlook, he was also a great believer in legal and constitutional methods, and no petty considerations ever made him compromise on his principles. A year earlier he had taken a bold stand on an even more delicate matter. One Abdul Qaiyyum had killed an Araya Samaji leader in Sindh who had published a sacrilegious book on the Prophet. This had made him an instant hero among the Muslims. He was tried and sentenced to death by a court, and hanged on 19 March 1935. An excited Muslim mob assembled demanding his body, and when the police refused, tried to take it by force. The police fired on the mob, killing some people. The news shocked Muslims throughout the country, and an adjournment motion was tabled in the Central Assembly.

Jinnah also spoke on the motion. His speech was characteristic of the man. He said nothing about the 'martyrdom' of Abdul Qaiyyum, he only censured the police for not anticipating trouble and taking suitable measures. 'I am not holding any brief for Abdul Qaiyyum,' he said, 'I am not saying that you were not justified in executing Abdul Qaiyyum. You were perfectly right. The law must be carried out.'¹ That needed some courage. Any other Muslim leader saying this would have been lynched by his infuriated followers.

In the same session of the Assembly, he moved an amendment to a Government motion on the Ottawa Pact, demanding its urgent termination. 'The Government body was in New Delhi; its heart in Downing Street and its head in Westminster,'² he said. His amendment, with the Congress and his Independent Party

¹ *Legislative Assembly Debates*, Vol. III, No. 6, pp. 512-15, 21 March 1935.

² *The Indian Annual Register*, 1936, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 155.

co-operating, was passed, to the great annoyance of the Government.

The Government suffered several defeats in the Assembly thanks to Jinnah. The Congress and Jinnah's Independent Party, working together, threw out official proposals about constitutional reforms, trade pacts, criminal laws and annual budgets; the Viceroy had to use his autocratic powers to 'certify' and enact them. Never before had the nationalist opposition pressed the Government so hard as in this brief period of Hindu-Muslim co-operation, says Professor Coupland. 'Of the fourteen occasions on which the Governor-General used the power of certification between 1921 and 1940, eight occurred in the life time of this Assembly.'¹

Jinnah's stock was rising quickly, not only among the Muslims but also among the non-Muslims. It seemed that the days of 1924-6 had returned, and there was hope that the mistakes of that period would be avoided and the Congress-League co-operation in the Assembly would not only become closer, but also extend beyond the Assembly. What was generally not known was that Jinnah was already working at it. Kanji Dwarkadas gives this account of an interview with Jinnah on 14 January 1944:

Jinnah then referred to his talks with Bhulabhai Desai, Satyamurthi and Govind Ballabh Pant in 1936, who were all prominent members of the Congress Party in the Central Legislature. In 1936, Jinnah said that he came to terms with these three Hindu leaders on the lines that whilst they all disliked the Communal Award and were, therefore, making efforts to improve upon it and make an agreed settlement which would be more fair to the Hindus and the Muslims and would bring about more unity in future action among the two major communities, they were prepared to work together until such an agreement was arrived at on the basis of the already existing Communal Award. Bhulabhai, Satyamurthi and Pant went to the Working Committee for the endorsement, but Gandhiji and Nehru would not hear of it.²

Resurrection of the Muslim League

The provincial part of the new constitution was due to come into force in April 1937, and elections to the provincial legislatures

¹Sir Reginald Coupland, *India, A Restatement*, Oxford University Press, London, 1945, p. 10.

²Dwarkadas, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

were to be held in the preceding winter. Jinnah wanted the Muslims to go to these councils as a united body, under the banner of the Muslim League; but that required the League itself to be roused from its slumber and organized as a party of the people—and the League had not even held any annual session since 1933, when the two conflicting groups had held separate sessions in two different cities. Jinnah therefore decided to begin by holding a session without delay.

The session held at Bombay on 11 and 12 April was unlike any such sessions in recent years, remarkably free from demonstration of any hard feelings towards the Congress or the Hindus. On the contrary, there were calls for unity and united action. 'Let us approach our people and say that we cannot do without unity; and let us ask the Hindu leaders to say likewise to their people. Let India open a new chapter of life,'¹ said the Chairman of the Reception Committee. The President of the session, on his part also called for unity, but this unity 'should not merely be an abstract and distant ideal. We must give it concrete shape by organizing the broadest strata of the entire Indian people, Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Parsis and Christians, on the basis of a common programme of action.'² He suggested that a conference of all political parties be called by the Congress and the League jointly to draft a Constitution for India, and to draw up an annual programme of action.

Jinnah spoke while moving a resolution rejecting the Federal part of the Government Act of 1935 as 'most reactionary' and 'retrograde'. As for the provincial part, it was to be utilized 'for what it is worth in spite of the most objectionable features'. There were, he said four parties (including the princes) in India. The object of the Hindus and the Muslims was common to a certain extent. Muslims were as anxious as any Hindu nationalist to stand by the country and struggle for her freedom. But for the first time the people were trying a Constitution by which the government would be carried out by majority rule and the Muslims were a minority community. *It was not a religious question.* It was a question of whether they should have sufficient

¹Pirzada, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 239.

²*Ibid.*, pp. 257-8.

safeguards to inspire their confidence so that they too would wholeheartedly join with their sister communities in the march for freedom. Jinnah believed that 'constitutional agitation' was the only practical method to bend the British to the will of the people; but this required that the two communities should stand shoulder to shoulder in their demands. Unfortunately, 'the largest organization,' the Congress, claimed to represent the entire nation and did not care about individual communities. With this attitude, it would never reach 'the goal they desire and we desire unless they appeal to Muslims'. So far as the Muslims were concerned, they owed a duty not only to the community but also to the country. They should organize themselves and compel the Congress to approach them for co-operation. With such organization the Muslims could arrive at a settlement with the Hindus '*as two nations if not partners.*'¹

The session passed a resolution which visualized the 'formation of parties with a well-defined policy and programme' and 'co-operation between groups with proximate aims and ideals' under the new constitution, and, considering it 'essential that the Muslims should organize themselves as one party, with an advanced and progressive programme,' decided to contest the forthcoming provincial elections; it authorized Jinnah to form a Central Election Board, with affiliated Provincial Boards.²

The Central Board appointed by Jinnah contained people from all sections, but had a decided majority of nationalist Muslims such as old Khilafatists, members of Jamiatul Ulema, the Ahrars and others. It met at Lahore in June and issued an election manifesto which bore the clear stamp of Jinnah.

The manifesto called the Lucknow Pact 'a landmark in the political evolution of the country...signal proof of the identity of purpose, earnestness and co-operation between the two great sections of the people of India,' but it was 'not the last word on the question of adjustment of political difference between Hindus and Musalmans. Nor was it even intended or could be so considered in the new circumstances that arose and developed since

¹Minutes of the session recorded by the Assistant Secretary of the League, Syed Shamsul Hasan, *Freedom Movement Archives*, Karachi, Muslim League Documents, Vol. 168, Document No. 67, pp. 2-9.

²Pirzada, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 262-3.

then.' The Indian demand for self-government had become more insistent from 1921 onward. 'Musalmans stood shoulder to shoulder with sister communities and did not lag behind in their patriotic co-operation with Hindus. But as a minority they maintain the principle that this position in any future political constitutional structure should be protected and safeguarded.' 'Here it might be stated' continued the manifesto, 'that at first sight *it may appear to an amateur politician that such demand savours of communalism, but in reality* to those who understand the political and constitutional history of the world, it must be evident that *it is not only natural but is essential by ensuring whole-hearted and willing co-operation of the minorities who must be made to feel that they can rely upon the majority with a complete sense of confidence and security.*'¹

The manifesto referred to the Montford Reforms, under which 'such power as was available under the scheme has been captured in various provinces by the reactionary conservative elements in combination with a coterie of men whose sole aim and object is to secure offices and places for themselves wherever and whenever available.' This had suited the Government, which had supported and encouraged these two classes 'with the result that they have not only been a hindrance and an obstacle in the way of the independent and progressive intelligentsia, but people generally have been exploited.' Thus was created a double domination of reactionary forces and imperialist power. 'Our aim', said the manifesto, 'is that this domination must cease.' The manifesto promised that the League would work for the replacement of central and provincial constitutions by democratic full self-government, and in the mean time utilize the present institutions in order to extract the maximum benefit for the uplift of the people.

The Muslim League Party, said the manifesto, must be formed 'as a corollary *so long as separate electorates exist*, but there would be free co-operation with any group or groups whose aims and ideas were approximately the same as those of the League Party.'²

The programme included: protection of the religious rights of the Muslims and amelioration of their conditions; repeal of all repressive laws; rejection of all measures detrimental to the

¹*The Indian Annual Register, 1936*, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 299. (Emphasis added.)

²*Ibid.*, pp. 229-301. (Emphasis added.)

interests of India or attacking fundamental liberties or involving economic exploitation of the country; reduction of the cost of administrative machinery; reduction of military expenditure; nationalization of the army; increase in the funds for nation-building departments; compulsory and free elementary education; and development of local industries.

This election programme, says a Hindu writer,¹ 'was not fundamentally different from the Congress, except that some emphasis was laid on Muslim interests'. To Dr Tara Chand also, a comparison 'reveals substantial similarity of the two declarations.'² In fact, but for the one point about Muslim rights, it might well have passed as the programme of the Congress itself.

It was in this spirit that Jinnah set about regenerating the Muslim League. Jinnah, says the biographer of Jawaharlal Nehru, 'had been the chief architect of the Lucknow Pact of 1916 between the Congress and the League, and his hope was for another similar understanding. He therefore secured the election as president of the League not of a loyalist contender but of Sir Wazir Hassan, a retired judge of Lucknow whose family had close links with the Congress leadership in the UP. The election manifesto of the League drafted by Jinnah was very similar to that of the Congress, and in the League parliamentary board there were representatives of Muslim organizations, such as the Jamiat-ul-Ulema, which supported the Congress.'³

He told the Jamiatul Ulema,⁴ as he had told the Central Assembly,⁵ and the League session,⁶ that the question of safeguards for the Muslims was *a political and not a religious issue*, and that there was nothing wrong in working for one's own community. 'The Hindus and the Muslims must be organized separately

¹Uma Kaura, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

²Tara Chand, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 225.

³S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 223. Also see *Martial Law say Martial Law tak*, Syed Nur Ahmed, Darul Kitab, Lahore, pp. 173-4. According to Raja Ghazanfar Ali, Jinnah told him that the reason for Wazir Hasan's selection was that Wazir Hasan had close personal relations with Nehru and this could help in Congress-League co-operation.

⁴Aziz Beg, *op. cit.*, p. 437.

⁵Jamiluddin Ahmad, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 5.

⁶*See*, p. 289.

and once when they are both organized they will understand each other better and then we will not have to wait for years for an understanding. Do not listen to the taunts. I am helping eighty million people and if they are more organized they will be all the more useful for the *national struggle*.¹

'...There is nothing communal in the programme and policy of the Muslim League,' he wrote to the Nawab of Chhatari, 'except that it maintains the principle that the Muslims as a minority should adequately be protected and safeguarded in the constitution of the country.'² The existence of the Muslim League, as the League manifesto had explained, was a logical sequence of separate electorate. As 'the constitution was based on communal electorate they would have to enter the legislature on communal ticket. *It was not their desire to become communalized*. They had made it clear, they would enter the councils through separate electorates but while in the legislature they would co-operate and form alliances with those whose ideals are identical with theirs.'³

'When Jinnah took up again in 1936 the leadership of the Muslim League,' says Nehru's biographer, 'he was still a nationalist who had no wish to support, or rely on, foreign rule. Indeed his aloofness, brittle ability and anti-imperial attitude made him as disliked by the British as any Congressman. In all his speeches in 1936 Jinnah stressed his nationalism and commitment to freedom, and his hope now was for another similar understanding'⁴ (to the Lucknow Pact).

Jinnah was thus working feverishly preparing the ground for Congress-League co-operation after the elections. There was no reason why they should not. Both were national parties and both had a common goal. They did differ on methods, but the objective was the same. Whenever they had co-operated in the past, they had succeeded exceptionally well. They had agreed on a scheme of reforms at Lucknow, and its communal part had been accepted by the British *in toto*. Jinnah and Motilal Nehru had co-operated in the Central Assembly and the Government was defeated and disgraced repeatedly. Since his return from

¹Saiyid, *op. cit.*, p. 171. (Emphasis added.)

²Noman, *op. cit.*, p. 332. (Emphasis added.)

³*Ibid.*, p. 330. (Emphasis added.)

⁴S. Gopal, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 223.

England, Jinnah was helping to repeat the same story. Why could that co-operation not be extended to the provincial field as well?

Both organizations had totally rejected the federal part of the new constitution. That was the common ground. But Jinnah wanted more than that: he wanted a positive basis for sincere and lasting co-operation. He wanted the two sides to agree on the fundamental structure of the India of the future, but until that came about, to work together in harmony and with understanding. The League had agreed to work the provincial part, and although the Congress had rejected it, Jinnah knew that the Congress, which was fighting elections, would ultimately accept it, despite all its denials. In that case, the two bodies could form coalition ministries in the provinces. So far their co-operation, whenever it became possible, had been negative—against the British, but this time the co-operation must be in a positive manner—to serve the people. The experience of working together might create greater understanding of each other's points of view, and sympathy for each other's programme, and this might lead to an understanding at the Centre.

With this aim and hope Jinnah organized the League's election campaign. It was a Herculean task. The League was fighting an election for the first time in its history. It had no real organization, no election machinery and no funds. Its name was hardly known to the Muslim masses: they had known the Khilafat Committee and the Jamiatul Ulema and now knew some provincial parties, like the Khudai Khidmatgars in the NWFP and the Ahrars in the Punjab, but not the League, except in a vague sort of way.

These local parties and local politicians presented a formidable challenge to the League. The prospects of provincial autonomy and the formation of full-fledged ministries there had shifted the focus of attention to the provinces. At least five prominent members of the Central Assembly, elected in 1934, betook themselves to the provinces to become Chief Ministers—Sir Ghulam Husain Hidayatullah (Sindh), Dr Khan Sahib (NWFP), A. K. Fazlul Haq (Bengal), Govind Ballabh Pant (UP), and Dr N. B. Khare (CP). These were in addition to Sir Fazl-i-Husain, who, after completing his term as a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, had gone back to Lahore and would, but for his death in July 1936, have become the first Chief Minister of the Punjab.

The Congress leaders had moved to the provinces because their Central leadership had so desired. The Congress had been in the election business since 1924, and twelve years later it was much more powerful than before, able to enforce discipline and contest elections all over the country with a well-oiled machine and no dearth of funds. But the Muslim leaders were motivated by nothing except personal ambitions: they did not care either for the League or for Jinnah. The League could give them neither funds nor prestige. On the contrary, attachment to the League would limit their field of manoeuvre and unnecessarily bind them to outside influence and control, while without it they could freely make deals with other provincial groups and individuals.

Jinnah undertook an extensive tour of India, but was offered stiff resistance by provincial bosses, political adventurers, government 'yes-men', landlords and other reactionaries. Sir Abdul Qayyum in the NWFP, Sir Ghulam Husain Hidayatullah and Sir Abdullah Haroon in Sindh, Sir Fazl-i-Husain and later Sir Sikander Hayat in the Punjab, Syed Abdul Aziz in Bihar and Sir Muhammad Saadullah in Assam, all gave him a cold shoulder. The League did constitute its Central and provincial Boards, but in many places its position was so bad that it had difficulty in finding candidates to fight under its label. In NWFP and Sindh, for example, it had no candidates, and in the Punjab, the League fought in only seven constituencies (out of eighty-six).

British Moves Against Jinnah

Meanwhile the British were actively engaged in intrigues against Jinnah. They were used to dealing with Muslim leaders who were servile in outlook and approach, and humbly petitioned their masters for favours, and were, in turn, used, willingly and eagerly, when necessary, in the game of divide-and-rule. The Hindu-Muslim unity during the Non-Co-operation Movement was a temporary phase which lasted but two years and then evaporated, leaving the two communities more divided than before. The Muslim disenchantment with the Congress had facilitated the Government's pursuit of the old policy with renewed confidence. But here was a Muslim leader of a different mould, one who, while rebuffed by and alienated from the Congress, continued to

follow the nationalist line. He defied and attacked the Government and fought them all the way, albeit constitutionally. His independence, strength of character, and the skill with which he exposed their machinations had always been most annoying, but what exasperated them most was that, unlike most Indian leaders who had opposed the Civil Disobedience Movement and had been won over by the Government, he could neither be seduced nor subdued. Worse still, he never tired of forming a united front against them.

His role at the Round Table Conference was, from the British point of view, most dangerous; but fortunately he had failed on account of Hindu intransigence. The best news they had was his decision to settle in London. But then came the meeting of the re-united Muslim League under his presidentship on 1 and 2 April 1934, and a report in *The Times* that Jinnah was seeking an agreement with the Congress for contesting the forthcoming elections to the Central Assembly on a joint programme of opposition to the White Paper. This upset the India Secretary so much that on 5 April he wrote to the Viceroy hoping that 'he is not getting a following among the Muslims.'

Counter-measures were immediately taken through the Anglo-Mohammedan School, and Sir Fazl-i-Husain and the Nawab of Chhatari (from the UP) formed a Parliamentary Majlis for participating in the elections. But as Jinnah had not yet finally returned to India, the Majlis soon disappeared. When he did return, his activities became the cause of great concern. Willingdon, who a year earlier had seen in Jinnah's success in carrying his three amendments and the condemnation of the Joint Parliamentary Report 'the guile of the serpent,' wrote to the Secretary of State for India on 6 April 1936, on the defeat of the Government in the Assembly: 'They wanted to down the Government and do something to annoy His Majesty's Government. Jinnah was the leader of the whole assault...He is a troublesome person and I shall warn Hopie against him...'¹

Willingdon had written less than a fortnight before the end of his Viceroyalty, and 'Hovie', Lord Linlithgow, the new Viceroy, needed no special warning, for plans against Jinnah had been made and were already being put into operation.

¹*Templewood Collection*, op. cit.

Sir Fazl-i-Husain had returned to Lahore in April 1935, and resumed political activity. He was an exceptionally capable and successful politician and, following the death of Shafi and the continued absence of the Aga Khan, became the Chief of the Anglo-Mohammaden School. His relations with the British were of mutual trust.¹ He had the full blessings of the Government in re-organizing the Unionist Party in the Punjab, and was encouraged in organizing similar parties in other provinces to off-set Jinnah's influence.

In the North-Western Frontier Province and Sindh, the League was not even able to set up Provincial Parliamentary Boards. Attention was therefore focused on the three key provinces of Punjab, Bengal and UP. In Punjab, Fazl-i-Husain, who was in complete control, flatly rejected Jinnah's plans for united Muslim action, and proceeded to defeat him. Political parties, on the lines of Husain's Unionist Party, were organized in other provinces—the Kriksha Praja Party in Bengal and the National Agricultural Party in the UP. In Bengal, the main opposition to the Kriksha Praja was from a group led by the Nawab of Dhaka and Khawaja Sir Nazimuddin, both from the Anglo-Mohammedan School, and the victory of neither party would cause any worry. But in the UP, the main Muslim party participating in the elections was the Muslim Unity Board, dominated by old Khilafatists. It was likely to join Jinnah, and had therefore to be checked.

The Governor of the UP, Sir Harry Haig, took personal interest in strengthening the Agricultural Party, which had been founded with the blessings of Haig's predecessor, Sir Malcolm Hailey. When he heard that the Nawab of Chhatari had applied for the League ticket with some of his colleagues, he was 'furious' and gave Chhatari 'a straight talk,'² and Chhatari hurriedly withdrew his name and those of his group. 'I urged Haig,'

¹So much so that high British officials would even reduce to writing, when dealing with him, what they would normally not discuss off the record with other politicians. See, for example, Governor G. F. de Montmorency's letter of 16 April 1931 giving his views against the amalgamation of the Zamindar League and the Zamindar Sabha in Waheed Ahmad (ed.), *Letters of Mian Fazl-i-Husain*, Research Society of Pakistan, Lahore, 1976, p. 135.

²Ibid., letter from Shafaat, 27 May 1936, pp. 563-4

reported Shafaat Ahmad Khan to Fazl-i-Husain on 5 July, 'to talk to Salimpur and Mahmudabad. He has given a bit of his mind to Salimpur and the latter has promised to write to you and ask you the details of your party. This is what Haig told me...'¹ Mahmudabad was also tackled later and told by Haig to transfer allegiance from Jinnah, 'the arch enemy of British Raj', to the Agricultural Party. He was reminded that his estate was a gift from the British, and he had better 'watch my steps'.²

During all this time funds were being collected to fight Jinnah. In February, the Aga Khan had already sent Rs. 7,000 to Fazl-i-Husain.³ This was to cover a period of six months, but on 22 June Fazl-i-Husain sent him an SOS. 'Jinnah has blundered in the arena, very much to our prejudice,' he said, and asked for more financial assistance.⁴ The Aga Khan immediately cabled back: 'Am prepared to send ten thousand immediately and ten thousand in August.'⁵ He had also been arranging money from other sources. 'Hyderi was here and he promised to help your political funds,' he said in one of his letters.⁶ Shafaat Ahmad was constantly engaged 'to devise ways and means to counteract Jinnah's Parliamentary Board,'⁷ and asked Fazl-i-Husain, 'Would it be worthwhile to wake up other provinces, such as Bombay and ask them to organize against Jinnah? True, they are doing it themselves: but more could be done by centralizing all the forces and co-ordinating them, particularly during the Assembly session?'⁸

Jawaharlal

While Jinnah was fighting against such heavy odds, the Congress faced no serious problems. It had a name that had reached even

¹Ibid., 5 July 1936, p. 615.

²The Raja of Mahmudabad's account of his interview with the Governor of UP in 1936, 'Some Memories', C. H. Philips & M. D. Wainright, (eds.), *The Partition of India*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1970, p. 384.

³*Letters of Mian Fazl-i-Husain*, letter of the Aga Khan, 27 February 1936, p. 500.

⁴Ibid., Fazl-i-Husain, letter of 22 June 1936, p. 596.

⁵Ibid., p. 598.

⁶Ibid., Aga Khan's letter of 4 March 1936, p. 503.

⁷Ibid., Shafaat's letter, 5 July 1936, pp. 615-16.

⁸Ibid.

the peasants in distant villages and an organization that had branches in all districts and *tabukas*. It was supported by a powerful Press and financed by the Birlas and the Bajajs. In addition, there occurred an event from which it profited immensely.

On 28 February 1936, Jawaharlal's wife Kamla died. She had been suffering from tuberculosis, and had been under treatment in sanatoriums in the Black Forest and in Switzerland. She had participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement, and had won Congress acclaim. When she left for Europe, India was moved that this frail and sick woman, who had defied the Government, was going away thousands of miles overseas for treatment, with her daughter, but without her husband, who was then in jail. He was still in jail when the doctors cabled that her condition was critical. The Government thereupon released Jawaharlal, who rushed to be with her in her last days.

Kamla's death created a wave of sympathy for Jawaharlal, and it was added to the list of sacrifices that the Nehru family had made for the sake of *swaraj*. On return, Jawaharlal was unanimously chosen as the president of the Congress for the year 1936, and then re-elected—the first time in Congress history that anyone served for two successive terms.

Jawaharlal was deeply affected by Kamla's death. He had a pang of conscience for the way he had treated her all their married years. Soon after their wedding in 1916, the family had moved to Kashmir to pass the summer. 'I left my family and the bride behind, and together with a cousin of mine, wandered for several weeks in the mountains and went up the Ladakh Roads.'¹

Jawaharlal had always taken Kamla for granted. He not only ignored her, but, worse, gave her no protection against the pinpricks and humiliations administered to her by members of his family, particularly by his two sisters. Kamla came from a middle class family who owned a flour mill in Delhi. She could read and write Urdu and Hindi but knew no English, and had not been to any school. After her engagement she was brought to Allahabad for training in that department.² But that was not enough. *Anand Bhawan*, with its sophisticated ways, English

¹Jawaharlal Nehru, *Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 37.

²S. Gopal, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 32.

governesses, and Europeanized style of life, was not a place where she could fit in easily. 'Today in this world only the educated are honoured,' Kamla said in a letter, obviously thinking of herself. 'People do not want to talk to those who are uneducated; indeed close relatives and even husbands do not wish to talk to them. Under such conditions the lives of the girls become unbearable; and then will it be a life of curse.'¹

'She came from a conservative family', says Madame Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit. '...But it was hard for her to adapt herself to surroundings totally different from those in which she had grown up. Her whole approach to life prevented her from being able to enjoy the situation in which she now had to live and make a home. The excessive lavishness by which she was surrounded as well as the westernized way of living were foreign to her and she did not fall into the pattern easily.'² The condescending tone, forty years after the death of Kamla, merely confirm all the stories of humiliation suffered by her in the Nehru home. She was a constant target of criticism, and in this respect the two sisters-in-law, Swarup and Krishna, were particularly mean. They talked, as a rule, in English to keep her out of the conversation, and ridiculed her rather rustic ways. No wonder Indira Gandhi never forgave them. 'But phuphee (aunty), I don't trust you', she once bluntly told Madame Pandit.

Jawaharlal remained totally oblivious to all this, giving her no protection, not even solace. His biographer has noted how little she figured in his jail diaries of the twenties. Even in 1935, nineteen years after they had been married, this is what he thought of her: 'What a child K is. That irritates me often and yet I think that is partly her charm. How my moods change when I think of her. How much she means to me and yet how little she fits in or tries to fit in with my ideas. That is really the irritating part, that she does not try, and so she drifts apart.'³ *She*, not *they*, drifted apart!

Be that as it may, it was while she lay dying in Europe that Jawaharlal realized how he had failed as a husband, and what suffering, physical and mental, she had endured. She had been

¹S. Gopal, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 194. Letter dated 4 November 1926 to Syed Mahmud.

²Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, *The Scope of Happiness*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1979, p. 56.

³S. Gopal, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 194.

hurt and humiliated, and he had failed to protect her. She had been neglected and often abandoned for his political work or even mountaineering, and she had not complained. She had been sick and had not been properly looked after, but she had suffered in silence. Had she been given the required medical attention when the signs of tuberculosis first appeared in 1924, the disease could perhaps have been checked and cured in its early stages. If, only if, he had been more conscientious and caring. Hit by remorse, Jawaharlal discovered that he cared for her much more than he had thought, and that she had quietly become a part of him. Her death created a void in his life. His home, *Anand Bhawan*, had changed considerably after the death, in 1931, of its *grand seigneur*, Motilal; the two sisters had been married away and now with Kamla dead, he suddenly felt very lonely.

In this tragic and forlorn state, suffering from a feeling of guilt, haunted by Kamla's ghost, Jawaharlal found escape in Congress work. Years later, he wrote to a friend who had lost his wife, 'those who have had similar experiences, and I am one of them, can understand to some extent the sorrow that comes to one. The only way to deal with it, so I found, is to apply oneself with greater earnestness to the cause for which one has stood.'¹

Jawaharlal did exactly this. Almost immediately after returning to India, and consigning the ashes of Kamla to the Ganges and Jumna, he immersed himself in Congress work.

He presided over the Lucknow session in April, kept himself busy with various kinds of organizational and election activities, presided over the Faizpur session again in December, and plunged headlong in the final round of electioneering. He travelled 110,000 miles by air, train, steamer, paddle-boat, canoe, car, lorry, bicycle and bullock cart, on horse, camel, elephant and on foot. He would start at sunrise and not rest till late at night, making as many as 150 speeches a week.

He had by that time already established himself as the leader of the new India and the darling of the youth. An aura of romanticism surrounded him—the product of Harrow and Cambridge going round dusty Indian villages dressed in *khadi*; the aristocrat of *Anand Bhawan* challenging the British and

¹Ibid., p. 199.

habitually going to jail rather than enjoying the good things of life. Other members of his family—his father, his mother, his sister, and his wife—had all suffered for the sake of the country, and recently his wife died far away from home, yet nothing deterred him from the path of duty. Legends, many of them without foundation, such as the one about the weekly laundry to Paris, grew quickly. He became the ‘Embodiment of Sacrifice’, the ‘Jewel of India’, the ‘Head of the country’. He became the object not only of immense love and admiration but, after the death of Kamla, of sympathy also.

Now forsaking the comforts of *Anand Bhawan*, he was travelling from one primitive—village to another, begging for votes—not for himself, for he was not a candidate—but for the Congress. How could he be refused?

These sentiments, generated by the whirlwind tours of Jawaharlal, played an almost decisive role in swinging the elections in favour of the Congress.

The Elections

The election results took everybody by surprise. In five of the eleven provinces—Bihar, Orissa, UP, CP, and Madras—the Congress was returned with absolute majorities. In Bombay, it secured forty-nine per cent of the seats, and could dominate the legislature with the help of a member or two, while in Assam and the North-Western Province it was the largest single party.

This was totally unexpected. No one, not even the Congress, thought it would do so well. All it had hoped for was to emerge as the largest single, not the majority, party in many, not all, provinces. This was also the reading of the Government. The Governor of Bombay, Lord Brabourne, for instance, reported to the Viceroy on 15 January that the Congress would get ‘between 50 and 75 seats’.¹ A month later his firm estimate was 68. ‘This number includes’, he added ‘of course, certain candidates who are not by any means staunch supporters of the Congress.’² The

¹Dr P. N. Chopra, (ed.), *Towards Freedom*, Indian Council of Historical Research, New Delhi, 1985, Vol. I, p. 39.

²*Ibid.*, p. 123.

Congress actually won 86 (out of 175). From CP, where the Congress won 70 seats out of 112, Governor Hyde Gowan reported on 13 January that the Congress would get 34, against 63 by independents and 15 by 'doubtfuls'¹, and on 4 February sent the revised estimates as: Congress 35, Independents 64, and doubtfuls 13.² In the UP, where the Congress share was 133 out of 228, Governor Haig was 'convinced that the Congress would not be able to secure more than sixty'³, although he was more cautious in his report to the Viceroy, whom he told that '...if, as seems probable, the Congress are in a minority, but have 70 to 80 seats, and another 15 sympathizers, it may be a matter of considerable difficulty to secure a Government.'⁴

The rout of provincial parties⁵ like the Agricultural Party in UP and the Justice Party in Madras, and the victory of the Congress, upset all calculations, deeply affected the Congress mentality, made the Government revise its policy on India, and set the country on the road to the war of succession.

The Muslim League did not do so well. In the Muslim-majority provinces it got 40 seats out of 119 reserved for the Muslims in Bengal, but in others it was routed. In the Punjab it won two out of 86, while in Sindh and the North-Western Province, not having entered the contest, it obtained none. In the minority provinces, however, it did much better. In the UP it won 29 out of 35 contested, in Bombay it won 20 out of a total of 29, and in Madras 11 out of 28. In all, the League secured 109 out of a total of 482. Although about 60 to 70 per cent of its candidates were victorious, its final share was less than twenty-five per cent of all Muslim seats.

For the Congress the results of the elections were beyond its wildest dreams. Flushed with victory, it started acting as if it was really the only political party in India and none other existed. It felt that Gandhi's claim at the Round Table Conference, that the Congress represented 85 to 95 per cent of the Indians, had been vindicated.

¹Ibid., p. 35.

²Ibid., p. 88.

³Khaliqzaman, op. cit., p. 153.

⁴Chopra, op. cit., p. 21.

⁵The only exception was the Punjab, where the Unionist Party had triumphed. But the Party was dominated by Muslims and in any case the Punjab was a Muslim-majority province where the Congress had no hopes.

The claim was hollow. A close analysis would show that it could not even claim to represent the majority of the people. Even though it had obtained absolute majorities in the legislatures of five out of eleven provinces, thanks to the system of single-member constituencies, it had not won a majority of overall votes with a total of 299 seats. In the six bicameral legislatures the share of the Congress was 64 or 28 per cent.¹ In the lower houses, the Congress had won 716² seats out of a total of 1585, or about 45 per cent. But this success was restricted to the Hindu-majority provinces and to the Hindu ('General') constituencies. Out of these 716 seats, 579 had been won in the Hindu provinces, and if Assam is also included, the total comes to 612. In the Muslim provinces of Bengal (60), the Punjab (18), NWFP (19), and Sindh (7)³ it secured altogether 104 seats out of a total of 535, or less than 20 per cent. Out of a total of 482 Muslim constituencies in all the 11 provinces, the Congress was successful in only 26. Nineteen of these twenty-six seats were obtained in the North-Western Province where the Congress fought in the name of Khudai Khidmatgars⁴; the rest of the seven were distributed in ten provinces. No Muslim was elected on the Congress ticket in Assam, Bengal, UP, CP, the Punjab, Sindh, Bombay or Orrisa. The Congress captured, in all, five per cent of the Muslim seats. 'This showed,' says the official history of the

¹Tara Chand, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 221.

²Ibid., p. 220.

³The statistics about elections given by various authentic sources differ. This is due to various factors e.g. death of a successful candidate and filling of the seat later through by-election, independent members joining some party, or change-over from one party to another. The slight variation in figures, however, does not change the picture. The figures given here are all taken from Tara Chand, op. cit., pp. 220-1. His figures are sometimes misleading—as in 64 above where he calls 64 out of 299 '28 per cent'; or in 65 he gives the total of Congress seats as 711, but the figures broken down province-wise are different, and if added up come to 716. The author, however, prefers to base his survey on figures which even the official historian of the Government of Bharat cannot controvert.

⁴In August 1931 the Congress Working Committee, in reconstituting the NWFP, the Congress Committee said that, 'In the language of the Province it might be described as the Frontier Province *Jirga*. Similarly, district and local Congress Committees may be described as local *jirgas*.' The Khudai Khidmatgars, it was agreed, should become Congress volunteer organizations '...The name Khudai Khidmatgars may, however, be retained'.

Freedom Movement published by the Government of Bharat, 'that the claim of the Congress to represent the Muslim community was exaggerated.'¹

Arrogance of Power

The elections had clearly proved two things, viz. (1) the Congress, despite its great triumph, was a minority party, and (2) it did not represent the Muslims at all. But the sweet smell of success so intoxicated Jawaharlal that even before the elections were over, he arrogantly declared: there are only two parties in India, the Congress and the Government, and others must line up.

This sudden outburst of the Congress president was too provocative to be ignored by Jinnah. For the last two years he had been facing the hostility of the Government and its henchmen on account of his nationalist policies. He had shown in the Central Assembly how the Congress and the League could co-operate and with what results. He had, through its manifesto, idealistically committed the League to work with the Congress, and throughout his election campaigns, and even earlier, he had been preparing the ground for future co-operation.

His theme was always the same: the Muslims must organize themselves and be ready to co-operate with like-minded progressive groups. In one speech he said:

Ours is not a hostile movement. Ours is a movement which carries the olive branch to every sister community. We are willing to co-operate, we are willing to coalesce with any group or groups, provided their ideals, their objects are approximately the same as ours.²

In another speech he explained:

The Muslim League stands for full national self-government for the people of India. Unity and honourable settlement between Hindus, Muslims and other minorities is the only pivot upon which national self-government for India of three hundred and eighty million can be constructed and maintained.³

¹Tara Chand, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 226.

²Khalid Bin Sayeed, *Pakistan, The Formative Phase*, Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1978, p. 81.

³*Ibid.*

If he was exhorting the Muslims to organize separately, it was because that way both communities would understand each other better; it would not in any way do any harm:

Muslims are uniting not to injure the cause of Indian freedom, but to defend it. If Muslims are a strong homogenous group of eighty million, they can give valuable assistance to the Hindus in the fight for freedom and at the same time be assured that they themselves cannot be reduced to inferiority when freedom comes or compelled to live on sufferance and be content only with the crumbs of the spoils of freedom.¹

In another speech he said:

If out of eighty million Muslims, I can produce a patriotic and liberal-minded national bloc, who will be able to march hand in hand with the progressive elements in other communities, I will have rendered great service to my country.²

He was constantly preaching and striving for Hindu-Muslim unity. He told the students at Delhi:

If I can achieve this unity, believe me, half the battle of the country's freedom is won...So long as Hindus and Muslims are not united, let me tell you, there is no hope for India and we shall both remain slaves of foreign domination.³

and the students at Calcutta:

India's salvation lies in the unity of all communities, especially Hindus and Muslims...it is up to you neither as a Hindu or a Muslim but as an Indian to find the solution.⁴

He even declared that:

There is no difference in the ideals of the Muslims League and the Congress, the ideal being complete freedom for India,⁵

¹Noman, op. cit., p. 333.

²Z. H. Zaidi, Aspects of the development of Muslim League Policy, 1937-47, in Philips & Wainright's *The Partition of India*, op. cit., p. 250.

³Saiyid, op. cit., p. 163.

⁴Z. H. Zaidi, op. cit., p. 251.

⁵Khalid Bin Sayeed, op. cit., p. 81.

and that he was making the greatest contribution to the advancement of *real nationalism* if he could by some method make the Congress High Command and the Hindu public generally understand and win them over, or bring them round by some means, to the question of the minority problem and then march on the road. If this question could be solved they would have a clear road to march on (toward) the goal of full independence.¹

He pleaded that: 'The Hindus and the Muslims should present a united front', they must stand together for the welfare of their province and for the freedom of their motherland.² On 7 January he went so far as to say at a public meeting: '*Hindus and Muslims can join hands and form one party, provided they could evolve a common programme of work both inside and out side the legislatures.*'³

The election campaign had until then been proceeding quite smoothly. The Congress and the League had not only refrained from attacking each other but shown mutual goodwill. 'During my tours,' admitted Jawaharlal in a letter to Rajendra Prasad, 'where there was no Congress Muslim candidate, I usually supported the League candidate if he was not an obvious reactionary, as he sometimes was.'⁴

But now Jawaharlal was taking an ominous turn. His declaration that only two parties existed not only betrayed a totalitarian mentality, it threatened to destroy the ground that Jinnah had so painstakingly prepared. He had organized the Muslim League separately because the separate electorates required it, but he had carefully abstained from communalizing politics.⁵ He had managed the League and conducted the election campaign on nationalist lines, and looked forward to an alliance between the two premier nationalist organizations, the Congress and the Muslim League. Now Jawaharlal was not only wanting to undo what Jinnah had done, he was denying that the Muslims represented a factor of any consequence.

¹Speech before the Muslim Students' Federation, at Calcutta, December 1937. *Dawn*, Karachi, 14 August 1987, p. VII.

²*Star of India*, 9 January 1937, cited by Chopra, op. cit., p. 7.

³*Ibid.*, 9 January 1937, Zaidi, op. cit., p. 251. (Emphasis added.)

⁴*Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, S. Gopal, (ed.), Orient Longman, 1976. Vol. VIII, pp. 119-22.

⁵See, Jinnah's letter to Chhatari, p. 293.

'There is a third party, namely the Muslims,' Jinnah pointed out in reply. 'I refuse to line up with the Congress, I refuse to accept this proposition,' he said, and asserted that: 'We are not going to be dictated to by anybody.' At the same time he assured that: 'We are ready and willing to co-operate with any group of a progressive and independent character provided its programme and policy corresponds to our own. We are not going to be the camp-followers of any party. We are ready to work as equal partners for the welfare of India.'¹

Jawaharlal had a knack for spoiling a perfectly healthy situation, and no skill for saving one. He could at that time have kept quiet, but instead made a vicious attack on the League and Jinnah. Calling Jinnah's ideas 'medieval and out of date,' he insisted that '...the present contest lies between imperialism and nationalism. All "third parties", middle and undecided groups etc., have no real importance...Thus in the final analysis, there are only two forces in India today...British imperialism, and the Congress representing Indian nationalism.' 'What does the Muslim League stand for?' he asked. 'The League,' he said, 'represents a group of Muslims, no doubt highly estimable persons, but functioning in the higher regions of the upper middle classes and having no contact with the Muslim masses and fewer even with the lower middle class. May I suggest to Mr Jinnah that I come into greater touch with the Muslim masses than most of the members of the Muslim League.'²

While challenging Jawaharlal's two-party thesis, Jinnah had still promised co-operation on a basis of equality. Jawaharlal, in his reply, not only re-affirmed his stand, he accused the League of not standing for independence, and being a reactionary body representing a small group. He developed this theme further in his subsequent speeches, rejecting the idea of any Congress-League pact, assailing the League and eulogizing the Congress, which had Muslim members 'who could provide inspiration to a thousand Jinnahs.'³

Jawaharlal's tone and attitude became more and more aggressive as news of election victories poured in. He was increasingly

¹Saiyid, *op. cit.*, p. 178, and Chopra, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

²J. Nehru, *Selected Works*, *op. cit.*, Vol. VIII, pp. 119-22.

³Chopra, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 119.

inspired by Hitler and Mussolini, whose stars were then in the ascendant. Moreover, his reinforced belief in socialism seems to have convinced him that the time had come for party dictatorship in India. Writing to Sir Stafford Cripps on 2 February 1937 he boasted: 'The Congress is supreme today so far as the masses and the lower middle classes are concerned. Even the Muslim masses look upon it for relief. It has hardly ever been in such strong position.'¹ With Gandhi temporarily in retirement, he began to suffer from illusions of grandeur—*there is no party but the Congress and Jawaharlal is its president.*

Jawaharlal may have supported the League candidates during his tours, but that was before the elections. After the elections, the Congress had become 'supreme' in at least the six Hindu-majority provinces and did not need the League in forming local governments. Its weakest spot was the Muslim-majority provinces, but the League had done very badly there. In the Punjab, Sindh and the NWFP, its total strength came to a miserable two.² In Bengal it had done better, but the Muslim members there were almost equally divided between the League, the Kriksha Praja and the Independents. Why then bother about the League? Why not instead bully or bribe small groups or individual Muslims, who would be easy to control, to sign the Congress pledge?

It was, of course, preposterous of Jawaharlal to assume the airs he did. India was not a one-party state, and the Congress not the sole Indian party. He may have genuinely disliked communal parties (although, before the elections, he had himself approached Malaviya for an election alliance), but they were a fact of life in India. They were the inevitable product of separate electorates, and could only be removed by the elimination of such special constituencies, as Jinnah had tried to do. The only province in which a non-communal party had succeeded was the Punjab, but that party, the Unionist, was a gang of political adventurers, the landlords and yes-men of the British. In any case it seemed unlikely that even the Unionists could survive the next elections against the 'Muslim communalists'. What seemed

¹Chopra, op. cit., p. 163.

²Of the two League members, both in the Punjab, one, Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan, soon defected to the Unionist Party.

more likely was that the Muslims would become more and more fragmented in the provinces and become the instruments of the foreign rulers. A Congress-League alliance was therefore the most natural thing in the world. However much he might dislike communal parties, the League, despite its failures, had emerged as the second largest party after the Congress. It was also the only party with an all-India standing. Moreover, its president, who was organizing it on new lines, was an old nationalist who, in Jawaharlal's own words, 'had been largely responsible in the past for bringing the Muslim League nearer to the Congress.'¹ He was trying to do it again, and had, according to Dr Tara Chand, shown 'that with one exception (safeguards for minorities)...he and his party hardly differed from the Congress.'² He had unilaterally narrowed the gulf between the Congress and the League, and was now offering the olive branch. All that was required of the Congress was to accept it.

Jawaharlal had caused enough damage by his ill-advised statements, but he could still have saved the situation when a convention of Congress legislators was held in Delhi in March. The Convention had been called in pursuance of a resolution of the Faizpur Congress session in December. The relevant resolution had envisaged a convention 'consisting of Congress members of the various provincial and Central legislatures, the members of the All India Congress Committee, and such other persons as the Working Committee might decide upon.'³ Jawaharlal had himself supported the idea strongly in his presidential address, saying that the purpose of the convention would be to 'put forward the demand for the Constituent Assembly, and determine how to oppose, by all feasible methods, the introduction of the Federal structure of the Act.'⁴ There was no one in the whole of India who had opposed the Federal part of the Act so strongly and so persistently as Jinnah—he had advised the Indians to do with it what the Germans had done with the treaty of Versailles. Additionally, he was the leader of the second largest party in India. His participation would have made the convention really national.

¹J. Nehru, *Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 67.

²Tara Chand, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 223.

³*Encyclopaedia of Congress*, op. cit., Vol. XI, p. 211. (Emphasis added.)

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 191.

A few days before the convention, Jinnah renewed his offer of co-operation:

We are free and ready to co-operate with any group or party if the basic principles are determined by common consent.¹

He followed it up with another statement on the eve of the convention:

There is really no substantial difference, now at any rate, between the League and the Congress as the plan of wrecking the constitution has disappeared from the Congress programme. I have often said that I am trying to see that Muslims should whole-heartedly and sincerely adhere to the policy and programme of the All-India Muslim League, which is both national and patriotic, and we shall always be glad to co-operate with the Congress in their constructive programme. It is no use encouraging individual Muslims to come into the fold of the Congress for the sake of a prize. In conclusion I say: Let us now concentrate on those causes which stand in the way of a united front.²

But Jawaharlal was no more interested in a united front. He was no statesman, and in no mood to mend fences with the Muslim League. The arrogance of power had driven him to a point where he was not prepared to accept even the existence of the League, let alone accept its extended hand of co-operation. He forgot that the Congress had no influence on the Muslims—that it had not dared to put up more than 58 candidates to the 482 Muslim seats. He also forgot that within the Congress itself the number of Muslims was so few as to be inconsequential. The Bharati writer Ram Gopal has pointed out that, in 1936, out of 143 members of the All-India Congress Committee only six were Muslims, of whom three were Khudai Khidmatgars from the NWFP and one, a former president, an ex-officio member.³ Jawaharlal forgot all this to insist on his claim that the Congress represented all Indians, from all communities and provinces, and was the one and only national party.

He became obsessed with the idea of 'one state, one party.' The people, he felt, had given their mandate in favour of the Congress. The Mahasabha and the Liberals had been wiped out.

¹Chopra, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 189.

²Saiyid, *op. cit.*, pp. 178-9.

³Ram Gopal, *op. cit.*, p. 245.

If the League had survived, and was offering co-operation, it was not something to be welcomed, for the very existence of the League diminished the Congress claim to speak for the whole of India. The right policy for the Congress was not to encourage the League, but to destroy it.

