ACT OF 1935 AND THE CONSTITUTIONAL IMPASSE

The Government of India Bill got the Royal Assent on 4 August 1935 and culminated into the Government of India Act of 1935. Through the new constitution, the British made the 'crafty devices' which were meant to safeguard the vested interests of the British Government; about which the Indian nationalists had not an iota of doubt that safeguards were positively against the canons of democracy.

This was later on revealed by Linlithgow, “we thought that way the best way...of maintaining British influence in India. It is no part of our policy, I take it, to expedite in India constitutional changes for their own sake, or gratuitously to hurry the handing over of the controls to Indian hands at any pace faster than that which we regard as best calculated, on a long view, to hold India to the Empire.”

While the Congress vociferously opposed to the clause in the provincial autonomy which had vested special powers with the Governor; Maulana Azad described it as “a fly in the ointment” and Nehru called it as “a new charter of slavery”; it maintained an attitude of neutrality regarding the Communal Awards to Muslims.

Explaining the Congress policy to the Press, Dr. Ansari said: “...The Congress knows that while large number of Hindus and Sikhs have taken strong exception to the Communal Award, a considerable section of Mussalmans, Harijans and Christians have accepted it for so long as an agreed substitute is found. The Congress will always strive to help to find a national solution of the question, but in my opinion such a solution of the question cannot be found except by a Constituent Assembly convened to frame a national

Constitution. Until then, the question of acceptance or rejection of the mode or proportion of representation as continued in the Award does not arise."\(^4\) The Congress Working Committee at Bombay on 17 June 1934 also reiterated that it could neither reject nor accept the Award, given the sharp division of opinion among the different communities in India.\(^5\)

The Congress members including Gandhi and Nehru did everything to soothe the Mahasabha's croaks. Nehru emphasised that “nationalism cannot be accepted only when it profits the majority community.”\(^6\) Gandhi recapitulated the same attitude by writing to Madan Mohan Malaviya, “...there is no escape from the Communal Award if we are to secure Mussalmans' co-operation and if