He opposed a move at the convention to invite other parties. 'The communal problem, of which we hear so much, seemed to be utterly non-existent, when we talked to the peasant, whether Hindu or Muslim or Sikh,' he said, '...we have too long thought in terms of pacts and compromises between communal leaders and neglected the people behind them. That is a discredited policy and I trust we should not revert to it. And yet some people still talk of the Muslims as a group dealing with Hindus or others as a group; a medieval conception which has no place in the modern world.'¹

Jawaharlal propounded the theory that the Muslim masses were all ready to fall in the lap of the Congress, if a little effort was made. It was a mistake, he told the convention, to have ignored Muslim constituencies. The deficiency should now be made up, by reaching the Muslims directly. The Congress must undertake a thundering programme of Muslim mass contact.

This programme of Muslim mass contact was Jawaharlal's answer to Jinnah's persistent offers of co-operation.

Such a programme was unrealistic and over-ambitious. Muslims had never been attracted to the Congress as such. When they first joined the Congress in large numbers in the days of Non-co-operation, it was as Khilafatists. When the Khilafat movement failed, they left the Congress, and kept away from the civil disobedience. The Congress could reach them only through some Muslim organization or its own Muslim members, the Nationalist Muslims. It never did reach them directly. A programme of direct contact with the Muslim masses was, from the beginning, bound to fail. It could not win the Muslim masses for the Congress, but it could widen the gulf between the Congress and the Muslim League, and divide the nationalist forces. And it did.

¹Chopra, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 252.

Provincial Government

The Government of India Act had come into force in the provincial field on April Fools' Day, 1937, but the Congress had declined to form ministries in its majority provinces because it had failed to elicit a promise that the Governors would not use their special powers. The Governors of those province had therefore asked leaders of non-Congress groups to form the ministries. 'In passing,' says Kanji Dawakadas, 'it must be mentioned that in March 1937 when Kher refused to form the Congress Ministry (in Bombay) and in July when Congress Ministry was formed, Jinnah played the game and was willing to co-operate with the Congress on honourable terms.'¹

In Bombay, the Governor had asked Sir A. M. K. Dehlavi, as the leader of the Muslim League, to form the 'interim' ministry, but on Jinnah's instructions he refused. Dehalvi was then sworn in as a minister in his individual capacity. 'Jinnah resented Brabourne's unconstitutional act and wrote to him a strong letter of protest and criticism, accusing him of disrupting political parties.'² In the UP, the Nawab of Chhatari was similarly asked to form the ministry. He invited Khaliqzaman, leader of the League to join him, but was turned down flat. The Raja of Salimpur, however, agreed, and was promptly expelled from the Muslim League.

But none of these gestures had the slightest effect on the Congress when it finally decided to form provincial governments. Instead of trying to form coalition ministries with the League it tried to break the League. 'Kher, the Chief Minister-designate, before forming the Ministry, saw Jinnah,' records Dwarkadas. 'He requested Jinnah to give him two members of his Muslim League to join the Ministry. Jinnah readily agreed and offered his and the Muslim League's fullest co-operation to the Congress Ministry. But what happened? Kher told me the whole story and later Jinnah confirmed it. The (Congress) High Command, Sardar Patel in particular, took Kher to task for having approached Jinnah. The High Command wanted no truck with Jinnah. So, Kher's request for two Muslim Leaguers in the Ministry was turned into a demand by the Congress that the

¹Dwarkadas, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

²*Ibid.*, p. 466.

Muslim Leaguers must resign from the Muslim League and join the Congress and only then would they be taken as Ministers.¹

The Congress attitude was demonstrated even more forcefully in the UP. 'The case of UP was crucial,' says Dr Tara Chand. 'The direction of the League in U.P. was in the hands of the old Khilafatists like Shaukat Ali and the old Congressmen like Khaliqzaman. The Provincial Congress leaders had advisedly refrained from putting up Congress Muslim candidates in opposition to the League candidates and, in fact, induced some Muslim Congressmen to stand on the League ticket. The League fought the candidates of the Agriculturist Party which had been organized under the influence of Fazl-i-Husain and encouraged by Malcolm Hailey, Governor of the Province. It did not oppose Congress candidates. The League won its elections in the United Provinces against the opposition of Muslim taluqdars and zamindars and obviously helped by the votes of the poor Muslim classes under the influence of the Ulema. With the help of the League the Congress won the only Muslim seat in the Province.'²

'The Congress did not expect to get absolute majorities in the Provinces,' says Dwarkadas. 'All that they hoped for was that it would be the biggest single party and would be in a position to make a majority by coalition with a numerically smaller party. Because of this, the Congress came to an understanding with the Muslim League prior to the elections. There was no written agreement but an understanding was arrived at in UP between Jawarharlal Nehru and Khaliqzaman that they would join their hands in opposition to the foreign Government in power and work together. This would not have been a new departure for the Congress and the Muslim League, for had not Motilal Nehru and Jinnah, and later Bhulabhai and Liaquat Ali, worked harmoniously in the Legislative Assembly during the Twenties, the Thirties and also early Forties? And what a powerful combination it was...this getting together of Motilal and Jinnah!'³

In fact, Khaliqzaman, in his enthusiasm for the expected League-Congress co-operation, had gone so far as not to nominate a League candidate to a seat that fell vacant due to the

¹Dwarkadas, *op. cit.*, pp. 466-7.

²Tara Chand, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 229-30.

³Dwarkadas, *op. cit.*, pp. 464-5.

death of a Muslim League legislator, making it possible for the Congress to win its solitary Muslim seat in the UP Assembly.

'On the announcement of the results of the elections,' says Dr Tara Chand, 'it was expected that approaches would be made for co-operation between the two bodies.'¹ But when Khaliqzaman met Nehru, the latter expressed his belief that 'really the Hindu-Muslim question in India was confined to a few ineffectual Muslim landlords and capitalists who were cooking up a problem which did not in fact exist in the minds of the masses. He ridiculed the idea of a separate Muslim organization being carried within the precincts of the Legislature.'²

A week after the Khaliq-Jawaharlal meeting Jinnah gave a statement: 'We are ready to fight for the country's freedom as equals with others, but never as camp followers, nor shall we submit to anybody's dictates.' The *Times of India's* report added: 'Mr Jinnah's idea was to form a progressive independent group to work with the Congress for the good of the country. He had always been prepared for an honest settlement, but finding no way to further that objective he had decided to strengthen the Muslim League.'³

What kind of settlement the Congress wanted, if it wanted one at all, was soon made clear by Abul Kalam Azad, who made the offer on behalf of the Congress.

Abul Kalam Azad was a member of the supervisory board that the Congress had set up to keep an eye on its ministries and parliamentary parties. Unlike the practice in parliamentary democracies, neither the Congress parliamentary parties nor their leaders nor even the Provincial Congress decided on coalitions, selection of ministers or other parliamentary affairs: they were decided by a board of three members, Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad and Abul Kalam Azad. They divided the provinces between them, and Azad was the zonal boss for Bengal, the UP, the Punjab and the NWFP.

Abul Kalam offered the following terms for Congress-League co-operation:⁴ 'The Muslim League group in the United

¹Tara Chand, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 230.

²Khaliqzaman, op. cit., p. 157.

³*Times of India*, 22 May 1937, Chopra, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 557-8. (Emphasis added.)

⁴Khaliqzaman, op. cit., p. 161.

Provinces Legislature shall cease to exist as a separate group'; the League members should become part of the Congress Party and should 'faithfully' carry out the 'policy laid down by the Congress Working Committee,' and the League Parliamentary Board of the province should be dissolved, and no candidates shall thereafter be set up by the Board for any bye-election.

This was not co-operation between two partners, but, as Chanakya would have said, an attempt by the bigger fish to swallow the smaller fish.

The aim of the Congress in taking this arrogant and dictatorial attitude was obvious enough, but it was later justified by Congress leaders on the principle of homogeneity of the cabinet and its collective responsibility. This, as Dr Tara Chand points out, was in contradiction with the Congress claim that it was more than a political party, it was a national movement. 'There were to be found within its fold rightists like Malaviya, centrists like Patel and Rajendra Prasad, leftists like Jawaharlal, socialists like Jayaprakas Narayan and Narendra Dev. and communists.'¹

'Cabinet homogeneity,' points out the Indian professor of politics, Dr Beni Prasad, 'really presupposes a durable two-party system which only the Anglo-Saxon race has really succeeded in maintaining—not without jerks—owing to its exceptionally strong sense of discipline and discrimination between essentials and non-essentials, owing to the gradualness of a constitutional development dating back to the thirteenth century, and owing to peculiar traditions of public life. France and other countries which embarked on parliamentary government rather suddenly in the nineteenth century, began and retained a multiple party system and, therefore, coalition cabinets. This entailed frequent resignations and dissolution...Nevertheless, this system worked for many decades, and its eventual breakdown in 1940 was due mainly to causes beyond itself.'²

Even in the home of parliamentary democracy, England, the principle was no longer held sacrosanct. The National Government formed in 1915 served the country, just as the National Government of Churchill, formed in 1940, saved it in the Second

¹Tara Chand, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 237.

²Beni Prasad, *India's Hindu-Muslim Question*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1946, p. 2.

World War. Both coalitions worked smoothly despite serious differences on vital issues, and without either softening the hostility of Churchill and his Conservatives towards Socialism or making Attlee and his Labourites lukewarm towards it. In 1937, however, the Congress had before it the examples of coalition governments formed in Britain not only during the First World War but also in peacetime. The National Government formed in 1931 worked perfectly well for four years, but Ramsay MacDonald—who was Prime Minister with 12 followers—was never asked by Baldwin, the leader of 473 Tories, to join the Conservative Party. The idea was too preposterous even to occur to him.

Even more significant was the decision of this cabinet on an important matter of policy. The ministers were divided over the issue of Protection and Free Trade. But they reached 'an agreement to differ', and on 22 January 1932 the Prime Minister announced it. So when the cabinet decided to go for Protection, the dissident ministers did not resign, and actually opposed it when the Imports Duties Bill was presented in the Parliament.

If this could happen in England, which was the accepted model in this respect, why not in India?

Moreover, as Dr Ambedkar points out, 'there was no collective responsibility in the Congress Government. It was government by departments. Each minister was independent of the other and the Prime Minister was just a minister.'¹

In any case, in the light of the conditions prevailing in India, with permanent communal majorities and minorities, coalition ministries were inevitable. This was foreseen by the Joint Parliamentary Committee, which said in its report: 'The legislature will be based on a system of communal representation, and the Governor will be directed by the Instrument of Instructions to include in his ministry, so far as possible, members of important minority communities. A ministry thus formed must tend to be the representative, not, as in the United Kingdom, of a single majority party or even of a coalition of parties, but also of minorities as such.'² When the 1935 Act was passed it was

¹Ambedkar, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

²*Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform Report*, H. M. Stationery Office London, 1935, Vol. I, p. 62-3.

taken for granted that the ministries in the provinces would be coalitions, and invariably contain representatives of the Muslims. 'At the Round Table Conference,' recalls Ambedkar, who was there, 'it was agreed that the cabinets shall include representatives of the minority communities. The minorities insisted that a provision to that effect should be made a part of the statute. The Hindus, on the other hand, desired that the matter should be left to be regulated by convention... The Musalmans did not insist upon making this provision a part of the statute because they depended upon the good faith of the Hindus. This agreement was broken by a party which had given the Muslims to understand that towards them its attitude would be not only correct but considerate.'¹

Instead of showing any consideration, the Congress was asking the League to commit suicide. The talk of collective responsibility and homogeneity of the cabinet was pure eyewash. The Congress never held these principles dear, and in provinces like Assam and the North-Western Province, where it had no clear majority, it felt no compunction in overthrowing existing Governments and forming its own ministries in coalition with other willing parties.

Jinnah had seen in the introduction of provincial autonomy a new opportunity for Hindu-Muslim co-operation and the ultimate settlement of their political differences. He had been singing the same song of unity and united action even after Jawaharlal had made his foolish utterances. Despite the heat generated by Jawaharlal's arrogance, he welcomed the Congress decision to form ministries, expressing the hope that the Congress would co-operate with the League in the legislature, and assured friendship and co-operation from the League side.² Earlier, towards the end of May, he had sent a message to Gandhi asking him personally to contribute towards a settlement. His reply was typically Gandhian: 'Kher has given me your message. I wish I could do something but I am utterly helpless. My faith in unity is as bright as ever; only I see no daylight out of the impenetrable darkness and in such distress I cry out to God for light.'³

¹Ambedkar, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-7.

²*Civil and Military Gazette*, Lahore, 10 July 1937.

³CWMMG, *op. cit.*, Vol. LXV, p. 231.

While Gandhi was crying for light, his followers were busy spreading darkness, and trying to strangle and destroy the League. Instead of accepting the olive branch that Jinnah offered, they tried to eliminate the League as a force, and to establish the claim of the Congress as the only party in India, and the one that represented the Muslims as well. As Jawaharlal explained in a letter to Rajendra Prasad:

... the alternative was worth having if it could be secured. This was the winding up of the Muslim League group in the U.P. and its absorption in the Congress. This would have a great effect not only in the U.P. but all over India and outside. This would mean a free field for our work without communal trouble.¹

The Congress began the work of sabotaging the League by offering ministerships to individual Muslim Leaguers, who, with whatever followers they could muster, were asked to cross the floor and sign the Congress pledge. Thus in the UP, where not a single Muslim had been elected on the Congress ticket, the two Muslim ministers to be appointed to the cabinet were Rafi Ahmed Kidwai—who was elected in a bye-election thanks to Khaliq-uzzaman—and Hafiz Mohammed Ibrahim, brother-in-law of the Jamiatul Ulema leader Maulana Hafizur Rehman, who defected from the Muslim League. A quisling was similarly found in Bombay, where no Congress Muslim had been elected to the legislature.

All this should have made Jinnah very bitter, but he did not lose his poise. He was, he assured his followers, 'not in the slightest degree affected by anything that has happened in the past, and nobody will welcome an honourable settlement between the Hindus and the Musalmans more than I, and nobody will be so ready to help it.'² But this goodwill was one-sided: on the other side there was nothing but ill-will and spite. The Congress redoubled its efforts to undermine the League by the double strategy of encouraging defections through lure of office, and intensifying the Muslim mass contact. While Jinnah wanted to walk 'hand in hand' and 'work shoulder to shoulder' with the Congress, Jawaharlal went about attacking the League as reactionary and

¹Nehru to Rajendra Prasad, 21 July 1937, *Selected Works*, op. cit., Vol. VIII, p. 169.

²Jamiluddin Ahmed, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 24.

anti-national. He called the politics, even the existence, of the League a mediaeval concept and ruled out any agreement with it. He would not accept the Communal Award because 'it is incompatible with freedom.'¹ He would not talk to the League because it was reactionary, and would not discuss the Hindu-Muslim question because the question did not exist. The 'League's existence is seen only in a few provinces and is confined to a few Muslims belonging to the upper classes...There is nothing like the Hindu-Muslim question but it is just the question of doing away with the country's bondage.'²

Jawaharlal thus closed, bolted and locked all doors to a Congress-League understanding. His statement of 17 September, quoted above, denied not only the very existence of the League but also that of the Hindu-Muslim problem. How could he, after this, talk about a problem that did not exist, with a body that did not exist?

It takes two to make peace, but only one to make war. Jawaharlal had declared war. All of Jinnah's peace efforts had failed, and all of his gestures of friendship and offers of co-operation rejected with contempt. Jawaharlal had made no secret of his intention of dealing with the communal problem by dividing the Muslims and breaking the League. Jinnah and the Muslim League were left with no alternative but to act in self-defence.

The Lucknow Session

'On the very threshold of what little power and responsibility is given, the majority community have clearly shown their hand,' roared Jinnah at Lucknow, a month after Jawaharlal's September statement. 'The Congress masquerades under the name of nationalism,' he said, and 'the present leadership of the Congress, especially during the past ten years, has been responsible for alienating the Musalmans of India more and more by pursuing a policy which is exclusively Hindu, and since they have formed the Governments in six provinces where they are in a majority,

¹*Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, op. cit., Vol. VIII, p. 131.

²*Ibid.*, p. 178, on 17 September, 1937.

they have by their words, deeds and programme shown more and more that Musalmans cannot expect any justice or fair play at their hand.'

'The Muslim League,' he declared, 'stands for full national democratic self-government for India...' But it also 'stands certainly and definitely to safeguard the rights and interests of the Musalmans and the minorities effectively,' and 'this is the *casus belli*.' 'That is why the Muslim League and those who stand by it have incurred the displeasure of the Congress...' and the League 'is not going to allow the Musalmans to be exploited either by the British Government or any other party'.

The Lucknow Session was the most momentous session of the All-India Muslim League from the time of its birth in Dhaka in 1907 to its demise in Karachi forty years later. From a body of petition makers, it was converted by Jinnah into an organization with a national outlook to work side by side with sister communities. That same Jinnah had now re-awakened it, after a long slumber, and was giving it a new face and a new soul, 'to regain lost ground'. He was now asking his people not to have their 'face turned towards the British', nor 'towards the Congress', but 'to believe in themselves and take their destiny in their own hands'.¹

The League's objective was now changed to 'the establishment in India of full independence in the form of a federation of free democratic States in which the rights and interests of the Musalmans and other minorities are adequately and effectively safeguarded in the Constitution'. The resolution on full independence was moved by Hasrat Mohani—a sweet revenge for the man whose attempt to change the Congress creed was opposed by Gandhi and voted down by his followers in 1921. Partition was not mentioned, but the League had advanced from the 1924 goal of 'government on federal basis so that each province shall have full and complete autonomy', to full independence and a federation of 'free democratic States'.

The League constitution was drastically changed, and it was converted from a club of a few to an organization of the many. Until then membership could be obtained only if one were

¹All these quotations are from Jinnah's presidential address, Jamiluddin Ahmad, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-39.

proposed and seconded by existing members. Now it was opened to any adult Muslim who agreed with its objects and paid the annual fee of two annas (a little over one British penny).

In order to make the League really representative of all Muslims, Jinnah had invited all sections and schools to join it. Consequently Lucknow presented a strange mixture of old revolutionaries like Hasrat Mohani, old Khilafatists like Ismail Khan, old Congressites like Khaliqzaman, as well as big *talukdars* like the Raja of Mahmudabad and pro-British politicians like Sir Mohammad Yusuf. But the unifying process received a tremendous boost when the three Chief Ministers of Assam, Bengal and the Punjab, Sir Mohammed Saadullah, A. K. Fazlul Haq and Sir Sikander Hayat Khan, announced their decision to join the League with their followers.

Lucknow gave the Muslims a platform, a flag, a programme and a new urge. Thanks to Jawaharlal's shortsightedness, the opposition in Congress-governed provinces consisted of the Muslim Leaguers, and in the Muslim provinces, the Congress parties, being the largest, were in opposition. Thus one could find Congress-League confrontation in every province. Many non-League leaders who had opposed the League in the elections were affected by the intractability of the Congress and joined the League. A large section of the Muslim youth, on the other hand, were still under the spell of Jawaharlal who projected the image of a non-communal revolutionary leader. But in February 1938 Jinnah went to Aligarh. He came, he saw and he conquered. 'I have from you today the greatest message of hope,'¹ he told the students of Syed Ahmed Khan's University. Henceforth Aligarh was to be the 'arsenal of Muslim India'.

It was easier for Jinnah to win over the students than the masses. His forte was logic and reason. He could argue his case before the intelligentsia and win them over, but how was he to explain it to the illiterate, ignorant masses? They had in the past been roused in the name of religion, and this is what Jinnah would not do. He never cried 'Islam in danger', or claimed that the struggle between the League and the Congress was a contest between belief and unbelief. That would have been too easy, and specially effective against Jawaharlal's slogans of economic relief.

¹Jamiluddin Ahmad, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

But Jinnah never stooped to such methods. He kept politics on a high plain, and he would never agree to exploit religion to serve political objectives. Here he was helped by the Congress even more than by his own increasing number of youthful League activists.

The Congress Governments had introduced many innovations in their provinces which were extremely unpopular with the Muslims. Schoolchildren were made to sing '*Bande Matram*' and show respect to the portraits of Gandhi. Hindi was introduced at the expense of Urdu, and the Congress flag was flown from government buildings. The district officers were instructed to 'co-operate' with district offices of the Congress, and Congress office-holders had started to throw their weight around. There were several acts of vandalism against Muslims, and the Hindus in general had begun to act as if an exclusive Hindu government had come to power. Muslim grievances had been tabulated in three pamphlets issued by the League, the most authoritative of which was the Pirpur Report, written in very restrained language. Even if the facts and figures given in it were brushed aside as mere propaganda, as was done by the Congress, not even the staunchest Congress partisan could deny that the Congress, by its words and deeds, had created a general impression on the Hindus that *Ram Raj* had come, and that they had become the ruling race.

When, in this situation, the leaders of the Jamiatul Ulema, and other religious leaders under the influence of Abul Kalam Azad, went out to campaign for Muslim mass contact, they merely helped to popularize the League. The masses were bewildered by the attitude of these Congress apologists, and their attacks on Jinnah aroused their curiosity about the man who was standing up against the Congress Governments. When the League workers, in their turn, went out to present their point of view, they found the people eager to listen to them. They found a responsive chord in their audience, who felt that they had found in the League worker someone who understood their plight and shared their sentiments.

The popularity of the League spread by leaps and bounds. Hundreds of primary and district League offices were established and hundreds of thousands of members enrolled. But more important than this phenomenal rise in membership was the fact

that the message of the League was reaching and winning over the Muslim masses.

The rising tide of the Muslim League swept away the Congress campaign of Muslim mass contact. A new wave of awakening was visible among Muslims throughout India, and especially in the provinces where the Congress ruled. They rallied round the League banner and raised slogans of '*Muslim League Zindabad*' and '*Quaid-i-Azam Zindabad*'. The fur cap that Jinnah wore at Lucknow, and which is totally unsuitable in most of India for at least eight months in a year, became popular and became known as the Jinnah cap. The students of Aligarh started wearing it in such large numbers, substituting it for the fez which was prescribed as part of the uniform, that the University authorities were forced to permit its use. Muslim India was imbued with a new spirit, and Jinnah and the Muslim League represented it. From the time of the Lucknow Session up to the holding of the general election in 1946, the League, with the exception of a single reverse in the early days, won every by-election to the Muslim seats, no matter which province.

The Congress, having failed first in liquidating the League at the time of Ministry-formation, and later in its attempt to contact the Muslim masses, now focused its attention on dissuading those prominent politicians who were outside it, from joining the League, while tempting those inside to leave it. In 1938 a provincial conference was held at Karachi, in which it was arranged that the then Sindh Chief Minister, Allah Bakhsh, would join the League with the members of his party. But the Congress Party in the Sindh Legislative Assembly, on the orders of Congress boss Patel, offered unconditional support to Allah Bakhsh if he did not join the League, thus assuring him of a majority in the house and continued Chief Ministership—which Jinnah, on principle, had refused to guarantee. Consequently Allah Bakhsh changed his mind and the League was deprived of one more provincial Chief Minister in its ranks.

Real statesmanship demanded that the Congress, even at this late hour, should have realized that, after its failure with the Muslim masses, it was in the best interest of India to reach a settlement with Jinnah and join forces in an anti-imperialist struggle. But instead of seeing the writing on the wall, it waged a war against the League. The Muslim League, and Jinnah

especially, became its *bête noire*. Besides repeated attempts to subvert the League from within, a barrage of propaganda was started. The Hindu Press never tired of attacking the League and its president for one reason or another, portraying them as agents of the British who stood in the way of freedom. The theme was taken up by their Muslim agents, the moulvis and maulanas of Jamiatul Ulema, Nehru's allergy to the priestly class notwithstanding.

Nothing, however, could stop the march of the League, and at the Patna Session in December 1938, Jinnah was able to report that his organization had 'succeeded in awakening remarkable national consciousness among the Muslims'. But, he said, 'you have yet to develop a national self and national individuality.'¹ They developed it miraculously fast, and within fifteen months Jinnah was able to say that the Muslims were a nation apart and demanded a separate homeland.

CHAPTER 12

SEARCH FOR AN ALTERNATIVE

At the Patna session a year after Lucknow, Jinnah in his presidential address rebuked the Congress for wanting to 'crush all other communities and cultures in this country, and to establish Hindu Raj'. After drawing a graphic picture of Congress doings, he posed the question: what was the remedy? Someone from the audience answered: Pakistan. There was a murmur of assent from the crowd; Jinnah paused for a moment, and then went on to urge the Muslims to develop their own 'national self and national individuality'.

That lone voice in the crowd, in fact, expressed the current thinking of the Muslims. The word 'Pakistan' was becoming increasingly popular. It represented, in a vague sort of way, a Muslim state. It would, of course, be in the Muslim-majority areas, but few had any idea about its territorial boundaries, population and resources, or about the nature of its relationship with the princely states, especially Bhopal and Hyderabad, the repositories of Mughal traditions. Pakistan was a vague dream, but it enunciated the concept of an independent Muslim power and mirrored the feelings and the ideal of the people.

The ideal itself was not new. India had never been one country, nor the Indians a nation. It was a veritable continent in itself, having a greater variety of people than the whole of Europe and the Americas combined. The Indians belonged to different races, spoke different languages, worshipped different gods, believed in different religions, observed different customs and rituals, had different cultures and traditions, and possessed consciousness of being different from each other. The writers of the *Puranas*, the ancient Hindu religious books, had divided India into nine divisions.¹ Hiuen-Tsang, the Chinese pilgrim visiting India in the

¹Ambedkar, op. cit., footnote, p. 35.

seventh century, recorded that there were actually 'five Indies'¹ and that those five divisions consisted of eighty kingdoms. Before the British, they were brought under one rule only twice, once under Asoka, and then eighteen centuries later under Aurangzeb, and that too for very short periods.² 'The unity of India in imagination and ideal was far from its actual realization in history,' says the eminent Indian historian, Dr Tara Chand.³

'India' was a geographical expression to denote, to the Europeans, the non-Chinese Asia south of the Himalayas. '*Les Indes*' and 'the Indies' were loose terms that applied to an area that included even parts of present-day Indonesia. In the sub-continent itself, there were Sindh and the Punjab, Gujrat and Bengal, Kashmir and Karnatik, Kathiawar and Kerala, but there was nothing like India. There was no word for India. There was no name for India because there was no country like India.

The ancient Hindus had no such word. Even imprecise terms like 'Aryavarta' and 'Bharat' were, historically speaking, given currency much later. 'Bharat', which is the official name of the present Indian Republic, did not denote any country. The Bharat kingdom 'formerly consisted of the land between the rivers Saraswati and Yamuna, now extended eastwards, being bound on the north by the Himalayas and on the south by the Vindhya mountains.'⁴ Even thirty years after the subcontinent had been unified under the British Crown, Sir John Strachey, a distinguished member of the ICS who temporarily acted as the Viceroy when Lord Mayo was assassinated, said that, 'India is a name which we give to a great region including a multitude of different countries,'⁵ and that, 'the differences between the countries of Europe are undoubtedly smaller than those between the countries of India.'⁶ 'When I hear my foreign friends speak of "an Indian" or "Indians", says the eminent Bharti author Nirad Chaudhri, 'I sometimes interrupt them breezily: "Please, please do not use that word. Say "Bengali, Punjabi, Hindustani, Marhati,

¹Ibid.

²Even then some parts of south India kept outside the Empire.

³Tara Chand, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 234.

⁴Margaret and James Stutley, *A Dictionary of Hinduism*, Routledge & Paul, London, 1977.

⁵Sir James Strachey, *India*, Regan Paul, Trench & Co., London, 1988, p. 2.

⁶Ibid., p. 3.

Tamil, Sikh, Muslim” and so on. As to the word “Indian”, it is only a geographical definition, and a very loose one at that.¹

Similarly there was no word like ‘Hindu’. It finds no place in Hindu literature or traditions. The Muslims used to call the people of India ‘Hindis’, and when they became Indianized themselves, they started calling them Hindus, to distinguish them from Hindi Muslims. Hinduism, with ‘thirty million deities in the Hindu pantheon,’ says Will Durant, ‘was not one religion, nor was it the only religion; it was a medley of faiths and ceremonies’.² The term ‘Hindu’ applied generally to followers of all faiths originating in India, including Buddhism and Jainism.

In the medley of nations with their bewildering array of beliefs, rituals, customs, traditions, practices, loyalties and attitudes, the Muslims stood out from the rest. As Sir Mohammad Iqbal said: ‘Indeed, the Muslims of India are the only Indian people who can be described as a nation in the modern sense of the word.’³

‘Hinduism’ had not succeeded in absorbing Muslims the way it had with other peoples. After the Aryan conquest, the Dravidians and other local inhabitants were deemed ‘untouchables’, but many of their customs were adopted and many gods accommodated in the Hindu pantheon. Buddhism, the religion of the rulers, was more difficult to deal with. But Brahmin patience and persistence paid off, and Buddhism itself was transformed. Buddha, who preached a godless gospel, was himself elevated to godhood and an object of worship and later became virtually one of the Indian gods, and it was not unusual to find images of Buddha and Shiva being worshipped side by side.

An essentially similar process was started in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries—to kill Islam by fraternal embrace through the Bhakti Movement. The Movement preached that God was ‘neither at Kabah nor at Kailash’ and that ‘Ram and Rahim’ were one, and aimed at reducing the distance between the Hindus and Muslims. The Hindus were quite willing to add one more god—this time Muhammad (PBUH)—to their pantheon. But the Muslims would

¹Nirad Chaudhuri, *The Continent of Circle*, Chatto & Windus, London, 1967, p. 34

²Will Durant, ‘Our Oriental Heritage’, *The Story of Civilization*, Vol. I, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1954, p. 509.

³Presidential address at the Muslim League session, Allahabad, 1930, Pirzada, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 169.

not agree; to them such an idea was sacrilege. Muhammad (PBUH), to a Muslim, is the best of mankind, but a human being nonetheless, with no divine attributes. And the greatest sin in Islam is *shirk*, to associate anyone in divinity with God.

Nor could the Muslims be tackled the way the Scythians and the Huns had been. These Central Asian invaders had no strong religious or cultural backbone. They were quite happy when their gods were accepted along with other Hindu gods and they were told that they themselves were the 'sons of kings'—Rajputs—the descendants of the sun and the moon, and made members of the Kshatriya military caste. No such approach could work with the Muslims, who possessed an all-embracing religion which to them was the last word of God, and which they considered it a great virtue to spread. Their religion was uncompromisingly monotheistic and iconoclastic, their society was caste-free and they habitually ate beef. No religious compromise between such opposites was possible.

The Muslims, from the moment they came to India, considered themselves different from and superior to the Hindus, although this was not the beginning of the concept of two nations. That concept goes back to the time of the Aryan conquest. Those conquerors had regulated their relations with the conquered by dividing humanity into Aryan and non-Aryan, the noble and the ignoble. The nobles, divided into high and low castes, formed an exclusive society to which no outsider was admitted. The outsiders were dirty and filthy, whose very touch would pollute the Aryans.

That was the origin of the Two Nation Theory in India.

As early as in the beginning of the eleventh century, the Muslim encyclopaedist Alberuni wrote that the Hindus 'differ from us in everything which other nations have in common'.¹ He further said, 'All their (Hindu) fanaticism is directed against those who do not belong to them...against all foreigners. They call them *mlecha*, i.e., impure, and forbid having any connection with them, be it by intermarriage or by any other kind of relationship, or by sitting, eating, drinking with them, because thereby, they think they would be polluted. They consider as

¹Edward C. Sachu, (ed.), *Alberuni's India*, S. Chand & Co., Delhi, 1964, Vol. I, p. 17.

impure anything which touches the fire and the water of a foreigner; and no household can exist without these two elements...They are not allowed to receive anybody who does not belong to them, even if he wished it, or was inclined to their religion. This too renders any connection with them quite impossible and constitutes the widest gulf between us and them.¹¹

After the Muslim conquest, the Hindus found themselves in the same position *vis-a-vis* the conquerors as the Chandals, Bhils, Adabassis and other indigenous people had *vis-a-vis* the Aryans. But the Muslims were tolerant and humane. They did not declare the Hindus untouchables; did not drive them from the city limits or the villages; did not banish them from business or government services. On the contrary, the local Rajas were left unmolested, if they agreed to pay the tribute. Hindus were employed in large numbers in government jobs and given the highest offices; and the children of Hindu wives ascended the throne. Despite claims of wholesale massacres and destruction, the very fact that in Delhi and the United Provinces, the centre of Muslim power for over seven centuries, the Muslim population did not exceed fourteen per cent, speaks for itself.

During Muslim rule, the common people, both Hindus and Muslims, generally lived peacefully side by side. This was bound to create action and reaction: the two communities influencing each other in manners and customs, food and dress, art and architecture, literature and music. They even developed a common language, Urdu. Yet they remained separate. As the Hindu historian and former Indian Ambassador to China and Egypt, Dr K. M. Pannikar, has said: 'The main social result of the introduction of Islam as a religion into India was the division of society on a vertical basis. Before the thirteenth century, Hindu society was divided horizontally, and neither Buddhism nor Jainism affected this division. They were not unassimilable elements and fitted easily with the existing division. Islam, on the other hand, split Indian society into two sections from top to bottom and what has come to be known, in the phraseology of today as two separate nations, came into being from the beginning.'¹²

¹Ibid., pp. 19-20.

²Pannikar, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

The two nations borrowed much from each other, but they remained separate. Like two streams they ran side by side, sometimes touching each other but avoiding the confluence. They lived in the same cities in Hindu quarters or Muslim quarters. They built different kind of houses—the Muslim house would be spacious and airy, while the Hindu house would have more built-up area on a plot of equal size. Their food, though appearing similar, was different, the Muslims being meat-eaters while the Hindus were vegetarians. Even their cooking utensils were different, the Hindus preferring brass, the Muslims copper. They continued, despite developing many things in common, to be different.

The fact that the Muslims were a nation apart was taken for granted. Everybody accepted it. When the Hindu leaders thought of social reforms they only thought of Hindus; when the Muslim leaders, not just Syed Ahmad Khan, undertook the uplift of their people, they thought of Muslims only. When Sir John Strachey observed that '...there is not, and never was an India',¹ he was only uttering a home truth. As early as on 24 June 1858, John Bright had questioned the wisdom of the British establishing one government in a land of so many national and linguistic groups. He referred to 'twenty nations' in his speech, and suggested five presidency governments instead of one, with capitals at Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Agra and Lahore. This would also, Bright said, facilitate transfer of power to local hands, at a future date.²

That time did not come till eighty-nine years later, but in the meanwhile the British ran India as one administrative unit. Even countries like Burma in the east and Aden (later South Yemen) in the west, which were never considered as belonging to greater India, were, until 1937, parts of British India. The development of rapid means of communications like the railways and the telegraph shrank the distances in the subcontinent, and different areas came in touch as never before. This created a facade of unity. Modern education created an elite class of English-speaking Indians whose members felt at home in each other's company despite their varied religious, regional, linguistic and family backgrounds. When discussing local problems, they found that,

¹Strachey, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

²*Hansard*, Third Series, Vol. CLI, 1857-8, columns 330-53.

whether in Bengal or Maharashtra, Bombay or Madras, the cause of their grievances was generally someone belonging to some all-India Service like the ICS or the Indian Police Service. This common feeling of resentment against a common adversary created a common sentiment, and was misconstrued as a feeling of common nationalism. Jinnah had referred to 'the New Spirit' in 1916. What hold this new spirit would have taken on the new generation, and how much nationalism would have consolidated itself in the new India if her leaders had been genuine nationalists and honestly worked for it, is a matter of conjecture. What is a fact is that no true Indian nationalism could develop.

The Hindu nationalist leader Tilak wrote in April 1901 that it was 'wrong to conclude...that the Marhattas, Punjabis, Bengalis, etc., all these people have one nationality'.¹ The President of the 1923 Congress recalled in his address that he had in an earlier statement said that: 'unless some new force, *other than the misleading unity of opposition*, unites this vast continent of India, it will either remain a geographical misnomer, or what I think it will ultimately do, become a Federation of Religions.'² He had, in fact, made many statements in the same strain. In his opinion, 'the problems of India are not so much national as international',³ and that 'a united India does not exist today. We have to create it and the first necessary condition before it can be created is to recognize that it does not exist.'⁴ Seventeen months later, he was to plead that the Provinces of India should enjoy the right to secede.⁵

The 1923 Congress President was none other than Mohammad Ali, who as a Muslim was acutely conscious of his separate nationality, and in whose ears the pronouncements of Syed Ahmed Khan about the multi-national character of Indian society rang constantly. Syed Ahmad Khan had proclaimed the Two Nation Theory and the unsuitability of the Western system of

¹In his Marhatti paper *Kesari*, 25 April 1901. Cited by K. K. Aziz, *History of the Idea of Pakistan*, Vanguard, Lahore, 1987, p. 68.

²Zaidi, *Encyclopaedia of the Indian National Congress*, op. cit., Vol. VIII, p. 201. (Emphasis original.)

³*Comrade*, 28 January 1911. Cited by K. K. Aziz, op. cit., p. 73.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 73.

⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 122-3.

democracy in India in no uncertain terms; and his successors had acted with alacrity at the first sign of transfer of some responsibility to Indian hands, by demanding the right to select their representatives through their own exclusive electorate. From that time onwards Muslim national politics, whether through a pact with the Hindus or without it, had devolved around securing safeguards to protect their identity and national interest in any future constitutional scheme.

The Khairi Brothers

Even before the Montford reforms were introduced, the partition of the subcontinent into Hindu and Muslim provinces had been suggested at an international conference in 1917, the year when the Lucknow Pact was being celebrated. The venue was Stockholm, the conference that of Socialist International, and the proposers were two brothers, Dr Abdul Jabbar Khairi and Professor Abdus Sattar Khairi. The Khairi brothers came from an old and eminent family of Delhi and had been educated at Aligarh. They were highly anti-British, had left India in the first decade of the century and had gone to the Ottoman Empire, where they joined the Young Turks' Committee of Union and Progress. During the War they were in Europe, and in the post-war world order envisaged by the Socialist International, they had proposed for India a set of free republican provinces in direct relationship with Whitehall.¹

Nothing was known in India about the proposal and activities of the Khairi brothers—they themselves returned in the thirties—but stray suggestions for partition were made by both Hindu and Muslim individuals after the sweet days of non-co-operation were over. A reference to Lajpat Rai's proposal has already been made in the previous pages², but another leader of the Hindu Mahasabha to make a similar suggestion was Bhai Permanand. Lajpat Rai and Bhai Permanand were both from the Punjab and could not reconcile themselves to the idea that self-government

¹*Comité Organisateur de la Conférence Socialiste Internationale de Stockholm*, Tiden Forlag, (ed.), Stockholm, 1918, Chapter 14, pp. 407-8.

²See, p. 216.

would not mean a Hindu-dominated government in their province.

In 1921 Maulana Hasrat Mohani, presiding over the League session at Ahmedabad, proposed a federation of Muslim and Hindu provinces in which Hindus 'would not be allowed to overstep the limits of moderation against the Musalmans', and three years later amended it in favour of a 'bi-communal federation'.

In 1929 the Governor of UP reported to the Viceroy an interview with Sir Ross Masood, the grandson of Syed Ahmed Khan. According to this report, Masood told the Governor that the Muslims, fearing that they would be swamped by the Hindus in a self-governing India, were turning more and more to the idea of a separate federation with Afghanistan.¹ This, it may be noted, was soon after the All Parties Convention had endorsed the Nehru Report.

The Nehru Report had given a jolt to thinking Muslims. If *sawaraj* was to bring a unitary form of government, in which separate electorates and weightage were abolished and the Muslims were not assured of a majority in their own provinces, they would not only not share the fruit of liberty, they would, in course of time, even lose their national identity; and if a man like Motilal, with his reputation of freedom from communal prejudice, could submit so meekly to the Mahasabha, what could the Muslims expect from other Hindu leaders?

The Aga Khan's reaction to the report was that India 'cannot have a unitary nor a federal government...It must base its constitution on an association of free states.' In this way, 'the compact body of Muslims in North-West and East India...would have free states of their own.' He had given his views in *The Times* on 12 and 13 October 1928, before the All Parties Conference had met in Calcutta. After the adoption of the report by the Convention, the Muslim point of view was expressed in the omnibus resolution of the Muslim Conference which demanded complete autonomy of the provinces, which alone could decide what power to surrender to the federation. Four months later, the Conference went a step further by demanding that 'all

¹Letter from Governor Hailey to the Viceroy, 3 December 1929, *Hailey Collection*, India Office Mss. EUR. E220.

transfer of power should be from Parliament to the provinces and that no subject shall be made federal without the provinces and mutual consent of the autonomous units.¹

Iqbal and Pakistan

Sir Mohammad Iqbal suggested a different solution. Presiding over the twenty-first session of the Muslim League at Allahabad in 1930, he said that, while supporting the resolution of the Muslim Conference:

I would like to see the Punjab, the North-West Frontier Province, Sindh and Baluchistan amalgamated into a single State. Self-government within the British Empire, or without the British Empire, the formation of a consolidated North-Western Indian Muslim State appears to me to be the final destiny of the Muslims, at least of North-West India.

This has been misconstrued as a demand for Pakistan, and a myth has been created that he was the first person to demand partition. The belief is so widespread that today it is accepted as an incontrovertible fact not only by the public and politicians, but also by historians and research scholars. But this is without any foundation.

The myth started two years after Iqbal's death, when the Pakistan resolution was passed in 1940. The Hindus had reacted strongly, and were attacking the resolution on every possible ground. The Muslims answered back; and to the criticism as to why the Muslims had suddenly awakened to the idea, they found an answer in attributing it to their great poet-philosopher who had suggested it as far back as in 1930.

After Pakistan was established, the myth was given official approval by the Information Division of the Government. The man in charge of the Division was an ICS officer, who thought that it would give an aura of romance to the Pakistan Movement if it was projected as having had its origin in the dream of a poet. The dream of a poet realized by a statesman—a Mazzini-Cavour-like combination.

¹*The Indian Annual Register*, 1928, Vol. I, p. 288.

The two sentences quoted *ad nauseam* to support the myth are taken out of context, but the address itself is enough to destroy it. Going back five sentences before of those oft-quoted two, this is what he said:

The principal of European democracy cannot be applied to India without recognizing the fact of communal grouping. The Muslims' demand for the creation of *Muslim India within India* is, therefore, perfectly justified. The resolution of the All-Parties Muslim Conference at Delhi is to my mind wholly inspired by this noble ideal of a harmonious whole which, instead of stifling the respective individualities of its component whole, affords them chances of fully working out the possibilities that may be latent in them. And I have no doubt that this House will emphatically endorse the Muslim demand embodied in the resolution.

Personally, I would go further than the demands embodied in it. I would like to see the Punjab, the North-West Frontier Province...¹

No one reading these lines in their proper context can conclude that Iqbal had put forward a proposal for partition in those much-abused two sentences. He was merely supporting the Muslim Conference, from the Muslim League platform, and asking his audience to 'emphatically endorse' its resolution, although he would personally go further and prefer the provinces in the north-west to be amalgamated into a single unit. But that province or state was to be a part of India, 'a Muslim India within India.' In the sentence immediately following, Iqbal mentioned that 'the proposal was put forward to the Nehru Committee'. The Committee rejected it because the proposed state would be too unwieldy. To meet this objection, Iqbal now suggested that the Ambala (administrative) Division may be separated. This would, he argued, also have another advantage. It would increase the overall percentage of the Muslims in the new state so much that they would have no objection to territorial electorates, thus solving a thorny issue.

Iqbal gave various reasons in support of his proposal: it would settle the electorate issue, ('it is the present structure of the provinces that is largely responsible for this controversy')²; it would give India 'security and peace resulting from an *internal*

¹Pirzada, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 159. (Emphasis added.) All quotations from the address are from Pirzada, pp. 153-71.

²*Ibid.*, p. 161.

balance of power';¹ 'the creation of autonomous States based on the unity of languages, race, history, religion and identity of economic interests, is the only possible way to secure a stable constitutional structure *in India*';² it would intensify patriotic feeling of the Musalmans;³ it would give the Muslims 'full opportunity of development *within the body-politic of India*'.⁴

Although Iqbal has occasionally used the word 'State', which some writers have used in support of the myth, it is clear from the rest of the address that he was using it loosely, as a synonym for a province. For one thing, as K. K. Aziz has pointed out, it was used in the original text with a small, not a capital 'S';⁵ for another, he has also used it in the plural form, e.g. his rebuttal of the charge by Srinivas Sastri that 'the demand for the creation of autonomous Muslim States, along the North-Western Frontier'⁶ aimed at exerting pressure on the Government, and his statement that 'nor should the Hindus fear that the creation of autonomous Muslim States, will mean the introduction of a kind of religious rule in such States.'⁷ It should be remembered that the Muslim Conference resolution, which Iqbal asked his audience to support, had itself used the words 'the constituent States'⁸ with capital 'S'.

Iqbal was only repeating the demands of the Muslim Conference (plus a suggestion for an enlarged North-Western province). The address throughout deals with the Muslim problem and its solution in *one India*. Nowhere are words like partition, division or separation used; on the contrary, there is a plea for a harmonious relationship. The rights of the provinces have been reiterated, but the emphasis is on autonomy, never on 'sovereignty'. He refers to the Simon Commission's idea of a federation, recommending replacement of the Central Legislative Assembly with an Assembly of representatives of Federal States, and redistribution of territory, and gives it his 'whole-hearted support'⁹, but insists that the latter must precede

¹Ibid., p. 160. (Emphasis added.)

²Ibid. (Emphasis added.)

³Ibid., p. 159.

⁴Ibid. (Emphasis added.)

⁵K. K. Aziz, *op. cit.*, p. 234.

⁶Pirzada, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Sherwani, *op. cit.*, p. 430.

⁹Pirzada, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

the former. A unitary form of government was 'simply unthinkable in self-governing India'.¹ 'The best course,' in his view, was 'to start with British Indian federation only'², without Princely states. 'What is called 'residuary powers' must be left entirely to self-governing States, the Central Federal State exercising only those powers which are expressly vested in it by the free consent of the Federal States'³; and the Muslims must have 'a one-third share in the total House of Federal Assembly'.⁴

'The Muslims demand federation,' he said, 'because it is pre-eminently a solution of India's most difficult problem, i.e. the communal problem.'⁵ But 'it can be of no advantage to the Muslims unless they get majority rights in the five out of eleven Indian provinces with full residuary powers, and a one-third share of seats in the total House of Federal Assembly.'⁶ 'A redistribution of British India calculated to secure a permanent solution of the communal problem is the main demand of the Muslim of India,' he said. 'If, however, the Muslim demand for a territorial solution of the communal problems is ignored, then I support, as emphatically as possible, the Muslim demands repeatedly urged by the All-India Muslim League and the All-India Muslim Conference.'⁷

The Allahabad address did not visualize a Muslim homeland. Iqbal's ideas, as expressed then, were influenced by two opposites, i.e. Lajpat Rai's proposal for the partition of the Punjab, and the resolutions of the Muslim Conference. What he demanded at Allahabad was: a weak federation, with powers that were assigned to it specifically by the provinces; one-third Muslim representation in the federal legislature; the residuary powers to rest with the provinces; and consolidation of the four north-western provinces into a single unit. His last demand has been taken out of context and given a colour that he never intended. Iqbal was not suggesting it as the solution of the communal problem—after all it affected less than thirty per cent of the Indian Muslims. He was

¹Ibid., p. 162.

²Ibid., p. 163.

³Ibid., p. 162.

⁴Ibid., p. 163.

⁵Ibid., p. 161.

⁶Ibid., p. 163.

⁷Ibid., p. 166.

suggesting a solution for a limited area. His proposal would give the Muslims one big Muslim province, within India, and would settle the electorate issue in this area at least, and for this purpose he was prepared to give away large chunks of Hindu-majority areas in East Punjab. He was anticipating the 'One Unit' that was created in Pakistan in 1955.¹

Iqbal lived for more than seven years after his Allahabad address, but he never made any pronouncement, either at the Round Table Conference, which he attended twice, or from any other public platform, proposing partition. He did not write an anthem or a song, not even a single line, for his supposed dreamland, although this was the most natural thing for a poet to do, although in his earlier days he had written the Indian counterpart of '*Deutschland uber Alles*'—*Sare jahan se achcha Hindustan hamara* (our India is superior to the entire world), as well as a Pan-Islamic anthem, '*Muslim hain, ham watan hai sara jahan hamara*' (we are Muslim, the whole world is our homeland).

Even in his private talks—and we have detailed accounts—Iqbal did not preach partition. We may mention here two such accounts, the first of which is '*Iqbal ke huzoor—nashistain aur guftugoen*' (in the presence of Iqbal—sittings and conversations), by Nazir Niazi. Niazi was an ardent admirer of the poet-philosopher and knew him well for twenty years, but in 1936, when he permanently shifted to Lahore, he had 'the good fortune to be present in the service of Hazrat Allama, night and day, and participated in the sittings and conversations at his place.'² He meticulously kept notes of these conversations in the form of a diary starting on 1 January 1938 and covering the last four months of Iqbal's life. During this period he looked after the poet with utter devotion, visiting him daily and spending almost all of his time with him, calling doctors, administering medicine, attending to his needs, receiving visitors and participating in discussions. The visitors were from all walks of life, and the discussions covered every subject—political, religious, literary, cultural, among others.

¹For a detailed discussion of Iqbal's Allahabad address, see, K. K. Aziz's excellent analysis in *History of the Idea of Pakistan*.

²Syed Nazir Niazi, *Iqbal ke Huzoor*, Iqbal Academy, Karachi, 1971, Vol. I, Preface p. A.

These were the days when Iqbal was terribly worried about the future of Islam and the Indian Muslims—he was having a public controversy with the chief of the Deoband seminary, Husain Ahmad Madani, on the essential elements of nationalism, was deeply involved in Muslim League affairs (he remained President of the Punjab League until February 1938, when he resigned due to ill-health, but remained active in preventing the Unionist Party from capturing the League), and had been in regular correspondence with Jinnah. Yet, although in Niazi's account we find Iqbal's discourses on Muslim regeneration, the political situation in India and abroad, the need for Muslim unity, Islam and nationalism, the ideology of the Saudi Government, even the possibility or otherwise of the establishment of a separate State of Chinese Muslims in Sinkiang,¹ we do not find Iqbal preaching the partition of India.

The only occasion when we hear the word 'Pakistan' from the poet's lips occurred on 30 January. While talking about Muslim affairs, 'Iqbal said: "whatever little unity has been achieved because of the League is very promising. How impressed is the Congress. The results of this unity will be grand. If the Muslims, somehow, could get a piece of land, it would even be better." I said "Pakistan?" (He) said "Pakistan! or call it what you may".²

This was hardly a plea for a scheme that was supposed to have originated with him, and which he was supposed to be preaching passionately.

On 5 February, hearing of the Congress decision that Gandhi and Jawaharlal would correspond with Jinnah, Iqbal said: 'I have written to Jinnah that he must emphasize three things in particular: (i) constitutional safeguards (ii) Sindh's affiliation to the Punjab, and (iii) continuance of personal and civil laws.'³

Four weeks later, Iqbal gave an in-depth analysis of the Muslim situation. He spoke about Islamic movements, the policies of European powers, Muslim unity and Muslim renaissance, the position of Muslims in India, Syed Ahmed Khan and his movement, the *ulema* and the Deoband seminary, Hindu nationalism and the Congress, the threat to the Muslims' future,

¹Ibid., pp. 139-40. On 3 February 1938.

²Ibid., p. 131.

³Ibid., p. 142.

and how to face it. An account of this discussion is given in sixteen pages, but partition is nowhere mentioned, even in passing. Iqbal ended the discussion by saying:

At present there is only one way...the Muslims should strengthen Jinnah's hands (and) join the League...Our united front is the only answer to the hostile activities of the British and Hindus. How can we get our demands accepted without it?...These demands are related to the protection of our national existence...The united front can be established only under the leadership of the League, and the League will succeed only through Jinnah. No Musalman, except Jinnah is now qualified to lead the Muslims.¹

Another long account is given by Niazi on pages 314 to 337. Here Iqbal censured territorial nationalism and the doctrine of separation of Church and State. He insisted that narrow nationalism was the antithesis of Islam, which believed in an international brotherhood, and criticized the concept of a common Indian nationality and the Congressite *ulema*, particularly Abul Kalam Azad, who were preaching it. The Hindus, he thought, had a positive concept of common nationality: they believed that through it, and the separation of Church and State, they could eliminate the Muslims as a political element and the Muslims could be reduced from a nation to a mere religious group. The Muslims must also have a positive concept of their own, for independence did not mean merely freedom from the British; it meant the freedom for a nation to construct its society according to the political and communal goal it had set.

Having said all this, one expected that Iqbal would then follow it up by saying that the goal for Muslims could only be the setting up of a separate Muslim homeland. But he did not say it. He merely emphasized the need for unity in Muslim ranks.

Iqbal's own solutions were spelled out in answer to the question: 'What is the remedy for the political and constitutional problems faced by the Muslims today? Is any political reconciliation between the Hindus and the Muslims possible?' The question was posed by the editors of the daily *Inquilab*, Ghulam Rasool Mehr and Abdul Majid Salik, and Iqbal 'briefly explained his point of view. As far as the political and constitutional problems are concerned he once again *expressed the opinion he had*

¹Ibid., pp. 282-98.

*expressed in his presidential address at Allahabad: and that is that the Federation should start with British India; Muslim majority in Sindh, the Punjab and Bengal should be recognized constitutionally; elections should be through separate electorates; personal laws be maintained, as well as other safeguards e.g. linguistic and cultural. But as regards political reconciliation, (he) said, "For this there is only one way, and that is the United Front of the Muslims, i.e. insistence as a nation on its separate identity. All parties other than the League must be disbanded."*¹

Iqbal expressed these views on 4 March 1938, over seven years after his Allahabad address and about six weeks before his death.

The other authoritative book is *Iqbal kay akhri do saal*, (Iqbal's last two years) by Ashiq Husain Batalvi. Batalvi was chosen as the Joint Secretary of the Punjab Provincial Muslim League when it was re-organized under the presidentship of Iqbal in May 1936. He was one of those ten or twelve activists who worked closely with Iqbal and Malik Barak Ali, trying to save the League from the clutches of Sir Sikander Hayat and his Unionists and to establish it in the Punjab. Of all the people who have written about the poet, nobody could be as well aware of Iqbal's political views and activities in that period of two years till his death as Batalvi. But nowhere in his 759-page book do we find Iqbal pleading for the partition of India. Yet Batalvi has insisted that at Allahabad Iqbal had proposed the establishment of a separate Muslim State, and that a year before his death he was vehemently supporting Pakistan. But he has nowhere quoted Iqbal and bases his claim entirely on Iqbal's two letters to Jinnah in 1937.

Before we come to Iqbal's letters to Jinnah, let us be absolutely clear in our minds that Iqbal did not propose partition at Allahabad nor, later, from any other public platform. In October 1931, *The Times* published a letter from a pro-Congress English educational missionary, Edward Thompson, calling the Allahabad address 'Pan-Islamic plotting'. Iqbal's reply was published by *The Times* on 12 October. Quoting his two famous sentences ('I would like to see the Punjab...') Iqbal said:

¹Ibid., p. 260. (Emphasis added.)

I do not put forward a demand for a Muslim State,¹ outside the British Empire, but only a guess at a possible outcome in the dim future of the mighty forces now shaping the destiny of the Indian subcontinent. No Indian Muslim with any pretence to sanity contemplates a Muslim State or series of States in North-West India² outside the British Commonwealth of Nations as a plan of practical politics.

Although I would oppose the creation of another cockpit of communal strife in the Central Punjab, as suggested by some enthusiasts, I am all for a redistribution of India into provinces with effective majorities of one community or another on lines advocated both by the Nehru and Simon Reports. *Indeed, suggestion regarding Muslim provinces merely carries forward this idea.³ A series of contented and well-organized Muslim provinces on the North-West Frontier of India would be the bulwark of India and of the British Empire against the hungry generations of the Asiatic highlands.⁴*

This letter has been explained away in various ways by those who are bent upon imposing on Iqbal the paternity of the Pakistan idea, but his disavowal in another, little-known, private letter, is so strong and absolute that it should leave no doubt. On 6 March 1934, he wrote to Maulana Raghīb Ahsan:

I am enclosing two copies of Edward Thompson's (a well known literary man in England) review of my book. It is interesting in many ways and you may like to publish it in your papers. Please send the other copy to the Star of India (Calcutta).

Please also note that the author of this review confuses my scheme with 'Pakistan'. I propose to create a Muslim province *within* the Indian federation; the 'Pakistan' scheme proposes a separate federation of Muslim provinces in the North-West of India *outside* the Indian federation and directly related to England.

Do not fail to point it out in your introductory comments and draw attention of the editor of the Star of India also to this point.⁵

The confusion to which Iqbal refers became worse later, when his letters to Jinnah in 1937 were published. On 28 May he wrote to Jinnah that the future of the Muslim League depended on its ability to solve the problem of Muslim poverty. How was it to be solved? 'Happily,' wrote Iqbal,

^{1,2}Emphasis added.

³Original emphasis.

⁴K. K. Aziz, *op. cit.*, p. 285.

⁵Facsimile of Iqbal's hand-written letter is found on page 114 of Faridul Haq's *Iqbal—Jahan-i-digar*, Gardesi Publishers, Karachi 1983. (Emphasis original.)

There is a solution in the enforcement of the Law of Islam and its development in the light of modern ideas. After a long and careful study of Islamic Law I have come to the conclusion that if this system of Law is properly understood and applied, at least the right to subsistence is secured to everybody. But the enforcement and development of the Shariat of Islam is impossible in this country without a free Muslim state or states. This has been my honest conviction for many years and I still believe this to be the only way to solve the problems of bread and butter for Muslims as well as to secure a peaceful India. If such a thing is impossible in India the only other alternative is a civil war which as a matter of fact has been going on for some time in the shape of Hindu-Muslim riots...But as I have said above in order to make it possible for Muslim India to solve the problems it is necessary to redistribute the country and to provide one or more Muslim states with absolute majorities. Don't you think that the time for such a demand has already arrived? Perhaps that is the best reply you can give to the atheistic socialism of Jawaharlal Nehru.¹

Was Iqbal pleading for partition? Was he pleading for a free Muslim state or states, as had been his 'conviction for many years' and which was still his belief?

Three weeks later, on 21 June 1937, in another letter, after castigating the 1935 Act, which is 'calculated to do infinite harm to the Indian Muslims,' he wrote:

The only thing that the communal award grants to Muslims is the recognition of their political existence in India. But such a recognition granted to a people whom this constitution does not and cannot help in solving their problem of poverty can be of no value to them. The Congress President has denied the political existence of Muslims in no unmistakable terms. The other Hindu political body i.e. the Mahasabha, whom I regard as the real representative of the masses of the Hindus, has declared more than once that a united Hindu-Muslim nation is impossible in India. In these circumstances it is obvious that the only way to a peaceful India is a redistribution of the country on the lines of a racial, religious and linguistic affinities. Many British statesmen also realise this, and the Hindu-Muslim riots which are rapidly coming in the wake of this constitution are sure to further open their eyes to the real situation in the country. I remember Lord Lothian told me before I left England that my scheme was the only possible solution to the troubles of India, but it would take twenty-five years to come.²

The reference to 'my scheme' and a comparison of the two letters with the Allahabad address make it clear that Iqbal was

¹*Letters of Iqbal to Jinnah*, Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf, Lahore, 1974, pp. 17-19.

²*Ibid.*, letter of 21 June 1937, pp. 22-3.

now more convinced than before that the country should be *redistributed* as he had suggested at Allahabad. (The talk with Lothian, referred to in the letter, could not have taken place later than the end of 1932). But then he goes on to say in the same letter of 21 June:

To my mind the new constitution with the idea of a single Indian federation is completely hopeless. A separate federation of Muslim provinces, reformed on the lines I have suggested above is the only course which can secure a peaceful India and save Muslims from the domination of non-Muslims. Why should not the Muslims of North-West India and Bengal be considered as nations entitled to self-determination just as other nations in India and outside India are? Personally I think that the Muslims of North-West India and Bengal ought at present to ignore Muslim minority provinces.

Here we find Iqbal denouncing the idea of a single federation, yet he reiterates his original scheme as the 'only course'. He also talks of self-determination for the Muslims of the North-West, and now adds Bengal, but in the same way as 'other nations in India', though no other 'nation' had demanded separation. We have also seen that even in March 1938 he was still thinking in terms of one India. Yet the reference to a 'separate federation of Muslim provinces' (though 'reformed on the lines I have suggested') is unmistakable.

This has been considered by the myth-makers as the final and irrefutable proof of the theory that the idea of Pakistan originated with Iqbal in 1930, that, his disavowals notwithstanding, he pursued it constantly, and that in 1937 he tried to convert Jinnah to his view. Any difference on this point is considered unpatriotic and an insult to the memory of Iqbal. But Iqbal was too big a man to need such artificial crutches for his memory. He is immortal. Few people outside the subcontinent can realize the depth and extent of his influence on the Muslim mind. He was the leading figure in the Muslim renaissance in India in the twentieth century. His poems brought back to the fold of Islam thousands of Muslim youths who had lost faith in Islamic values. Mohammad Ali once confessed that he had learnt Islam from Iqbal, and not from any moulvi.¹ So had many others who later led the Muslims in various fields. He gave the young generation

¹*Hamdard*, 12 August 1927, under the title, 'My teacher, Iqbal'.

renewed faith and pride in its Islamic heritage. The Muslim youth which so enthusiastically responded to Jinnah's call got its intellectual inspiration from the poet. His services to Islam and the Muslims are far too great to need any false claims.

Two things strike any reader of Iqbal's letters to Jinnah. First, he was very distressed by the political situation then prevailing, and very anxious about the future of the Muslims in India. Second, he had infinite faith in Jinnah. All authoritative accounts, including those of Niazi and Batalvi, confirm it, but even without any outside confirmation, this is obvious from the letters themselves. Iqbal was no politician, and his participation in political activities was at irregular intervals and for short durations. He had no political ambitions at all, and detested the hypocrisy of the average politician. Nor was he attracted by the boisterousness and excitement of politics; he liked nothing better than to meditate and write in the solitude of his home. Yet in 1936, when his health had broken down, he became the president of the Punjab Provincial League, and worked for the League almost until his death two years later, as a call of duty. The Muslims were then divided and disorganized: Mohammad Ali and Ansari on the one hand, and Shafi and Fazl-i-Husain on the other, had died. The Congress was claiming to be the only party in the country and the British were trying to humour it. In this gloomy picture Iqbal saw Jinnah as the only ray of hope.

Iqbal's letters to Jinnah are entirely different from those of the presidents of other provincial branches. They would, if they wrote to him at all, and not to the General Secretary, Liaquat Ali Khan, talk about organizational matters and provincial politics. Iqbal's letters, while they did touch on provincial affairs not infrequently, were on a different plane. He would discuss ideas and ideals and give his own comments, leaving the decision to the leader who knew best and in whose hands the destiny of the nation had been placed. His own duty was to communicate to Jinnah any piece of information that came to him or any idea that occurred to him.

His analysis of the situation on 20 March for example, was that basically the problem in India was cultural, and he rejected Jawaharlal's thesis that it was economic. But on 28 May, he was worried about the poverty of the Muslims and felt that the League would have no influence with the masses if it did nothing to

improve their economic condition. On 21 June, however, he considered the problem neither cultural nor economic, but political. Similarly, he was making various suggestions to Jinnah, *as they came to his mind*. The suggestion for a separate federation ('reformed on the lines I have suggested') was one of such ideas; calling a Muslim legislators' convention, holding a North-Western Muslim Conference, holding the next session of the League in the Punjab, and temporarily ignoring the Muslim minority provinces, being others.

Iqbal would put them before Jinnah because 'Muslim India hopes that at this serious juncture your genius will discover some way out of our present difficulties.'¹ He apologized for 'my writing to you so often,' but felt justified because 'you are the only Muslim in India today to whom the community has a right to look up for safe guidance.'²

Iqbal, although a practicing lawyer, was more of a poet and never very particular about the use of terms like 'federation', 'states' and 'provinces' or the subtle differences such as between 'State' and 'state'. In these letters he was even less punctilious, his interest being in merely putting across his ideas, leaving it to Jinnah to consider the pros and cons, and to either develop or discard them. He was simply thinking aloud to Jinnah. That is why so much confusion and so many contradictions appear about the concept of a Muslim state (or states). He had opened his heart to Jinnah, and the heart, ever sincere, is not always meticulous or discriminating.

Rahmat Ali

The person who for the first time demanded partition explicitly, loudly and persistently, and who produced a clear-cut plan, was Chaudhry Rahmat Ali. In a pamphlet, 'Now or Never', issued in January 1933 from Cambridge, where he was studying, he proposed that the Punjab, N.W.F.P. (or Afghanistan Province), Kashmir, Sindh and Balochistan be separated from India and formed into a federation of their own, and named it 'Pakistan'.

¹Letter of 28 May.

²Letter of 21 June.

Iqbal, like the Aga Khan and other Muslims leaders after the Nehru Report, was thinking in terms of all-powerful provinces. To this he made his own contribution with the suggestion for a single enlarged province in the North-West. Rahmat Ali took Iqbal's idea¹ and developed it further. If the area was too big for a province, it was not too big for a fully independent State. Why stop at residuary powers? Why not claim full sovereignty?

'This demand,' said Rahmat Ali, 'is basically different from the suggestion put forward by Doctor Sir Mohammad Iqbal in his presidential address to the All India Muslim League in 1930. While he proposed the amalgamation of these provinces into a single state forming a unit of the All-India Federation, we propose that these provinces should have a separate Federation of their own.'² Although the underlying idea was not original, to Rahmat Ali must go the credit for mooted it as a subject for serious debate and consideration. Others had talked vaguely, in general and uncertain terms: he had given a definite shape to an idea.

But Rahmat Ali's scheme created no stir. For one thing, it concerned only thirty per cent of the Muslims: it not only said nothing about the Muslims in the minority provinces, it did not touch even the Muslim majority in Bengal. For another, it included Kashmir, which was outside British India. If a Princely state was brought in, its Hindu Maharaja notwithstanding, because the majority of its population was Muslim, then what was to become of the states with Muslim rulers, such as Bhopal and Hyderabad, which had large Hindu majority?

Rahmat Ali later revised his scheme, proposing two additional Muslim States, 'Bang-i-Islam' in the North-East and 'Usmanistan' in the south. The contradiction of claiming both Kashmir and Hyderabad (Usmanistan) made no difference to him. In fact, still later he proposed setting up seven more states for Muslim pockets not only in India but in Ceylon (present Sri Lanka) also. Thus the revised scheme of Rahmat Ali visualized ten Muslim states: Pakistan, Bangistan and Usmanistan plus (1) Siddiquistan (in CP), (2) Farooqistan (Bihar and Orissa), (3) Haideristan

¹Rahmat Ali later claimed that he had originally unfolded his scheme in 1915 but there is no supporting evidence.

²K. K. Aziz, (ed.), *Rahmat Ali, Complete Works*, National Commission on Historical and Cultural Research, Islamabad, 1978, p. 8.

(UP) (4) Muinistan (Rajputana), (5) Mapilistan (South-West India), (6) Safistan (Western Ceylon) and (7) Nasiristan (Eastern Ceylon).

Rahmat Ali was a visionary. He took no part in the struggle for Pakistan that was launched by the Muslim League. His activities were confined to pamphleteering from Cambridge, and that too in very imprecise language. His contribution to the Pakistan struggle is nil. But he was the man who boldly proposed a partition scheme for the first time, and thus helped to spread the idea of Pakistan. More than that, he gave a name that stuck, and popularized the movement.

For five years nobody took any notice of Rahmat Ali in India, but from 1938 his idea started to gain popularity. A year earlier, Jawaharlal Nehru had contemptuously rejected the Muslim League's hand of co-operation, and Congress ministries had been formed in six to eight provinces, with the League sitting on the opposition benches. Normally in a parliamentary system, the opposition takes this role in its stride, hoping to turn the tables at the next elections; but in India there were no such prospects at all. The Hindus and the Congress were to perpetually occupy the treasury benches, and the Muslims and the League were eternally condemned to stay out of office. Were the Muslims doomed to be ruled forever by the Hindus, and never to share power?

The question became urgent as Muslim grievances against the Congress rule increased. Nehru called them 'unfounded', and the Congress leaders in general refused to accept the possibility of misconduct by their ministers; while the Governors, whose constitutional duty it was to protect the minorities, did not lift a finger. When the 1935 Act was about to come into force, the Congress had demanded an assurance from the Governors that they would not interfere with their special powers. This was categorically refused in all the provinces. A communiqué issued by the Bombay Government on 27 March 1937 was typical. It stated that: 'His Excellency pointed out to Mr Kher that under the Government of India Act 1935, it was impossible for the Governors to give any assurance as regards the use of the powers vested in them under the Act. The terms of the Act are mandatory and the obligations imposed on the Governors by the Act and by the Instrument of Instructions in respect of the special powers

and safe-guarding of the interests of the minorities are of such a nature that even if a Governor wished to relieve himself of them, it was not in his power to do so.¹ But all this was forgotten as soon as an understanding was reached between the British and the Congress.

Section VII of the Instrument of Instructions required that in the matter of selection of his ministers, a Governor was 'to appoint in consultation with the person who in his judgment is most likely to command a stable majority in the Legislature those persons (including so far as practical members of important minority communities) who will best be in a position collectively to command the confidence of the Legislature.' Under this Section, a Governor could have insisted, if he wished, that the Muslim member of the cabinet be a representative of the community rather than a hand-picked individual. But no Governor did, for the Governors were acting under the instructions of Linlithgow, although he had been the Chairman of the Joint Parliamentary Committee and knew more than anyone else the background and the purpose of this particular instruction.

As the Congress embarked on its new course, the Governors paid no heed to Muslim complaints, ignoring another Clause (IX) of their instructions 'requiring (them) to secure, in general, that those racial or religious communities for the members of which special representation is accorded in the legislature...shall not suffer, or have reasonable cause to fear neglect or oppression.'

If the Governors were indifferent, the Governor-General was even more so. He knew that the grievances were real, not a propaganda ploy by the League, for on 19 August 1938 he had reported to the India Secretary that although many of these were exaggerated, 'there is no question but that a certain number of them, at any rate, are well-founded.' Yet Linlithgow was to turn down Jinnah's demand for a Royal Commission of Inquiry.

The British were then having a honeymoon with the Congress and were out to punish Jinnah. He had not only condemned the federal part of the 1935 Act, but had also been a harsh critic of the special powers of the Governors. Now he was to be taught what such criticism would cost. Let the Muslims suffer; the more

¹*The Indian Annual Register*, 1937, Vol. I, p. 238.

they suffered the more would they realise how helpless they were without British support; and this would cost Jinnah much following. Khaliqzaman records: 'When a few years later we began to suffer under the heels of the Congress Government and I went to make a complaint about the attitude of Congress towards the Muslim minority, to the Governor of UP, he referred me to Mr Jinnah's speech in the (Central) Assembly in 1934.'¹

Strange as it may sound, both the Congress and the British were engaged at this time in the same game of dividing the Indians, and only Jinnah and his Muslim League had been trying to prevent it. The Congress, in its drive to establish its totalitarianism, was trying to isolate and break the League; while the British were happy that the gulf between the two communities was widening without any effort on their part.

It was the Muslims who were suffering, and they had to do something.

What was to be done? One thing was certain: paper safeguards were not enough. The Muslims had obtained safeguards after a great deal of effort, and felt triumphant that these had been incorporated in the constitution; but in practice they had proved utterly useless. The Hindus had trampled over them, and the Governors who were supposed to be the custodians of the constitution remained silent spectators. If this could happen while the British were still there, what would the majority community not do after India became free?

In the aftermath of Motilal Nehru's report the Muslims had begun to think in terms of all-powerful provinces, with their own territorial forces. But the haughty attitude of Motilal's son and the experience of Ram Raj turned their minds more and more to their own separate State(s). The years 1938 and 1939 saw a plethora of schemes with this basic idea. There was one (modified several times) by Dr Abdul Latif of Hyderabad; another by two professors of Aligarh, Dr Zafarul Hasan and Dr Afzal Husain Qadri; a third by 'A Punjabi', believed to be the work of the Nawab of Mamdot; and a fourth by the Chief Minister of the Punjab, Sir Sikander Hayat Khan. There were others too.

The authors of almost all these schemes agreed that the Muslims were a nation in their own right, but differed on the

¹Khaliqzaman, *op. cit.*, pp. 136-7.

extent of separation. Almost all visualized some sort of a confederal link; 'A Punjabi' urged the Muslims to be 'separatists-cum-confederalists', while the Aligarh professors envisaged 'defensive and offensive' alliances between the units. The authors of all these schemes were inhibited by two considerations. The first was with regard to the Muslims in minority provinces. How were they to be protected? At all the previous stages of constitutional reforms, the thought uppermost in the minds of Muslim leaders had been to provide safeguards, especially for this part of the community. Separate electorates and weightage were a product of this anxiety. Now that the 'safeguards' had proved ineffective, a complete separation of the majority provinces would mean further deterioration of the position of the minority provinces' Muslims. Furthermore, all the centres of Muslim culture and traditions happened to be in the minority provinces. The area between Panipat and Patna was specially close to the heart of every Indian Muslim, and it was to this area that he looked for inspiration and guidance. Delhi, Agra, and Lucknow were Muslim cities. The Taj Mahal and Qutub Minar were located there, as well as Aligarh and Deoband. This was the area where all Muslim movements, whether of revolt or regeneration, had originated and flourished—the Jihad of Saiyyid Ahmed Shaheed of Rai Bareli, The Great Revolt, the Aligarh Movement, the Khilafat agitation, the move to establish, and later to resurrect, the Muslim League. The area was also the cradle of Urdu, which had now become, after Islam, the strongest bond between the Muslims of India. Any scheme that would make this land totally 'foreign' could not easily be contemplated.

The second inhibition was provided by the Princely states. Kashmir had to be a part of the Muslim State, although its ruler was Hindu. It could not be otherwise, because of its geographical position and the Islamic character of the overwhelming majority of its people. But then what about Hyderabad, where the case was exactly the reverse? Yet Hyderabad had become the home of Mughal traditions and the centre of Muslim culture in the south. It was in Hyderabad, for instance, where the first Western-style university to impart education in Urdu (not English) was established. It was also a rich and self-reliant state, where the Muslims were prosperous and formed the ruling class. How could it be written off?

The Indian Muslims were on the horns of a terrible dilemma. The section which urged them to trust the Hindus had, after the Congress raj, lost all influence with the public, and many of them had become disillusioned themselves. The Anglo-Mohammadan School was disappointed at the British letting the Congress have a free hand at the expense of the Muslims, and was forced to re-think. Among the people at large there was no dearth of lotus-eaters who thought that the exit of the British would mean the restoration of *status quo ante*, but the Congress raj had awakened them from their dream. If the Muslim Empire could not be restored, a smaller Muslim State could still be established. The idea was catching on, but few had thought out in comprehensible terms what exactly the new State would be like, or what would be its relations with the Hindu State, or what its other consequences be.

Jinnah and the Pakistan Idea

Jinnah, as we have seen, had the vision of Pakistan much earlier, but he had not discussed it with anybody. However, in 1938, after the Governor of Bombay refused to have a Muslim representative in the provincial cabinet, he told Francis Low, the editor of the *Times of India*:

This means that we of the Muslim League who represent the Muslims are to have no further say in the government of this province or of any other province in India where the Congress is in a majority. That is the end. There is nothing more to do except to get a State of our own for the Muslims of the country.¹

This was, as far as we know, the first and the only time before 1939-40 that he had talked about a separate Muslim State. But among the Muslim public Rahmat Ali's idea was taking root. In September 1937, the Punjab Muslim Students Federation set its goal as 'the establishment of a Muslim national state in the north-west of India comprising the Punjab, the North-West Frontier

¹Sir Francis Low, *Memories of the Quaid-i-Azam*, The Pakistan Society Bulletin, London, No. 17, August 1962, pp. 17-18, cited by K. K. Aziz, *History of the Idea of Pakistan*, op. cit., pp. 627-8.

²K. K. Aziz, op. cit., p. 625.

Province, Sindh and Balochistan'.² In the Muslim League itself some people like Abdus Sattar Khairi, who was now a member of the League Council (and had welcomed amending his original proposal of separate independent provinces to a separate and independent union of Muslim provinces), and Sir Abdullah Haroon were actively preaching the idea.

This group tried to have a resolution in favour of partition passed at the Sindh Provincial Muslim League conference held in Karachi in October 1938. Haroon, in his speech as Chairman of the Reception Committee, declared that if the communal problem was not solved 'it will be impossible for anyone to save India from being divided into Hindu India and Muslim India, both placed under separate federations.'¹ Jinnah, in his presidential address, obliquely referred to the Congress policies which were creating 'a serious situation which will break India vertically and horizontally.'² But he would still not go beyond this. He not only said nothing in support of Haroon, but intervened when the partition resolution was introduced. The resolution, as proposed by Sheikh Abdul Majid Sindhvi in the Subjects' Committee, considered it 'absolutely essential in the interests of an abiding peace...and political self-determination of the two Nations, known as Hindus and Muslims, that India may be divided into two Federations, viz., the Federation of Muslim States and the Federation of non-Muslim States.' The Muslim Federation was to be open to admission to 'any other Muslim State beyond the Indian Frontiers.'³ On Jinnah's persuasion, however, the resolution was amended to read (after the words 'the two Nations, known as Hindus and Muslims'), 'to recommend to All-India Muslim League to review and revise the entire question of what should be the suitable constitution for India which will secure honourable and legitimate status to them,' and asked the League to devise 'a scheme of Constitution under which Muslims may attain full independence.'⁴

The incident is highly significant. It shows that the idea of partition had passed beyond individual thinkers or small groups

¹Ibid., p. 630.

²Ibid., p. 631.

³Sherwani, *op. cit.*, p. 592.

⁴*Resolutions of the All India Muslim League, from October 1937 to December 1938*, published by the Honorary Secretary, 1944, Annexure, p. 81.

of students, and had won converts among mature and responsible leadership. It also shows that Jinnah was not yet prepared to go to that extreme. Nevertheless, the resolution as finally adopted did talk of 'two nations', their right of 'self-determination', and 'full independence'. And this had been done, not by a band of individuals or some small, insignificant society, but by the provincial branch of what was fast becoming the only representative body of the Indian Muslims.

The matter was raised again at the annual session of the League at Patna. Jinnah lashed out at the Congress for having 'killed every hope of Hindu-Muslim unity in the right royal fashion of Fascism'. 'The Congress does not want any settlement with the Muslims,' he said. 'It wants to thrust its own terms on the Muslims of India.' He considered it 'a misfortune of our country, indeed it is a tragedy, that the High Command of the Congress is determined, absolutely determined, to crush all other communities and cultures in this country, and to establish Hindu Raj.' He charged Gandhi with '*destroying the ideal with which the Congress was started,*' and for being 'the one man responsible for turning the Congress into *an instrument for the revival of Hinduism.*' 'I say the Muslims and the Muslim League have only one ally, and that ally is the Muslim nation,'¹ he declared.

Yet, despite noting that the League had succeeded in 'awakening a remarkable national consciousness among the Muslims,' he refrained from demanding a separate Muslim Federation. In fact, he restrained others from doing so. Abdus Sattar Khairi had given notice that he would move a resolution saying that as 'the Muslims of India are not a Community, but a NATION in every sense of the term,' they 'demanded the Right of SELF-DETERMINATION.'² The resolution was seconded by another professor from Aligarh, Dr Syed Abid Ahmed Ali. Abdul Majid Sindhi, supported by Abdullah Haroon, had wanted to move the same resolution that was passed at Karachi.³ But due to Jinnah, neither of the two resolutions could get past the Subjects' Committee. In its place the Committee passed a small resolution, which was ultimately adopted by the open session, which, while

¹Pirzada, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 302-10.

²*Freedom Movement Archives*, Vol. 188, p. 64. (Emphasis original.)

³*Ibid.*, Vol. 190, pp. 29-31.

rejecting the 1935 Act, authorized Jinnah 'to explore the possibility of *suitable alternative* which will safeguard the interests of the Musalmans and other minorities in India.'¹

The Patna session established the Muslim League as the premier political organization of the Indian Muslims. Sikander Hayat and Fazlul Haq had given it a boost at Lucknow, but since then other provincial leaders had been joining it in large numbers. These included Abdul Aziz (Bihar), Nawab of Chhatari and Sir Mohammed Yusaf (UP), Abdullah Haroon (Sindh) and Abdur Rauf Shah (CP) all of whom had summarily rejected Jinnah at the time of the 1937 elections. The Muslim masses, especially in the Congress provinces, were also drawn to it in droves. In fact, although the Jamiatul Ulema and its political offshoots like the Ahrars kept away, the League had by now become the representative body of the community, and Jinnah the leader. During the year he had been referred to in the Urdu Press by various titles such as Zaimul Millat Quaid-i-Azam and Quaid-i-Millat, but it was Quaid-i-Azam (the Great Leader) that became universally popular.

The Quaid (as Jinnah was affectionately called in some quarters, particularly among the youth), while holding his followers back on the demand for partition, continued to be worried about the position of Muslims in Congress-governed provinces. Complaints poured in at the League office, as well as directly to him. As the Congress refused to accept its guilt and the British watched nonchalantly, a sense of desperation was overtaking the community, and a resolution was passed at Patna declaring that 'the time has now come to authorize the Working Committee of the All India Muslim League to decide and resort to "Direct Action" if and when necessary.'² The Quaid himself reflected the Muslim mood while speaking in the Central Legislative Assembly on 22 March 1939. He said that his party had supported the Government when it was right, and the Congress when the Congress was right, but nobody supported them when they were right. He referred to Congress repression and government indifference, but 'both combined will never succeed in destroying our souls,' and added that 'we have now

¹*Muslim League Resolutions*, pp. 73-4. (Emphasis added.)

²*Muslim League Resolutions*, p. 67.

made a grim resolve that we shall go down, if we have to go down, fighting.¹

The Muslims were fast reaching the end of their tether.

At about the same time (on 20 March), two members of the Working Committee, Chaudhry Khaliqzaman and Abdur Rahman Siddiqui, who happened to be in London in connection with a Palestine conference, met the India Secretary, Lord Zetland. During the discussions Zetland asked them what, in their view, was the alternative to a federation. Khaliqzaman thereupon suggested 'a federation of Muslim provinces and States in North-West India; a further federation of Bengal and Assam; and possibly more than one federation of the other provinces and States in the remaining part of India.'²

On return to India, they reported the interview to the Quaid. 'He carefully heard every word of the talk, at times asking me to repeat certain words, and thereafter he said, "Have you weighed the consequences?" I replied, "There being no alternative open to us we cannot go on talking on the old basis without any result." He assured us that he was not opposed to it but it had to be examined in all its bearings.'³ In the Urdu version of his memoirs, Khaliqzaman has also added: 'We (two) felt that it had not given him as much pleasure as it deserved,' and 'when we returned from our talk, Rahman was very depressed, and he thought that Jinnah Sahib is not prepared to accept it. I differed from him and said to him that, "As the President, he must consider all its pros and cons".'⁴

That two members of his own Working Committee should suggest partition to the Secretary of State for India, although the Muslim League had not yet decided on it, showed to the Quaid how rapidly the idea was spreading amongst the Muslims. He was a democratic leader *par excellence*: he would not only give a lead, but also carry the people with him. Clearly the ground was now almost ready, but Jinnah was still reluctant to make the demand. He was not in two minds or vacillating; that had never been a weakness with Jinnah. On the contrary, he was by nature quick

¹Jamiluddin Ahmad, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 90.

²Khaliqzaman, *Pathway to Pakistan*, *op. cit.*, p. 207.

³*Ibid.*, p. 211.

⁴Khaliqzaman, *Shahrah-i-Pakistan*, pp. 749-50.

and decisive, as has been acknowledged even by his detractors. He had more than once asked his followers to think a thousand times but once a decision was taken, never to flinch.¹ A demand for partition, which would decide the fate of both the communities, once made, would irretrievably commit the League, and Jinnah did not want to burn his boats before giving the Congress yet another chance.

There had been intermittent negotiations, mostly by correspondence, between Jinnah and the Congress represented by Gandhi, Jawaharlal and Subhas Chandra Bose. On 19 October 1937, Gandhi had written and called Jinnah's speech at the Lucknow session a 'declaration of war',² to which Jinnah had replied that he was acting 'purely in self-defence'.³ Then in February 1938, Gandhi wrote: 'In your speeches I miss the old nationalist. When I returned from the self-imposed exile in South Africa, everybody spoke of you as one of the staunchest of nationalists and the hope of both Hindus and Muslims. Are you still the same Mr Jinnah?'⁴ To this Jinnah replied: 'Do you think you are justified in saying that? I would not like to say what people spoke of you in 1915 and what they speak and think of you today. *Nationalism is not the monopoly of any single individual*, and in these days it is very difficult to define it; but I don't want to pursue this line of controversy any further.'⁵

But nothing came out of these negotiations, because the Congress refused to accept the Muslim League as the representative of the Muslims, as it had done at Lucknow in 1916. The Congress arrogance, instead of abating, was increasing. It was asserting the claim of being 'the one and only party' in India, and was now not even hiding its aim of liquidating other parties. In a press interview in December 1938, Gandhi said:

¹For example, at the Calcutta Special Session of the League to consider 'Non-co-operation', in September 1920: 'it rests with you alone to measure your strength and to weigh the pros and cons of the question before you arrive at a decision. But once you have decided to march, let there be no retreat under any circumstances'. (Pirzada, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 543).

²Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada, (ed.), *Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah's Correspondence*, East & West Publishing Co., Karachi, 1966, p. 89-91.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., p. 91. (Emphasis added.)

The Congress does claim to be the one and only party that can deliver the goods. It is a perfectly valid claim to make. One day or the other some party has to assert itself to that extent...It would love to be absorbed by the Muslim League if the Muslim League could care to absorb it or to absorb the Muslim League in its turn...But if the Congress has the ambition of absorbing other political organizations, it cannot help being a totalitarian party...You may try to damn it by calling it totalitarian. Absorption is inevitable when a country is engaged in a struggle to wrest power from foreign hands: it cannot afford to have separate rival political organizations.¹

Meanwhile Savarkar was telling the Mahasabha in his presidential address at Nagpur: 'When we will be in a position to retaliate...and do retaliate, the Muslims will come to their senses in a day.'² There was, so far as the Muslims were concerned, no difference between the Mahasabha and the Congress. The former did not mince words, while the latter was all milk and honey. The ultimate aims of both were the same and, in the circumstances of 1939, Mahasabha Governments would not have been any worse. But such pronouncements spurred the Muslims in their search for a political alternative.

There was a spurt of activity by Muslim separatists that summer. The schemes of 'A Punjabi' and Sikander Hayat were published in July, and of the Aligarh professors in August; Latif had also presented a modification of his earlier scheme. In July, the Punjab Muslim Student's Federation changed its goal from the establishment of a Muslim national state to 'Khilafat-i-Rabbani'. The Inter-Collegiate Muslim Brotherhood of Lahore followed suit.

Thus by August 1939, Muslim opinion had become unanimously opposed to a federation, and a committee of the Muslim League, appointed by the Quaid in March, was considering various schemes in search of 'a suitable alternative'. Opinions, however, differed as to what that alternative should be. Among the members of the League's Working Committee, the highest organ of the party, Sikander Hayat was pleading for a three-tier federal structure, the Nawab of Mamdot was suggesting a Confederation, Liaquat Ali Khan was demanding 'a limited and

¹Interview with H. V. Hodson, Editor of the *Round Table*, CWMG, op. cit., Vol. LXVII, P. 240.

²*The Indian Annual Register*, 1938, Vol. II, p. 334.

specific Federation,'¹ Abdulla Haroon and Abdul Majid Sindhi wanted two separate federations, while Khaliqzaman and Abdur Rahman Siddiqui were in favour of three or four. But these differences had narrowed down to the question: Should there be a federation or confederation at all? And if so, how weak? Even Liaquat Ali was asking for 'dividing the country'²; and Mamdot was saying that, 'if Hindus object to confederation, Muslims would have no alternative but to demand complete separation'.³ Meanwhile the younger generation was increasingly opting for partition, and pressing for it.

But the Quaid was still reluctant to make the final choice. While pressure within the League itself was building up, he would not go beyond condemning the 'federal idea'. He kept on warning the Congress against the results of its policy, but he would not even hint at his preference for partition. In fact, he was holding his followers back.

At that time, watching the international situation, he could see that war was coming, and that it would certainly involve India. Perhaps he thought that, in the life-and-death situation with which India would be faced then, the Congress would rise above petty party considerations and be amenable to some joint patriotic effort.

War did come, the next month, but the attitude of the Congress, if it changed at all, changed for the worse. It saw in Britain's extremity a unique opportunity for itself to demand power at the Centre as the sole representative of India. The demand was accompanied by a threat to launch a civil disobedience that would seriously tax British resources and gravely affect the war effort.

The Muslim League announced its policy in a resolution adopted by the Working Committee on 18 September. In this resolution, the League welcomed the Viceroy's announcement that the Federal Scheme of the 1935 Act had been suspended,

¹Presiding over a Muslim League Conference at Merrut, Liaquat Ali Khan said on 25 March 1939: '... If Hindus and Muslims cannot live amicably in any other way, they may be allowed to do so by dividing the Country in a suitable manner...If this is done, a limited and specific Federation would not only be easy but desirable.' K. K. Aziz, *op. cit.*, pp. 637-8.

²*Ibid.*

³*Ibid.*, p. 637.

although it wished that Scheme had, instead, been abandoned completely. It then went on to point out that:

Muslim India occupies a special and peculiar position in the polity of India and for several decades it had hoped to occupy an honourable place in the national life, government and administration of the country, and worked for free India with free and independent Islam in which they could play an equal part with the major community with a complete sense of security for their religious, political, cultural, social and economic rights and interests; but the developments that have taken place, and especially since the inauguration of the provincial Constitution based on the so-called democratic parliamentary system of government, and the recent experiences of over two years have established beyond doubt that it has resulted wholly in a permanent communal majority and the domination of the Hindus over the Muslim minorities, whose life and liberty, property and honour, are in danger, and even their religious rights and culture are being assailed and annihilated every day under the Congress governments in various provinces.¹

Thus, while reiterating that 'Muslim India stands against exploitation of the people of India and has repeatedly declared in favour of Free India, it is equally opposed to the domination of Hindu majority over Muslims and other minorities and vassalization of Muslim India and is irrevocably opposed to any federal objective which must necessarily result in a majority community rule under the guise of democracy and parliamentary system of government. Such a constitution is totally unsuited to the genius of the people of the country which is composed of various nationalities and does not constitute a national State.' It therefore demanded review and reconsideration of the whole constitutional question *de novo*, and an assurance that no constitutional arrangement would be made without the consent and approval of the League.

While going so far as to declare that the parliamentary system of government was not suited to India as it meant domination of the Hindus, and that the objective of 'Free Islam in Free India' was not a practical possibility any more, the League still refrained from showing preference for partition. Ten days later, speaking at a dinner of Old Boys of the Osmania University (Hyderabad) the Quaid declared that he was still a nationalist. He said:

¹*Resolutions of the All India Muslim League, from December 1938 to March 1940*, published by Liaquat Ali Khan, Secretary of the League, pp. 25-8.

I yield to none in the determination to safeguard the interests of my country, nor would I yield to anybody in striving for the attainment of freedom for my country.

I am essentially a practical man; I have been in practical politics for over a quarter of a century. *The words 'nationalism' and 'nationalist' have undergone many changes in their definition and significance. Some people have a dictionary of their own, but within the honest meaning of the term I remain a nationalist.*

He went on to say:

I have always believed in a Hindu-Muslim pact. But such a pact can only be an honourable one and not a pact which will mean the destruction of one and the survival of the other. The Congress High Command, unfortunately, are not prepared to grasp the hand of friendship, but would like to destroy the very hand which offered friendship. One does not see much light at present but you never can say when the two communities would unite. We have a recent example of the German-Soviet pact between two nations which were the bitterest of enemies.¹

While the Quaid was publicly expressing his belief in a Hindu-Muslim pact and making a plea for unity, Gandhi was privately 'begging' the Viceroy not to even consult the League.²

The March to Pakistan

Immediately after the declaration of war, the Viceroy started a series of meetings with the Indian leaders. His aim was to ensure that, by making some constitutional concessions, India was kept quiet and nothing hampered the war effort. This was the opportunity for India to liberate itself from foreign rule by united action. But the Congress was not prepared to share either honours or power with any other party, and certainly not with the League.

Although Jinnah had resisted all attempts to rush him into demanding partition, he was deeply concerned about the plight of Muslims in the Congress provinces. During his various meetings with Linlithgow this matter was discussed several times, but the Viceroy gave no assurance that anything would be done to protect the Muslims. The League Council, meeting on the eve of war, on

¹Jamiluddin Ahmad, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 91-2. (Emphasis added.)

²Linlithgow to Zetland, 27 September 1939, *Zetland Collection*. India Office Library and Record, Mss. EUR. D. 609.

27 and 28 August at Delhi, had 'deplored' the 'utter neglect and indifference shown by the Viceroy and the Governors in the Congress-governed provinces in exercising their special powers to protect and secure justice to the minorities,'¹ and after Jinnah's first meeting with Linlithgow on 4 September, the Working Committee in its 18 September resolution had 'strongly urge(d)' upon the British Government and the Viceroy to direct the Governors to exercise their special powers where any provincial administration 'resorted to oppression or interference with their (the Muslims') political, economic, social, and cultural rights.' The resolution made it clear that 'real and solid Muslim co-operation and support to Great Britain in this hour of trial cannot be secured successfully if His Majesty's Government and the Viceroy are unable to secure to the Musalmans justice and fair play in the Congress-governed provinces where today their liberty, person, property, and honour are in danger and even their elementary rights are most callously trampled upon.'²

In his first meeting with the Viceroy, Jinnah in reply to the usual British plea for co-operation, asked: 'Why should we fight to perpetuate conditions in India that must bring about complete domination by the Hindus?' He demanded that the British Government announce that the existing constitution would be completely overhauled and reshaped; and that the Government protect the elementary human rights of the Muslims in Congress provinces. 'I said,' reported the Viceroy to the Secretary of State, "'Do you want me to turn Congress ministries out?'" To this Mr Jinnah at once replied, "Yes ! Turn them out at once. Nothing else will bring them to their senses. Their object, though you may not believe it, and though *I did not believe it till two years ago*, is nothing less than to destroy both you British and us Muslims.'" In the same interview the Quaid declared that the western type of democracy did not suit India, and, in answer to Linlithgow's query as to how then India was to obtain self-government, said that 'an escape from the impasse...lay in the adoption of Partition.'³

¹*Resolutions of the All India Muslim League, October 1937 to December 1938*, p. 19, (Resolution No. 8).

²*Ibid.*, p. 27.

³Linlithgow to Zetland, 5 September 1939. (Emphasis added.) *Linlithgow Collection*. India Office Library and Record, Mss. EUR. F. 125.

In the next meeting, he informed Linlithgow that he had received representations from a group of Aligarh professors urging him 'under no circumstances to reach agreement either with the Congress or the Governor-General unless the plan to create a united India was abandoned and effective protection was given to the Muhammedans in the Provinces.'¹

On 1 November the Viceroy had a joint meeting with Jinnah, Gandhi and the Congress President, Rajendra Prasad. He asked them to hold discussions among themselves in order to find the basis of an agreement in the provincial sphere, and to follow it up with proposals to the Viceroy for participation in the Central Government. What an irony that such an initiative should have come from the representative of the Imperial power! But it did, anyhow, give an opportunity to Indian leaders to form a united front. Jinnah agreed immediately, and the three did meet later, but the Congress leaders refused to hold any discussions with Jinnah, and told him that they wanted the British to concede Congress demands first.

While the Congress was riding its high horse, the Muslim League was gaining in strength every day. It was no more the elite club of yesteryear but had been converted into a party of the masses, whose appeal and influence was increasing rapidly. Linlithgow reported to the Secretary of State on 28 November:

So far as the Muslims are concerned, one of the most significant features of the last two years has in my judgment been the emergence of the Muslim League from a position of relative secondary importance, as an All-India political organization which, whatever internal dissensions may from time to time reveal themselves, is second only in importance to the Congress; and in certain respects second not even to that body. The second significant feature in this connection has been the extent to which Muslim demands have expanded and crystallized during the same period.²

The movement for partition was also spreading rapidly. On 18 November, the Raja of Mahmudabad told the Conference of the Assam Provincial Muslim League that: 'There must and will be more than one federation, each independent but at the same time complimentary of the other.'³ Six days later, even the cautious

¹*Linlithgow Collection*, op. cit.

²*Ibid.*

³K. K. Aziz, op. cit., p. 641.

Liaquat Ali Khan said, at a League conference at Darbanga, that the Hindu attitude 'has led to the idea of partitioning India into Hindu and Muslim zones'.¹ The picture was becoming clearer to everyone except the Congress leaders. Even the pro-Congress Sir Stafford Cripps, who had in October advised Nehru to stand firm against the British Government,² on his return to England after a short visit to India in December, expressed his belief that 'some separation of Hindu and Muslim dominions might be necessary' and partition would be 'a necessary fact of the Indian constitution.'³

Jinnah himself had, in the autumn of 1939, told a delegation of Muslim students from Cambridge who had called on him and tried to sell Rahmat Ali's idea: 'I am getting more and more convinced that you are right, *in spite of myself*.'⁴ Yet he would still not go beyond saying, as he told the *Manchester Guardian* in October, that Muslim India wanted to be free and develop its own institutions. He was still resisting the pressure from his followers, and would not give up hoping and trying for an understanding with the Congress. He was hoping against hope.

The new year opened in a deadlock. No understanding had been reached between either the Government and the Congress, the Government and the League, or the League and the Congress. The Congress was claiming to be the only party that could deliver the goods and demanding the setting up of a constituent assembly; and in a bid to put more pressure on the British, its ministries in the provinces had resigned. The League had welcomed these resignations and celebrated a day of deliverance and thanksgiving, and the Congress-League talks had broken down. In its negotiations with the Government, the League had expressed readiness to co-operate under certain conditions. It wanted its proper share of responsibility in the interim period and, after the war, the consideration of the entire constitutional question with a guarantee that no constitution would be imposed on India without the consent of the Muslims.

These guarantees were of utmost importance to the League. As Liaquat Ali Khan told Stafford Cripps in December, there

¹Ibid.

²Gopal, *op. cit.*, p. 253.

³Colin Cooke, *The Life of Richard Stafford Cripps*, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1957, p. 256.

⁴K. K. Aziz, *op. cit.*, p. 640. (Emphasis added.)

were only three possible constitutional alternatives left, viz. (a) partition, (b) dominion status for each province, (c) a confederation.¹ And Jinnah, while resisting the pressure from his followers for partition, could not accept any arrangement which would prejudice the Muslim demand in future.

The British were, as usual, playing their own game. They were not anxious to come to terms with Jinnah, despite his positive response, without simultaneously reaching an agreement with the Congress, despite its negative policy. They could not totally ignore the League because of its rapidly rising popularity, plus the fact that the majority of the population in the border areas in both the north-west and north-east was Muslim. Moreover, they were trying to use the possibility of reaching an agreement with the League as leverage against the Congress—the same way as Birkenhead had tried to do for the Simon Commission. What they would have welcomed most was to get both the Congress and the League to co-operate with them, but if this was not possible, to somehow reach an understanding with the Congress alone.

Linlithgow began a fresh effort to reach this objective when he visited Bombay in January. He saw Jinnah, and Jinnah told him of the terms he had offered the Congress leaders in November for co-operation between the two organizations. These were: (a) coalition ministries in the provinces; (b) no legislation affecting Muslims to be enforced if opposed by a two-thirds majority of Muslim members of that legislature; (c) the Congress flag not to fly over public buildings (d) an understanding on the singing of '*Bande Matram*'; and (e) the Congress to give up its efforts to destroy the League.²

Commented Linlithgow in a report to the Secretary of State: 'We ought to recognize that in dealing with Muslim leaders we were dealing with people...who were responsible men and also they were out, as anyone else, for India's advance.'³

But the Congress was singing a different tune. In its campaign to coerce the British to transfer power to it alone, it considered the League a very irritating obstacle. To the question of minority rights,

¹Eric Estorick, *Stafford Cripps: A Biography*, Heinemann, London, 1949, p. 199.

²Linlithgow's record of interview with Jinnah 13 January 1940, *Zetland Collection*, op. cit.

³Linlithgow's record of interview with Jinnah 12 January 1949, *Zetland Collection*, op. cit.

it would give assurances of full protection, and even go through the motions of talking to Jinnah, but with no intention of reaching an agreement. On 18 October for example, Nehru wrote to the Quaid that, 'I entirely agree with you that it is a tragedy that Hindu-Muslim problem has not so far been settled in a friendly way. I am terribly distressed about it and ashamed of myself in so far as I have not been able to contribute towards its solution.'¹ But his negotiations with Jinnah, like the talks between Jinnah, Gandhi and Rajendra Prasad, soon broke down as he was prepared neither to consider Muslim complaints nor to recognize the League as the representative of the Muslims. The Congress leaders, instead of making a settlement with Jinnah, branded him an instrument of the British, standing in the way of India's freedom. Gandhi said:

Janab Jinnah Sahib looks to the British power to safeguard the Muslim rights. Nothing that the Congress can do or concede will satisfy him, for he can always, and naturally, from his standpoint, ask far more than the British can give or guarantee. Therefore, there can be no limit to the Muslim League demands;²

and Nehru announced that:

The Congress will not enter into negotiations with the Muslim League through Mr Jinnah who is bent upon preserving British domination in India.³

The Congress demands had, of course, beautiful democratic trappings. All they asked for was a Constituent Assembly where the Indians could exercise their natural right and draw up a constitution for their country. Outwardly this was a thoroughly democratic solution, but in practice it meant that the Congress, refusing to settle the communal problem in advance, merely intended to ride roughshod over the rights of the minorities and use its brute majority to dictate its wishes.

Jinnah naturally could not support this demand, and made his position clear to the Government. He expressed his views in an article, published in *Time and Tide* of London on 19 January 1940, in which he said that the Muslim League stood for a free India

¹ *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, op. cit., 1977, Vol. X, p. 359.

² CWMG, op. cit., Vol. LXX, p. 318-19, *Harijan*, 30 October 1939.

³ *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, op. cit., Vol. X, p. 421.

but was totally opposed to any federal idea which necessarily must result in the majority community rule under the guise of democracy, and that the Hindus and the Muslims were two separate nations 'who both must share the governance of their common motherland.' This was close to a demand for partition, but not entirely. He was still holding back.

It was about this time that the Jinnah-Linlithgow meeting had taken place, and Jinnah had told the Viceroy about the terms of co-operation he had offered the Congress. The Congress was already feeling that its attempt to blackmail the British had backfired, and that the resignation of provincial governments had been a blunder. Efforts were then under way to find some formula for getting back into office, and overtures were being made to the British—the Viceroy followed his interview with Jinnah by seeing the leader of the Congress party in the Central Assembly, Bhulabhai Desai. Desai told the Viceroy: 'If there could be an understanding that the provincial ministries would get back into office and the Governor-General's Executive Council would be expanded, the absence of the Constituent Assembly might be regarded as less vital,'¹ and that even dominion status might be acceptable. When Linlithgow mentioned Jinnah's terms for co-operation, Desai was quite helpful. He felt that coalition ministries were a distinct possibility under a not-too-difficult agreement on such matters as governmental programmes.

Desai's talk created a glimmer of hope for a Congress-League *rapprochement*. The League Chief Ministers reacted promptly. Fazlul Haq of Bengal called a meeting of fifteen Muslim and fifteen Hindu leaders to settle the communal question, and said that the best solution would be to form coalition ministries in the provinces. Sikander Hayat of the Punjab also expressed willingness to give the idea a trial.² But the situation changed when the thread of talks was picked up by Gandhi.

In the Gandhi-Linlithgow meeting that took place in Delhi on 5 February, the question of coalition ministries was summarily dismissed: Gandhi said that he 'did not think there was anything doing with the Muslim League',³ and the Viceroy remarked that

¹V. P. Menon, *The Transfer of Power in India*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1957, p. 73.

²*Indian Annual Register, 1940*, Vol. I, p. 35.

³Record of interview, *Zetland Collection*, op. cit.

he was not in any case enamoured of coalitions. What they discussed at length was the question of the revision of the constitution. Linlithgow suggested 'that use could be made of a broad-based and representative federal legislature for the purpose. Though he had announced the suspension of the federal negotiations, His Majesty's Government would be prepared to resume those negotiations even during the war. As soon as the requisite number of States had acceded, His Majesty's Government would inaugurate the federation.'¹

The Quaid met the Viceroy the next day. The League Working Committee had met on 3 and 4 February, and decided to send a delegation to England to explain the Muslim point of view to the Parliament and the Government. The question arose as to what line to take there. 'We had on several occasions been talking of a revision of the 1935 Act,' says Khaliqzaman in his memoirs, 'but we had not suggested any alternative to the "Federal Objective". Now something positive had to be presented, otherwise our visit would yield no result.'² A discussion followed Khaliqzaman's suggestion that the League should confine its demand to the separation of the Muslim zones:

At this stage Sir Sikander who was sitting to the right of Mr Jinnah started pleading for his confederal scheme and Mr Jinnah opposing it. The discussion went on for about two hours when finally, with the concurrence of the members, Mr Jinnah rejected Sir Sikander's scheme and entered in his notebook my suggestion with approval. I do not know how many people realize when it was that for the first time the Muslim League Working Committee decided to claim the division of India.³

According to Khaliqzaman, the Quaid informed the Viceroy of this decision on 6 February.⁴ However, this is not correct. He did not tell the Viceroy about it; the Viceroy's talk that day, however, apparently convinced him that any long postponement would greatly injure Muslim interests.

The Viceroy told Jinnah that although he had for the moment not succeeded in bringing about an arrangement satisfactory to all parties, he would not 'for an instant' relax efforts to restore

¹Menon, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-7.

²Khaliqzaman, *Pathway to Pakistan*, *op. cit.*, p. 233.

³*Ibid.*, p. 234.

⁴*Ibid.*

normal working of the 1935 Act, and that the Congress ministers 'could return to office in the provinces on any day on which they chose'. When the Quaid warned that the return of Congress Ministries under existing circumstances would lead to civil war in India, 'I replied that was a very grave utterance from a man in his position: but even if he meant what he said, the constitution was part of the law of the land and must be respected in its present form unless and until the law was altered,' and 'he must take it from me that no opportunity would be missed of persuading Congress Ministers to return to office.'¹ Linlithgow also once again asked Jinnah for his 'constructive' views, and the Quaid said he would give them in good time.

The eagerness of the Viceroy to bring the Congress back into office was alarming. The Congress had been unrepentant about its record in the provinces and the British had been unconcerned. Throughout his talks with the Viceroy, the latter had given to Jinnah neither any assurance about protecting Muslims in minority provinces nor about the future shape of the constitution. On the contrary, he would ask Jinnah for specific suggestions. Jinnah's reluctance to come out with the final choice was proving embarrassing to no one but himself. The Congress was charging him with having no policy except to oppose it and to stand in the way of India's freedom; and the British were blaming him for negative tactics and wanting things to stand still, which was impossible. If the British-Congress parleys succeeded, the give-and-take could only be at the expense of the Muslims. He had not yet demanded partition, and could not for ever stand merely on the demand for reconsideration of the constitutional question, without making any positive suggestions. 'Well,' the British could say to him, 'we are revising the 1935 Act. Do you have any suggestions?' and Jinnah could say nothing more than that he was opposed to federation. 'What do you want in its place?' and Jinnah could say nothing,² although he knew that partition had

¹The record of interview and the telegram dated 6 February 1940 from the Viceroy to the Secretary of State for India, *Linlithgow Collection*, op. cit.

²In December, Linlithgow had asked Khawaja Nazimuddin in Calcutta, 'what alternative he (Jinnah) was in a position now to propose himself,' and Nazimuddin had to admit this weakness in the League's position; Linlithgow to Zetland, 18 December 1939, *Linlithgow Collection*, op. cit.

become the fate of India, and his own followers were becoming more and more vociferous about it.

Jinnah's self-denial seriously handicapped him in his negotiations with the Viceroy. Linlithgow thought he had discovered Jinnah's weak point, and would miss no opportunity to ask for 'constructive suggestions'. But Jinnah would not take him into his confidence. He might still have held out but for the suspicion that the British and the Congress might reach an agreement behind his back. He had never believed that the Congress was sincere in its opposition to Federation.¹ He had said at Patna:

Let the Congress continue to say that they will never accept the Federation. But I tell you I do not at all believe in the professions of the Congress. The Congress will tumble into it just as it tumbled into the provincial part of the Constitution.²

As for the British, Linlithgow himself was emotionally involved, and totally committed to Federation. In the summer of 1939, he had sent a message to Gandhi through his disciple, Bombay's Home Minister K. M. Munshi:

Tell Mr Gandhi that we cannot do without the Congress and the Congress cannot do without us...Let me introduce the Federal part of the Constitutional Act, and the Congress will be in power at the Centre. If you do not heed my advice I tell you, Jinnah will break the country into two.³

Linlithgow had sent this message after a difference of opinion with the Secretary of State about the possibility of inaugurating the Federation. On 28 March, after his meeting with Khaliqzaman and Abdur Rehman Siddiqui, Zetland wrote to Linlithgow: 'What they told me confirmed to some extent the views which I expressed to you not very long ago to the effect that we should probably have greater difficulty in bringing the Muslims into the federation than the Congress,' and that 'the

¹'...it is no use having complete independence on your lips and the Government of India Act, 1935, in your hands,' he said of the Congress in October 1937, and '...let the Congress at least concentrate and see that the All-India Federation Scheme embodied in the Government of India Act, 1935,...is not brought into being.' Presidential address, Lucknow.

²Pirzada, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 308.

³Francis Watson, *The Trial of Mr Gandhi*, Macmillan, London, 1969, pp. 218-19.

difficulty of bringing the federation into existence' 'was gaining in magnitude.'¹ Linlithgow's answer was that: 'We cannot for a moment contemplate substantial modification...much less the jettisoning of the Federal plan on account of Muslim fears...Our prestige is deeply involved.'² Linlithgow also said that the Muslims were far too weak to stop the coming of the Federation.

The Congress had not listened to Linlithgow then, but now that it had overplayed its hand and was realizing it, the position was different. Linlithgow felt confident that by offering the glittering reward of return to office in the provinces plus a share of power at the Centre, he could induce the Congress to accept the federal part. All that would he required to save its face was to make a few minor, not substantial, modifications. It was true that the Muslims had been assured that the Government was 'not under any misapprehension as to the importance of the contentment of the Muslim community to the stability and success of any constitutional development in India,' and that Jinnah 'need, therefore, have no fear that the weight which your community's position in India necessarily gives their views will be underrated.'³ But this could be explained away with such tongue-in-cheek phrases as 'democratic practice', 'wishes of the majority' and the evil of 'the veto of the minority'. True, the Government had said that it was not possible to undertake any major constitutional changes during wartime. But the war situation had not prevented the British from rushing the India Amendment Act, 1939, through Parliament. The Act (Section 126A) had empowered the Central Government not only to direct provincial governments as to how to exercise their executive authority, but also to make laws on subjects which were specifically reserved for the provinces. This hit hard at the most important feature of the 1935 Act, i.e. provincial autonomy. But if such a drastic modification could be made so easily, what could stop them from making a few minor changes in order to make federation acceptable to the Congress?

In a statement in January, Jinnah had said: 'The Congress High Command, from the latest writings of Mr Gandhi, are out

¹Zetland to Linlithgow, 28 March 1939. *Zetland Collection*, op. cit.

²Linlithgow to Zetland, 19 May 1939. *Linlithgow Collection*, op. cit.

³*Speeches and Statements of the Marquess of Linlithgow, 1936-43*, Bureau of Public Information, Government of India, New Delhi, 1945, p. 399.

for a compromise with the Viceroy, under paramountcy, in a manner such as would once more revive the gentlemen's agreement¹ and the alliance with the British Government in order that Musalmans and minorities and other interests may be placed at their mercy once more for them to begin their process of crushing them downright.' He warned the government that:

any repetition of such a position in which the guarantees already given to the minorities are not implemented, or are not honoured in practice, will create the gravest crisis in India; and Muslim India will resist it by all means in their power and will not shrink from making any sacrifice. The British Government will be wholly responsible for the consequences if they yield or are stampeded by the threats and coercion by one party.²

He had followed that up with the personal warning to Linlithgow on 6 February. He was not imagining things: there was a real danger that the Government and the Congress might reach an understanding, leaving the League out in the cold. Linlithgow was, of course, very keen on this, and in Britain the *Manchester Guardian*³ and the *New Statesman and Nation* were asking for power to be handed over to the Congress, letting it deal with the Muslims, while Cripps was pleading for the same policy with the Government⁴ and Parliament.⁵ Zetland, on his part, despite his misgivings about the possibility of inaugurating the Federation, would have been quite happy if the Viceroy was able to pull it off. His only concern was with protecting British interests in India. He had, in January-February, drawn up a memorandum setting out the British 'desiderata'. If these were

¹The understanding between the Government and the Congress, after which the Congress formed ministries in the provinces in 1937.

²Jamiluddin Ahmad, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 134-5.

³In a letter to Linlithgow, on 21 February 1939, Zetland reported that in an interview with him, Crozier, editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, had said that Jinnah's attitude was both unhelpful and deserved condemnation. *Zetland Collection*, *op. cit.*

⁴On 23 October 1939, Cripps told Halifax that '...if we believe in Democracy, Congress did represent the majority of British India.' Estorick, *op. cit.*, p. 188.

⁵In his speech in the House of Commons on 26 October, Cripps said, *inter alia*, that if a member 'believes in democracy how does he reconcile that with saying that 80,000,000 Moslems are to determine the future of India, and not the far larger number of Hindus?' *Hansard*, Vol. XII, 1938-9, p. 1655.

secured, he recommended to the cabinet, the British should not let the minorities stand in the way of a settlement and 'accept a constitution framed by Indians themselves.'¹

When Jinnah saw Linlithgow next, on 24 February, he told him that the League was not satisfied with the assurances given by the Government, but the Viceroy failed to reassure him. It was obvious that the British were ready to betray the Muslims if a deal could be struck with the Congress. If that happened, the British would justify their action by blaming Jinnah for never letting them know, in spite of repeated requests, of any positive ideas the League had.

But Jinnah still did not tell Linlithgow of the Partition decision, either at this meeting or at the next, on 28 February. In this later meeting, though, he told the Viceroy that India was not 'competent' to run a democracy, and he and others who had advocated it in the past had been carried away by 'patriotic and nationalist' feelings: practical experience had proved that this system would not work.² He also stressed the need, in any constitutional settlement, for adequate *equipoise* between the Hindus and the Muslims.

His last interview with the Viceroy before the Lahore session took place on 13 March. During this period he made two public speeches. He told the students of Aligarh that he had as much right to share in the government of the country as any Hindu, but that the Muslims found themselves 'between the devil and the deep sea,' and must depend upon themselves.³ To the Muslim League Councillors he explained what the Muslim goal was. The whole question was very simple, he said: Great Britain wanted to rule India; Gandhi and the Congress wanted to rule India and the

¹'I feel strongly,' wrote Zetland to Linlithgow on 4 February 1940, 'that it is most desirable that we should avoid so far as possible providing ground for the accusation that we are... playing the minorities as pawns in a Machiavellian game of divide and rule. I am much afraid that in India itself and in neutral countries and particularly of course in America, there are real doubts of our sincerity. It is for this reason that I urged upon the Cabinet, as I did verbally, that they should accept responsibility for saying to Congress and the minorities that provided our desiderata were met to our satisfaction we would accept a constitution framed by Indians themselves.' *Zetland Collection*, op. cit.

²Linlithgow to Zetland, 28 February 1940, cited by Uma Kaura, op. cit., p. 133.

³On 6 March 1940. Jamiluddin Ahmad, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 145-51.

Muslims; but the Muslims did not want to be ruled by either. 'We want to be free.'¹ This may now be interpreted as a demand for partition, but he did not mention it in his speech.

In his meeting with the Viceroy, reported Linlithgow to Zetland, Jinnah expressed his apprehensions that the British might get into a position 'in which our hold over India was deliberately and progressively withdrawn so that in the end control of the country as a whole would be handed over to a Hindu Raj while in the intermediate period His Majesty's Government would be in a position of having to uphold Hindu control with British bayonets to hold the Muslims down.' When Linlithgow once again asked Jinnah for his 'constructive proposals,' Jinnah 'said nothing in reply.' But he did say:

When we got to the stage of deciding what was to be done in India, the Muslims would be very ready to tell us the right answer. Meanwhile if we wished their definite and effective help we must not sell the pass behind their backs. If we could not improve on our present solution for the problem of India's constitutional development, he and his friends would have no option but to fall back on some form of partition.²

The improvement that Jinnah was hinting at could only be either a confederation or dominion status for each province, or some other balanced arrangement—*the equipoise*. But the Viceroy could promise nothing, and Jinnah was left with no option but partition.

The Rubicon is Crossed

Nine days later, the twenty-seventh session of the Muslim League was held in Lahore, and Jinnah, in his presidential address, paved the way for the Partition Resolution.

Jinnah's address was a masterly expose of the Indian political situation, the Muslim problem and its solution. 'We never thought,' he said,

that the Congress High Command would have acted in the manner in which they actually did in the Congress-governed provinces. I never dreamt that they would ever come down so low as that. I never could believe that there would be

¹On 25 February 1940, *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 145.

²Viceroy's telegram of 16 March 1940 to the Secretary of State, *Zetland Collection*.

a gentlemen's agreement between the Congress and the Government to such an extent that, although we cried ourselves hoarse, week in and week out, the Governors would be supine and the Governor-General helpless. We reminded them of their special responsibilities to us and to other minorities, and the solemn pledges they had given to us. But all that had become a dead letter.¹

With regard to the League demand that the constitutional question be considered *de novo* and the British not make any declaration without the consent and approval of the Muslims, he declared, 'We and we alone wish to be the final arbiter (of our fate).'² The communal problem had been complicated by the mistaken belief that the Muslims were a minority. 'The Musalmans are not a minority. The Musalmans are a nation by any definition.'³ 'The word "Nationalism" has now become the play of conjurers in politics,'⁴ Jinnah said. The problem of India was not inter-communal but of an international character, and the only solution was to divide India into 'autonomous national States.'

The Resolution was moved at the open session the next day, and adopted by acclamation a day later, on 24 March. It demanded that 'geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be so constituted, with such territorial readjustments as may be necessary, that areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority as in the North-Western and Eastern zones of India, should be grouped to constitute Independent States in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign.'

Thus, 83 years after the formal end of the Mughal Empire, the Muslims of the subcontinent finally decided on the political future they wished to shape for themselves.

A few observations may be made about the Pakistan Resolution. First, it did not mention the Two Nation Theory. Although Jinnah dealt with it at length in his presidential address, the resolution itself based the demand on the principle of numerical majority. Second, the word 'Pakistan' was nowhere used. Third, the resolution concerned British India only. It did not touch the princely states. Fourth, it did not—unlike Abdul Majeed Sindhi's

¹Pirzada, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 330.

²*Ibid.*, p. 334.

³*Ibid.*, p. 335.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 335. (Emphasis added.)

resolution at Karachi—envisage the possibility of any foreign country beyond the then Indian frontiers joining the Muslim federation. Fifth, the rule of sharia or the establishment of an Islamic State was nowhere envisaged. Sixth, there was no mention of 'federations' or 'confederation': areas were to be 'grouped', but these terms were avoided. Lastly, the resolution was very loosely worded. Two sets of words had been used freely: one was 'independent', 'sovereign' and 'autonomous'; and the other 'regions', 'zones' 'areas', 'States' and 'units'. This has come in for a lot of criticism, some of it very harsh, even by many Pakistanis, and has caused many controversies. Many explanations have been offered, none of them very satisfactory. But it has never occurred to anybody that Jinnah—who always weighed his words very carefully, and even in his ordinary speeches and statements used such precise language that it sometimes became heavy and lost much of its beauty—would discard his habitual care and caution, and let the most important resolution of his life, setting out the goal of his nation, be drafted casually, that this might have been a deliberate act to keep the possibility of some compromise open.

As soon as the resolution was passed, a storm broke. The Hindu Press and politicians attacked it in most foul language, and from every angle. If any sober tone was adopted, which was exceptional, it was to prove, by misleading statistics, that Pakistan would be a bankrupt state, that it would not be able to defend its borders, and that it would crash before take-off. It was held that Pakistan would be against the interests of the Muslims themselves; and the Muslims in minority provinces were told, with deliberate mischief, that they were being abandoned and would have no option but to migrate from their homes. Rajagopalacharya called it the 'sign of diseased mentality.' Nehru branded it a 'mockery' and a 'mad scheme', and declared that 'there is no question of settlement or negotiations now...'¹ Gandhi termed it 'an untruth', and was later to damn it as a 'sin', and announced that 'there can be no compromise with it'.² But the most vile attempt was to create hatred in the Hindu mind for the idea itself. Not only were Hindus told that they would be like slaves in the proposed State, which would be run on theocratic

¹*Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, op. cit., Vol. XI, p. 17.

²*Harijan*, 15 June 1940, CWMG, op. cit., Vol. LXXII, p. 27.

lines, but the very principle of partition was branded as 'vivisection of the motherland,' 'dividing the baby into two halves,' and 'cutting the cow.'

The attempt to incite the religious feelings of the Hindus against Pakistan, which started immediately in March 1940, continued right up to 1947, when the Congress agreed to partition, and even afterwards aroused such hatred against it that any cool consideration of the matter was made impossible.

Jinnah explained the partition scheme in many subsequent statements, and tried to remove any misconceptions. The scheme presupposed independence of India, and would indeed hasten the dawn of freedom. It was the only practical solution of the complicated communal problem. The position of Muslims in the minority provinces could not improve in a united India, but Partition would at least give two-thirds of the community its homelands. Both the communities could live in their zones according to their philosophy of life and genius. Minorities would be safeguarded by mandatory safeguards. 'I say let us live as good neighbours and solemnly undertake that you will protect and safeguard our minorities in your zones and we will protect and guard your minorities in ours.'¹ There was no reason why Muslim India and Hindu India could not live side by side as honourable nations and good neighbours. The former would defend the subcontinent against foreign invasions, and under an adapted Monroe Doctrine, be counted as India's outposts on the frontier.² 'We will then stand together and say to the world, 'Hands off India; India for the Indians.'³

Jinnah's statements, in contrast to the bullying and bluster of Hindu leaders, were based on logic and reasoning, well argued and conciliatory in tone. He demolished Nehru's complaint that he (Nehru) could not understand what Pakistan stood for by asking what it was then that Nehru was opposing so vehemently. To Rajagopalacharya's thesis that even the Mughal emperors Akbar and Aurangzeb looked upon India as 'one and essentially indivisible,' he answered: 'Yes, naturally they did so as conquerors and paternal rulers. Is this the kind of government Mr Raja-

¹Jamiluddin Ahmad, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 458.

²*Ibid.*, p. 228.

³*Ibid.*, p. 252.

gopalacharya does still envisage? And did the Hindus of those days willingly accept the rule of the "great men"?¹

He denied that the Muslim League movement was anti-Hindu, and called the insinuation 'wicked'. 'We have no quarrel with the Hindus,' he said. 'It is the Hindus who are obsessed with the idea that they are the rightful successors and heirs of the British raj.'² On the threats of civil war he said, 'there will be no conflict and should be no conflict unless the Congress desires it,'³ and hoped that 'the better minds of the Hindus will give earnest and serious consideration'⁴ to the scheme.

Jinnah, despite the hysteria displayed by the Hindu Press and the abusive language and threats of Hindu leaders, tried to keep the discussion on a high plain. He advised his young followers not to indulge in threats and arrogant language, but to 'try, as far as possible, to reason and persuade our opponents.' 'I know,' he said, 'that our reasoning and all our persuasion do not always succeed, but we must make every effort. Let us not create unnecessary bitterness against those who are at present the opponents'⁵ of Partition.

Jinnah himself was so attentive to Hindu susceptibilities that for a long time he was careful not to use the word 'Pakistan'. The word, in Urdu, means 'land of the pure (or clean)', and could have been misinterpreted. He had, in 1939, even prevailed upon 'A Punjabi' not to use the word in his book.⁶ For a long time, even after the name had become popular, he continued to use the phrase 'the Lahore Resolution,' or later 'the Lahore Resolution, popularly known as Pakistan Resolution'. But as soon as the Resolution was adopted the Hindus had branded it as 'Pakistan'. They gave currency to it, and it became popular among the Muslim masses.

'Pakistan' soon became synonymous with the Lahore Resolution, and in one word explained the League demand. It was rather awkward for the League to always refer to 'the Lahore Resolution for the creation of free zones in Muslim-majority areas of the Punjab,

¹Ibid., p. 178.

²Ibid., p. 351.

³Ibid., p. 182.

⁴Ibid., p. 173.

⁵Address to Punjab Muslim Students Federation, 2 March 1941. Ibid., p. 236.

⁶K. K. Aziz., op. cit., p. 533.

Sindh, North-West Frontier Province and Balochistan in the north-west and Bengal and Assam in the north-east, completely separate from the rest of India.' Now the whole thing could be summarized in a single word. It was so much easier to explain the implications of the Resolution to the masses, and end up by saying 'This is Pakistan.' The people would remember it and make it a slogan.

Jinnah, however, took a very long time in adopting it. Speaking at the Delhi session of the League on 24 April 1943, more than three years after Lahore, he said: 'There is a new propaganda... The latest argument, which I think is really very wicked—of all, the most wicked. The argument is this: that Mr Jinnah is working for the territories in the North-Western and Eastern zones as "*Pak*" (clean) and the others as "*Na-Pak*" (un-clean, filthy). I have heard this from several quarters...and I was thunderstruck. You know what false propaganda can do. I think you will bear me out that when we passed the Lahore Resolution, we had not used the word 'Pakistan'. Who gave us this word...You know perfectly well that Pakistan is a word which is really foisted upon us and fathered on us by some sections of the Hindu Press and also by the British Press. Now our resolution was known for a long time as the Lahore Resolution, popularly known as Pakistan. But how long are we to have this long phrase? I now say to my Hindu and British friends: we thank you for giving us one word.'¹

And Jinnah adopted the word 'Pakistan', in spite of himself.

It is beyond the scope of our study to go into any detailed examination of the developments from the passing of the Lahore Resolution to the actual partition of the subcontinent, but it is pertinent to point out that even after the Resolution had been passed, and the goal had been formally fixed a year later at Madras,² Jinnah never weakened in his fidelity to India as a whole, and strove for an agreement on the principle, the details to be arranged by negotiations and mutual consent. If the principle was agreed to, 'the question of details will arise then and with goodwill, understanding and statesmanship, we shall, let us hope, settle them among ourselves.'³ Jinnah tried his best to make the

¹Pirzada, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 425-6.

²The Lahore session passed the Resolution. The Madras session (April, 1941) incorporated it in the constitution of the League as the main 'aim and object'.

³Jamiluddin Ahmad, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 281.

Congress agree to this. He made many overtures and indicated willingness to meet its leaders to work out a settlement. He even said that 'the last word is never spoken in politics.' 'Why not you and I meet and put our heads together? If you make a practical proposition, we present a common united demand to Mr Amery¹ or for that matter to the British Parliament or the British nation if you like.'²

But the Congress was deaf to all such pleas. In June, Gandhi had written:

It is an illusion created by ourselves that we must come to an agreement with all parties before we can make progress. There is only one democratic, elected political organization, i.e., the Congress.³

This was the same old tune. The Congress was not interested in settling the communal question. It only wanted a deal with the Government directly. Having failed in browbeating it, Gandhi used his usual weapon, and started *satyagraha* in October.

The *satyagraha* was an ignominious failure. However, as the Japanese forces swept through south-east Asia, the British Government sent Stafford Cripps, now an important member of the war cabinet, to India. Cripps brought with him a set of proposals covering both the interim and the post-war periods. For the duration of the war, he proposed to induct a national government to deal with everything except the war operations. After the war, a Constituent Assembly was to be set up, which any province could refuse to join; and the seceding provinces could form their own Union. The proposals were rejected, for different reasons, by both the Congress and the League. Soon afterwards, the Congress decided to start the 'Quit India' movement, but the Government, in a pre-emptive strike, arrested its leaders.

The Cripps proposals had, from the League point of view, made a great advance, because they conceded, in principle, the right of provinces to secede. The League rejected them because that right could be exercised only after the formation of the Union, and because only one Constituent Assembly was envisaged and not two; also, the procedures were unsatisfactory, and the

¹Leopold Amery, who became Secretary of State for India.

²On 19 November 1940. Jamiluddin Ahmad, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 219.

³*Harijan*, 15 June 1940, CWMG, op. cit., Vol. LXXII, pp. 168-90.

document that Cripps had brought was strictly on a take-it-or-leave-it basis and did not admit of any modifications at all. Nevertheless, a strong section of the League Working Committee felt that the rejection was a mistake and the League was adopting self-defeating tactics.

This group consisted of such stalwarts as Sikander Hayat Khan, Nawab Ismail Khan and Khaliqzaman. Sikander Hayat Khan, the Punjab Premier, was considered to be a British stooge, but the highly respected Ismail Khan, president of the UP Provincial League, was an old Khilafatist; and Khaliqzaman was not only an old Khilafatist, he had been a prominent member of the Congress and had courted jail on more than one occasion. All of them felt that the League should, particularly after the Lahore Resolution, co-operate fully and unconditionally with the Government. It was interested neither in a 'National Government' nor in a Constituent Assembly. Its goal was Pakistan, and with the Congress attitude being what it was, the League should join forces with the Government against the Congress.

The League, unlike the Congress, was not against co-operation with the Government, but wanted it on honourable terms. It was willing to protect 'our hearths and homes' in collaboration with the Government, provided the League was given substantial, not phantom, responsibility, and provided that no declaration was made that would prejudice the demand for Pakistan. As a gesture of goodwill, the League ministries in the provinces were allowed to participate in the war effort. In June 1940, when the collapse of France was imminent, the Working Committee asked the Government to mobilize all the country's resources for the defence of India. 'The Committee is of the view,' said its resolution, 'that unless a satisfactory basis for close co-operation is agreed upon on an all-India basis and not province-wise basis between the Government and Muslim League *and such other parties* as are willing to undertake the responsibility for the defence of the country in the face of imminent danger, the real purpose and objective will not be secured and achieved.'¹

This policy has been attacked again and again by Khaliqzaman in his memoirs. 'I opposed the concluding

¹ *Resolutions of the All India Muslim League, From April 1940 to 1941*, published by the Secretary of the League, p. 3. (Emphasis added.)

portion of the policy of conditioning our support to the war effort on an agreement with other parties to undertake responsibility for the defence of the country...our insistence on co-operation with other parties in the Executive Council could only mean also bringing in Congress in the provinces, against which we had made so much fuss,'¹ he says. 'The result of our staying away from the war effort could only deprive us of our claim that we were with the British war effort although Congress were not co-operating.'² At another place he says: 'I definitely felt that our demand to associate the League with the war effort with authority and power as partners with Congress was totally a wrong policy.'³ Again, he says: 'Due to the foregoing policy of the Muslim League on the war effort we deprived ourselves of the claim that we, in contrast with the Congress, were contributing our share in the defence of the country. It was my painful duty to oppose Mr Jinnah's policy in regard to the war effort which, although others may disagree with me, I am morally certain, had caused us great loss in leading to our securing only a truncated Pakistan.'⁴ He could not understand why Jinnah was 'so anxious to bring the Congress in the Centre and the provinces.'⁵ According to him and his friends, 'our open and categorical demand to the Englishman should have been that we should be given the entire (undivided) Pakistan after the war, and during the war we would fully support the British Government.'⁶

The Khaliqzaman group thought that the Cripps proposals were a windfall for the League. 'I strongly urged the Working Committee of the Muslim League to accept the long-term plan of the Cripps Proposals,' says Khaliqzaman, '...I thought our acceptance of the Proposals would morally bind the British Government to respect it in any future settlement of Hindu-Muslim differences.'⁷ But 'when Jinnah Sahib, in his address, started lashing out at the Cripps Proposals in the open session (at Allahabad), my eyes went wide with amazement ...After the

¹Khaliqzaman, *op. cit.*, p. 243.

²*Ibid.*

³*Ibid.*, p. 247.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 249.

⁵Khaliqzaman, *Shahrah-i-Pakistan*, *op. cit.*, p. 824.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 822.

⁷Khaliqzaman, *Pathway to Pakistan*, *op. cit.*, p. 278.

speech of Jinnah Sahib the Cripps Mission was buried, as far as the Muslim League was concerned.¹

As against this, Nehru's biographer says that the Quaid 'was willing to accept the proposals and saw no great difficulty in the interim arrangements...Jinnah has been so often criticized in this book that it is a pleasure to record that on this critical occasion he was guided by patriotism.'²

The fact is that Jinnah was always guided by patriotism. Even in 1946, when the Congress-League relations were even worse, and a British Cabinet Mission was negotiating the transfer of power, we find from the record of Stafford Cripps' interview with him on 30 March that, 'he (Jinnah) said that he would consider it right and necessary that his policy should be *for the good of India as a whole*.'³ During the war, and especially after the Japanese had reached the borders of Assam, he was more concerned with the defence of India as a whole than with securing any petty advantage for his party. Khaliqzaman's criticism of the Quaid does have a point, for it all came down to the League demanding that the Congress must be included in the war effort, but Jinnah considered it necessary in the larger interests of India. What a contrast to Gandhi's attitude, whose advice to Linlithgow was to ignore the League!

The Congress answer to Jinnah's patriotism was to pass, in May 1942, a resolution at the All-India Congress Committee against any kind of partition. But Jinnah pursued his policy despite the hostility of the Congress and the opposition of the Khaliqzaman faction ('we must help them without question during the war.'⁴) He would not meekly surrender to the Government who 'want our support on the assurance that we shall be remembered as loyal servants after the war and will even be given a *bakhsheesh*'.⁵ Such a nationalistic stand did not please the British and they would not accept the reasonable demands of the League, although the League was willing to come to terms and, in the absence of the Congress, was the only other major

¹Khaliqzaman *Shahrah-i-Pakistan*, p. 862.

²S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, op. cit., p. 279.

³Nicholson Masergh, (ed.), *The Transfer of Power*, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1977, Vol. VII, p. 59. (Emphasis added.)

⁴Khaliqzaman, op. cit., p. 826.

⁵Jamiluddin Ahmad, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 193.

party left on the scene, and although the war situation had become grave. On the contrary, they tried to create disruption in the League's ranks and to weaken it.

In July 1941, the Government decided that the Viceroy's Executive Council be expanded and five new portfolios be created, and a National Defence Council be set up. The prospective Muslim members of both the Councils were approached by the Viceroy directly and appointed by him without reference to the League. Jinnah took strong exception to this method, insisted that they should have been nominated by the Muslim League as the authoritative representative of the Muslims, and demanded that the League members so appointed resign. This created a crisis in the League. Sikander Hayat, Fazlul Haq and Saadullah tried to justify their acceptance and claimed that they had been nominated by reason of their being Chief Ministers of the Punjab, Bengal and Assam respectively. But Jinnah insisted that as they had been appointed, not *ex officio*, but as representatives of the Muslims, they must resign. The crisis deepened, and Muslim India held its breath. The League was then not so strong as it later became, and a division in Muslim ranks would have been a great misfortune. But Jinnah held his ground. In the end the three Chief Ministers resigned, and those other members who did not were expelled from the League.

The League emerged from the crisis stronger than ever. It was a challenge to the authority of the President and the Party, and it was successfully met. Sikander Hayat and Fazlul Haq had given weight and prestige to the League at Lucknow in 1937, but now they were subjected to its discipline like any other member. A few months later, Fazlul Haq defied the League, and was expelled. All his popularity evaporated overnight. It was the Quaid-i-Azam who became the darling of the Bengali Muslim.

Jinnah's popularity increased with astonishing rapidity. 'Pakistan' became the battle cry of a community which was pulsating with new life. Not since the fall of the Mughal Empire had the Muslims been so well organized and nationally motivated.

While the movement for Pakistan was going from strength to strength, the British—Amery in London and Linlithgow and his successor, Field-Marshal Wavell, in New Delhi—were singing the song of Indian unity. Congress leaders were in detention, but Gandhi was released, and in September 1944, Gandhi-Jinnah talks

were held in Bombay. The talks started on the basis of a proposal by Rajagopalacharya conceding Pakistan. Any hopes of an agreement were dashed by Gandhi accepting Pakistan in one breath and rejecting it in the next.

The rest of the Congress leaders were released in 1945, to pave the way for a conference at Simla to consider setting up an interim government. The conference broke down as the Viceroy would not agree to nominate more than three out of five Muslim ministers from the League. The Congress hostility to the League had not diminished, and after the failure at Simla, Nehru started a campaign of vilification against Pakistan, Jinnah and the League. This had an effect quite different from what he had intended. It made the concept further popular, and his threats offended many Muslims who were still either ignorant or undecided. Nehru's campaign here played no small part in the Muslim League triumph in the general elections held soon after.

The Muslim League issued no manifesto. It fought the elections on two issues only, viz. (1) Pakistan, and (2) the League being the only representative organization of the Indian Muslims. The results were stunning. In the Central Assembly, it won a hundred per cent of the Muslim seats. In the provincial Assemblies, its share was 428 out of a total 492, or approximately 87%. Even this did not give a correct index of the Muslim's near unanimity, which was better reflected in the margin of votes obtained by the League candidates; and in the fact that many of the winners who had contested against the official League candidates were genuine Leaguers denied the League ticket on account of local jealousies, and asked to be taken back into the party immediately after victory. The strength of the League was further proved when in the second general elections held in Sindh at the end of the year, it increased its seats from 27 to 35 out of 35.

The Congress similarly won overwhelmingly in non-Muslim constituencies. Thus the Congress and the League emerged as the two main parties, and logic and good sense demanded that they reached a settlement among themselves. Both were in a strong position, and both could afford to make concessions. Jinnah had time and again said that if the principle of partition was conceded, he was prepared to discuss concrete and practical counter-proposals. Begum Shaista Ikramullah, a former member

of Pakistan's Constituent Assembly and a former ambassador, has given an account of the talk that her father, Sir Hassan Suhrawardy, had with Jinnah in October 1940. Sir Hassan was then an adviser to the Secretary of State for India. He saw Jinnah, perhaps under instructions from the Secretary of State, and discussed whether there could be an alternative to total partition. Canada, with its federal structure, with the Catholic minority enjoying complete religious freedom, with the French language being at par with English, and with Quebec being fully autonomous, came under review. 'Quaid-i-Azam was saying that if there was a constitution like that of Canada, and if it was fully acted upon, the Muslim rights could be protected. Quaid-i-Azam then gave a few examples of the narrow-mindedness of the Hindus. Is it possible that they would play fair? He had still not given up this hope.'¹

But the Congress made no attempt to settle: it had nothing but abuse for Jinnah and Pakistan.

The Cabinet Mission

It was in this atmosphere that the Labour Government sent a mission (delegation) of three cabinet ministers, Secretary of State Pethick-Lawrence, Stafford Cripps, and A. V. Alexander, to India. After prolonged negotiations, the Mission issued a statement on 16 May proposing a plan of its own. The Plan proposed a three-tier structure. The provinces were grouped into three sections: one was to include the Muslim provinces in the north-west, another to consist of Bengal and Assam, and the third was for the rest. The provinces were to decide what powers to surrender to the sections. At the top, the Union Centre was to deal with only Defence, Foreign Affairs and Communications.

Although the Plan did not specify Pakistan, it had redeeming features. It was opposed vigorously in the League Council which met to consider it, but Jinnah used his great influence in its favour, and the Council accepted it. Congress 'acceptance' came eighteen days later.

¹Begum Ikramullah was present at the interview. Daily *Jang*, Karachi, 11 September 1989, 'Quaid-i-Azam' edition.

The 'unity of India', in which the Congress leaders professed to believe religiously, had been saved by the one man who could have done it:

But was he ever thanked for it? Never. There was not a word of appreciation, or recognition of the great concession he had made. On the contrary, there were taunts, ridicule and derision. The Hindu Press jeered at him in news headlines, articles and cartoons: Jinnah had been defeated and disgraced, and his Pakistan had been given 'a State funeral'.

The Cabinet Mission intended that while the constitution-making proceeded, an Interim Government should function. The Mission 'attached the greatest importance' to this short-term plan, which stood together with its long-term plan and formed an integrated whole, and negotiations had been started with the Congress and the League even before announcing its proposals. Jinnah had taken the initiative in accepting the Mission's Plan and was constructive about the Interim Government. The Congress was hesitating and haggling about both.

On the Mission's proposals, the Congress Working Committee resolution of 24 May stated that the Constituent Assembly was 'sovereign'. This was contrary to the proposals, which envisaged the Assembly working under its plan. But the Congress asserted that 'it will be open to the Constituent Assembly itself at any stage to make changes and variations.' The resolution also stated that the 'provinces will make the choice whether or not to belong to the sections in which they were placed.'¹

Such interpretations made nonsense of the plan. The heart of the plan was the Grouping scheme, which the Congress seemed bent upon wrecking. During its negotiations with Jinnah, the Mission had hinted that Jinnah could either have a truncated Pakistan, without the non-Muslim areas of the Punjab, Bengal and Assam, or undivided provinces in a weak Indian Union; and had suggested Grouping. At the tripartite conference at Simla preceding the announcement of the Mission's Proposals, Jinnah had said that 'he would accept the Union Centre if Congress would accept Groups.'² Grouping was therefore the essence of the plan, and the Mission said so in a statement on 25 May. 'The

¹*The Transfer of Power*, op. cit., Vol. VII, pp. 679-82.

²Wavell, *The Viceroy's Journal*, Oxford University Press, London, 1973, p. 258.

scheme stands as a whole,' it said, and, 'the interpretation put by the Congress...to the effect that the Provinces can in the first instance make the choice whether or not to belong to the section in which they are placed, does not accord with the Delegation's intentions. The reasons for the grouping of the Provinces are well known and this is an essential feature of the scheme.'¹

While negotiations between the Cabinet Delegation and the Indian parties dragged on, the question arose as to the action to be taken in case one of the two parties refused to join the Interim Government. That possibility had been contemplated. Wavell's record of his interview with Jinnah on 3 June shows that during discussions on the formation of the Government, Jinnah 'then asked what we should do if the ML came in and the Congress refused. I had anticipated this query and had consulted S of S through PSV.'² I told him that the ML would certainly not suffer by its readiness to work the Delegation scheme, and that the intention was to go ahead with the scheme as far as possible with any party who would work for it. He asked for something more specific before he met his Working Committee at 6 p.m. and I said I could do nothing more without consulting the Delegation.' Wavell duly consulted, and

I got permission to give Jinnah a verbal assurance that we would work with the ML if they accepted and the Congress refused, so summoned him again for 4 p.m. After lunch I dictated a formal assurance to Jinnah. In this I told him that though the Delegation could not give him a written assurance of what its action would be in the event of breakdown of the present negotiations, I could give him, on behalf of the Delegation, my personal assurance that we did not propose to make any discrimination in the treatment of either party; and that we should go ahead with the plan laid down in our statement so far as circumstances permit, if either party accepts; but we hoped that both would. I asked him not to make this assurance public, but simply to say to his Working Committee, if necessary, that he was satisfied on this point.

The Delegation approved the assurance and also produced one from Cripps, which amounted practically to the same thing. I showed them to Jinnah at 4 p.m. and he seemed satisfied.³

¹Ibid., pp. 487-8.

²PSV, Private Secretary to the Viceroy.

³Wavell, op. cit., p. 285-6. See also, *The Transfer of Power*, op. cit., Vol. VII, p. 784-5.

Wavell proceeded with the task of forming the new Executive Council, and on 16 June the Delegation, in a statement, announced that invitations were being issued to fourteen people (six from the Congress, five from the League and three from the minorities). Paragraph 8 of the statement said:

In the event of the two major parties or either of them proving unwilling to join in the setting up of a coalition Government on the above lines, it is the intention of the Viceroy to proceed with the formation of an Interim Government which will be as representative as possible of those willing to accept the Statement of 16 May.

With these categorical assurances, the duty of the Viceroy, when the Congress refused to join the Interim Government, was to go ahead with its formation, without the Congress. But the Delegation, in a complete volte-face, refused to do this, and instead installed a Council of bureaucrats.

This episode is generally either ignored or made light of by historians and commentators, but it is very important in that it not only was a breach of faith by three Cabinet Ministers of His Majesty's Government and his Viceroy, but also shows the deep aversion of the British to the Muslims and Jinnah. The British Labour Party had always been partial to the Congress, and its leading figures were openly pro-Congress, more so now than ever before, because of Nehru's socialist creed. Of the three Ministers in the Delegation, Pethick-Lawrence had, as far back as in 1926, attended the Gauhati Congress.¹ He was a pacifist and a great admirer of Gandhi. Wavell was 'frankly horrified at the deference shown to Gandhi'² by him and the Mission. Stafford Cripps was a close friend of Nehru. He and Lady Cripps would be the house guests of Nehru during their visits to India, while it was at the Cripps home in England that the method of transferring power to India (the Congress) was agreed to. Attlee had been present, had participated in the discussions and agreed to the final plan. Cripps had also been 'in private correspondence with Nehru about the objectives before the Mission came out'³ to India. The third member, Alexander, had no strong inclinations,

¹Sitaramayya, *op. cit.*, p. 518.

²Wavell, *op. cit.*, p. 236.

³*Ibid.*, p. 311.

but was decidedly biased in favour of socialism and Indian unity. The Viceroy, Wavell, was, of course, a soldier and essentially apolitical. He was, however, a strong believer in Indian unity, and could not brook the idea that the Indian army would be divided. His record as Viceroy shows that he went out of his way 'to back up (Premier) Khizar in the Punjab against Jinnah's attempt'¹ to bring him under the discipline of the League, in 1944, and, a year later, caused the break-up of the Simla Conference by accepting Khizar's claim to have an Executive Councillor from his party at the expense of the Muslim League.

The Delegation had from the beginning a strong bias in favour of the Congress. Cripps, the moving spirit of the Delegation and the one man who had no dearth of fresh ideas, was specially inclined to appease the Congress at every step. In his Journal, Wavell again and again complains of Cripps' partiality. On the very first day he arrived in Delhi to take up the Viceroyalty, he was told by Linlithgow of his own experience that 'Cripps did not play straight'.² Wavell himself thought that 'he is sold to the Congress point of view, and I don't think he is quite straight in his methods.'³ Wavell complains of 'partisanship on the part of Cripps',⁴ of 'Cripps' continued daily contacts with the Congress camp,⁵ and his 'continuous courting, flattery and appeasement of the Congress.'⁶ He mentions one instance where a letter was drafted to the Congress and League Presidents, and Cripps was anxious to show the draft to the Congress President before dispatch.⁷ Wavell generally suspected Cripps of giving the Congress 'advance notice' of what was being done or even considered.⁸ Nehru, for instance, 'had already a fairly intimate knowledge of the contents of the Statement' of the Mission a few days before it was actually made.⁹ At another occasion 'Cripps showed his Congress bias strongly, and said he would resign if

¹Ibid., p. 107.

²Ibid., p. 33.

³Ibid., p. 211.

⁴Ibid., p. 264.

⁵Ibid., p. 267.

⁶Ibid., p. 269.

⁷Ibid., p. 253.

⁸Ibid., p. 256.

⁹Ibid., p. 267.

this was not done...Cripps threatens resignation freely, I think this is the third or fourth time he has spoken of it.¹

Pethick-Lawrence, on his part, 'with fixed and old-fashioned ideas derived mainly from Congress,'² would never stand up to the Hindu leaders, 'showed his bias against Jinnah,'³ and would scheme with Cripps to devise ways to put Jinnah in the wrong. The Mission 'might have succeeded had Cripps and P-L not been so completely in the Congress camp.'⁴

The Cabinet Mission had been 'unable to remain really impartial.'⁵ It was guilty of 'appeasement and pandering of Congress,'⁶ and had been 'living in the pocket of Congress.'⁷ 'The fatal weakness of the Mission in their abject attitude to Congress, and the duplicity of Cripps, left behind a legacy' which Wavell found 'beyond my powers to counteract.' Wavell 'paid a heavy price for not being firmer in the last stages of the Mission and allowed myself to be double-crossed by Cripps.'⁸

The refusal of the Congress not to join the Interim Government created a situation that the Mission did not like. True to form, it had to do something for its pet. So Cripps and Pethick-Lawrence got into the act. Learning that the Congress Working Committee had rejected both the long-term and short-term proposals, early next morning, 'the indefatigable Sir Stafford Cripps went and worked on Mr Gandhi in the Bangui Colony,' revealed Jinnah in a public speech.

It seems he did not cut much ice. He came back and Lord Pethick-Lawrence was put on scent of Mr Vallabhbhai Patel, the strong man of the Congress. He waylaid Mr Patel on the road and took him to his house and there they concocted a device. The Congress was persuaded to accept the long-term proposals even with their own interpretations and reservations and the Mission assured the Congress that it would abandon the Interim Government Scheme of 16 June.

¹Ibid., p. 299.

²Ibid., p. 161.

³Ibid., p. 305.

⁴Ibid., p. 402.

⁵Ibid., p. 287.

⁶Ibid., p. 271.

⁷Ibid., p. 324.

⁸Ibid., p. 367.

'This is exactly what happened,' said Jinnah and challenged the British to deny it. 'Now I ask the Viceroy to issue a statement giving a categorical explanation on this point. This is a grave charge against the honour, integrity and character of the members of Cabinet Delegation and the Viceroy.'¹

But Jinnah's charge, grave though it was, was never refuted.² He had factually described what had happened. The Mission had gone back on its plighted word. Nobody could be convinced by the argument now advanced that, both parties having accepted the Plan, both were entitled to join the Government, and one party having refused to join it, the matter had better be postponed. In the first place, the Congress acceptance was no acceptance at all, for it was subject to its previous reservations about 'the limitation of the Central authority, as contained in the proposals, as well as the system of grouping of Provinces,'³ and the Congress President had left no room for doubt when he stated in his letter that, 'while adhering to our views we accept your proposals.'⁴ In the second place, even if the acceptance was genuine, the Congress had definitely refused to join the Government, and there could be no justification for preventing the other Party from joining it. By no stretch of imagination could paragraph 8 of the 16 June Statement be interpreted this way. The Mission had acted against the letter and spirit of its own statement. Even the premier British newspaper in India, *The Statesman*, remarked that what the Mission had done was to 'eat their words.'

The secret State papers, since released, bear full testimony to the dishonest behaviour of the Mission. They clearly show that their intention throughout was that if one Party refused to come in, the other would be asked to join the Government. This was a calculated tactical move, and its consequences had been carefully weighed. If the Congress refused, the League had to be brought

¹Jamiluddin Ahmad, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 310.

²On the contrary, it was confirmed by the account since given by Gandhi's secretary, Pyarelal, and Sudhir Ghosh. Ghosh acted as 'Gandhi's Emissary', both in India, and, later, in London, conveying messages from Gandhi to Pethick-Lawrence and Cripps, and back.

³Resolution of 'acceptance' of the Congress Working Committee, 25 June 1946, *Transfer of Power*, op. cit., Vol. VII, p. 1037.

⁴*Ibid.*, Vol. VII, p. 1036.

in: this was not palatable at all, but had been accepted, by both the Mission and the British Government. On 3 June, when it appeared that the negotiations with the Congress would break down, the Mission sent a long telegram to Attlee giving its appreciation of the situation and discussing various possibilities. It began by saying that: 'The interpretations which Congress have placed upon our Statement would if they prevailed almost certainly make it unacceptable to the Muslim League. But we have already publicly repudiated these interpretations.' Then, discussing how the situation could develop, it said in paragraph 4(b): 'If the Congress refuse, while the Muslim League agree, the situation would be much more serious. We should invite Muslims to go on with their own Constitution-making in Group B and C: we should adhere to our grouping...The Central Government would have Muslim League representatives and representatives of the Minorities with seats reserved for Congress but held temporarily by officials or non-Congress Hindus.'¹ On 12 June, Pethick-Lawrence sent a personal telegram saying that assurances given to Jinnah '...would be discharged, however, if we proceed as in (b) of para 4,' and asking for confirmation that 'you are not averse to them.'² Attlee's reply came the next day that the Cabinet was 'in accord with general views expressed'.³

From 4 June, the names of various non-Congress Hindus were being considered for appointment. The Delegation and the Viceroy, in a bid to force the issue, made its statement of 16 June (with that paragraph 8), announcing fourteen names (eleven from the Congress and the League, and three from the minorities), to whom invitations were being issued. The gambit failed, and on 21 June, when a breakdown seemed imminent, the Delegation and the Viceroy discussed at some length what to do if the Congress refused. 'It was agreed that Jinnah should be asked to co-operate in a Government.'⁴ The mechanics of formation of this Government, and how much freedom Jinnah should have in the selection of other members, were then discussed. Wavell opposed a suggestion that the choice should

¹*Transfer of Power*, op. cit., Vol. VII, p. 789.

²*Ibid.*, p. 887.

³*Ibid.*, p. 917.

⁴Wavell, op. cit.; p. 299.

be left to Jinnah. 'Jinnah would not be a Prime Minister. He (the Viceroy) would choose the non-Muslim members...He thought he could get Hindus of sufficient weight who would be willing to serve.' Thirteen names were considered. After all, as Alexander put it, 'The Delegation's marching orders from the Cabinet were to form a Government with the Muslim League, keeping places open for Congress in accordance with paragraph 4(b).' Pethick-Lawrence thought it would be inevitable that the Viceroy should discuss the character of the new Government with Jinnah. Cripps suggested that Jinnah should be asked to form the Government, and if he failed, or his terms were unacceptable, Congress should be asked to do so. At this Alexander said that 'this proposal would amount to give them (Congress) control of the Central Government and enabling them to interpret the Delegation's Statement of 16 May in their own way'¹—something the Delegation actually did soon after.

Next day, 22 June, Pethick-Lawrence said at the daily meeting of the Delegation that in case of breakdown, 'It would...be desirable for the Viceroy to make an immediate approach to Jinnah as soon as the Congress rejected the proposals. If Jinnah would not come in on terms such as could be accepted, then the Viceroy could set up a caretaker official Government.' After some discussion it was agreed that 'Mr Jinnah should be approached at once.' It was also 'agreed that if Mr Jinnah formed a Government we should endeavour to go on with constitution-making as far as possible. At any rate an attempt could be made to get Sections B and C of the Constituent Assembly into operation.'² The Viceroy then sent telegrams to the provincial Governors asking them to suggest names of non-Congress Hindus.³

Two days later, when the delegation met as usual at ten o'clock, everything had changed. Pethick-Lawrence, who had met Gandhi and Patel at six o'clock that morning, reported that according to his understanding Patel was now in favour of accepting the Mission's proposals 'without reservation', and that he had 'pointed out to them (Gandhi and Patel) that if the Congress accepted the Statement of 16 May they would put themselves on

¹*Transfer of Power*, op. cit., Vol. VII, pp. 994-8.

²*Ibid.*, p. 1004.

³*Ibid.*, pp. 1006-7.

the level with the Muslim League in respect of the Interim Government.' 'The First Lord said that he felt that the Muslim League were being manoeuvred by Congress who wanted to give a paper acceptance... Their acceptance of the May Statement would not be genuine.' The Viceroy 'thought we should not admit that Congress had accepted the Statement of 16 May unless they did so in good faith and without reservation.' Alexander then said: 'He had come out to India quite unbiased and in the early stages had been somewhat exasperated with Mr Jinnah's attitude. But he was bound to say that the behaviour of the Congress in the last six weeks seemed to him the most deplorable exhibition that he had witnessed in his political career.'¹

The next day, Wavell submitted a note to the Cabinet Mission, in which he stated that either there had been 'a reversal of policy' or 'the assurance given to Mr Gandhi is not entirely an honest one.' He referred to press reports that morning that Congress might accept the 16 May Statement if allowed to do so under its own interpretations, and said, 'I take it that this cannot be regarded as an acceptance... and that the Delegation will say so clearly.'² The same day he wrote in his journal:

Now Cripps, having assured me categorically that Congress would never accept the Statement of 16 May, instigated Congress to do so by pointing out the tactical advantage they would gain as regards the Interim Government. So did the Secretary of State. When I tackled him on this, he defended it on the grounds that to get the Congress into the Constituent Assembly was such a gain that he considered it justified. It has left me in an impossible position vis-a-vis Jinnah.³

Jinnah was informed of the Mission's decision on the 'Congress letter of acceptance which is really a dishonest acceptance'⁴ and of the postponement of the formation of the Interim Government. Jinnah was 'naturally and justifiably sore.'⁵ At the Delegation meeting next morning, Pethick-Lawrence was 'apologetic about the way he had handled the interview with

¹All the above is from the official record of discussions, *Transfer of Power*, op. cit., Vol. VII, pp. 1023-5.

²Ibid., p. 1032.

³Wavell, op. cit., p. 305.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., p. 307.

Jinnah the evening before, but all the same was for keeping off anything which might annoy the Congress.¹

This had been the guiding principle of the Delegation all along—not to do anything that might annoy the Congress, and to do everything that would please and satisfy it. Jinnah made a radical concession when he agreed to a Union Centre, but it was hardly appreciated. On the contrary, the Viceroy went back on his assurance that the proportion in the Interim Government would be 5:5:2 (5 from the Congress, 5 from the League, and 2 from the minorities), and announced names on the basis of 6:5:3, reducing the proportion of League representatives. But when the Congress, for reasons of its own, still refused to join the Government, the Mission plotted with it, behind Jinnah's back, and postponed formation of the Interim Government itself. Apart from anything else, this was a strange act by a Mission which had come with the purpose of arranging transfer of power—to set up a 'Caretaker' Government which for the first time since the Morley-Minto Reforms had no Indian representative. But this was done because the Congress wanted it. As Cripps said, 'Sardar Patel had told him that it would be easier for the Congress if there was a temporary Government of officials only.'²

The secret papers fully prove Jinnah's charge that the British were guilty of a flagrant breach of faith. Their action, in fact, was a prelude to transferring power to the Congress. As early as in September 1945, Wavell, after meeting Attlee and Cripps in London, had observed that '...they are obviously bent on handing over India to their Congress friends as soon as possible.'³ They would have done it straightaway but for the landslide victory of the Muslim League at the general elections, and, later, Jinnah's bold acceptance of the Mission's Proposals. The secret state papers are only a record of what was approved to be recorded, and of course they say nothing of the underhand deals between the Congress and Cripps and Pethick-Lawrence. Nevertheless they do show how at every stage of negotiations they brought every kind of pressure on Jinnah for more and more concessions, and how Pethick-Lawrence and Cripps were always scheming to find

¹Ibid.

²*Transfer of Power*, op. cit., Vol. VII, p. 1043.

³Wavell, op. cit., pp. 169-70.

or invent some excuse for pinning the blame on Jinnah. In the end, having squeezed every possible concession out of him, they betrayed him, without any qualm of conscience.

Six weeks later, it was decided to form the postponed Interim Government. True to their conduct, the British asked Nehru, not Jinnah, to do it. The Anglo-Hindu Combine was actively at work.

The Mission's conduct could not but encourage the Congress to be even more intransigent than before. Nehru, who took over as the new president, in his statements went beyond the cover of 'interpretations' to reject the Mission's Plan. '...We chose the best part of it and rejected the worthless ones,'¹ he told a public meeting on 4 July. Three days later, he addressed the All-India Congress Committee, and said that, 'so far as I can see, it is not a question of our accepting any plan—long or short. It is only a question of our agreeing to go into the constituent assembly. That is all, and nothing more than that.'² Amplifying his statement, he told a press conference on 10 July: 'we agreed to go into the constituent assembly...we have agreed to nothing else...What we do there, we are entirely and absolutely free to determine. We have not committed ourselves on any single matter to anybody.'³ He indicated that the Central Government would be much stronger than contemplated in the Mission's Plan and that there would be no Grouping. He admitted that this would change the basis of the Scheme and create a new situation, but, he said with an air of triumph, the Congress was always creating new situations.

Congress reservations and interpretations already nullified its acceptance of the Cabinet Mission Plan, but after this clear rejection by the Congress President, there could not be any doubt about the Congress attitude and intention. The League was now left with no alternative but to withdraw its own acceptance, which it did on 29 July.

Motilal Nehru, by going back on his promises to give safeguards to Muslims, had turned them away from a united India; Jawaharlal Nehru, by rejecting the Mission plan, forced

¹ *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, op. cit., Vol. XV, p. 234.

² *Ibid.*, p. 237.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 241-4

them to Partition. The Pakistanis are under a heavy debt of gratitude to them. Some day they must raise a moment to both father and son.

Events now moved quickly. While the Congress was gloating over its victory and the League was bitter, tension between Hindus and Muslims kept on mounting. Riots broke out on an unprecedented scale, and soon spread from Bengal to the Punjab. Although the League joined the Interim Government in late October, peace could not be restored.

In February, Attlee announced that the British would withdraw from the subcontinent by June 1948. Wavell was replaced by Lord Mountbatten, with instructions to re-open negotiations and advise on the ways and means to transfer power, and to whom. Within a month of his arrival Mountbatten had found that there was no escape from Pakistan, and if the Punjab and Bengal were partitioned, it would be accepted by the Congress. He prepared a plan accordingly, got the approval of the British Government, and the agreement of the two major parties. Pakistan and Bharat became free in August 1947.

CHAPTER 13

THE PARTITION

The last phase of India's struggle for independence occurred in 1947. The British were eager to quit, not because of any Gandhian movement, but because of the internal situation as it was developing. The Indian Army, which had expanded immensely during the war, was now being demobilized. Labour trouble and unemployment figures were rising. The economic conditions were getting worse, and the Government was not prepared to face another famine like the one in Bengal four years earlier. There was general dissatisfaction, and the law and order situation could deteriorate any time and cause a chain reaction. The Indian Army's loyalty could no longer be taken for granted as in the past. During the war, thousands of officers and men had deserted to join the Indian National Army, and had become national heroes. There were mutinies in the Navy at Bombay and Karachi in February 1946 and strikes in the Air Force. The number of British officers in the armed forces at that time was only 4,000, against the normal strength of 11,000. On the civil side, 'the iron frame' on which the Government of India rested had been considerably weakened. Recruitment to the ICS had been stopped during the war, and there were left only 1,600 British officers in the Superior Services, as against 2,942 in 1935. The Indian members of the ICS were showing signs of independence, and there had been some clashes on racial lines in a Service that was previously bound by a strong *esprit de corps*.

These were ominous signs, and Wavell had prepared a plan for withdrawal—the Breakdown Plan—while the Cabinet Mission was still in India. The British could have stayed on in India for a little longer, had they wanted, by strengthening the armed forces with three or four divisions of the British Army. But the British people were totally exhausted after six years of war: they desired peace.

Even if the British had made that effort, the times were against them: their days were numbered in any case. The British knew it, and had the good sense to decide to go, rather than be thrown out later. The Labour Government accelerated the process of transfer of power, and its Cabinet Mission almost succeeded in formulating a scheme acceptable to both the Congress and the Muslim League. Had the members of the Mission played straight and insisted that all parties adhere to the original scheme, its plan might have borne fruit, but they resorted to many acts of subterfuge, and their dithering encouraged the Congress to make the kind of interpretations which had the effect of negating the Plan itself, forcing the League to withdraw its acceptance. In December, the British Government did finally say that the League's interpretation of the Grouping scheme was correct, but by then it was too late. The League continued its boycott of the Constituent Assembly, and the Congress went ahead with framing a constitution with a strong Centre.

The Labour Government would have liked nothing better than to transfer power to the Congress in a United India, but it had been forced to admit that the League's stand on the Mission's Plan had been correct; and as, out of the 79 Muslim members of the Constituent Assembly, 76 had boycotted it, it was becoming clear that if a united India was imposed, Muslims would resist it. The series of Hindu-Muslim riots at an unprecedented scale in Bengal, Bihar and UP—soon to spread to the Punjab—had given warning that a civil war was looming.

The British, in their anxiety to leave the subcontinent as quickly as possible, now took two steps of far-reaching effect. Attlee announced in the House of Commons on 20 February 1947 that Britain would quit India by June 1948, and if by that time a constitution was not worked out by a fully representative Assembly, Britain would then decide to whom power was to be handed over. He also announced the appointment of Lord Mountbatten in place of Wavell.

Mountbatten was the perfect choice for the job from the Labour point of view. He 'firmly believed' in the unity of India, and his name had been suggested by the Congress.¹ He was a war

¹Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre, *Freedom at Midnight*, Collins, London, 1975, p. 8.

hero, and would have the support of the Conservative Opposition in the Parliament. He was a cousin of King George, and this would have tremendous influence with the Indian Princes. He possessed great driving capacity, and such supreme self-confidence that he suffered 'from the congenital weakness of believing that I can do anything.'¹ He had established a rapport with Nehru when the latter had visited Singapore a year earlier. Unlike Wavell—who was a man of honour, and who, despite his dislike of Jinnah, acknowledged the justice of Jinnah's case²—he had no moral principles. For Mountbatten what mattered was success and personal glory; and in achieving his aim he would sacrifice principles, promises, persons and anything that came in the way. For him, says his official biographer Philip Ziegler, diplomacy 'did not exclude a degree of manipulation, even chicanery, which would have been inconceivable to either of his predecessors. Mountbatten was well aware that certain of his advisers felt that his tactics sometimes verged on the unethical, but believed that sleight of hand was justified to achieve the greater good.'³ On his own admission he 'had no hesitation in eating my words.'⁴ 'The truth in his hands,' concluded Ziegler, 'was swiftly converted from what it was to what it should have been. He sought to rewrite history with cavalier indifference to the facts to magnify his own achievements.'⁵

The Cabinet Mission itself had been guilty of falsehood and chicanery, but had not entirely succeeded in its objective. It needed someone on the spot to carry out to a successful end its policy in India. Mountbatten seemed ideal for this mission. He seemed to have every chance of success, if given a free hand; and this was given ungrudgingly.

¹Ibid., p. 37.

²In particular the Mission gave Jinnah a pledge on 16 May, which they have not honoured,' Wavell wrote in a note on 2 December 1946. *Transfer of Power*, op. cit., Vol. IX, p. 240.

³Philip Ziegler, *Mountbatten—the Official Biography*, Collins, London, 1985, p. 364.

⁴*Transfer of Power*, op. cit., Vol. XII, p. 601.

⁵Ziegler, op. cit., p. 701. Ziegler also says that Mountbatten 'delighted in intrigue,' and mentions that the Vice-Chief of Naval Staff, Casper John, complained that 'he would never give a straight answer to a straight question.' (p. 528.)

When Mountbatten arrived, the Congress leaders had already become mentally prepared for partition. On 8 March, the Congress Working committee had passed a resolution proposing the separation of Muslim and non-Muslims areas in the Punjab; and a little later Nehru was to publicly declare that the Muslim League could have its Pakistan, provided it did not take away those areas which did not wish to go with it.

This was not a change of heart but a change of tactics. It was caused by a taste of power, and the realization that power was not yet in its grasp, but could be if it contented itself with non-Muslim provinces only. The Interim Government was a house divided against itself, and the League ministers had refused to accept either Nehru as a Prime Minister or the Viceroy's Executive Council as a Cabinet. Worse still was the fact that the purse-strings were controlled by the Muslim League. When the League joined the Government, it was supposed to have been given two out of the four most important departments: External Affairs, Home, Defence and Finance. But the Congress refused to surrender any of the portfolios except Finance. In offering Finance, the Congress thought it was being very clever. The League leadership had no economist, so either it would refuse the offer or its nominee for the job would make a fool of himself.

The Congress had a surprise in store when Liaquat Ali Khan proved to be an excellent Finance Minister. Moreover, the Congress had not realized that, according to the rules of business in the Government of India, financial control, except for routine and approved matters, rested entirely with the Department of Finance. No new projects could be undertaken or financial commitment made without the prior sanction of the Finance Department. The Congress ministers were thus obliged to submit all their schemes for the prior approval of Liaquat Ali Khan, 'the leader of the Muslim League bloc'. They found themselves circumscribed and circumvented, and, as they themselves were responsible for it, angry at themselves. To add to the woes of the Congress, Liaquat presented his 'Poor Man's Budget' at the end of February. These proposals included a new business-profits tax of 25 per cent, a graduated tax on higher capital gains, and the setting up of a special commission to investigate the accumulation of wealth arising from tax evasion. This caused an immediate hue and cry from Hindu capitalists who had made huge fortunes

during the war years. These capitalists had been financing the Congress for a long time, and they now rushed for help to Patel, who had been responsible for collecting party funds. Although a compromise was reached on the budget proposals, the Congress leaders were deeply perturbed, and they thought that the only way to get out of the situation was to agree to some sort of partition, at least temporarily. Patel, who had had the bright idea to give Finance to the League, was the first important person to be converted.

Mountbatten's own instructions were to keep India united. Attlee's directive to him stated that the 'definite objective' was 'to obtain a unitary Government for British India and the Indian States, if possible within the British Commonwealth,' through the Constituent Assembly set up under the Cabinet Mission Plan; if this was not found possible, he was to report by 1 October on how he considered power should be transferred. He was, however, to take every opportunity of stressing the great importance of avoiding any breach in the continuity of the Indian Army and of maintaining the organization of defence on an all-India basis and 'the need for continued collaboration in the security of the Indian Ocean area.'¹

Mountbatten himself believed not only in a united India but in a strong Centre. He told a staff meeting in April that 'it had always been and would remain his main desire to hand over power to a unified India with a strong Centre. The next best to this would be to hand over to a unified India with a weak Centre—such as was envisaged in the Cabinet Mission Plan.'² The possibility of a strong Centre had been buried by the Cabinet Mission itself, and recent developments had made even a weak Centre impossible.

On 11 December 1946, while a change in the Viceroyalty was being contemplated by Attlee, at a meeting of the India and Burma Committee of the Cabinet, 'it was agreed that if the Congress persisted in an intransigent attitude, the logical consequences would be the establishment of Pakistan which they so much disliked.'³ The Government and Mountbatten shared that

¹ *Transfer of Power*, op. cit., Vol. IX, pp. 972-4.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. X, p. 190.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. IX, p. 33.

dislike. The Government was looking for some way to save the Plan from wreckage, and Mountbatten, in his Himalayan conceit, believed he could do it.

It was with this belief in his ability to succeed where lesser souls had failed that Mountbatten arrived in India. He had no doubt in his mind that, with very little effort on his part, he would win friends and influence people, dazzle everyone and sweep everything before him. He found the Congress leaders, whose nominee he was, sweet and warm. They would agree to anything—a strong Centre, a weak Centre or partition. What flexibility, what statesmanship! He was happy indeed. But when he met Jinnah, he did not find the same warmth. Jinnah did not know the circumstances of Mountbatten's appointment, but he did know that he was representing a Government which had acted perfidiously, and that the new Viceroy had come to carry out its dishonest policies more effectively. He was cold and cautious, and, to Mountbatten's chagrin, immune to his famous personal charm. Moreover, he was adamant on Pakistan. Nothing, neither flattery nor threats, would move him. No tricks worked on him. He stood firm as a rock. Mountbatten felt rebuffed and annoyed, and called him 'a psychopathic case'. Of course, Jinnah was as much a psychopathic case as an early Christian in a Roman arena or, closer in time, Winston Churchill after the defeat of France, refusing to make peace with Hitler.

As a naval commander, Mountbatten knew only one way of dealing with anything that hindered the progress of operations—remove it; bombard it or sink it, but remove it. In this operation that the Admiral was starting as the new Viceroy, Jinnah appeared as a hurdle which he could neither destroy nor remove nor win over. He found he had run aground. He felt repulsed and annoyed. His monstrous vanity was injured, and he developed an antipathy towards Jinnah which increased with each passing day.

This added a personal factor in the process of transfer of power, but actually Mountbatten was never an impartial umpire. He was himself a product of the intrigues against the Muslim League and Jinnah that had been going on for a year, and later became its most active and effective weapon. The unofficial contacts and secret agreements between the Congress and the Labour leaders, on which the Cabinet Mission had relied so much

during its stay in India, were carried on after its return to England. Agatha Harrison and Horace Alexander, the Quakers of the India Conciliation Group, acted as the bridge between Gandhi and the British ministers. In addition, Sudhir Ghosh was sent from India to act as 'Gandhi's emissary'. Krishna Menon was already in London as Nehru's representative and constantly in touch with the Labour leaders, many of whom he knew intimately. Krishna Menon was also a friend of Mountbatten; and it was at a meeting between him and Cripps that Krishna Menon had suggested that Wavell be recalled and replaced by Mountbatten.

Another Menon was also high in the estimation of, and close to, Mountbatten. This was V.P. Menon, the Reforms Commissioner and Constitutional Adviser to the Viceroy. This was a key post which had previously been occupied by another Hindu, Sir B. N. Rau; one from which constitutional changes and political decisions could be greatly influenced. For instance, Menon confesses that during the Simla Conference in 1945, 'I had been pressing consistently on the Viceroy that Jinnah's claim that the Muslim League represented the will of the Muslims of India was quite untenable; that we could not let down the Unionist Party which alone, contrary to the League's claims, could speak for the Punjab; that in the interests of the Punjab we should not compromise with the League, but should go ahead with our plans. My argument was that if we conceded Jinnah's claims, we should logically be conceding his demand for Pakistan.'¹ Menon was not listened to at that time by Whitehall but that did not prevent him from giving tendentious advice later on.

Menon had been a confidant of both Linlithgow and Wavell. He had supplied the Viceroys, off and on, with news about and reactions of Congress leaders. Actually, he was a double agent, and since August 1946 when he met Patel, he had 'made it my purpose to consult him, (Patel) so far as possible on important developments in the constitutional field.'²

As contacts between Patel and Menon became more frequent, the matter came to the attention of the Viceroy's House, and on 26 March 1947, George Abell, Private Secretary to the Viceroy, wrote a note about his reliability: 'Up to recently he knew every-

¹V. P. Menon, *Transfer of Power in India*, op. cit., 1979, p. 207.

²V. P. Menon, *Integration of the Indian States*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1985, p. 93.

thing in connection with high policy that was going on between the Viceroy and the India Office. Lately he has been rather less closely in confidence because he is a Hindu, and is inevitably under pressure from Congress to tell them what is going on... Mr Menon now is generally convinced of the righteousness of the Congress view on the general political situation. Thus, though he is a friend of mine, and one of the people I like best in Delhi, I am convinced that it is not possible to take him into confidence as fully as has been done in the past.¹

Abell was an ICS officer who had been Private Secretary to Wavell. When Wavell visited London in December, he left behind Abell to carry out discussions on his behalf. Abell was 'very disappointed with the P.M. and Members of H.M.G. and the way they had gone back on their promises...was really horrified at their lack of realism and honesty.'² He had then not suspected that behind this attitude was a plot between the Congress and the Labour Government. Now, while he conscientiously wrote a note for the new Viceroy's information, he failed to realize that Mountbatten had come as a result of that plot, or that Menon was not to be considered as an unreliable agent of the Congress, but as its representative in the Viceroy's House. In fact, he was soon to be a greater favourite and trusted aid of Mountbatten than Abell himself.

There was no counterpart of Menon from the Muslim League side on the Viceroy's staff. The Viceroy's House was full of people who were vehemently opposed to Partition and Jinnah. The two most senior members were the 'Chief of the Viceroy's Staff', Lord Ismay, and the 'Principal Secretary to the Viceroy', Sir Eric Mievile, who had been on the staff of Lord Willingdon, with his strong anti-Jinnah bias. The atmosphere at their staff meetings was decidedly hostile to Jinnah and Pakistan. This is evident from the recorded minutes of the meetings; while the account given by Mountbatten's Press Attaché, Alan Campell-Johnson, in his book *Mission with Mountbatten*, and Mountbatten's own speeches and statements later, are full of venom. It was not unusual at these meetings for someone to declare that the division of the Indian Army was 'the biggest crime'; for another to say that the

¹*Transfer of Power*, op. cit., Vol. VII, p. 26.

²Wavell, *Journal*, op. cit., p. 409.

Muslim League was 'in a weak position'; and for a third to add suggestively that 'Mr Jinnah could be squeezed'. They would then consider how to do it; and where necessary, Menon would draw up a scheme.

By the end of April, Mountbatten having concluded that the Cabinet Mission Plan was dead and Pakistan was inevitable, had drawn up a plan for partition. This was based on the principle that the provinces had the right to determine their own future, including the right to stand on their own feet or form groups; but Bengal and Punjab should be partitioned. The general principles of the new plan had been accepted by the party leaders, and it had been taken by Lord Ismay and Abell to London on 2 May. The Viceroy had strongly urged that, as time was of the essence, the British Government's approval be communicated to him by 10 May. This was done, and on 10 May a press communiqué announced that the Viceroy would present it to the Indian leaders on 17 May. The next day a new communiqué announced that the leaders meeting had been postponed to 2 June. On 18 May Mountbatten flew out to England for consultations with the Government, and the plan he presented to the leaders on 2 June was different from the original plan. What had happened and why?

Plot at Simla

According to the version given by Mountbatten and his friends, he had gone to Simla for a short rest, and had invited Nehru and Krishna Menon as his house guests for the weekend. There, on a 'hunch', he gave an advance copy of the draft of the plan to Nehru. When Nehru read it he was furious, and sent a strongly worded letter to Mountbatten. Mountbatten was stunned by the 'Nehru bombshell'. He asked V. P. Menon to draft another plan. This new plan was shown to, and approved by Nehru: it formed the basis on which India was actually partitioned.

There are far too many gaps in the story. Even so, why, one may ask, was the plan shown to Nehru, when it had not been shown to Jinnah? Was this the act of an impartial umpire? Again, where was the need to do it when Nehru had himself conveyed the Congress approval of the plan in a letter to Mountbatten on

1 May¹, and the Viceroy had so informed his Government? Jinnah, it was feared, might not accept the plan; and if Mountbatten feared rejection, he should have shown it to Jinnah, not Nehru. What then inspired the 'hunch' that Nehru would not like it? And, if Nehru had been aware of the plan, even if he had not known all the details, why was his reaction at Simla so violent? And, if Nehru had gone back on his word, should he have been placated by withdrawal of the original plan and substitution of another, according to his wishes? Finally, how was it that V.P. Menon was able to propose another scheme, work out its details, and write it down in legal and constitutional form and language, and hand it over, complete in all respects, in 'only two or three hours',² as he claimed?

The documents released by the British Government in *The Transfer of Power* show that while Ismay was in London with the Mountbatten Plan, those in Simla were discussing alternative plans. Mountbatten arrived on the evening of the 6th, and on the 7th the staff meeting discussed a suggestion by Menon that, in the event of Jinnah rejecting the Mountbatten Plan, they should be ready to produce an alternative. Mountbatten agreed and ordered preparation of an alternative plan based on demission of power to the provinces, the central subjects being given to the existing Central Government.³ The next day, 8 May, Nehru arrived and was present at a Staff meeting, where he unfolded a plan of his own. He proposed that power be demitted in *June 1947* to a Central Government responsible to the Constituent Assembly; that creation of Pakistan straightaway be ruled out; that provinces may form groups, and this power may be extended to leaving the Union, but only after the principles of the Constitution had been worked out.⁴ In addition, Menon had a plan, which was officially discussed at the Staff meeting on 10 May, when Nehru was present. This was the plan, which after 'a lengthy discussion with Vallabhbhai Patel' in 'December 1946, or early in January 1947', Menon had dictated 'in his presence.'⁵

¹*Transfer of Power*, op. cit., Vol. X, pp. 517-19.

²Menon, *Transfer of Power in India*, op. cit., p. 365.

³*Transfer of Power*, op. cit., Vol. X, pp. 656-9.

⁴*Ibid.*, Vol. X, pp. 670-7.

⁵Menon, pp. 358-9.

Menon's plan had been placed before the Viceroy by Ismay on 25 April, and Mountbatten had ordered that it form an Appendix to the papers that Ismay was taking to London.¹

Is it not extraordinary that, while pressing the British Government to quickly approve the plan that the Viceroy had drawn up after due thought and had sent to London through his Chief of Staff personally, and expecting that approval to come in a day or two, he and his staff should still be discussing that Plan, as well as considering three alternative plans?

It is interesting at this stage to compare Mountbatten's attitude towards Nehru with that towards Jinnah. Nehru, sitting in the inner circle of the Viceroy's staff, explained his own plan and commented on Menon's plan. He was shown the plan that was being examined in London, and when he objected, the plan was substituted by another, which was shown to him for approval. Jinnah, on the contrary, was not only not consulted, the Demission Plan was drawn up to threaten and blackmail him. This plan was based essentially on the long-standing Congress demand to transfer power to the majority community. Mountbatten told Nehru about it and Nehru said that 'Congress would prefer this alternative plan.' Discussing it in the Staff meeting, Mountbatten said that, in case of a boycott by Jinnah, he would 'go ahead with the plan and allow the Congress minority to supply the voters and form the Constituent Assemblies and Ministries in the Provinces and half-Provinces in which the Muslim League boycotted the proceedings.' This would not require the agreement of the Indian leaders, and 'his present intention was to confront Mr Jinnah with this alternative the day before the proposed meeting with Indian leaders.'²

He had no alternative plan to threaten Nehru with.

Jinnah was, of course, unaware of the conspiracy that was being worked out at Simla. Nor do we know all the details from the documents in *The Transfer of Power*. These papers cannot tell the whole story. They are merely minutes, carefully written, of meetings, or records of notes, or copies of letters and telegrams. They do not cover the secret negotiations going on, and the understanding reached between Mountbatten and the Congress.

¹*Transfer of Power*, op. cit., Vol. X, pp. 437-8.

²*Ibid.*, Vol. X, pp. 656-9.

They do, however, help in piecing together the story with whatever other information is available from other sources.

Mountbatten's great desire was to bring independent India in the Commonwealth. Today this may appear to be ridiculous: the organization itself may seem to be a strange creature of no consequence, neither fish nor fowl, defying description. But in those days it had great prestige as an association of free nations, with common citizenship and the common link of the Crown. The Government instructions to Mountbatten were to try to keep India in the Commonwealth, and he himself was deeply attached to the idea and thought that it would add to the prestige of the Crown, to which he felt personal and family loyalty. From the time he came as Viceroy, he was as much concerned with the way to transfer power as with making the subcontinent retain its link with the Crown.

The main hurdle in achieving this aim was the attitude of the Congress. Nehru, it may be re-called, had vehemently opposed his father's proposal to accept Dominion Status and since 1929 the Congress had become committed to 'Complete Independence'. The Constituent Assembly had adopted a resolution moved by Nehru himself that India would be an 'Independent Sovereign Republic'.

Mountbatten had been looking for a formula which would make it possible for India to stay in the Commonwealth despite that resolution, when he received a telegram from the Nawab of Bhopal on 27 March, saying that he had had a talk with Jinnah and his impression was that Jinnah could be persuaded to stay in the Commonwealth. This piece of information should have made Mountbatten very happy, but it did not. He told his Staff meeting on 28 March that 'he was not prepared to discuss this question with different parts of India.'¹ On 9 April when Jinnah, at a meeting with him, indicated that Pakistan would stay in the Commonwealth, Mountbatten showed no enthusiasm at all.² He told Liaquat on 11 April, that he 'was not prepared even to discuss the suggestion of any part of India remaining in the Empire unless the suggestion came from all parts together.'³

¹Ibid., Vol. X, p. 36.

²Ibid., p. 191. Mountbatten did not even mention this in his record of the interview (document 105) but brought it up at a Staff meeting two days later.

³Ibid., p. 201.

To be forced to divide India was bad enough for Mountbatten, but to have Pakistan, and not Bharat, inside the Commonwealth would be a double defeat. He was at first distressed at this development, but before long decided that it gave him an opportunity to persuade Bharat. Bharat should be told of the enormous advantages that Pakistan would enjoy—Pakistan would get, *inter alia*, the services of experienced civil and military officers which would be so badly needed in the initial years, but which would not be available to a country outside the Commonwealth. The British officers would organize Pakistan's armed forces into a magnificent fighting machine, and see to it that it got all the required military equipment and stores; this would turn the military balance in favour of Pakistan. While casting this bait, Mountbatten would pretend that he himself and the British Government had no interest in the matter and that it was for the Congress itself to think over and decide.

This is the line Mountbatten took with Krishna Menon on 17 April. He said that he had 'received strict instructions from His Majesty's Government not to make an attempt to keep India in the Commonwealth'—'a blatant untruth,' remarks his biographer.¹ Mountbatten also said to him 'in strict confidence that I was one of those sentimental fools who would always try to help any nation that wanted to be in the Commonwealth,' but 'I also told him that I was not prepared to negotiate with various parts of India, e.g., the States, Pakistan & co. who in any case wished to be in the Commonwealth.' When Menon suggested that Mountbatten take the first step forward, Mountbatten firmly refused and said that 'it was for the Congress to make the first move.' Menon then said that 'if the British were voluntarily to give us now Dominion Status, well ahead of June 1948, we should be so grateful that not a voice would be heard in June 1948 suggesting any change...'²

The interview throws some light on the tactics of the two, each wanting the other to take the first step. Mountbatten would not do it because he had 'strict instructions' to the contrary, but he was romantically attached to the idea and did not want other

¹Ziegler, *op. cit.*, p. 382.

²Record of Mountbatten's interview with Krishna Menon on 17 April 1947, *Transfer of Power*, *op. cit.*, Vol. X, pp. 310-13.

parts of India to get that membership, although they wished it. Krishna Menon's suggestion for a way out was to create goodwill by transferring power ahead of the deadline.

The two met again after five days, when they 'properly let down our hair together and discussed every aspect of the plan now being worked on'. Mountbatten said that although he would advise the Government against admitting Pakistan into the Commonwealth, yet if the demand was made over their heads to the British people, it might be too strong to be resisted, and he listed the advantages that it would have against India. 'In fact,' said Mountbatten, 'backed by British and American arms and technique, Pakistan would in no while have armed forces superior to those of Hindustan,' and that 'places like Karachi would become big naval and air bases.' 'How can we prevent this?' asked Krishna Menon. 'By the simple expedient of being in the Commonwealth yourself,' said Mountbatten.¹

It was at this meeting that Krishna Menon suggested that Mountbatten should take Nehru away for two or three days on holiday, 'for,' he said 'between you, you can solve the problems of India.'

It was the fourth week of April now, and Mountbatten's partition plan was being given the final touches. As the time for Ismay's departure drew near, and there was still no move from the Congress, Mountbatten became apprehensive. There were references by him in the Staff meetings on several occasions to the ugly possibility of Pakistan being inside the Commonwealth, and Bharat outside. This was 'the last thing he wanted to see,' he said at a meeting on 26 April, 'and it would indeed be most disastrous that Hindustan left the Empire irretrievably and Pakistan remained within irretrievably.'² On the eve of Ismay's departure, he explained at a Staff meeting on 1 May that 'the more he thought of it the more concerned did he become that it would be disastrous to allow only one, for example, Pakistan, to remain in, and thus back up one part of India against the other... On the other hand, he personally was much in favour of British India as a whole being permitted to remain in the Commonwealth, and was using the Pakistan threat to remain in

¹Ibid., Vol. X, pp. 371-4.

²Ibid., Vol. X, p. 442.

as a lever to help Congress "take the plunge".¹ Earlier, on 25 April, Mountbatten had instructed Ismay that, while in London, he should warn the India Secretary of Pakistan's unilateral application and point out 'the difficulties which would result.'²

It was also on 25 April that V.P. Menon had submitted his own plan to Mountbatten through Ismay. He had pointed out that internal troubles were increasing, and argued: 'Is it not then better tactics to confront the parties as *constituted authorities* with the problem from the beginning?' 'For the transitional period,' he said, 'the Congress has accepted Dominion Status, and if we accept the proposition immediately there is a good chance that the interim arrangement may cover a fairly long period...on the other hand, if we defer parting with power to the last minute we may not have any alternative except to hand over on the basis of complete independence.' Therefore, Menon suggested, if an agreement on the Cabinet Mission Plan was not forthcoming, the British Government should give an award on partition: there should be two Constituent Assemblies; Bengal and the Punjab be partitioned; power be transferred to the Executive Councils elected by the two Constituent Assemblies; and the existing constitution, with necessary modifications, be adopted for the two new Dominions. There should be a common Governor-General and a Common Defence Council.³

The Mountbatten Plan, unlike the Menon Plan, did not provide for any interim arrangements; nor did it touch upon the question of Dominion Status. The underlying idea was that power would be transferred to the constituent assemblies.

When the plan was in the drafting stage, Mountbatten intensified his efforts to entice the Congress. Despite his report to the Secretary of State on 1 May that, 'I have never once discussed with any Congress leader the possibility of India remaining within the Commonwealth,'⁴ he had been in touch through intermediaries. After his first interview with Krishna Menon, 'the germ of a new plan had come into the mind.' This concerned 'the question of India remaining, in some way, within

¹Ibid., Vol. X, p. 523.

²Ibid., Vol. X, p. 414.

³Ibid., Vol. X, pp. 437-40. (Emphasis original.)

⁴Ibid., p. 541.

the British Commonwealth,' but 'the grant (of Dominion Status) would have to take place this year; or the object would not be achieved.'¹ Krishna Menon had asked him to give Dominion Status well ahead of June 1948, and he decided that this was the bait he could use.

After the second meeting with Krishna Menon, which suggested the Simla holiday, he talked to C. H. Bhaba the next day. Bhaba was the Parsi member of the Interim Government. Mountbatten persuaded Bhaba to collect Baldev Singh, a Sikh, and John Matthai, a Christian, all three being Congress nominees in the Interim Government, and go and meet the five Congress members. At this meeting, which should be private, with no outsider present, and where Mountbatten should on no account be quoted, they should, as representatives of the minorities, express their deep concern at how Bharat was likely to suffer militarily if Pakistan stayed in the Commonwealth and Bharat did not. Mountbatten also suggested that, in order to save face, the Congress should not link up the Republic resolution with the date of the British departure, and that, 'I should receive a suggestion from Congress to act on their resolution to turn India over to Dominion Status as soon as possible *before* June 1948.' In this case there would be two dominions, free in every respect except Defence. 'I would be Governor-General of the two dominions and Chairman of the Commonwealth Defence Council' until June 1948.²

These then were Mountbatten's terms for a deal with the Congress: he would transfer power early if Bharat would accept Dominion Status and a common Governor-General. This became the subject of 'violent discussions' in the Congress, as V. P. Menon and others reported to him. The result of these discussions was that, on 1st May, Menon conveyed to him that 'Sardar Patel might well accept an offer of Dominion Status for the time being.'³

Five days later, Mountbatten arrived in Simla with V. P. Menon. That Mountbatten should have taken Menon with him to Simla is not without significance, for if he wanted to get away from it all, and to rest his mind and recuperate his energies, the Constitutional Adviser was the last person he would have wanted

¹Ibid., p. 314.

²Ibid., pp. 375-8. (Emphasis original.)

³Ibid., p. 524.

around. The period of rest was, in fact, a period of hectic activity: there were more than one Staff meetings a day, two of which were attended by Nehru, who too had come for a 'holiday'.

Once in Simla, Mountbatten and Menon had a heart-to-heart talk. Menon told the Viceroy that Patel was indeed ready to accept Dominion Status, if power was transferred in two months. Menon himself says that: 'It was at Simla that, for the first time, I had an opportunity of explaining my point of view to the Viceroy in person.' But he suddenly stops there, and does not take the reader into his confidence any further.

The minutes of the Viceroy's Staff meeting on 7 May, however, mention that Menon said that, 'if the Viceroy approached Sardar Patel on the subject, he would get a positive reply. Pandit Nehru would say the same.' He also quoted another high Hindu official, Sir Chandulal Trivedi, Governor of Orissa, as suggesting that the word 'Emperor' should be dropped from the title 'King-Emperor'.

It was at the same meeting that Menon expressed the view that it was constitutionally possible for a *British* Governor-General to be responsible for the two Dominions of India. He also said that the problems of setting up an administrative machinery for Pakistan in six months were not 'insuperable'. Mountbatten then ordered Menon to prepare a paper setting out the procedure whereby a form of Dominion be given to India by *January 1948*.¹

The next day Nehru arrived.

In the course of discussions at the Staff meeting on 8 May, Nehru urged early transfer of power—in *June 1947*—and said that 'the Congress-majority part of India would be able to take over power almost immediately.' At this, the Constitutional Adviser said that if Pakistan was not ready to receive power, Mountbatten could 'continue as Viceroy for Pakistan and Governor-General for the Union of India.'²

Menon gives no account of discussions of 7 and 8 May, except that Nehru and Krishna Menon arrived on the 8th, and the Viceroy asked him to 'discuss my plan with Nehru and find out his reactions'. 'I had discussions with him on that and the next

¹Ibid., pp. 656-9

²Ibid., p. 675.

day...I gathered the impression that he was not averse to the proposed transfer of power on the basis of Dominion Status.'¹ Menon then mentions the Staff Conference on 10 May, *when* Mountbatten told Nehru that Menon had been working on a scheme, and asked Menon to explain it. The farce continued, and Menon 'repeated much of what I had already discussed with Nehru.'²

All this points to a Congress-Mountbatten understanding having already been reached *before* Mountbatten had his 'hunch'. This was as much a part of play-acting as Nehru's fury. The stage was set by V.P. Menon telling him about the Congress conditions. All that was now required was to settle the procedure and minor points of details and to finalize and seal the deal after Nehru's arrival, and the Staff meetings in Simla were conducted on this assumption; they also considered the *modus operandi* and the tactics to be employed against Jinnah. Menon does not give the date, but apparently he talked to Mountbatten soon after his arrival on the evening of the 6th; for the meeting on 7 May not only decided on the Demission plan to threaten Jinnah, but Mountbatten is also recorded as saying that if that plan was implemented, it would be 'most highly desirable' for India to get Dominion Status 'at least six months in advance of June 1948'. At the next day's meeting Nehru was demanding that the date be advanced further to June 1947, i.e., within two months; and Menon was suggesting that if Pakistan was not ready, Mountbatten could continue to be its Viceroy.

The dramatic turn of events—the 'hunch' of Mountbatten, the angry reaction of Nehru, the hurried preparation of a new plan—are nothing but a smoke-screen to disguise the conspiracy that was hatched at Simla. We hear almost nothing about the activities at Simla of Krishna Menon, who had been discussing the Commonwealth question with Mountbatten. There is no record of the Viceroy's discussions with either Nehru or Krishna Menon, although since the day he came to New Delhi, Mountbatten had made it a habit to record such discussions immediately after every interview. We find Mountbatten becoming lyrical about the advantages *to Britain* if India stayed in

¹Menon, *Transfer of Power in India*, op. cit., pp. 359-60.

²Ibid., p. 360.

the Commonwealth. These included India filling in 'the whole framework of the world strategy' on Imperial defence; 'the greatest advantage to the prestige of the present British Government; and the enormous enhancement of British prestige', 'this factor alone was of overriding importance'. At the same meeting, on 9 May, Mountbatten said: 'if Dominion Status was granted to India before June 1948, the grant should take place during 1947.' Speaking of the difficulties of quickly transferring power on this basis, Mountbatten said that 'they could be overcome in the same way' as difficulties has been overcome 'during the war'.¹

The same day, 9 May, Patel, whom Menon says 'I was keeping informed of the developments in Simla',² issued a press statement demanding that power be transferred to the Indian Government on the basis of Dominion Status. He also assured Menon that 'there would be no difficulty in the Congress accepting Dominion Status.'³

The theory advanced by an Indian historian that the original plan with Ismay had been presented with the intention that it be rejected and pave the way for the acceptance of Dominion Status, is wide of the mark. It assumes cunning on the part of Mountbatten and innocence on the part of Nehru. Actually both were co-conspirators, and each was playing his part in a put-up act. Nehru's strong reaction was unnatural for he certainly knew the basis and the main features of the Plan. On 22 April Mountbatten had discussed it in 'every respect' with Krishna Menon, who could not have failed to report it to Nehru. The details of the plan were published by the Delhi *Hindustan Times* on 3 May, and by *The Hindu* even earlier, 'almost completely.' Mountbatten himself told a Staff meeting on 3 May that 'the only Indian leaders who had seen the *full draft of the plan* were Mr Jinnah and Pandit Nehru.'⁴ How was it, then, that the plan was shown to one of the parties again?

Actually, Mieville had gone 'through the draft statement with him'⁵ and in the Staff meeting on 11 May, after Nehru's angry

¹*Transfer of Power*, op. cit., Vol. X, pp. 702-5.

²Menon, op. cit., p. 365.

³Ibid., p. 365.

⁴*Transfer of Power*, op. cit., Vol. X, p. 579. (Emphasis added.)

⁵Ibid., p. 488.

letter, Mievile, in Nehru's presence, 'made it absolutely clear that the draft he had showed Pandit Nehru was the full draft of the whole plan.'¹ Nehru had then made two small points about the NWFP and Balochistan, and had raised no objection about 'the whole approach'. Nehru's later 'forceful' reaction was supposedly caused by the part giving the provinces the right to form unions or stand alone, rather than starting with a Union and then opting to secede, as he wanted. But this was the starting point of the plan, and he could not have missed it when he went through the draft with Mievile.

Nehru tried to justify his attitude by blaming Whitehall for changes in the original draft, but these had been changes of drafting and arrangement and not of substance, as a comparison between the two documents would show. Ismay rightly said in his telegram of 6 May to Mounbatten that 'substance remains same but we think you will find present considerably improved.'² Mountbatten himself recorded on 15 May that 'the new draft appeared better than ours.'³ Nehru was never able to point out any drafting change to which he took exception: and Mievile, Ismay, and even Campbell-Johnson called Nehru's act a *volte-face*.

Volte-face it was indeed: but that was part of the deal.

The most revealing document in *The Transfer of Power*, however, is Mountbatten's telegram to Ismay of 8 May, the day Nehru arrived. It said:

...Patel and Nehru have now themselves indicated through V.P. Menon a desire for a form of early Dominion Status...

and asked Ismay to circulate papers about Menon's Plan to the India Committee of the Cabinet. The telegram went on to say:

2. We shall spend the weekend working out details with Nehru and obtaining Patel's concurrence. A further telegram will be sent to you on Sunday.

3. If this comes off it will not only produce a sporting chance of the main Union of India remaining indefinitely in the Commonwealth, but will also get over the difficulty of Jinnah having already indicated Pakistan's insistence on not being kicked out of the Empire. It will also largely solve the problem of those Indian States which refuse to join a Constituent Assembly.

¹Ibid., p. 763.

²Ibid., p. 636.

³Ibid., p. 836.

4. I know that at the time that you and Abell left it did not seem that this scheme could be pulled off but the situation has completely changed by Patel and Nehru coming forward themselves. This is the greatest opportunity ever offered to the Empire and we must not let administrative or other difficulties to stand in the way. I rely on you both to give this your full backing.¹

The telegram was sent in the evening of the day Nehru arrived—one day before Patel's statement and two days *before* Mountbatten's 'hunch'. It confirms that a deal was made that day. Thus the weekend was spent in working out details about the bargain, and the manner in which it was to be implemented. During the weekend Mountbatten 'made real friends with Nehru.'² Naturally.

Thus it was that a problem that had defied the best brains in Britain and India was solved through a blueprint prepared in 'two or three hours'. The 'holiday' in Simla was utilized for hatching a conspiracy, reminding one of the conspiracy in Bengal between Robert Clive and the Hindu Mahajans two centuries earlier. The conspirators were the same two parties, as was the victim. The only difference was that, while Clive was laying the foundations of the Empire, Mountbatten had come with the avowed object of dismantling it. The Muslim League was kept unaware of the doings at Simla, and Mountbatten went through the act of obtaining the agreement of the Congress and the Muslim League. The League was not shown the new plan—the Menon Plan, miscalled Mountbatten Plan—as Nehru had been; instead 'Heads of Agreement' were drawn up, by Menon, of course. The League could not be persuaded to give its written approval, because this could only be done by its Council, which could not meet in the short time available, but Jinnah gave his general approval. The Congress readily wrote that it accepted the Plan, and offered the common Governor-Generalship to Mountbatten.

Mountbatten left for England on 18 May. The British Government were perplexed by their Viceroy's sudden withdrawal of his own plan, and wanted him to explain his action personally. Mountbatten faced them with supreme confidence, and said that the previous plan would have been rejected; he had instead come with a new plan which had been accepted by both parties. In

¹Ibid., Vol. X, p. 699. (Emphasis added.)

²Ibid., Vol. X, p. 776.

addition, both the emerging countries had expressed the wish to stay in the Commonwealth, and he, Mountbatten, would be the common Governor-General. The Government were impressed, and Attlee made some remarks in praise of the Viceroy.

Mountbatten returned to India in triumph. Instead of losing face with his Government, he had dazzled them with a unique achievement, thanks to Nehru, Patel and Menon. Henceforth his attitude towards the Muslim League changed for the worse. He had never sympathized with the League, but now he was completely enamoured of the Congress. After all, he had conceded Pakistan; what else could Jinnah want? The Congress, on the other hand, had to be humoured in every way and indulged. If the accelerated process of transfer of power would not allow Pakistan to have an administrative machinery in time, it did not matter. If Pakistan would not get its cash and other assets in time, it did not matter. If Pakistan would be seriously hurt and damaged, it did not matter. All that mattered was the goodwill of Bharat, which should be helped in every way to become a strong and well-knit state.

Mountbatten's unfriendliness towards Pakistan increased progressively, but it turned to active hostility on the question of a common Governor-General.

Mountbatten had imagined himself as the Governor-General of India, united or divided, until June 1948. His condition for a quick transfer of power, conveyed to the Congress through Bhaba, was that he would be the common Governor-General. After the deal was made with the Congress, Nehru, in his letter accepting the new plan, added a sentence that they would be happy if Mountbatten continued in the job. This cost him nothing, and it did not come as any surprise to Mountbatten, but it satisfied the latter's ego. What was more, he could now face the British Government as a victor who had achieved the impossible in India, and in the process become so popular with the 'natives' that they wanted him to continue. To the outside world also such an appointment would appear as a unique tribute to his diplomatic skill and personal charm. But Pakistan's refusal almost nullified its impact.

When Mountbatten raised the question with Jinnah, Jinnah did not react favourably. He thought that each country should have a separate Governor-General, though there should also be a

Crown Representative to act as a mediator. There is nowhere any document in *The Transfer of Power* to justify the belief that Pakistan was likely to accept a common Governor-General; actually we find Mountbatten himself telling the India Committee of the British Cabinet of 'Mr Jinnah's objections to a common Governor-General' on 20 May.¹ Nevertheless, Mountbatten, in his supreme self-confidence, believed that he would be able to pull it off. Even two days after Jinnah had told him of the League decision to nominate himself, Mountbatten still thought he would be able to browbeat Jinnah, and ordered that the relevant Provision in the India Independence Bill should stay unchanged.²

The Muslim League's decision to nominate Jinnah as the Governor-General of Pakistan came as a rude shock to Mountbatten. It hurt his vanity. He felt humiliated and mortified. From this point on he became the sworn enemy of Pakistan.

Henceforth Mountbatten dropped even the pretence of impartiality, and did everything in his power to hurt and harm Pakistan and to prevent it from reaching the take-off stage. The Viceroy's House was converted into *Swaraj Bhawan*. Schemes would be initiated and implemented to injure and cripple the new State at birth, and anybody who protested or did not fully co-operate was thrown out. Very senior British officers who did not follow the line found themselves on the way home, be they the Governor of a province, like Olaf Caroe of the NWFP, or the Political Advisor to the Crown Representative, Conrad Corfield, or the Supreme Commander, Field-Marshal Claude Auchinleck. Auchinleck's 'resignation' was actually written by Mountbatten himself, and sent to him to sign on the dotted line.

The hurried process of transfer of power itself worked against Pakistan. It had taken two years to separate Orissa from Bihar as a province, and a similar period to separate Sindh from Bombay. In the case of Burma's separation from India, it had taken three years. Could the partition of India and the setting up of two independent States of many provinces be completed in two months?

This indecent haste could hardly affect Bharat. It would inherit the capital, the Central Secretariat and the General Headquarters

¹Ibid., Vol. X, p. 918.

²Ibid., Vol. XI, p. 886.

of the defence forces. Its administrative machinery would remain intact. It would be a going concern from the start. But Pakistan would have to start with nothing. The dawn of freedom would find Pakistan without an administrative set-up, without any armed forces, without its own currency and postal service, in fact, without anything but its name.

Surely it could not have been an error of judgment, for the Viceroy's own staff had pointed out that it would take at least a year for Pakistan to set up some form of government and between five to ten years to split the Indian army. It was a calculated act indeed.

As early as on 24 March, the day after Mountbatten took the oath of office, Nehru had agreed with Mountbatten that 'it might be possible to frighten Jinnah into co-operation on the basis of the shortness of time available.'¹ Jinnah was not easily frightened, but when he was told about the process of transfer of power being completed in two months, he protested strongly. Apart from other considerations, all the factories and stores were in India and Pakistan's share could not be handed over in so short a time. He need not worry, he was assured, the King's representative would see to it that Pakistan got its fair share; but after July, Jinnah was told that he was himself to blame because he had not accepted a common Governor-General.

That Pakistan did not get its agreed share of military stores and other assets meant a loss of millions of rupees; but more importantly, it did not get them when it needed them most.

Between 3 June and 15 August, and of course later, Mountbatten went out of his way to favour Bharat at the expense of Pakistan. He would not even accept Pakistan as a new country, but only as a part of India that was seceding. This was contrary to facts as well as to the legal position: the British Government's own statement of 3 June 1947, had referred to 'the transfer of power...to *one or two successor authorities* according to the decisions taken.'² When Nehru first raised the matter, and Jinnah asserted that it was not a case of secession but of division, the Viceroy's Private Secretary asked London for advice as, 'I believe that official view is that two new states will be created and that

¹Ibid., Vol. X, p. 12.

²Text of the Statement, *ibid.*, Vol. XI, pp. 89-4. (Emphasis added.)

neither of them can claim to be India.¹ The Viceroy's staff shared this view, and General Ismay thought that the word 'secession' was highly derogatory. Mountbatten's own view, however, as conveyed to the India Secretary, was that 'we shall meet far greater difficulties from Congress if we oppose their view than from the League if we follow the Congress suggestion.'² In other words, 'squeeze' the League. The Secretary of State found 'considerable force' in the Viceroy's arguments, and 'on balance, the advantage would seem to lie...in adopting the Congress doctrine and accepting Hindustan as the successor of the former India,' although he did concede that it would be 'a result unfair to Pakistan.'³

So Bharat was declared the successor State, inheriting its name and its position as a continuing entity. It inherited not only all Indian assets abroad, but also all Indian trade and diplomatic missions and membership of international organizations. Even in ordinary commercial transactions, when the fate of a Company is decided, its goodwill is considered a valuable asset, not given away casually and freely; but here, in the case of a country of four hundred million people, this was done; and for political and dishonest reasons.

The desire to please Bharat was visible at every stage, even in things it could not claim, e.g. the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the Bay of Bengal. On 28 May, the India Committee of the British Cabinet decided that nothing should be done to suggest that these islands were an organic part of British India; on the contrary, they were like a colony similar to Aden, which was separated from India in 1937.⁴ When drafting the Indian Independence Bill, however, it was noted that either the Islands 'be legislated *into one or the other Indian Dominions*' or provision be made for their separation.⁵ When the Secretary of State sought the Viceroy's views, Mountbatten reported that any attempt to claim the islands would cause 'an absolute flare-up throughout India' and 'destroy all the good feeling which exists.'⁶ The

¹*Transfer of Power*, op. cit., Vol. XI, p. 144.

²*Ibid.*, Vol. XI, p. 220.

³*Ibid.*, Vol. XI, pp. 345-8.

⁴*Ibid.*, Vol. X, p. 1012.

⁵*Ibid.*, Vol. XI, p. 312-13. (Emphasis added.)

⁶*Ibid.*, Vol. XI, p. 306.

Muslim League was interested in the future of these islands. The demand for a corridor between East and West Pakistan had been refused, and the only channel of communication between the two wings was by sea. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands occupied an important strategic position on the sea route, and provided refueling bases. They had never formed part of India. Most of the islanders belonged to tribes which had no historical, religious or cultural ties with the people of India. Bharat, therefore had no preferable claim on or need of them, but for Pakistan they provided an important link. The British Ministry of Defence was also interested. Fully supported by the Chiefs of Staff, it argued that the islands formed a vital link in the strategic scheme of Commonwealth defence and that the British Government included in the India Independence Bill a clause to the effect that they would cease to be part of India after independence. Mountbatten, however, was adamant and the relevant clause was omitted from the Bill; and the islands fell into the lap of Bharat.

The campaign to deprive Pakistan of as much land as possible was extended by Mountbatten in the case of the Princely states as well.

According to the India Independence Bill, with the end of the Raj, paramountcy was to lapse, and the States could either accede to one of the new countries or become independent. Many States with Hindu rulers wanted, for geographic reasons and because of fear of maltreatment by the Congress, to join Pakistan. Since large areas of East Punjab and West Bengal had been lopped off Pakistan it would not have hurt her if these States had joined her. They would, in fact, have created some balance between the two Dominions. But Mountbatten went after the Princes, throwing all his personal charm and official position on the side of Bharat. By 15 August, not a single state had acceded to Pakistan: the rest had, with few exceptions, joined Bharat.

Mountbatten used every trick he knew to make the States join Bharat. He overawed them with the authority of the Crown Representative, and dazzled them with his relationship with the King-Emperor. He used every weapon in his armoury to coax and cajole. Where his personal charm and powers of persuasion failed, he used bluff, bluster and blackmail, and his 'sleight of hand'. As one state minister said, he now knew how Dolfuss felt like before Hitler. The Maharajas of Dholpur and Indore were

browbeaten. Those of Jodhpur and Jaisalmer, whose states were contiguous to Pakistan, and who had decided to join their neighbour, were forced to change their decision. The Maharaja of Bikaner, whose state received water from the Ferozepur Waterworks, sent his Prime Minister and Chief Irrigation Engineer to Mountbatten on 11 August with the message that if, as rumoured, the Headworks went to Pakistan under the Boundary Commission Award, Bikaner would have no choice but to join Pakistan. Mountbatten said nothing at the interview, but later the Ferozepur area, which had been included in Pakistan, was awarded to India.¹

In the pursuit of his objective Mountbatten would go to such ludicrous lengths that when the Chief Minister of one state told him that his Maharaja was abroad and he did not know what the wishes of his master were, Mountbatten looked at a glass paper-weight and said that according to his crystal ball the Maharaja wanted accession to Bharat. He apparently thought he had acted very cleverly, for the incident was later mentioned by him with some pride.

On Kashmir, his role is too well known to need repetition. Suffice it to say that when he visited Kashmir in July, it was not as the Crown Representative, but as an emissary of Nehru, who had, on 17 June, written to Mountbatten that the 'obvious course appears to be for Kashmir to join the Constituent Assembly of India'. Nehru had wanted to go there himself, but Mountbatten offered to go in his place, for he obviously feared this might be counter-effective. He did not succeed entirely in his mission, but he continued to participate in the Congress intrigues. And when the tribals attacked the state, Mountbatten never thought of contacting Pakistan but assumed, in effect, the supreme command of the military operations.

The first news of the tribal incursion, it may be mentioned here, was given to Bharat by no less a person than General Gracey, the Britisher who was Acting Commander-in-Chief of the Pakistan Army. It was he who, as soon as he received the information, telephoned the Commander-in-Chief of the Bharti army. Later, when the Indian forces had been flown to Kashmir, and Jinnah asked that a contingent of Pakistan forces be sent

¹Ibid., Vol. XI, p. 639.

there, the same Gracey failed to carry out the order, and instead contacted New Delhi again.

The accessions to Bharat of Bikaner and Kashmir were the result of grave injustices done to Pakistan when the borderline between the two countries was being drawn. Mountbatten had a hand in this, although the line was actually drawn by a Boundary Commission.

When the question of setting up such a Commission was discussed, the Muslim League had suggested that it be entrusted to the United Nations, but Nehru did not consider that feasible. Jinnah then wanted three Law Lords from Britain to deal with it, but the Law Lords were not approached and Jinnah was told that they could not stand the hot season of the sub-continent and time was short. The time was short because of the Anglo-Hindu decision to transfer power in such a hurry, and this was now used as an excuse for not appointing highly respectable judicial personages for this important task. But the real reason was the assurances given to and the understanding reached by Mountbatten with the Congress. The details of this understanding would never appear from any document, but we know, in one case, from a speech by Patel in 1950, that he had made it a condition of the agreement on Partition that Calcutta would be given to Bharat, although the League had been told that the fate of Calcutta was to be decided by a Boundary Commission.

The Boundary Commissions that were finally constituted for the Punjab and Bengal consisted of two Muslim and two non-Muslim judges, presided over by an English lawyer, Cyril Radcliffe; and since the Muslim and non-Muslim judges were bound to disagree, it was Radcliffe who gave the final award.

Radcliffe awarded Calcutta to Bharat, along with the whole of the Muslim-majority district of Murshidabad and the greater part of the Muslim-majority district of Nadia, nearly 6,000 square miles of territory with a population of 3.5 million Muslims.

In the case of the Punjab, Radcliffe gave away a number of contiguous Muslim-majority areas to Bharat, though not a single non-Muslim-majority area was given to Pakistan. Among others, the areas given away were the Muslim-majority *tehsils* (sub-districts) Zira and Ferozepur, including Ferozepur Water Headworks, which irrigated mostly the Muslim-majority areas, and two contiguous Muslim-majority *tehsils* in Gurdaspur area.

Both these awards had far-reaching effects beyond the gift of the *tehsil* areas. The first made Bikaner join Bharat; while the second provided Bharat with its only road link with Kashmir.

The Boundary Commission Award, which was released on 17 August, was scheduled to be announced as much ahead of 'D-Day' as possible. This was considered an indispensable necessity to contain uncertainty and violence in the border areas. The Government of the Punjab, in particular, was pressing for it. On 16 July, the Governor made 'a special request for as much advance intimation not only of the date of the award but also of its contents as can be given.'¹ On 21 July, the Viceroy's Private Secretary, Abell, wrote to Radcliffe's Secretary, Christopher Beaumont, that during the Viceroy's visit to Lahore a day earlier, the Governor had stressed to him the great need for advance information. 'Even a few hours warning would be better than none, as the nature of the award would affect the distribution of police and troops.'² The next day Mountbatten himself wrote to Radcliffe on 'the risk of disorders (that) would be greatly increased if the award had to be announced at the very last moment before the 15th August,' and said that 'we should all be grateful for every extra day earlier that you could manage to get the award announced.'³

On 8 August, Abell wrote to the Governor's Private Secretary, Abbott, enclosing 'a map showing roughly the boundary which Sir Cyril Radcliffe proposes to demarcate in his award, and a note by Christopher Beaumont describing it. There will not be any great changes from this boundary...'⁴

The next day, at the Viceroy's Staff meeting, it was stated that, 'Sir Cyril Radcliffe would be ready by that evening to announce the award of the Punjab Boundary Commission,'⁵ that is to say, one day *after* Abell's letter. At this meeting Mountbatten now adopted an entirely different attitude towards the timing of the announcement, and wondered whether it would in fact be desirable to publish it straightaway.⁶

¹*Transfer of Power*, op. cit., Vol. XII, p. 191.

²*Ibid.*, Vol. XII, p. 279.

³*Ibid.*, Vol. XII, p. 290-1.

⁴*Ibid.*, Vol. XII, p. 579. See footnote also.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 611.

⁶*Ibid.*

The same day, Walter Christie, Deputy Private Secretary to Mountbatten, wrote in his diary:

Staff meeting today concerned with Boundary Commission timing of announcement and precautions—George (Abell) tells me H.E. is in a tired flap, & is having to be strenuously dissuaded from asking Radcliffe to alter his award.¹

The next day Chaudhri Muhammad Ali, the Secretary General-designate of the Pakistan Government and a future Prime Minister, flew into Delhi from Karachi with a message from Jinnah. It was a strong protest against the reported boundary line that Radcliffe was said to have drawn. Muhammad Ali waited in Ismay's room while Ismay, he was told, was closeted with Radcliffe, who was staying and working in the Viceroy's House. When Ismay returned and Muhammad Ali gave his message, he feigned total ignorance. Muhammad Ali then pointed to the map of the Punjab hanging in the room, on which a pencil line had been drawn, closely following the reported boundary-line.²

The charge that Mountbatten had deliberately delayed announcement of the Award, is fully proved by the publication of the *Transfer of Power* documents. Any claim that Mountbatten did not read the reports earlier, and had the sealed envelopes from Radcliffe deposited intact in a safe when he left for Karachi on the 13th, is as false as his report to Listowel on the 14th that 'I personally have scrupulously avoided all communication with the Boundary Commission.' If Mountbatten's version is accepted, then how was it possible for his Secretary to send a map to the Governor of the Punjab on the 8th? And what about the minutes of the Staff meeting on 9 August where it was stated that the Award would be ready that evening? And what about Christie's diary entry?

In any case, forty-five years later the most ardent apologist of Mountbatten is silenced by the statement by Beaumont to the *Daily Telegraph* on 24 February 1992, in which he said that 'Mountbatten interfered and Radcliffe allowed himself to be overborne.' According to Beaumont, Radcliffe yielded to 'overwhelming political expediency' at a special lunch with Mountbatten and Ismay, and changed

¹Ibid., footnote No. 3.

²Chaudhri Muhammad Ali, *Emergence of Pakistan*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1967, pp. 218-19.

the borderline, transferring Ferozepur and Zira from Pakistan to Bharat. 'Great discredit to both' Mountbatten and Radcliffe.

A terrible product of Mountbatten's doings was the general massacres in the Punjab. When he came to India, the riots had already started, and were spreading and increasing in intensity. In his very first Viceroy's Report, on 2 April, Mountbatten said that: 'In the Punjab all parties are seriously preparing for civil war, and of them by far the most businesslike and serious are the Sikhs who already have a plan.'¹ The situation deteriorated progressively each day, and Jenkins, the Governor of the Punjab, kept on sending alarming reports. On 31 May the whole of the province was declared a 'Disturbed Area', and later he sent to the Viceroy the Chief of the Provincial intelligence with a report of a Hindu-Sikh plan to massacre Muslims, attack trains taking goods and government personnel to Pakistan, and to assassinate Jinnah.

What did the fast-moving, decisively-acting, dynamic Mountbatten do to protect the lives of innocent citizens in the face of these warnings? On 4 June, during a press conference explaining his partition scheme, he said that 'we shall not allow any more violence or strife.'² He told Abul Kalam Azad: '...I shall give you my complete assurance. I shall see to it that there is no bloodshed and riot. I am a soldier, not a civilian. Once partition is accepted in principle, I shall issue orders to see that there are no communal disturbances anywhere in the country. If there should be the slightest agitation, I shall adopt measures to nip the trouble in the bud. I shall not use even the armed police. I shall order the Army and the Air Force to act and use tanks and aeroplanes to suppress anybody who wants to create trouble.'³

A similar assurance was given by the Viceroy to the League leaders and to the Prime Minister. Attlee told a Cabinet Committee on 23 May: 'It was the Viceroy's considered view that the only hope of checking communal warfare was to suppress the first signs of it strongly and ruthlessly, using for this purpose all the force required, including tanks and aircraft,'⁴ and the Cabinet agreed to give him full support in the matter.

¹*Transfer of Power*, op. cit., Vol. X, p. 690.

²*Ibid.*, Vol. XI, p. 119.

³Azad, op. cit., p. 207.

⁴*Transfer of Power*, op. cit., Vol. X, p. 967.

But Mountbatten used no tanks or aircrafts. He did not even arrest the leaders of gangs planning massacres. He delayed communicating the Boundary Commission Award, which it had been agreed should be announced as soon as possible. He did not send a single soldier of the British army when it had become obvious that Indian personnel could not be depended upon to act impartially. On the contrary, he played down the tragedy in which according to modest estimates, between half a million and a million were massacred, 100,000 women were abducted and nearly twenty million had to run for their lives across the border to become refugees. Only a hundred thousand had died, he said in November 1947 in his defence, only a small part of the country was affected. Only!

Less than two centuries earlier, Robert Clive, the founder of the British Empire in India, and Warren Hastings, the first Governor-General, had been indicted for crimes much smaller and fewer than Mountbatten's. But Britain now had no Edmund Burke, no leaders to stand up for justice and the underdog. Had Britain retained in 1947 some of that moral fibre which had made it 'Great', Mountbatten would have been hanged from the top of Nelson's column. He was instead hailed as a hero and made an Earl.

The Pakistan that emerged on the map of the world on 14 August 1947 was not the Pakistan the Indian Muslims had bargained for. Truncated and mutilated by the loss of large areas in East Punjab and West Bengal, and further maimed by a perverse Boundary Award, denied the chance of letting adjacent states accede to it, and cheated of its own share of stores and assets, Pakistan still had no rancour against its big neighbour. Pakistanis were full of joy, and they looked forward to an era of peace and friendly relations with Bharat.

Jinnah held these sentiments more than anybody else. During the process of partitioning the Indian Army, Brigadier N. A. M. Raza, the Pakistani representative, had reported to him that a deadlock had been reached because any physical division of the ordnance factories, all of which were located in Bharat, would seriously affect their efficiency, and in some cases force their closure, and the Indians were asking that since this would cause them injury without enabling Pakistan to set up its own factories, Pakistan should rather take its share in cash. This would be most

dangerous, pointed out Raza, because, in case of war, India would have all its war factories running. 'Why should there be a war?' Jinnah had asked the Brigadier. The political problem had been settled by mutual agreement: they would be living in peace and amity. By insisting on physical division, Bharat would be hurt without benefiting Pakistan. No, ordered Jinnah, let Bharat keep the factories: Pakistan should accept cash.¹

It was in this spirit that, on the eve of his departure for Pakistan, he appealed for the past to be buried 'and let us start afresh', and he wished 'Hindustan prosperity and peace'. When the Radcliffe Award sent a wave of anger throughout Pakistan, he reminded his people that 'we had agreed to abide by it' and 'as honourable people we must abide by it'. He wanted to start 'a new and noble era'.

The creation of Pakistan was certainly a triumph for Jinnah, but the Congress leaders now contrived to turn it into a Pyrrhic victory, before eventual defeat. He had accepted the partition of provinces and many other losses because it would mean settlement by peaceful means. On the day of freedom he said in a radio message to his people that, 'our object should be peace within and peace without,' and, 'let us impress the minorities by word, deed and thought that...as loyal citizens of Pakistan they have nothing to fear'. He was looking forward to a long period of peace during which past bitterness would be forgotten and the two dominions would live as close friends and allies; but Bharat was out to undo Pakistan.

The Congress did not accept partition without mental reservations. 'Jawaharlal and Patel,' says Nehru's biographer, 'had come to the conclusion that there was no alternative to at least temporary secession.'² Writing to Krishna Menon on 29 April 1947, Nehru said: 'I have no doubt whatever that sooner or later India will have to function as a united country. Perhaps the best way to reach that stage is to go through some kind of partition now.'³ Even in his radio speech on 3 June, accepting the Plan, he

¹This was related by Brigadier Raza to a British television team, led by Saeed Hasan Khan, in 1982. The author had also heard it from him personally in 1971.

²Gopal, Vol. I, p. 343. In 1960 Nehru admitted that 'we expected that partition would be temporary'. Leonard Mosley, *The Last Days of the British Raj*, Harcourt, New York, 1961, p. 248.

³Ibid.

said, 'it may be that in this way we shall reach the united India sooner than otherwise.'¹ Mountbatten had himself reported to the India Committee of the British Cabinet on 19 May that, Congress leaders have modified their attitude while at the same time they are confident that those provinces would seek return with remainder of India.² Abul Kalam Azad also mentions in his memoirs that: 'the Congress leaders had not accepted partition with free and open minds', and that Patel was 'also convinced that the new State of Pakistan was not viable and could not last. He thought that the acceptance of Pakistan would teach the Muslim League a bitter lesson. Pakistan would collapse in a short time and the Provinces which had seceded from India would have to face untold difficulty and hardship.'³ On 8 August 1947 Patel himself said that: 'it will not be long before they (Pakistan areas) will return to us'.

The British shared this hope and belief. Mountbatten, in suggesting partition, felt that Pakistan should 'be given a chance to fail on its own demerits.' Cripps 'also did not see the June Plan as a complete severance of the seceding areas, and advised Professor Morris-Jones, who was going to India at the end of May as constitutional adviser to Mountbatten, to make a study of such joint organizations as the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the International Postal Union.'⁴ In his 3 June broadcast Mountbatten had said that nothing had 'shaken my firm opinion that...a unified India would be by far the best solution'. Later, comparing the two emerging States, he said that it was the difference between putting up a permanent building, a Nissen hut or a tent. 'As far as Pakistan is concerned we are putting up a tent.'⁵ But perhaps Mountbatten revealed himself most in his talk with Liaquat Ali Khan, after a stormy meeting with Jinnah. Mountbatten was then very angry at Jinnah's refusal to accept him as the common Governor-General, and Liaquat Ali Khan said that Mountbatten could not expect Jinnah not to be the first

¹*Transfer of Power*, op. cit., Vol. XI, p. 96.

²*Ibid*, Vol. X, p. 896.

³Abul Kalam Azad, op. cit., p. 225.

⁴Gopal, op. cit., p. 356.

⁵Alan Campbell Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten*, Robert Hale, London, 1972, p. 87.

Governor-General of the State he had created. 'Not when it means he will be its last',¹ Mountbatten had said.

From the sequence of events and the documents that have come to light since then, it is clear that the Anglo-Hindu Combine had planned to concede Pakistan in such a manner that it would be destroyed either at birth, or within six months at the most. Pakistan would be weakened in every way. It would be crippled from the start by separation of rich agricultural and industrial areas and by denial of its share of civil and military stores and equipment; by villainous boundary awards that would take away headwaters, putting it at the mercy of Bharat and giving Bharat access to Kashmir; and by withholding its cash balances. When Pakistan was born on 15 August, it would have no armed forces worth the name and no civil secretariat. Its treasury would be empty. While its Government would be struggling to establish itself, secessionist elements would become active and harass it. Kashmir would be occupied by the Indian Army, and might join up with the Frontier Province. On 6 June, 'Nehru spoke about Khan Sahib wishing to join the Union of India at a subsequent stage'.² Kalat would be encouraged to declare its independence, and some Congressite leaders in Balochistan induced to follow in the footsteps of the Khan brothers in the NWFP. As for the Eastern wing, 'presumably Pundit Nehru considers that East Bengal is bound sooner or later to rejoin India,' Moutbatten told his staff on 31 May.³ Further pressure would be brought on the new country by withdrawing the Hindu and Sikh communities, which ran the commercial life. To this would be added millions of refugees from East Punjab. And the 'tent' that Mountbatten was setting up would collapse.

It is hard to believe that any leaders could be so callous as to play with the lives of millions of people in this way, but this would be denying facts and understimating the Congress hatred of the Muslim League and Pakistan. We have, for instance, the testimony of Sheikh Abdullah, once the, 'blue-eyed boy' of the Congress. Speaking about Patel, he says:

¹ *Transfer of Power*, op. cit., Vol. XI, p. 900.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. XI, p. 105.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. XI, p. 3.

Once, when I was sitting with him, he said there was only one way of finishing off Pakistan; and that was to push as many Musalmans from India into Pakistan as possible, so that Pakistan should go under their burden, and is forced to bend its knees to India. It was clear that behind the Hindu-Muslim riots taking place in Delhi and the nearby areas at that time, it was the politics of Sardar Patel that was functioning.¹

Any State would have collapsed under such colossal problems, but the people of Pakistan showed superhuman endurance. Their morale remained high, and their faith in Pakistan did not waver. Jinnah himself was greatly shocked by the general massacres, the extent of Mountbatten's perfidy, and the British Government's support to him. In October 1947, he suggested that a Commonwealth Committee tour the affected areas. This would have had a healthy effect, making the authorities in charge of law and order more responsible. But even this suggestion, which hardly involved any expense and committed nobody, was turned down.

Jinnah faced the terrible ordeal with his usual determination. There were limits to compromise, and he would not surrender on the matter of Pakistan's integrity. 'No surrender. No surrender,' he told his cabinet. 'They may throw us in the Arabian Sea, if they can. But no surrender.'

Jinnah was a sick man at that time. Actually, he was a dying man. In June 1946, his doctor had advised Jinnah that his tuberculosis had reached a stage where he could not hope to live more than a few months. The happenings from August 1947 affected him deeply, and his health deteriorated rapidly. But Jinnah defied death.

For the next one year, living on borrowed time, Jinnah survived through sheer will power; and Pakistan survived because he did not die.

It was a miracle year for Pakistan. The Government was established and functioned smoothly. The army was organized and equipped, if not well, sufficiently. The void in commercial and trade fields was filled. The over nine million refugees, even if they had not all been rehabilitated properly, had been absorbed. The national economy was in good shape, and had now its own central bank and its own currency.

¹Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Atish-i-Chinar* (Urdu), Chaudhri Academy, Lahore, 1985, p. 343.

Pakistan had also made a good impression at the United Nations and was gradually becoming known in foreign countries. Pakistan had survived the most dangerous year of its life. It had turned the corner. Jinnah was satisfied. On the first anniversary of its birth he gave a message to the nation. It ended with these words: 'Nature has given you everything; you have got unlimited resources. The foundation of your State has been laid, and it is now for you to build, and build as quickly and as well as you can. So go ahead and I wish you Godspeed. *Pakistan Zindabad.*'

It was a strange message, coming as it did from the Chief Executive. Instead of telling the people what his Government was doing or planning to do for them, he was asking the people to build, and wishing them Godspeed. But it was a message, not from the Governor-General, but from the Quaid-i-Azam. It was a farewell message to his people.

That day he was lying seriously ill at Quetta, some 300 miles from the capital. Three weeks later, on 11 September, when his condition deteriorated further, he was flown to Karachi. Early that night he was given an injection, and the doctor said to him: 'Sir, we have given you an injection to strengthen you, and it will soon have effect. God willing, you are going to live.' 'No,' said the man with the iron will, 'I am not.'¹ Half an hour later, he was dead.

¹Dr Ilahi Bakhsh, *With the Quaid-i-Azam During His Last Days*, Quaid-i-Azam Academy, Karachi, 1978, p. 51.

CHAPTER 14

THE SUMMING-UP

Mohammad Ali Jinnah has a special place in history. His achievement was unique, and by no means smaller than that of either Washington or Bismarck, although he did not resort to force of arms. He did fight, so to say, on two fronts simultaneously, and each adversary was many times stronger than him. On the one hand there were the British, who, despite the exhaustion of six years of a world war, still held their empire, and were in a position to enforce their wishes on India. On the other were the Hindus, who were numerically three times more than the Muslims, and far ahead educationally, economically, technologically and industrially, firmly entrenched in government services and possessing a strong Press at home and important connections abroad. In the last days of the Raj, both joined forces to defeat Jinnah; but by bold initiatives, unmatched skill and a superb sense of timing, the Quaid, despite every handicap, triumphed against both.

Jinnah's achievement was great by any standard, but what makes it even greater was his adherence to clean methods. He would never, even when driven into a corner or deserted by his colleagues at a critical juncture, compromise on the high moral principles he had adopted as his guide.

Jinnah's political life may be divided into the following seven phases:

Before 1913

During this period Jinnah was a young firebrand nationalist, like the nationalists of any nation-state. The Congress was then dominated by Dadabhai Naoroji, Pherozeshah Mehta, Gokhale

and Wacha, and Jinnah could not understand why Muslims should not work shoulder to shoulder with other communities for the liberation of the country through the Congress. He detested the policy of petitions by Muslim leaders and wrote a letter to the *Times of India* questioning the representative character of the Simla delegation. In 1906, he opposed a resolution in the Congress providing for reservation of seats in the legislatures and the services, for 'the educationally backward classes in India'. He insisted that 'the Muhammadan community should be treated in the same way as the Hindu community,' and declared that: 'The foundation upon which the Indian National Congress is based is that we are all equal.'

Jinnah was completely cut off from Muslim politics during this phase. He thought in terms of Indian nationalism, pure and simple, and made no allowances for the less advanced section of the people, and certainly not on religious lines. In 1910, he moved a resolution in the Congress against the extension of the principle of separate electorates to local municipal bodies. A little later, his election from the Muslim constituency to the Central Legislature brought him in touch with Muslim problems; and after a year he presented a bill concerning the protection of Muslim endowments. Nevertheless, he remained as much a nationalist as before, opposed to separate electorates, and as staunch a Congressman as ever.

1913-20

Until 1913, Jinnah had kept away from the Muslim League, but in 1912 the League itself was captured by the Young Turks, who radically transformed it. There were such revolutionary changes that they made it impossible for a British henchman like the Aga Khan to continue as the permanent president, and forced his resignation. This paved the way for Jinnah to join the League.

Jinnah's membership of the League did not dilute his nationalism. He was happy at the changes in the League and particularly welcomed its resolution calling for harmonious working between various communities and the desire to find a *modus operandi*, and used his influence to have the Congress pass a similar resolution at its session in December, reciprocating

those feelings. Jinnah had now become the bridge between the Congress and the League.

It was then, talking with Muslim leaders and dealing with the problems of Hindu-Muslim unity, that he acquired a proper appreciation of the Muslim point of view, their problems and their fears and hopes. Failing in his attempt to persuade the League not to insist on separate electorates, he realized the depth of Muslim feeling in the matter and the reasons for their misgivings.

Jinnah became convinced that the Hindu-Muslim tangle was the number one problem of India and its solution the *sine qua non* of freedom. To him it became a *national problem*, which must be taken out of the hands of communalists and solved by national leaders. There was no nationalism in India, but a 'New Spirit' was abroad and had to be cultivated tenderly. The minorities would not unite with the majority until they had a complete sense of security. Ways must be found to give them that security. It would be unrealistic to expect that they would join the Congress blindly; an insistence on this condition would make them suspicious, and even alienate them. What was required was a sincere effort to find a long-term solution: the Muslims must be carried along with the Congress, but as a separate group and with a separate organization. The Congress and the League marching along hand in hand towards the same goal—that was the right method. It would serve the national cause, and yet keep the Muslims happy. This co-operation would, at the same time, build up mutual trust and strengthen the New Spirit.

This practical approach was Jinnah's prescription for India's political malady. On 21 May 1913, in reply to a letter from Wazir Hasan, the League Secretary, proposing to call a conference of Hindu and Muslim leaders to discuss organized action for public good and harmonious inter-communal relationship and inviting suggestions, Jinnah said that he was one of those who 'firmly believe that the union of the two communities in India is absolutely necessary'. He emphasized the importance of education in this connection, and suggested: 'If possible, attempts should be made to bring together boys from these communities. Instead of having two separate schools for Hindu and Mahomedan boys there should be *two separate branches of one school*—one branch or wing should be of the Mahomedan boys and the other of the Hindu boys.

They should be brought into a friendly contact as often as possible.¹

This letter was written a few months before Jinnah became a member of the Muslim League, and shows that he had already diagnosed the malady and decided on the medicine, which he set out to administer with great enthusiasm. A member of both the Congress and the Muslim League, he justified the separate existence of the League, but arranged for the simultaneous holding of sessions of the two organizations in the same city, at the same time, and for their following of parallel policies. This culminated in the signing of the Lucknow Pact.

1920-3

India was caught in the fever of the Non-co-operation Movement. Jinnah was hooted down for opposing it at the Congress session. Although he made efforts to bring about an understanding between the Congress and the Government, he was totally upstaged in these stormy times.

1924-9

The failure of the Non-co-operation Movement gave rise to dissensions all round—dissensions among the Muslims, dissensions in the Congress, and worst of all, dissensions between Hindus and Muslims, which became extremely bitter, and caused bloody riots between the two. Jinnah, as a true nationalist, condemned violence, no matter to which community the guilty belonged and believed that this state of things would be ended if a new National Pact was made to replace the Lucknow Pact, which had become out-dated and which both communities wanted to modify. He gave a lead to the country by resurrecting the Muslim League and suggesting, from its platform, the basis of a new political agreement. Meanwhile, he and his party collaborated closely with the Swaraj Party in the Central Legislative Assembly.

¹*Archives of the Freedom Movement*, op. cit., Vol. 115, p. 19. (Emphasis added.)

After the failure of many unity conferences, Jinnah once again took the initiative and persuaded Muslim leaders to accept joint electorates, if certain constitutional proposals were accepted. These Delhi Proposals were hailed by Hindu leaders at first, and accepted by the Congress. In his drive for unity, Jinnah also boycotted the Simon Commission—an act that split the Muslim League down the middle; but Jinnah stood firm. The Nehru Report, however, went back on the Delhi Proposals, and Jinnah's earnest pleading to accept at least three amendments were rejected. Betrayed by the 'nationalists', Jinnah was also discredited in the eyes of the Muslims, who organized an All-Parties Muslim Conference, leaving Jinnah 'high and dry'.

1930-5

This half-decade was one of isolation for Jinnah. Although he participated in the two Round Table Conferences, and formulated the Muslims' demands in the form of the Fourteen Points, his was a solitary figure, respected but without a following; and he settled down in London.

1936-7

Jinnah ended his self-exile and returned to India, determined to bring about Hindu-Muslim co-operation in practice, for which he saw an opportunity in the Government of India Act which provided for provincial autonomy. He resurrected the Muslim League once again and tried to bring unity among the Muslims as a prelude to unity between Hindus and Muslims on a community-to-community basis. The League manifesto drawn up by him was similar to that of the Congress, and in his election speeches he indicated time and again that the League would collaborate with the Congress to serve the people and advance the national cause.

Since Jinnah had failed in his efforts to make the Hindus agree to proposals that would have induced the Muslims to abandon separate electorates, their continuance had made the existence of separate Muslim political parties inevitable. In the circumstances Jinnah was *nationalizing Muslim politics, not*

communalizing national politics; and was hopeful of positive results after the elections. In the elections, however, the Congress obtained absolute majorities in five provinces, and emerged as the largest party in three others. This totally unexpected victory turned its head. It rejected the offer of co-operation from the League, and demanded that the League virtually cease to exist.

The League refused, and henceforth the two parties were ranged in opposition to each other in every province. Relations between the Congress and the League deteriorated rapidly. The grievances of the Muslim public in Congress-governed provinces also contributed to it. But the Congress, instead of trying for a *rapprochement*, thought it wiser to contact the Muslim masses directly: this proved counter-productive.

1937-47

The coming of the war caused the British to initiate talks with the Congress and the League. But the Congress claimed to be the sole party which could speak on behalf of India, and was not prepared for a reconciliation with the League. Meanwhile the idea of partition had spread rapidly among the Muslims. Jinnah resisted the pressure to adopt it as long as he could, but fearing a British-Congress understanding, by-passing the League, he felt obliged to make the demand in March 1940.

The Hindus and the Congress launched a vicious propaganda against Pakistan, while the Muslims were greatly attracted to it. The gulf between the two communities widened. But in 1946 Jinnah took the initiative in having the Cabinet Mission plan accepted by the League. This maintained Indian unity, with a weak Centre. The Congress accepted it with conditions, and later virtually rejected it. This forced the League to withdraw its acceptance also. The plan thus died, and there was no alternative left but to partition India.

All through these phases Jinnah demonstrated his uncompromising nationalism and patriotism, his independence of character, courage of conviction, steadfast loyalty to freedom, and constant efforts to bring about Hindu-Muslim *rapprochement*. Early in his career, he had grown out of the kind of nationalism that is

the product of city-states or small countries as in Europe, and realized that India with its plural society and immense diversity was more than a continent, a case by itself: a New Spirit was indeed there, and he, who himself was inspired by it, worked single-mindedly to develop it. Speaking on the Congress demand for complete Independence and the right to form its own constitution, he said in 1941: 'Beautiful: I assure you it appeals to me more than it appeals to you, and I dreamt of it when I was a boy of twenty-one.' But practical man that he was, he was able to distinguish between dream and reality.

The success of his practical politics at Lucknow in 1916 had made Jinnah the hero of nationalist India, and fulfilled his ambition to become 'the Muslim Gokhale'. The Non-co-operation Movement, however, left him out in the cold, and after its failure, when he tried to pick up the pieces, he found that the 'New Spirit' had evaporated, and Indian politics had become divided violently between Hindus and Muslims. He worked hard and ceaselessly for a solution in that old 'New Spirit', and was almost able to do a repeat of Lucknow, but for the betrayal by Motilal Nehru.

During this period Jinnah was still considered a hard-boiled nationalist, though the Hindu leaders would sometimes question his nationalism when he differed with them and agreed with the Muslim point of view.

Jinnah's humiliation at the All-Parties Convention at Calcutta and his self-exile were the defeat of Indian nationalism. It is arguable whether Indian nationalism was ever born, or still-born or killed in infancy; but if Lucknow (1916) was a matter of pride, Calcutta (1928) was one of shame. The 'New Spirit' never recovered from its mortal blow.

The Gandhi-Nehru Congress

Gandhi, having re-captured the Congress at Calcutta and having had his salt *satyagraha*, changed his political posture. He downgraded the need for a communal settlement, proclaimed the Congress the sole representative of the Indians, and proceeded to Hinduize the Congress. He 'retired' from the Congress and launched his programme by setting up the following organizations:

1. *Seva Sangh*: a small body of nine regional chiefs to oversee Gandhian projects.

2. *Harijan Seva Sabha*: to prevent conversion of the Untouchables to other religions, and to consolidate them as an integral part of Hinduism.

3. *Hindi Parchar Sabha*: to propagate sanskritized Hindi as the State and national language, and to displace Urdu from its place of primacy.

4. *Nagri Parchar Sabha*: to preach and popularize Hindi Nagri script for all Indian languages.

5. *Gram Sudhar Sabha*: Village Welfare League.

6. *Khadi Pratisthan*: to preach the spinning and use of *khadi*.

7. *Wardha Talimi Sabha*: to promote a system of primary education, which preached Gandhian principles of religion, nationalism and spiritualism, to the exclusion of all religions other than Hinduism.

8. *Cow Rakhsha Sabha*: Cow Cult Association.

All these organizations, though officially independent of the Congress, were its auxiliaries or advance guards, and prominent Congress leaders were given the responsibility of running them.

Hindu-Muslim unity, which Gandhi had called 'the break of our life',¹ formed no part of this programme. The programme, in Gandhi's own way, aimed at creating 'one country, one nation, one religion, one language and one party.'

The case of language is representative of this attitude. Urdu and Hindi were twin sisters but with different scripts and different identities. There was no language called 'Hindustani'. Dr Gilchrist, of Fort William College, had used the terms 'Urdu' and 'Hindustani' as interchangeable, and called the language of Mir Amman, Sher Ali Afssos and Haideri 'Hindustani', who themselves called it 'Urdu'. When the Baptist Mission of Calcutta first published the translation of the Bible, it was 'from Greek language to Urdu', but underneath was also written in English 'in Hindustani language'. 'Hindustani' was no separate language, but it came to be referred to as simple Urdu, bereft of flowery expressions. The Britishers in the army learned it in Roman script, and called it 'Hindustani'.

¹On 22 December 1924, CWMG, op. cit., Vol. XXV, p. 477.

Gandhi had previously held that Urdu and Hindi were really one language—Hindustani—which could be written in either script, Persian or Devanagri. But now he turned one of his somersaults, declaring that Hindi, with Devanagri alone, was the national language of India. At a session of the Bharatya Sahitya Parishad at Nagpur in April 1936 under the Presidentship of Rajendra Prasad, he called '*Hindui athwa Hindustani*' (Hindi i.e. Hindustani) the national language of India. Urdu, he added, could not be granted that status because it was written in the alphabets of the Koran. A year later, writing to Nehru, he said, '...You should not hesitate to express the hope that as Hindus and Muslims are one day bound to become one at heart, they will also, those who speak Hindustani, adopt one script i.e. Devanagri, because of its being more scientific and being akin to the great provincial scripts of the languages descended from Sanskrit.'¹ Sure enough the Congress ministers, as soon as they were inducted in office, took steps to impose Hindi in schools and offices.

These 'social' activities of Gandhi, many of them apparently innocuous and non-communal, carried out throughout the length and breadth of the country under his trusted lieutenants, convinced even the most narrow-minded Hindu communalist that Gandhi had the same aim as the Mahasabha, but Gandhi's methods were more effective, and the Congress ministries lost no time in implementing Gandhi's programme. Jinnah rightly charged Gandhi with destroying the Congress ideal, and said, 'He is the one man responsible for turning the Congress into an instrument for the revival of Hinduism. His ideal is to revive the Hindu religion and establish Hindu Raj in this country, and he is utilizing the Congress to further this object.'² If Jinnah said that in anger, there was a note of sorrow when he said that 'the reason why there has not been a settlement between the Hindus and the Musalmans is that—the Congress leaders will pardon me for saying this—the Congress is a Hindu organization, whatever they may say' and wanted the Muslims to come 'within the ken of the Congress and Hindu raj.'³

¹3 August, 1937, *Nehru Papers*, cited by Uma Kaura, p. 123.

²Pirzada, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 306.

³Jamiluddin Ahmad, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 210.

While Gandhi converted the Congress from an Indian to virtually a Hindu organization, Jawaharlal Nehru strove to keep the label of 'National'. He had seen the power of the Hindu communalists, learned from his father's abject surrender to them, and developed a technique that had the stamp of Gandhian methods and yet was his own. He projected himself as a nationalist, a socialist and an atheist, who was not only not interested in any religion but decidedly against all religions. He would deprecate all communal talk and activities of communal organizations, detect nothing like a separate Muslim culture, and consider it foolish that the minorities should desire to maintain their identities, condemn separate electorates and the Communal Award, and even deny the very existence of the communal problem. He would equally condemn Hindu and Muslim communalists, call an ordinary Congress worker better than a thousands Jinnahs, yet do nothing against 'many a Congressman (who) was a communalist under his national cloak,'¹ and who, 'though always speaking apparently in the name of nationalism had little to do with it in practice'.² At the same time he would throw his weight in favour of his community when Hindu sentiments were involved. In 1919, he had, despite his free-thinking, opposed his sister's marriage to a Muslim. In 1921 he had gone with Malaviya to the banks of the Ganges where the Government had, for fear of epidemics, banned bathing in the river. Malaviya declared it an interference with Hindu religious rites, and defied the ban. Jawaharlal followed him, but, he claimed, not for religious reasons. Many years later, when the Hindus of Lahore were protesting against the establishment of a central abattoir, he joined them, but not for religious reasons. He adopted a similar stance when Gandhi undertook to replace Urdu with Hindi. And when he died, he was cremated according to orthodox Hindu rites and his ashes consigned to Indian rivers, not for religious but nationalist reasons!

Interestingly, Sheikh Abdullah, the great friend and admirer of Nehru, and the man who, more than any other Indian, was responsible for bringing Kashmir to Bharat, has this to say about him. In his autobiography, the Sheikh writes: 'He (Nehru) was a

¹J. Nehru, *Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 136.

²*Ibid.*, p. 138.

lover and admirer of that past of India which had the magic of Hindu revivalism as well as Hindu Raj. His "Discovery of India", even if unconsciously, comes close to the theory of history of such Hindu revivalists as K. M. Munshi and Dyanand Saraswati. He considered himself as a weapon and instrument for re-establishing that ancient empire, and for this purpose Machiavelli's diplomacy and jugglery were also mixed in his ideology. That is why this *chela* of such a man of principle as Mahatma Gandhi, was simultaneously a great worshipper of ancient India's well-known master of statescraft Chanakya; and his book the *Arth Shaster*, in which he has dealt with the secrets of deception by the State, was, according to his own admission, kept on his bed-side. Jawaharlal employed Machiavellian diplomacy with us in Kashmir, as well as with Pakistan, and also demonstrated it on international level on Hungary and other matters.¹

Nehru's message to the Hindu public clearly was: never mind my religious beliefs or what I say publicly, for when it is a question of Hindu communal interests, Hindu culture, Hindu traditions, Hindu revival and Hindu ambitions, I am entirely with you.

The message was well received. The Hindus understood. Even the most militant among them reacted to Nehru's criticism of Hindu communalism with a twinkle in the eye, and felt sure that aggressive Hindu ambitions and narrow Hindu interests were safe with him—far safer than they were with his father. No wonder they put up no resistance worth the name against the Gandhi-Nehru Congress, and let it sweep the polls in the two general elections held in 1937 and 1946.

The neo-nationalism of Gandhi and Nehru was an extension of Hindu nationalism, which had its roots in Hindu revivalist movements. All these movements considered India as the land of the Hindus only, aimed at ridding it of all foreign influences, and were anti-Muslim in the extreme. Their political aims were set accordingly. The Muslims had no place in their India of tomorrow, except that of *melechas*. 'The Hindu writer or politician,' says a British Professor, 'almost invariably speaks of the future India as a Hindu India. I could fill this book with quotations from speeches in various Councils and Congresses,

¹Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah, op. cit., p. 351.

from pamphlets, books and articles, in which Hindu speakers or writers envisage a future India as Hindu India'.¹

Speaking about the founder of Araya Samaj, Dayanand, his biographer says: 'Indeed he was the first person to use the term *swaraj*, he was the first to insist on people using only *swadeshi* things manufactured in India and to discard foreign things. He was the first to recognize Hindi as the national language of India.'² His stamp on Gandhi is clear enough, although Gandhi denied being an Araya Samajist.

The revivalist movements fed on the hatred of Muslims. 'Even before we could read,' says a modern Hindu writer, 'we had been told that Muslims had once ruled and oppressed us, that they had spread their religion in India with the Koran in one hand and the sword in the other, that the Muslim rulers had abducted women, destroyed our temples, polluted our sacred places.'³

With such brainwashing, it is easy to understand the behaviour of Hindu politicians. To them Indian nationalism was another aspect of Hindu nationalism. Surendranath Bannerji, who built up the Congress in its early years and presided over it twice (1896 and 1902), found no contradiction in his attitude when he told the Oxford Union that 'the Hindus of India—the *nation of which I am a member*—belong to 'an ancient and powerful race'; nor did Lajpat Rai, president in the heydays of 1920, when he declared: 'I am a Hindu nationalist working for the attainment of self-government for India.'

Nevertheless, the Congress had still not come under the total influence of the Hindu extremists. A serious bid to capture it by the Hindu extremists Tilak and Lajpat Rai had failed in 1907, and for the next decade it was controlled by the liberal Gokhale-Mehta group. But by 1920, Gokhale and Mehta, as well as Tilak, were dead, and the Gandhi-Mohammad Ali combination had taken over.

Jinnah was the real successor of Gokhale and Mehta in the Congress, and the Lucknow Pact became possible because of the drastic concessions by the Muslims, and because Tilak, despite his communal outlook, was genuinely interested in *swaraj*, and

¹Prof. R. N. Gilchrist, *Indian Nationality*, Longman, 1920, p. 92.

²H. B. Sarda, *Dayanand*, p. cxxii. Cited by Majumdar. *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 336.

³Nirad Chaudhuri, *The Autobiography of An Unknown Indian*, The Hogarth Press, London, 1987, p. 226.

considered Hindu-Muslim concord as a step forward in that direction. When criticized by the extremists for yielding too much to the Muslims, he remarked that: 'We could not have yielded too much.'

But the Hindus never really accepted the separate electorate. Every time talks were subsequently held on the Hindu-Muslim question, they would invariably demand that the system be abandoned, but they would not agree that the Muslims should have their natural majorities in the provinces where they exceeded the Hindu population. At the time of the partition of Bengal, the Raja of Kassimbazar dreaded the prospect of Muslim majority in the provinces. Hindus opposed even the introduction of reforms in Muslim provinces—Balochistan and the Frontier were too backward; Sindh was too poor to be constituted into a province; it was a mistake to introduce reforms in the Punjab and they should be withdrawn.

Throughout this period the Hindus, with the sole exception of C. R. Das, refrained from reconciling the Muslims. They made no genuine peace moves, and suggested no reasonable peace formula, but tried to deceive the Muslims through one subtle suggestion or another. Motilal Nehru, for instance, is on record as saying: 'I pressed him (Lajpat Rai) hard to accept the Muslim demand as it made no practical difference to the Hindu majority in the CL (Central Legislature). After some hesitation he agreed with me but thought it extremely unwise to give in at that stage on this point when the Muslims were pressing for many other most unreasonable concessions. Ultimately we agreed that the Hindu opposition to the Muslim demands was to continue and even be stiffened up by the time the Convention was held. The object was to reduce the Mohammedan demands to an irreducible minimum and then to accept them at the Convention. The death of Lalaji before the Convention was a great blow to Hindu-Muslim unity...'¹ Whatever one may think of these tactics between 'sister communities', it does show the extent of sincerity behind the peace efforts. Incidentally, even the 'irreducible minimum' presented by Jinnah was rejected at Convention.

¹B. N. Pandey (ed.), *The Indian National Movement, 1885-1947*, Macmillan, 1979, pp. 63-4. Quoted by Sherwani, p. 437.

All of Jinnah's efforts for a National Pact failed. When he revived the League in 1924, it was 'to organize the Muslim community, not with a view to quarrel with the Hindu community, but with a view to unite and co-operate with it for their motherland'. He set an example himself, by co-operating with the Swaraj Party in the Central Legislature, and continued his efforts for finding a mutually acceptable formula. He did find it at Delhi, but it was torn to pieces at Calcutta. With Das dead, Jinnah was bound to fail against the rising ambition and chauvinism of Hindu communalists, the betrayal by Motilal and the tactics of Gandhi. Gandhi, despite his pose of a nationalist, never condemned the *shuddhi* and *sanghtan* movements; on the contrary, he was always very close to Malaviya, and encouraged him and his policies. Malaviya had revived the Mahasabha in 1923, and Gandhi, as Congress president at Belgaum, gave it formal recognition. There, Gandhi took a new line on the Hindu-Muslim question. Instead of negotiating with the Muslim leaders, as had been the practice in the past, he asked the communal organizations to list their demands, which the Congress would then consider. He thus downgraded the League, elevated the Mahasabha and set up the Congress in the superior role of an arbitrator. The communal question was no more to be discussed in a friendly and amicable way, but the Muslims were to submit their demands for consideration by the Congress; and in the Congress, the same communal leaders—like Malaviya and Lajpat Rai or their agents—who had rejected those demands on behalf of the Mahasaba, would pass judgement as nationalists and Congressmen.

In the second and the better part of the third decade, nationalist affairs were always decided by the 'Congress and the Muslim League' or by the 'Congress and the Khilafat Committee'. Even the Swaraj Party's official name was 'The Congress-Khilafat Swaraj Party'.

But in the thirties the Congress assumed the airs of the sole nationalist party. Gandhi claimed that the Congress had a following of 85 to 95 per cent of the Indians, and other parties did not count. The Congress of the thirties was not the Congress of Dadabhai Naoroji, Gokhale and Mehta. It had, in the words of Mohammad Ali, who resigned from it after its adoption of the Nehru Report, been 'denationalized' by Motilal, and Gandhi,

gradually and step and by step, converted it into a Hindu organization in everything but name. With the *shuddhi* of the Congress, the Mahasabha became superfluous, and Malaviya left everything in the safe hands of Gandhi. Formally it continued to exist, but that was only for the purpose of opposing Muslim demands, and giving an excuse to the Congress for not coming to terms with them. Congress could henceforth go through the motions of discussing the Hindu-Muslim question, if forced, and pose as a 'Nationalist' organization; it may even be willing to accept Muslim proposals, but could feign helplessness on account of the opposition from the Mahasabha.

Gandhi and Nehru, between them, strengthened the new role of the Congress. Gandhi would paint it with deep Hindu colouring, while Nehru would insist that the colours were purely national. Gandhi would change his priorities and say that the Hindu-Muslim question would automatically be solved after *swaraj*; Nehru would claim that nothing like the communal question existed. Gandhi, 'consciously and deliberately meek and humble', would claim that the Congress alone represented India; Nehru would imperiously demand that as between the British and the Congress, others must line up. Nehru's arrogance reached such proportions that, in a moment of self-revelation, he said in an article he wrote anonymously: 'Jawaharlal has learned well to act without the paint and powder of the actor...Men like Jawaharlal with all their great capacity for great and good work are unsafe in a democracy. He calls himself a democrat and a socialist...but a little twist and he might turn into a dictator. He might still use the language of democracy and socialism, but we all know how fascism had fattened on this language and cast it away as useless lumber...he has all the markings of a dictator in him. His conceit is already formidable.'¹

Jawaharlal, as he confessed in his self-analysis, may have started acting 'like some triumphant Caesar', but this could not be accepted by the Muslims; nor could they allow the Congress to represent them. When Jinnah left the Congress in 1920, it was on a difference of opinion; but, while continuing to be a nationalist himself, he had not questioned the national character of the Congress. On the contrary, he had written a letter to the

¹*Modern Review*, Calcutta, November 1937.

Times of India on 3 October 1925, denying the charge that it was a Hindu institution;¹ and paid tribute to its leaders at the First Round Table Conference, from which the Congress was missing. But now the Congress had transformed itself completely.

It was the Congress that had changed, not Jinnah. Jinnah himself continued to be a genuine nationalist 'within the honest meaning of the term' until the end, but after 1940 he stopped describing himself as one, because 'the term "Nationalist" has now become the play of conjurers in politics', and the Congress propaganda machine was calling the few Muslims inside the Congress 'Nationalist Muslims'.

Jinnah had said in 1916 what he said again in 1924, and was to repeat in 1937, that the Muslims must be organized 'not to prejudice national advance but to [fall] into line with the rest of India'. It was not a case of a nationalist turned communalist, but of a nationalist trying to nationalize communal politics. He ran the 1936-7 election campaign on national lines, keeping it above communal controversies, and looking forward to Congress-League co-operation in action. But after the elections, the Congress, intoxicated with power, rejected Jinnah's extended hand.

The arrogance of the Congress, and two years of Congress rule, made Jinnah look at the Hindu-Muslim problem *de novo*. His policy of settling communal issues and forging a united front against the British had failed. Its success depended entirely on inter-communal understanding and co-operation. But co-operation meant an effort by both sides, and as the Urdu saying goes, 'it takes two hands to clap'. How could he co-operate if the Congress was unwilling?

The Muslims were left alone, and had to fend for themselves.

Things did not look too bright. As matters stood there were permanent communal Hindu majorities in most of the provinces, and the Centre was to have the same. The Congress behaviour had shocked the Muslims and shattered their hope 'to occupy an honourable place in the national life, government and administration of the country and work for free India with Free and Independent Islam'. Jinnah became convinced that the Congress would never come to terms with the Muslims, and also that paper safeguards were no good at all. Nevertheless, he, who

¹Ram Gopal, *op. cit.*, p. 1621.

had had a vision of Pakistan in 1928-30, did not rush to demand it. What he asked for, when the Second World War forced the British to open negotiations with Indian parties, was that as the Muslims would bear the brunt of the war, they should have a fifty per cent share in the Viceroy's Executive, if the Congress joined, otherwise more. He was looking for some equipoise with the majority community. It was 'equipoise' that was the spirit behind the Delhi Proposals which had, a decade earlier, brought India close to a settlement, and he was in search of some such arrangement now. But the Congress was in no mood to listen to any proposal that did not make it the sole master of the whole of India.

Jinnah delayed demanding Pakistan for as long as there was the slightest hope of any settlement; but when it became impossible, and any delay was likely to damage Muslim interests, he boldly demanded it, in March 1940.

The Hindus repudiated the Lucknow Pact, repudiated the Solan Pact, repudiated the Bengal Pact. They went back on their acceptance of the Delhi Proposals. They refused to settle with the Muslims at the Round Table Conference, and their leaders, Gandhi and Malaviya included, preferred arbitration by the British Prime Minister to an understanding with their compatriots. They disdainfully rejected the League's offer of co-operation after the elections. They arrogantly declared that no communal problem existed, proclaimed themselves the sole political party, and asked others to 'line up'. And when another opportunity occurred in 1939, they refused to even discuss an equipoise. What then was left for the Muslims but to go their own way?

The Muslims were driven to demand Pakistan.

'When no adjustment could be made between the two communities, the Pakistan plan was devised.'¹ By deciding on the partition of the sub-continent, the Indian Muslims proclaimed their refusal to accept Ram Raj over the whole of India. It was a revolt against the tyranny of the majority, a revolt against the caste system.

Pakistan, as demanded at Lahore, was meant to be a practical solution to the communal problem in India. It had no Pan-Islamic

¹Jinnah on 30 March 1941, Jamiluddin Ahmad, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 256.

implications, and did not envisage, as some Muslims wanted, affiliation with Afghanistan or any other Muslim neighbour. On the contrary, Pakistan was to 'constitute the postguard of India', and a kind of Monroe doctrine was to apply. The minorities in Muslim and Hindu Indias were to be protected through constitutional safeguards; also, a desire on the part of each State to treat them well would impel similar conduct on the part of the other.

The scheme was the 'least fissiparous' of all partition proposals. India could easily have been divided into five States. Rabindranath Tagore¹ is said to have been in favour of three; John Bright had pleaded for five; others had suggested many more. But Jinnah restricted it to two only, and he made no claim to small Muslim pockets spread all over India, or to historic Muslim cities like Delhi, Agra and Aligarh, so near the border of the proposed Pakistan.

Jinnah's intent was to solve the Hindu-Muslim question, not to disrupt India. Addressing a press conference in September 1942, Jinnah, while bitterly criticizing the British policy towards the Muslim League although the League was willing to support the war effort, said that if it was a question of hampering the war effort, the League could give five hundred times more trouble than the Congress, but this would result either in a foreign aggressor seizing India, or 'in paralysing British power, resulting in its sudden destruction, the consequences of so doing will be that India will be broken to bits.'² This was a situation that Jinnah wanted to avoid, and he firmly turned his face away from any secessionist movement. He told the Sikhs that, although he did not dispute their being a nation, they were 'a sub-national group', like the Muslims scattered in the minority provinces. Similarly he discouraged the Tamils. When E. W. Ramaswami Naicker, the non-Brahmin leader of Madras who later founded the Dravida Kazhgam, tried to interest him in pleading for the cause of Dravidistan along with Pakistan, Jinnah replied that if they wanted to establish Dravidistan, 'it is entirely for your people to decide on the matter. I can say no more, and certainly I cannot speak on your behalf.'³

¹Masarrat Husain Zubairi, *Voyage Through History*, Hamdard Foundation Press, Karachi, 1984, Vol. I, p. 237.

²Jamiluddin Ahmad op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 434-5.

³Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 152-3.

None of this was ever appreciated by the Congress, nor indeed was there any response to his appeals to settle the question by friendly negotiations. His plea that they accept the principle of partition, and settle details by mutual consultations, was rejected out of hand. So were his entreaties to 'sit as equals and come to a settlement...it was the policy of the British in India to divide and rule, why can't we unite and get the British out?' He even declared that there was no last word in politics and, 'if the Congress have got a definite practical proposal to make, we are willing to consider.' 'We should meet and place our cards on the table as friends and see that justice is done to both.'

The Congress, if it was really sincere in saving the unity of India, should then have come up with some counter-scheme to partition, or some ideas ensuring some equipoise, as a basis for a settlement. But it never made any such attempt. Later, in 1944, scared by the immense popularity of the Pakistan idea among the Muslim masses, Gandhi held talks with Jinnah for three weeks, but it was an exercise in polemics. Gandhi made no attempt to reach an agreement.

Ultimately it was Jinnah who tried to save the unity of India by accepting the Cabinet Mission Plan, and the Congress which destroyed it by its rejection.

Jinnah and the British

In opposing Pakistan, Congress lost its balance completely. A campaign of hate was started against the scheme, as well as against Jinnah. He was called all kinds of names—a traitor, a British agent, and an instrument of the imperialist policy of divide and rule, among others. To call Jinnah, with his anti-British record, an instrument of the British, was not only patently false but also stupid and mischievous.

The British antipathy to Jinnah was, except in the case of Willingdon and Mountbatten, not for personal reasons, and did not end at the Viceroy's House: it went right up into Whitehall. Of all the Indians he had met, Secretary of State Samuel Hoare 'disliked Jinnah the most', and of the British Prime Minister at the time of Partition, his biographer mentions: 'Fortunately Attlee did not say on television what he soon afterwards said in private,

that Jinnah "was the only Fascist I ever met".¹ He also quotes Attlee as saying that one reason why Mountbatten continued to stay in India, as the Governor-General of Bharat only, was that 'if Mountbatten had left India, it would have looked like a victory for that twister Jinnah'.²

The British dislike for Jinnah was caused by his intense and uncompromising nationalism. They were not used to an Indian leader who could neither be bent, nor bought, nor tricked. The Muslim leaders were generally servile, and those who were not could be disposed of in other ways. As for the other 'nationalist' leaders, the British knew how to handle them: Tilak could be jailed or deported; Gandhi and Nehru could be rendered comparatively harmless by tickling their egos—as Hoare did in getting Gandhi to justify governmental action on the devaluation of the rupee.

But Jinnah was entirely different. His razor-sharp intellect would in a moment spot the weakness of the British case, and he would put his finger on it; he would also have the courage to take a stand even if he was alone, as he often was—as at the First Round Table Conference, when he protested against continuing privileges of the British in India. No other delegate supported him, and the Muslim delegation immediately disowned him. In the Second Conference, he was the only one to demand that the process of nationalizing the Indian army be undertaken.

To the British antipathy to Jinnah was added his demand for partition. For the Congress it was a good propaganda ploy to say that it was the culmination of 'divide and rule', but Pakistan presupposed freedom from the British. Throughout his political life Jinnah had tried to persuade the Indians to 'unite and rule'; and when Gandhi raised the slogan of 'Quit India' in 1942, Jinnah amended it to demand 'Divide and Quit'. In 1947, the British did want to quit, but they did not want to divide India.

There were many reasons why the British detested the idea of partition. They were very proud of bringing unity, however superficial, to the subcontinent, and wanted to leave behind a united India as the monumental achievement of their rule. The British, however, are not a sentimental race and might have suffered it, and even got over their built-in animosity to Islam

¹Kenneth Harrison, *Attlee*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983, p. 552.

²*Ibid.*, p. 384.

and their traditional hostility to the Indian Muslims, had there been no foreign and defence policy requirements.

At that time, the British dominated the Middle East. The Anglo-Iranian Company virtually controlled Iran. The Gulf Sheikdoms were British Protectorates. The Suez Canal was run by the British. British troops were stationed in Iraq, Transjordan and Egypt; and Palestine was under a British mandate. The emergence of a Muslim State in India the size of Pakistan would have certainly strengthened the national movements in the region, and Pakistan would, without doubt, have supported them. The plans for evacuating Palestine in 1948, as a prelude to the establishment of Israel, were in danger of being frustrated. The Indian Muslims had taken great interest in the fate of the Arabs of Palestine. Innumerable resolutions supporting the Arabs had been passed by the League and other Muslim organizations; Muslim India's delegations had participated in conferences on Palestine; and of the four conditions Jinnah had made for co-operation with the Government during the war, one was that Indian troops should not be sent to Muslim countries, and another demanded justice for the Palestine Arabs. The British fully realized the depth of Muslim feelings on Palestine. Attlee himself, in reply to Truman's plea for throwing open the gates of Palestine to Jewish immigration, had told the US President in a telegram in August 1945 that, among other things, the Muslims of India had to be taken into consideration, as they might be aroused by inconsiderate treatment of the Arabs.¹

The British attitude to the League demand was explained by the Secretary of State to the Viceroy in April 1940. 'I cannot help thinking,' wrote Zetland, 'that if separate Muslim States did indeed come into existence in India, as now contemplated by the All India Muslim League, the day would come when they might find the temptation to join an Islamic commonwealth of nations wellnigh impossible. More particularly would this be the case with the North-West of India, which would in these circumstances be a Muslim State coterminous with the vast bloc of territory dominated by Islam which runs from the North Atlantic and Turkey in the West to Afghanistan in the East.'² A

¹Harrison, *op. cit.*, p. 391.

²Zetland to Linlithgow, April 18, 1940, *Linlithgow Collection*, *op. cit.*

strong Pakistan would have stood between the Mideast plans of the Anglo-American bloc and their implementation.

But the most important consideration was defence. Pakistan just did not fit into the post-war global defence strategy of the British. There was still no NATO, and no guarantee that the US would not retire into its shell, as it had after the First World War. The British Empire was still intact, and although it was planned to wind it up, those plans were linked with defence and other considerations. 'Uppermost in Attlee's mind,' says his biographer, 'were two anxieties: that an independent Pakistan was not economically viable, and that the north-west part of the potential Pakistan was very close to Russian territory. In Attlee's view an independent India, controlled by the Congress, was still the most desirable solution, and he knew that the American government concurred.'¹

Many studies on the consequences of partition from the defence angle were undertaken in London and New Delhi, and the recommendation was always the same: partition would mean two defence establishments, duplicating expense; it would lack unity of command; and Pakistan alone would not be able to sustain the war-machine necessary to ward off the Russian danger. The Indian Army had expanded during the war and been built into a fine force, both by Wavell and Auchinleck. It must be kept that way. In a divided Indian Army the two parts would be facing each other with suspicion, rather than meeting the danger from across the Khyber. The importance of keeping the Indian Army united was felt so much that even when partition was agreed upon, last-minute efforts were made not to divide the armed forces, somehow.

The British head and heart agreed on Indian unity; as did British politicians, soldiers and journalists. The Labour Party was, of course, sold on the idea; but other parties too agreed with it in principle. There was not one politician or writer or anybody prominent in British public life who supported Pakistan. They were uniformly against it: they only differed in the degree of their animosity.

¹Harrison, *op. cit.*, p. 369.

Jinnah's Concept of Pakistan

In its propaganda campaign against partition, the Congress charged that Jinnah intended to make Pakistan a religious state. Knowing Jinnah and his political beliefs, the charge was absurd, and the Congress leaders knew it; but they did it deliberately for double mischief. If the charge was accepted, it meant that Pakistan would be, as they claimed, a mediaeval state, a theocracy, where the non-Muslims would have no place. This would completely antagonize the non-Muslims in the Pakistan provinces, making its creation more difficult, and if it became inevitable, would prepare the way for detaching areas of non-Muslim majority from the new State. But if the charge was denied, it would give an excellent propaganda weapon for use among the Muslim masses. The weapon was actually used by the Congress Muslims, who opposed Pakistan on the ground that it was not going to be an Islamic State, and Jinnah, who, they said, was not a good Muslim, was deceiving the Muslim public. In either case, it served the propaganda aims of the Congress.

This propaganda about the theocratic nature of Pakistan has been going on for so long that many people believe it. The pronouncements of the fundamentalists in Pakistan, and the use of religion made by General Ziaul Haq for personal ends, have only reinforced this impression. But this is totally false. Jinnah never wanted a religious or theocratic state. His idea of Pakistan was of a modern, liberal, secular and democratic state.

Two things must always be remembered about the Pakistan demand. First, that it was meant to be a solution to the communal problem. There were to be two Indias, one Muslim and the other Hindu, but Muslim India was to have a non-Muslim population of about twenty-five million, and Hindu India a Muslim population of about the same size. Iqbal, who wanted the rule of the sharia, was prepared to lose the Ambala division and non-Muslim areas of the Punjab, but Jinnah was not. It must, however, be added, in fairness to Iqbal, that he expressed this view only once, in a private letter (to Jinnah), but at the Allahabad Session he publicly stated: 'Nor should the Hindus fear that the creation of autonomous Muslim States will mean the introduction of a

kind of religious rule in such 'States'.¹ *The presence of non-Muslims was an essential part of Jinnah's Pakistan.* Their presence was, in fact, a guarantee of safety for the Muslims left behind in India.

The treatment of the minorities was the crux of the matter. The whole basis of partition was that 'you will protect and safeguard our minorities in your zones and we will protect and guard your minorities in ours'. Jinnah took the initiative in giving an assurance that in Pakistan the non-Muslims would be treated 'on the basis of equality of mankind'. They would not live on sufferance, but as honourable citizens, with equal civic and political rights, and 'enjoy the fullest security of life, property and honour just as the Musalmans themselves, nay, even better'. The Government of Pakistan, he promised, 'will function with the will and sanction of the entire body of people in Pakistan, irrespective of caste, creed or colour'.

Pakistan would have liberated two-thirds of the Muslim nation, but the remaining one-third would still be a minority. Since no exchange of population was planned, and mere paper safeguards were not enough, the best guarantee for their protection could be a solemn undertaking by Hindu India, conscious of the Hindu minority in Pakistan, to treat its Muslim minority well. 'If there is any safeguard known in the world for minority provinces, the most effective safeguard is the establishment of Pakistan,' he told the Convention of Muslim Legislators.

The second point to remember is that Pakistan was to be a nation-state. It was demanded because Muslims were a nation, and as such entitled to a state of their own; and as they were in a majority in the north-west and the north-east, the state was to be established there. Pakistan was demanded on the basis of nationality, not religion. Religion no doubt played a very important part in moulding that nationality, but it was not the sole factor. Speaking on 7 February 1935, in the Central Assembly, Jinnah said:

I entirely reciprocate every sentiment which the Honourable Leader of the Opposition expressed, and I agree with him that *religion should not be allowed to come into politics*, that race should not be allowed to come into politics. Language does not matter so much, I agree with him, if taken singly one by one. *Religion is merely a matter between man and God*, I agree with

¹Pirzada, *op. cit.*, Volume II, p. 160.

him there entirely, but I ask him to consider this: is this a question of religion purely? Is this a question of language purely? No, Sir, this is a question of minorities and it is a political issue.

He continued:

Now, what are the minorities? Minorities means a combination of things. It may be that a minority has a different religion from the other citizens of a country. Their language may be different, their race may be different, their culture may be different, and the combination of all these various elements—religion, culture, race, language, arts, music and so forth makes the minority a separate entity in the State...¹

He was amplifying the same views when he said that Muslims were 'a nation miscalled a minority.' 'We are a nation with our own distinctive culture and civilization, language and literature, art and architecture, name and nomenclature, sense of values and proportion, legal laws and moral code, customs and calendar, history and traditions, aptitudes and ambitions. In short, we have our own distinctive outlook on life and of life. By all canons of international law we are a nation.'

That nation was going to live 'according to our own notions of life' and to develop and function according to the Muslims' 'own genius, and according to their own laws and their own culture, social life and religion' and 'way of life'. 'Let me live according to my history in the light of Islam, my tradition, culture and language, and you do the same in your zones,' he said.

Pakistan was to be governed by Islamic *principles*, naturally, but it was not going to be a religious state.

Jinnah's Pakistan was to be a Muslim, but *not* an Islamic State. It was to be Muslim because the overwhelming majority of its citizens were to be Muslim, but he carefully avoided to call it Islamic. It would be governed by Islamic principles, even Islamic law, but it was *not* to be a religious state. If Britain, with a 'Defender of the Faith' as its monarch, could be secular, or if the President of the United States could urge his armies on by saying 'Onward Christian Soldiers', and fight to save Christian civilization, and yet the US continued to be secular, why not Pakistan? The Islamic principles of which Jinnah talked were spelled out in different speeches as

¹Jamiluddin Ahmad, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 5.

'democracy,' 'social justice' and 'Islamic Socialism...which emphasizes equality and the brotherhood of man'—principles with which no non-Muslim can quarrel. As for the question of Islamic Law, the personal law of the non-Muslims was protected, as was their culture.

Jinnah was very keen on setting an example in the treatment of minorities in Pakistan, as he hoped this would start a wholesome friendly competition between the two states. He told the Punjab Balmik Achut (Untouchable) Federation: 'Those of you who will be living in our Pakistan shall be treated on a footing of equality of manhood not only according to our *modern* conception of civilized government but because of our religious instruction which enjoins that every non-Muslim minority under a Muslim government shall be treated justly and fairly.' Jinnah's declarations about equal treatment of the minorities in Pakistan are innumerable and categorical. They in fact promised more than equality, and once, 'he pledged that he would appoint himself the champion of the small minority of Hindus living in Muslim areas and would insist that the constitution should accord them full rights'.

Whenever, during the struggle for Pakistan, Jinnah was asked about its form of government, he would invariably answer that it would depend on the people's representatives, but on the question of minorities he never left any doubt about their position of equality. In 1941, when K. M. Munshi charged that: 'The State under the Pakistan scheme would not be a civil government responsible to a composite legislature consisting of all communities, but a religious State pledged to rule according to the teachings of that religion, thus by implication excluding all others not following that religion from a share in the government,' Jinnah refuted him in strong terms: 'Is it not an incitement to the Sikhs and the Hindus? Telling them that it would be a religious State, excluding them from all power, is entirely untrue,' and he reiterated that the non-Muslims would be citizens of the State, treated with 'justice, equality, fair play, toleration and even generosity'.¹

In fighting for Pakistan, Jinnah was fighting neither for religious reasons alone nor for a religious state. He was fighting

¹Ibid., p. 326.

for a national state. He denied that the League was fighting for religious rights, and said, in February 1943: 'Which government, claiming to be a civilized government can demolish our mosque, or which government is going to interfere with religion which is *strictly a matter between God and man*? The question is that the Musalmans are a nation, distinct from the Hindus,'¹ and so entitled to their own state. At the Delhi session of the League in April 1943, Dr Abdul Hameed Kazi of Bombay had given notice that he intended to move a resolution to the effect that 'the Constitution of Pakistan would be based on the concept of *Hakumat-i-Ilahiya* (godly government), but Jinnah pre-empted him by declaring in his presidential speech: 'The Constitution of Pakistan can only be framed by the *millat* and the people. Prepare yourselves and see that you frame a Constitution which is to your heart's desire. There is a lot of misunderstanding. A lot of mischief is created. Is it going to be an Islamic Government? Is it not begging the question? Is it not a question of passing a vote of censure on yourself? The Constitution and the Government will be what the people will decide. The only question is that of minorities.'² The resolution was never moved.

Eight months later, at the Karachi session, Bahadur Yar Jung made a stirring speech, drawing a picture of an ideal Islamic state in Pakistan. He then turned to Jinnah and said: 'If that is not going to be Pakistan, I don't want that Pakistan'. Jinnah smiled, asked, 'is that a charge sheet against me?' and dismissed the matter.

In April 1946, at the Muslim Legislators' Convention at Delhi, Jinnah said: 'What are we aiming at? It is not theocracy, not for a theocratic state.'³ He successfully resisted all attempts by a considerable section of the League to commit it to the establishment of an Islamic state, and the fact is that there is no resolution of either the Council or the Working Committee of the All-India Muslim League desiring it.

Those who now talk of Pakistan being an ideological state are totally wrong and misleading. In those days there was no talk of the ideology of Pakistan: if the word ideology was ever used at

¹Ibid., p. 486.

²Pirzada, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 425.

³Jamiluddin Ahmad, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 284.

all, it was about the ideology of the Muslim League. Jinnah used it for the first time at the Madras session in April 1941, when he said: 'What is its (League's) ideology and what is its policy?... We want the establishment of completely independent states in the North-West and Eastern zones of India,' and he repeated in the course of the same address: 'The ideology of the League is based on the fundamental principle that Muslim India is an independent nationality.' A year later he said at the Allahabad session that: 'At Madras we defined our ideology.' In January 1945, in a message to the Frontier Students, he said: 'Pakistan not only means freedom and independence but the Muslim ideology.' One can go through all the statements, writings and speeches of Jinnah, from the Lahore session until his death, but there are hardly any other references to ideology, and certainly none to Pakistan's ideology. Similarly one can search and search and find that, although Jinnah would refer to Pakistan as a 'Muslim state', he *never* called it an 'Islamic state'.

Among the prominent leaders of the League, the most enthusiastic supporter of an Islamic state was the Raja of Mahmudabad. Not only was he a member of the Working Committee and the Treasurer of the League, he was personally very close to Jinnah. The Raja's father and Jinnah were great friends. Jinnah was one of the trustees of the Mahmudabad estate when the Raja was a minor. The Raja called Jinnah 'uncle', and was the only member of the Working Committee who could be, and regularly was, Jinnah's house-guest both at Bombay and Delhi. In a rare article, he says:

During 1941-5, I myself came under its influence and was one of the founding members of the Islamic Jamaat. We advocated that Pakistan should be an Islamic State. I must confess that I was very enthusiastic about it and in my speeches I constantly propagated my ideas.

My advocacy of an Islamic State brought me into conflict with Jinnah. He thoroughly disapproved of my ideas and dissuaded me from expressing them publicly from the League platform lest the people might be led to believe that Jinnah shared my view and that he was asking me to convey such ideas to the public... Now that I look back I realize how wrong I had been.¹

¹*Some Memories*, Raja of Mahmudabad's article in Philip and Wainwright, op. cit., pp. 388-9.

When partition had been agreed to, Jinnah was asked at a press conference in New Delhi, on 14 July 1947, whether Pakistan would be a theocratic state. Jinnah reacted strongly and replied: 'You are asking me a question that is absurd. I do not know what a theocratic state means.' A correspondent suggested that it meant a state where only people of a particular religion, for example Muslims, could be full citizens. To this Jinnah said: 'Then it seems to me that what I had already said is like throwing water on a duck's back. When you talk of democracy, I am afraid you have not studied Islam. We learnt democracy thirteen centuries ago.'¹

On the eve of partition when Jinnah came to Karachi, he immediately took the following steps:

- (1) He had a Hindu, an Untouchable, elected as the first president of the Constituent Assembly. The position was later occupied by Jinnah himself.
- (2) On being elected as President of the Constituent Assembly, in his very first speech on 11 August, he declared that religion had nothing to do with the business of the State and that 'in course of time Hindus would cease to be Hindus and Muslims would cease to be Muslims...in the political sense as citizens of the State.'
- (3) He had the Muslim League flag adopted as the flag of Pakistan, but with a white strip covering one third part of the flag as a symbol of peace and minorities.
- (4) Replying to Mountbatten, who in his address had referred to the Mughal Emperor Akbar and had made an oblique plea for treating the minorities well, Jinnah reminded Mountbatten that the treatment of non-Muslim minorities 'with utmost tolerance and regard and respect for their faith and beliefs' was in Muslim blood, going back to the time of the Prophet [PBUH] himself.
- (5) On 17 August he attended a special Church Service by the Christians of Karachi to celebrate Independence.

Jinnah lived only a year after the birth of Pakistan, a year in which the entire attention of its leaders and people was devoted to survival, and no constitution-making task could be undertaken; but he continued to talk in that strain. He called upon Pakistanis to build their country as 'a bulwark of Islam' and talked of 'the principles of Muslim democracy' and 'Islamic socialism'. These are sometimes misrepresented by Islamic fundamentalists in Pakistan in support of their theories, but 'make no mistake,' he

¹Rafique Afzal, *op. cit.*, p. 422-3.

would warn, '*Pakistan is not a theocracy or anything like it. Islam demands from us the tolerance of other creeds and we welcome in close association with us all those who, of whatever creed, are themselves willing and ready to play their part as true and loyal citizens of Pakistan.*'¹ In February 1948, speaking about the constitution, he said: 'I am sure that it will be a democratic type, embodying the essential principles of Islam...In any case Pakistan is not going to be a theocratic state...to be ruled by priests with a divine mission. We have many non-Muslims—Hindus, Christians and Parsis—but they are all Pakistanis. They will enjoy the same rights and privileges as any other citizens and will play their rightful part in the affairs of Pakistan.'²

A little-known incident occurred in the last meeting of the All India Muslim League Council in Karachi in December 1947. An 'old gentleman stood up and, addressing Quaid-i-Azam, said, "We have been telling this nation that the meaning of Pakistan is *La ilaha illallah*."³ To this the Quaid retorted, "Sit down, sit down. Neither I, my Working Committee nor the Council of the All India Muslim League has ever passed such a resolution wherein I was committed to the people of Pakistan. You might have done so to catch a few votes."⁴

The Congress had blamed Jinnah for raising the cry of 'Islam in danger'. This was a cheap slogan, used in the past by many misguided and misguiding leaders in Muslim lands which automatically repelled the West. If Jinnah, the most secular of all Muslim leaders, could be accused of it, the advantages were obvious, and the Congress decided to do just that, in the same

¹Jamiluddin Ahmad, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 456. (Emphasis added.)

²Ibid., Vol. II, p. 463.

³*La ilaha illallah, Muhammadur Rasolallah* (There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his Prophet). The slogan meant that Pakistan would be governed by the Islamic sharia.

⁴*Frontier Post*, Peshawar, 6 June 1988, reporting on Malik Ghulam Nabi's book *Daghon ki Bahar*, Sang-i-Meel Publications, Lahore. The author wrote for a confirmation or contradiction of this incident to Maulana Jamal Mian Frangimahali, who was then Joint Secretary of the All India Muslim League, and is one of the few men living today who were present at the meeting. Two or three days later, the Maulana very kindly telephoned me, and said he could not give anything in writing. As for any verbal comments, he would rather reserve it for our meeting, for which he asked me to telephone later. When I phoned him later for the promised interview, he refused point-blank to see me.

manner that it had accused him, the most nationalist of Indian leaders, of being a pawn of the British. Fortunately the origin of this campaign can be traced to the exact date.

The date was 30 June 1937, the culprit was the President of the Congress, Jawaharlal Nehru, and the occasion was a by-election in Jhansi, UP. It was after Jinnah's refusal to 'line up', as Nehru demanded. The *bonhomie* between the Congress and the League had disappeared, Nehru had rejected the League's offer of co-operation and demanded its virtual liquidation, the confrontation between the two organizations had begun and now they were both testing their strength at the polls. Suddenly, out of the blue, Nehru issued a press statement attacking Jinnah. He had, said Nehru, read an appeal by Jinnah to the voters in Jhansi 'with astonishment'. He had read many leaflets and appeals by League leaders and found that 'the cry raised is that Islam is in danger,' but 'Mr Jinnah has capped the sheaf of Muslim League leaflets and statements...He appeals in the name of Allah and the Holy Koran for support for the Muslim League candidate.' He added: 'To exploit the name of God and religion in an election contest is an extraordinary thing even for a humble canvasser. For Mr Jinnah to do so is inexplicable...it means rousing religious and communal passions in political matters; it means working for the Dark Age in India.'¹

But Jinnah had made no such appeal, and he issued a categorical denial on 2 July. 'I have issued no statement of any kind whatever up to the present moment; nor have I seen the contents of the alleged statement,' he said. He reiterated that the League was 'a political organization', and regretted the propaganda started against him and the League.

The matter should have ended there with Nehru, if he were a gentleman, apologizing for his mistake. But it was not a mistake, it was a deliberate act; and Nehru, instead of expressing any regret, pursued it further by suggesting that Jinnah 'find out who was responsible for the misuse of his name and disassociate himself from the statement in question';² and he went on to attack the Muslim League as a reactionary body.

¹ *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, op. cit., Vol. VIII, p. 136-7.

² *Ibid.*, p. 150.

Nehru's statement was the cue; and from that time onwards the Congress leaders and the Congress Press accused Jinnah, day in and day out, of trying to win popularity among the Muslim masses by such cheap and false slogans as 'Islam in danger'. This was also the Congress line in foreign countries, especially Britain and the United States. But at home, Nehru, with the help of Abul Kalam Azad, mobilized the *ulema* against Jinnah. It is a fact of history that, with the sole exception of Maulana Shabbir Ahmad Usmani, no *alim* of any standing supported the idea of Pakistan: they actually opposed it with all their power. The President of the Jamiatul Ulema, Husain Ahmed Madani issued a *fatwa* in October 1945, on the eve of general elections, declaring it *haraam* for Muslims to join the Muslim League.¹ The organization itself, and its more vocal wing, the Ahrars, opposed Pakistan tooth and nail, and Mazhar Ali Azhar, who was quite high in this hierarchy, wrote the following lines:

ایک کافر کے واسطے اسلام کو چھوڑا
یہ قائد اعظم ہے یا کافر اعظم

(He gave up Islam for the sake of a Kafirah²
Is he the Quaid-i-Azam or the Kafir-i-Azam.)

The Jamaat-i-Islami also joined this anti-Pakistan crusade. Its *Ameer* (chief), Maulana Abul Aala Maudoodi denounced both the Congressite Muslims and the Muslim Leaguers. According to him, those who believed in Pakistan, those who had put their faith entirely in freedom from the British, and those who were looking for a third alternative, had one thing in common: 'all these people hesitate to advance directly to the real goal of Islam'.³ 'As a Muslim, I have no interest in the establishment of their rule in those areas of India where the Muslims are in a majority,' he wrote in another article. 'For me the primary question is whether in this "Pakistan" of yours the basis of government will be the sovereignty of God or, in accordance with the Western idea of democracy, the sovereignty of the

¹Khalid Bin Sayeed, *op. cit.*, p. 216.

²*Kafirah*: feminine of *Kafir*, an unbelieving woman. The reference was to Jinnah's wife, who came from a Parsi family.

³*Musalman aur Maujooda Siyasi Kashmakash*, Office of the Tarjumanul Quran, Pathankot, 1942, Vol. III, p. 92.

people. In the first case it will certainly be "Pakistan", otherwise it will be as much of "Na-Pakistan" as that part of the country where, according to your scheme, the rule will be that of non-Muslims: in fact, in the eyes of God, it will be...*napak* (filthy) and damned...'¹

Maudoodi condemned the Pakistan movement as devoid of Islamic aims and the Islamic spirit, and its leaders of following un-Islamic practices. His soul revolted when he saw the Muslim League resolution, and the activities of these 'so-called Muslims'. He found 'no one, from the League's Quaid-i-Azam down to its humble followers, who possesses Islamic disposition and Islamic outlook, and looks at matters from the Islamic point of view. These people do not at all know anything about the meaning and significance of "Musalman" and his special position.'² He thought that 'the people who believe in Pakistan' had 'not only disqualified themselves from giving Islam's message,' they were putting hurdles in its way.³ 'So, those who think that if the Muslim majority areas are liberated from the control of the Hindu majority and a democratic system is set up here, then it would be the establishment of the Kingdom of God, they are wrong. Actually, what will be achieved will only be the *kafirana* government of Muslims.'⁴ Maudoodi considered it fatuous to think that a democratic system could later be converted into an Islamic government, because the powers that be, having Muslim names, would crush such attempts with greater impudence than *kuffar*. 'Isn't that a foolish man who aims at Islamic Revolution and yet endeavours for the establishment of such a democratic government which would stand in the way of that goal more than any *kafir* government.'⁵

Maudoodi was right in saying that the Pakistan movement was not aimed at establishing a religious state, and one can understand his opposition on that ground; but he was wrong when he and his Jamaat later claimed that the purpose and the ideology of Pakistan was the establishment of an Islamic State, and that it was a commitment which could not be broken.

¹Ibid., pp. 76.

²Ibid., p. 30.

³Ibid., p. 104.

⁴Ibid., p. 107.

⁵Ibid., p. 108.

The 'Islamic ideology of Pakistan' is a post-Jinnah phenomenon. The campaign started two or three years after the country was created. The Jamaat-i-Islami, forgetting what it had said before 1947, was in the forefront of the campaign, and was soon joined by other *ulema* who had been upstaged and discredited for their opposition to the movement.

The Pakistan movement was strictly a political, not a religious movement. As a matter of fact, it was the first-ever political movement of the Indian Muslims. The Aligarh movement was a movement for social and educational uplift. The Khilafat movement was run entirely on religious grounds. But the movement for Pakistan was political in character, form and aims. There were indeed people, like the Raja of Mahmudabad, who tried to give it a religious colouring, but the Quaid had kept them in check.

Some of Jinnah's speeches about 'Islamic principles' have been twisted by interested parties to mean that he was in favour of an Islamic state, but his 11 August speech is so clear and categorical that no amount of conjuring can help. Many of his later pronouncements simply confirm it.

It is an irony that the man who always strove to keep religion and politics apart, should be considered as having mixed them. Religion was brought into Indian politics not by Jinnah, but by Gandhi. For Gandhi '...the politician in me has never dominated a single decision of mine, and if I take part in politics, it is only because politics encircles us to-day like the coils of a snake...In order to wrestle with this I have been experimenting with myself and my friends by introducing religion into politics.'¹

On Gandhi's outlook on politics, Nehru writes in his autobiography:

Gandhiji, indeed, was continuously laying stress on the religious and spiritual side of the movement. His religion was not dogmatic, but it did mean a definitely religious outlook on life, and the whole Non-co-operation Movement was strongly influenced by this and took on a revivalist character so far as the masses were concerned. The great majority of Congress workers naturally tried to model themselves after their leader and even repeated his language.

I used to be troubled sometimes at the growth of this religious element in our politics, both on the Hindu and the Muslim side. I did not like it at all...Even some of Gandhiji's phrases sometimes jarred upon me...thus his frequent reference to *Ram Raj* as the golden age which was to return. But I

¹ CWMG, op. cit., Vol. XVII, p. 406.

was powerless to intervene, and I consoled myself with the thought that Gandhi used the words because they were well known and understood by the masses. He had an amazing knack of reaching the hearts of the people.

But I did not worry too much over these matters...We felt that we knew him quite well enough to realise that he was a great and unique man and a glorious leader, and having put our faith in him we gave him a blank cheque, for the time being at least.¹

Nehru, who was not worried by Gandhi's religious outlook, which gave the whole movement a religious turn, was deeply troubled by Jinnah's resurrection of the Muslim League and his demand for Muslim homelands, and considered it fair game to attack him, even on grounds that Nehru himself knew were false.

Actually Jinnah had secularized Muslim politics. He had taught his people to think in terms of political interests. He had always insisted that the Muslim League was a political organization, had fought against the entrenched position of the *ulema* in Muslim politics and had succeeded. The dimensions of his success increased as the idea of Pakistan made more converts among the followers of religious leaders. In February 1938 he told the students of Aligarh that the League had 'set you free from the reactionary elements of Muslims' and 'has freed you from the undesirable elements of Moulvis and Maulanas.'²

As Jinnah's stock among the Muslims continued to rise, that of the *ulema* continued to fall proportionately. While Jinnah became the Quaid-i-Azam, Abul Kalam Azad was not able even to lead the two annual Eid prayers, which he had been doing for years, because the Calcutta Muslims refused to pray behind him. Never before had the influence of the *ulema* been so low among the Muslims of India as during this period. They felt it bitterly, hated Jinnah with the depth of their hearts, and did everything against him. They vehemently opposed him and the Muslim League, failed miserably in the general elections of 1945-6 as a body, and hated Jinnah all the more. It was a contest between modernity and the mullah, and modernity triumphed.

The mullah practically disappeared from the Muslim political scene for half a decade after 1945. He surfaced again some time after Jinnah's death. This time he came as the champion of the

¹J. Nehru, *Autobiography*, op. cit., pp. 72-3.

²Jamiluddin Ahmad, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 46.

Islamic state, which he claimed was the promised ideology, the very *raison d'être* of Pakistan. He gained at first by inches, then by miles, as no political leader had courage enough to contradict him. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, early in his career as the leader of the Pakistan People's Party, did take the line that Islam was not an issue in a country so overwhelmingly Muslim, but later he too thought it wise not to challenge the religious leaders. When he was overthrown, General Ziaul Haq assumed the role of champion of the Islamic State. Since then parrot-like cries of 'Islamic state', and 'rule of the sharia' have become the order of the day.

That is the mullah's revenge on Jinnah.

Jinnah and the Muslim Politicians

In the fight for Pakistan, Jinnah took on the British and the Hindus simultaneously. But that was not much of a problem for him: his real problem was to keep the Muslims united and disciplined. Here he had to deal with four different categories of people. First, there were the *ulema* and the Congress Muslims. They opposed the League bitterly, appearing in different garbs and uniting in various unholy alliances such as the Azad Board or the Muslim Majlis, but they were swept away by the rising Muslim consciousness.

The second belonged to the Anglo-Mohammedan School. They had lost much of their importance but still had some power to do harm, and often used it. Here one finds a lamentable contrast between the non-Congress Hindus and the non-League Muslims. The non-Congress Hindus opposed the Congress and attacked its policies, but when the chips were down they would come to its aid. The Mahasabha was, of course, there to strengthen the Congress hand against the Muslims, but there were others too. The Liberals or the no-party leaders would pose as neutrals, pretending to bring peace between the Congress and the League, but denounced the Pakistan scheme, and make proposals that really served the Congress. When Gandhi undertook a fast in 1943, three non-Muslim members of the Viceroy's Executive Council resigned in protest against the Government decision not to release him from custody. In contrast to this,

Sir Zafarullah Khan was advising Linlithgow on how to create dissensions in the League,¹ and Sir Sikander Hayat, while a member of the League, was counseling him not to 'inflate Jinnah's ego or to make him more difficult to deal with'.²

The third element was neutral between the Congress and the League, as the Khaksars were. However, they were jealous of Jinnah's rising popularity, and never helped him. In fact it was a Khaksar who tried to assassinate Jinnah in 1943.

The fourth element was within the League itself. It consisted of the powerful regional bosses on the one hand, and self-seeking careerists on the other; often the two overlapped. Once the League had become a mass organization and opened its doors to every Muslim, all kinds of heterogeneous elements had entered it, and there had been no opportunity to purge it of undesirables.

The elections of 1937 had shown that *nawabs* and *rajās*, *talukdars* and *zamindars*, members of 'respected families' and British title-holders could not expect to get into the legislatures as a matter of course, as they had until then. The franchise had been enlarged from seven to over thirty-seven million, and the common voter had become interested in promises of reforms and measures to improve his lot. The wiping out of the National Agriculturalist Party in UP, the success of the Praja Party in Bengal, and the success of the Congress and the League as national parties, had proved this. The careerists could no longer hope to be elected to the legislatures on their own, and then get ministerial offices through British patronage. They needed the backing of a popular party. Since they could not join the Congress, the obvious place was the League. Jinnah welcomed everybody who signed the League pledge, and this gave an opportunity to a large number of such undesirable elements who felt no loyalty to the League to get into it and occupy important positions. The intelligentsia and the younger crowd, which was now rallying round Jinnah, did not like this, but Jinnah told them that: 'I am prepared to admit that there are men who are not true leaders,' but the right course was for all Muslims to join the League and then for the sincere workers to purify it.

¹Linlithgow to Amery, 15 May 1941, *Linlithgow Collection*, op. cit.

²Linlithgow to Zetland, 5 September 1939, *Zetland Collection*, op. cit.

This element stayed in the League as long as it was useful and was quick to betray when its selfish interests were not served. Those in the minority provinces generally did not give much trouble, and if they did, for example the Nawab of Chhatari or Sir Sultan Ahmed, who joined the Defence and the Viceroy's Executive Councils, they were promptly expelled from the League. The real trouble came from the majority provinces.

The first to desert was Fazlul Haq, who had brought immense prestige to the League by joining it in 1937, and then had done much to organize it in Bengal. But he lost his head completely in 1941 when called upon to resign from the Defence Council which Linlithgow had set up. While the premiers of the Punjab and Assam obeyed, Fazlul Haq, although he too resigned, created a lot of fuss; he then, one fine morning, deserted the League Parliamentary Party and formed a coalition ministry with the help of other deserters, the Congress and the Mahasabha. This was a great blow. Fazlul Haq was, at that time, the President of the Bengal Provincial League, leader of the Parliamentary Party, and a member of both the Council and the Working Committee of the All-India Muslim League. He had been in public life for over three decades; was, in a way, one of the founders of the Muslim League; and had great influence with the masses. Jinnah was advised against taking any action against him, but he would never compromise on a matter of principle, and Fazlul Haq was expelled from the organization.

In the Punjab, Sir Sikander was disappointed by his failure to capture the League and by its increasing popularity at the expense of his own Unionist Party. He was also uncomfortable with the anti-British stance of the organization, and found himself out of place in the League, especially after the failure of the Cripps Mission. He was dropped from the Working Committee in 1942.

Sir Sikander died before the year was out, and before any confrontation could take place. That occurred two years later, with his successor Khizar Hayat Tiwana. Tiwana would not let a League Parliamentary Party be formed in the Punjab, and was expelled from the League along with many of his followers.

In Sindh, the League had nominated no candidates in the elections of 1937, and it had no Muslim League Parliamentary Party. The thirty-five Muslim members of the Legislature were

divided into four factions, giving the twenty-five Hindu members power quite disproportionate to their numbers. Ministries came and went through changing combinations and permutations. In October 1938, when Jinnah was in Karachi, he was successful in having a League Parliamentary Party formed. At the last moment Allah Bakhsh went back on his written undertaking and refused to join the Party. A little later, Sir Ghulam Husain Hidayatullah, who had been a candidate for the league leadership against Allah Bakhsh, himself deserted the party and became a minister in the government of his former rival.

The League Parliamentary Party in the Assembly, however, continued to grow as the League and the concept of Pakistan became more and more popular. Even Ghulam Husain Hidayatullah came back, and became the Chief Minister. But group rivalries and personal ambitions could not be curbed, and on the eve of the general election of 1946, G. M. Syed felt dissatisfied—many members of his group had not been given party tickets as he wanted—and deserted the League, and put up his own candidates in opposition to the Muslim League.

Syed, like Fazlul Haq in Bengal, was the President of the Provincial League, and member of the Council and the Working Committee, but his desertion on the eve of a general election was even more of a stab in the back. In the end he was routed and the League won all the seats in the Provincial Assembly.

During this fight on two fronts, the 'fifth columnists' were a real danger. The Congress by now had become totally obsessed with anti-Jinnah sentiments, and to defeat and humiliate him had become for it much more important than the attainment of *swaraj*. These feelings coloured all its actions in the last two years before independence; and it spared neither money nor effort to malign and frustrate him. Every inducement was offered to Muslim Leaguers to desert their organization and create disruption in the League ranks. In this game they received, when necessary, the help of the British.

The Anglo-Hindu Combine succeeded most notably in the Punjab, where the Muslim League was kept out of power till the last. In the general elections the League secured 75 (later raised to 79) out of 86 Muslim seats, and was the largest party in the legislature, but the Governor asked Khizar Hayat Khan, who headed a party of ten, to form the Government. The Congress,

which had never tired of condemning the Unionists of Khizar Hayat as toadies, eagerly joined him, and with the help of other Hindu and Sikh groups, Khizar Hayat Khan formed the government. Even Jawaharlal Nehru, who had called the Unionist ministry 'the most reactionary of all the provincial governments',¹ protested at this betrayal of Congress principles, but Nehru always had a convenient conscience, and was soon satisfied when Abul Kalam Azad explained that it was the only way to frustrate the League in the Punjab.

The Congress used every device against the League. The *ulema* were employed to denounce it, and petty moulvis and mullahs with no standing whatsoever went round with the propaganda line laid down, and their speeches were prominently reported in the Congress press.

An interesting incident which throws light on such tactics occurred on 11 November 1945, when *The Hindu*, of Madras, one of the most, if not the most, respected dailies of India, prominently published a news item:

Gandhiji real leader of Muslims Jamiat leader denounces Pakistan

Bangalore. 9 Nov. The modern Indian Musalman has yet to realise that his real leader is not Mr Jinnah but Gandhiji who is the symbol of suffering India. If tested by the true standards of Islam, Gandhiji stands out as the true embodiment of real Islamic spirit, says Maulana Walad-uz-Zina, Vice-President of the All-India Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Hind, Delhi, and member of the Working Committee of the All-India Muslim Majlis in a statement to the Press.

The report went on to say that, according to the Maulana, Pakistan was an absurd scheme, and every true *munafiq* of the *millat* was now determined to give a united fight to Jinnah. The Maulana was supported by Ghulam Mardood of Nellore.

Now *munafiq* means a hypocrite and a deceiver, the worst curse in Islam, and *mardood* means one who is eternally damned. As for the Maulana himself, his name, Walad-uz-zina, is a universal term of abuse, with different words in different languages, for someone born out of wedlock!²

¹*Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, op. cit., Vol. VIII, p. 268.

²Syed Shamsul Hasan, *Plain Mr Jinnah*, Royal Book Co., Karachi, 1976, p. 206.

What had happened was that one of the several mullahs mobilized by the Congress to work against Muslim League candidates in the elections had played up, and *The Hindu* reporter, not having ever heard of him, asked the first Muslim he met what the name of the mullah was, and what exactly were the Arabic terms he had used. This happened to be a local student, who decided to play a practical joke and wrote them down, and the reporter swallowed it hook, line and sinker.

The Hindu report reflected the Congress attitude towards the League: any Muslim, however unimportant, was to be welcomed, blazed abroad and helped in every way, if he took a position against the Quaid.

When Jinnah returned from self-exile, he found his people, like a ship without a rudder, floating aimlessly: he gave them a platform, a policy and a programme. He found them in despondency and despair: and gave them hope. He found them disunited and dispersed: and gave them an organization. He found them diffident and apprehensive: and gave them self-confidence and courage. He found a mob: and welded it into a nation. He set a goal: and defied everybody and everything to lead his people to that goal.

The Congress tactics failed as much as its money and the propaganda machine. Jinnah's message reached even remote villages, thanks to the enthusiastic work of the Muslim youth. He became the unquestioned darling and hero of the Muslim masses. This was an astonishing feat. He had no religious appeal, the most effective weapon with the Muslim public. He was totally anglicized, and his life style was totally different from and unattractive to the average Muslim. He could not even communicate with the masses, for he could hardly speak Urdu. In the pre-1937 days, he had dominated the councils and drawing-room discussions, but was hardly known to the man in the street. But when the League was converted into a mass organization, Jinnah himself became a leader of the masses. He was taken out in huge public processions, and he would address mammoth public meetings. He would sometime address them in broken Urdu, and the people, instead of ridiculing him, as they would others who lacked mastery of that language, enjoyed it and felt obliged that he was making the effort for their sake. Generally, however, he would address even mass meetings in English,

although the huge majority did not understand a word of what he was saying, but the crowd would hear him with reverence in pin-drop silence, sometimes whispering to an English-knowing neighbour to explain the point that the Quaid-i-Azam was making, and wait for someone to translate the speech after it was finished.

This was a remarkable transformation, and Nehru up to the last could not believe that Jinnah had become a mass leader; and wondered at what had happened. But the Muslim masses had come to believe that he was the one man who was fighting for their cause, and the only one they could trust. While there was a direct relationship between the Quaid-i-Azam and the people, the League woefully lacked an intermediate leadership. There was a terrible void, with Jinnah at the summit and masses at the bottom, with almost nothing in between. Jinnah achieved Pakistan single-handedly. With little help from his immediate assistants, he mobilized his people and led them triumphantly to the Promised Land.

APPENDIX I

CHRONOLOGY OF THE NON-CO-OPERATION MOVEMENT AND THE KHILAFAT MOVEMENT

1918

December: Eleventh session of the Muslim League at Delhi. *Ulema* participates for the first time. President expresses deep concern over the question of 'the Khilafat and protection of our holy places', and warns that Muslim 'temporal loyalty is subject to the limitation imposed by...our faith.' A resolution to that effect, and demanding representation at the peace conference, is adopted. Proceedings proscribed by the Government. League decides to boycott victory celebrations.

1919

February: Rowlatt Bill introduced in Legislative Council.
March: Gandhi meets Maulana Abdul Bari of Farangi Mahal, at Lucknow.
March 14: In an article in *Akhawat*, Bari says that he not only supports *satyagraha* against Rowlatt Bills, but also envisages the possibility of *satyagraha* if Muslim demands about Khilafat and protection of the holy places are not conceded.
March 17: Director of Intelligence reports to the Government: 'the feelings of Indian Muhammadans towards Government are very bitter, and the situation requires careful watching.'
March 19: Bombay Khilafat Committee, with Seth Chotani

- as President, formed at a public meeting in Bombay.
- March 21: Viceroy gives assent to the Rowlatt Bill.
- March 30: Strike and demonstrations in Delhi, as the beginning of *satyagraha*.
- April 6: Strike and start of *satyagraha* in the rest of India.
- April 9: Gandhi arrested and detained near Delhi and sent back to Bombay.
- April 13: Jallianwalah Bagh massacre.
- April 15: Martial Law formally proclaimed in Lahore and Amritsar districts.
- April 18: Gandhi suspends *satyagraha*.
- July 21: Gandhi announces formal end of the *satyagraha* movement.
- August 27: Gandhi writes to Abdul Bari: 'The time for joint and firm action on our part is now.'
- September 18: Gandhi addresses a Khilafat public meeting in Bombay, and asks the Muslims to 'sacrifice your ease, comfort, commerce and even your life' for Khilafat.
- September 20: Khilafat Conference in Lucknow under Sir Ebrahim Haroon Jaffer, and the formation of All India Central Khilafat Committee, with Bombay as its headquarter. Seth Chotani elected President and Siddique Khatri as secretary (replaced by Shaukat Ali on release, two months later).
- October 17: Muslims observe Khilafat Day. Gandhi had earlier appealed to Hindus to join Muslims in fasting and strike on the day.
- November 23-24: All India Khilafat Conference meets at Delhi. Gandhi opposes the plea of Hindu leaders to link up Khilafat with Punjab atrocities, and that of Muslims to link it with cow protection. He opposes Hasrat Mohani's resolution on boycott of British goods, and instead suggests, for the first time, Non-co-operation.
- November 25: Jamiatul Ulema-i-Hind formed.
- December 29-31: Amritsar sessions of the Congress, League,

Khilafat Committee and Jamiatul Ulema-i-Hind. Decision to send a deputation of Hindus and Muslims to the Viceroy. Gandhi opposes C. R. Das at the Congress, and advocates co-operation with the Government; as a compromise, it is resolved to work the 'Montford' reforms as far as possible.

1920

- January: Khilafat delegation calls on Chelmsford. Viceroy's reply unsatisfactory, but he promises facilities for the delegation's trip to England. Decision to send a delegation to Europe; and to start Non-co-operation on 1 August, if demands not accepted. Gandhi presents broad outlines of Non-co-operation to Khilafat Conference, Merrut, which are accepted.
- February 1: Khilafat delegation leaves for Europe.
- February 28: Bengal Khilafat Conference. 'Officials of the Raj saw this Bengal Conference as the culmination of the stream of fiery speeches let loose by the release of the Alis and A. K. Azad'. Conference asks Muslims to abandon their loyalty to the British, and assist the Khalifa if his pre-war dominions are not kept intact. Bari almost declares *jihad* and speaks of 'soaking Christians in kerosene and burning them alive.' Gandhi's message to the Conference pledges 'support till death'.
- March 7: Gandhi's Manifesto. He suggests observance of Khilafat Day on March 19, and resort to Non-co-operation if demands not accepted.
- March 11-14: Khilafat Committee's decision to start Non-co-operation, when found necessary, in accordance with the programme drawn up by a committee of which Gandhi is the principal member. The programme is divided into several stages, including:
- a) relinquishment of all Government titles,

- honours and honorary offices:
- b) resignation from councils;
 - c) resignation from civil services;
 - d) resignation from the police and the army;
 - e) non-payment of taxes.
- March 17: Khilafat delegation's unsatisfactory interview with Lloyd George.
- March 19: Khilafat Day all over India. Ajmal Khan surrenders his title and medals.
- March 20: Discussions of Muslim leaders (Bari, Shaukat Ali, Ajmal Khan, Ansari) with Hindu leaders (Tilak, Malaviya, Lajpat Rai, Gandhi). Gandhi and Azad argue with Bari that time for *jihad* has not yet come.
- March 25: Congress Inquiry Report on Punjab atrocities released.
- April: Khilafat Conference, Kanpur, under the auspices of *ulema* talk of war between Islam and Christianity. Conferences in Sindh and Madras in similar vein.
- May 12: Central Khilafat Committee, at Bombay, confirms Non-co-operation as already defined, and forms a small sub-committee to work out details (Members: Gandhi, Shaukat Ali, Azad, Chotani, Khatri).
- May 14: Treaty of Sevres.
Gandhi call it 'a staggering blow to the Indian Musalmans' leaving them no option but Non-co-operation.
- May 28: Khilafat Committee Manifesto calls for renunciation of honours and titles and resignation from civil services for the time being.
Ulema declared India *Darul Harb*.
Hunter Committee report on Punjab 'disorders' published.
- May 30: AICC rejects Non-co-operation, but agrees to consider it at a special Congress at Calcutta.
- June 1-3: Central Khilafat Committee meeting at Allahabad confers with Hindu leaders and re-affirms

- the four main stages of Non-co-operation Movement; appoints a committee (Gandhi, Ali Brothers, Azad, Kitchlew, Hasrat Mohani) to give the programme a practical effect.
- June 22: Eighty-two leading Muslims send an ultimatum to the Viceroy that unless their demands are met Non-co-operation will start on 1 August. Gandhi sends separate letter informing him that he is advising Muslims to that effect.
- June 30: Gandhi reverses his stance and links 'Punjab wrongs' with Khilafat.
- July 7: Non-co-operation Movement Committee issues instructions on 'how and when to act'.
- August 1: Non-co-operation Movement formally launched. Thousands of Muslims suffers because of the *Hijrat* Movement in which they had participated because India had been declared *Darul Harb*. Gandhi and Ali brothers tour India and set the country aflame.
- September: Calcutta Congress accepts Non-co-operation.
- December: Nagpur Congress confirms Calcutta decision.
- 1921**
- July: Karachi Khilafat Conference demands expulsion of non-Muslim powers from *Jaziratul Arab* and rejects any limitation on Turkish sovereignty. Declares service in the British Army *haram* for Muslims, and announces decision to start civil disobedience, along with the Congress, and hoist the flag of an independent Republic at Ahmedabad session in December.
- October: Ali brothers arrested and sentenced to two years.
- December: Ahmedabad Congress: Gandhi opposes Hasrat Mohani's resolution for complete independence.
- 1922**
- February 1: Gandhi's ultimatum to the Viceroy threatening to start 'civil disobedience of an aggressive

character' if his conditions are not accepted
within seven days.

February 12: Movement suspended by Gandhi.

APPENDIX II

THE SWARUP AFFAIR

The Swarup-Syud Hossain marriage has been an open secret, but vigorous efforts have been made by Hindu leaders, and by Jawaharlal himself, to draw a veil over it. So much so that when in the late fifties, news reached him that Choudhri Khaliquzzaman was writing his memoirs, he sent Khaliquzzaman a message asking him to do a personal favour, and not mention anything about the affair—and Khaliquzzaman obliged. Jawaharlal, of course, has said nothing about it in his autobiography. He has not even mentioned Syud Hossain, although Jawaharlal was closely connected with him as a director of *The Independent*.

In the absence of any authentic version, rumours of various kinds have grown around the affair. The story most widely believed was that the couple had eloped. Jawaharlal's Principal Secretary, M. O. Mathai, for example, has devoted one chapter to Hossain in his book *My Days with Nehru*; and he starts it with these words: 'After Syed Hossain eloped with Swarup Nehru (later Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit) and returned, he was advised by friends and foes to leave the country.'

The rumour had an echo in England, where, according to the *Hansard* of 15 April 1920:

Lieutenant-Colonel James asked the Secretary of State for India whether Syed Hassan, or Hussein, a member of the Indian Caliphate delegation recently visiting this country and professing to speak for their co-religionists in India, has recently, at the instance of Pundit Motilal Nehru, been accused of abduction and forcible proselytisation of the latter's daughter?

Mr Montagu: I have no information whatever as to this matter.

Thereupon Hossain wrote to Colonel James asking him either to withdraw the 'absolutely false' suggestion or to repeat the statement outside the privilege of Parliament. Hossain also wrote

to the Speaker asking for protection. The Speaker forwarded the letter to Colonel James, who did not go beyond acknowledging, in the third person, a second letter from Hossain. The matter was raised in the House of Commons on 21 June 1920 by Colonel Wedgewood, but the Speaker expressed his inability to do anything, and it died out.

Hossain, though anxious to nail the lie about abduction, did not, then or later, say a word about marriage. He was, in the words of Sarojini Naidu, 'the last of the Great Gentlemen'.¹ He did not return to India until 1937, when both he and Swarup were grey-haired, and Swarup was a mother of three daughters. When they met, their behaviour, again in the words of Mrs Naidu, 'showed good breeding on both sides'. Hossain, after a short stay in India, again returned to America.

The Nehru sisters have been less secretive. They have discussed the affair, but they have been silent on whether the marriage did actually take place: they did not confirm it, but they did not deny it either.

The youngest of Motilal's three children, Mrs Krishna Huthesingh, contributed an article on 'Nehru & Madam Pandit' to the American magazine, the *Ladies' Home Journal* in January 1955. In this article she said:

Having been brought up to associate freely with men and women, Nan (Swarup) had many opportunities for meeting young men. Quite a few were in love with her, including a young prince. But Nan did not seem to like any of these young men enough to marry. It was not surprising that she should meet and fall in love with a man regardless of his caste or creed. We had not been brought up to differentiate between one caste and another and had no narrow religious bias. But most Indians at that time were still bound by traditions and custom. Nan did not confide in anyone but kept her feelings to herself.

Continuing, she said:

When our parents began to discuss Nan's marriage to the young man whom they had in view since her childhood, Nan rebelled. There were tears and tantrums and many bitter arguments. Mother could not possibly conceive of refusing such a match. Father kept aloof, secretly sympathising with Nan because the young man, though eligible and belonging to a good Hindu

¹Dr Krishnalal Shridharani, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, 10 December 1947.

family, was somewhat of a prig and not the type he would have chosen for his daughter. However, one day father discovered the real reason for Nan's refusal: her desire to marry another. Then there was trouble.

Even Jawaharlal, Nan's hero, sided with the family against her. What hurt Father deeply was the fact that Nan did not confide in him'. Then 'one day Father summoned Nan and told her to pack and get ready to go to Mahatma Gandhi's ashram. Jawahar was to escort her. There Nan was supposed to stay until she came to her senses and Father's temper cooled...The days passed peacefully. Gandhi's wife, Kasturba, mothered Nan, and Gandhi himself kept Nan constantly by his side. He had long talks with her and taught her to spin.

When ultimately she returned to Allahabad, 'Nan learned on her arrival that her friend had gone overseas, so she bowed to the inevitable.'

Mrs Huthesingh leaves no doubt about the identity of Swarup's friend, for she says that they met again in 1947, his friend having returned to India 'at the invitation of Jawahar ... His reward was that he was recalled and appointed ambassador; after a couple of years he suffered a heart attack and died.'

Mrs Pandit herself had always been very dignified and forthright about the whole affair. In her memoirs, published fifteen years after Jawaharlal's death, she writes:

A couple of years earlier, while still in my teens, I had become attached to a young man, Syed Hossain, whom my father had appointed editor of a newspaper he had just started, *The Independent*. In an era that proclaimed Hindu-Muslim unity, and belonging to a family that had close Muslim friends, I must have thought it would be perfectly natural to marry outside my religion. But in matters such as marriage the times were deeply traditional, and I was persuaded that this would be wrong. My mother felt, in any case, that my Western-oriented upbringing encouraged me in unorthodox ways. So she welcomed Gandhiji's suggestion that I should spend a little time with him in his famous ashram. As far as I recollect nobody asked me specially whether I wanted to go.¹

A little after the memoirs were published, Syed Hashim Raza, of the formerly ICS, wrote a letter to Mrs Pandit from Karachi. Raza complimented her on her frankness and said:

On page 65 you have referred to the late Syed Hossain. As an enlightened person you thought it would be perfectly natural to marry outside your

¹Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, *The Scope of Happiness*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1979, p. 65.

religion. I disbelieve the rumour that you actually married Syed Hossain who had to divorce you at the intervention of Gandhiji and the late Maharaja of Mahmudabad. You say that you were persuaded that this would be wrong. Your decision does not negate but confirms the two nation theory.

Mrs Pundit sent a very affectionate reply to Raza on 7 July, but in her hand-written letter she said not a word either about her marriage to Hossain or about the two-nation theory.

The story of the marriage has been assiduously kept out of the Press and publications in India. Memoirs, biographies, family histories, all carefully ignore it. In one book, *The Complex Nehru*, published in 1965 by the Society Book Centre of Calcutta, however, there is a passing reference to it: 'She (Swarup) was legally married to a handsome young man of a distinguished family of the land, who ultimately rose to be free India's first Ambassador to Egypt. But Jawaharlal, most obediently and diligently, carried out the wishes of his mother in having the marriage annulled and getting her re-married according to ancient rites.' (p. 10.) The author of the book, S. A. Hasan, was the son of Hossain's elder brother.

One coherent account of the wedding was given in the *Daily News* of Karachi on 17 November 1971, by the Editor of *Comment*, H. M. Abbasi, who was present on the occasion. According to Abbasi, one forenoon—'it must have been late 1920, about October–December'—he was sitting with Maulana Rashid Fakhri, a distant relation whom he called Dada, when a messenger came and whispered something in his ears. Fakhri jumped to his feet and, accompanied by Abbasi, hurried to the Hossain residence. There they saw Swarup reclining in an easy chair 'composed, contented and at ease. Syed looked jittery. He was walking up and down. Half a dozen gentlemen were present, including Nawab Sir Muhammad Yousuf, who later became a provincial minister and a knight.'

Abbasi learnt that: 'Lakshmi and Syed were going to be married right away. Lakshmi recited the *Kalma* (Muslim affirmation of faith). And Maulana Saheb read the marriage *khutba* and joined the two in wedlock.'

This is the only published account of the marriage by an eye witness.

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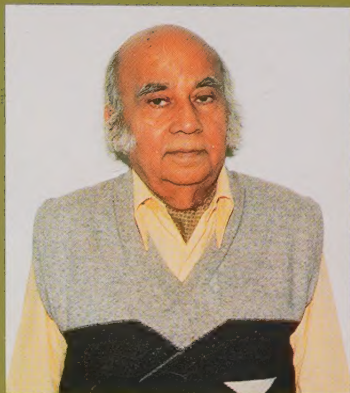
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Saad Rashidul Khairi was born in Delhi in 1923, into a literary family. His grandfather, Allama Rashidul Khairi, was the founder of *Ismat* and an early proponent of women's education and emancipation.

He was educated at the universities of Delhi (BA) and Aligarh (MA, LLB), and was a Pakistan movement activist with the Delhi Muslim Students Federation. He worked as a reporter for *The Sind Observer* and *The Daily Gazette* and then joined the Pakistan Foreign Service in 1948. Khairi served as Pakistan's ambassador to Sudan, Ethiopia, Argentina, Peru, Uruguay and Chile. He also worked as Director General, External Publicity, in the Ministry of Information, Islamabad. He retired from government service in 1976, and from 1979 to 1987 worked as Managing Editor of the Jeddah daily *The Saudi Gazette*.

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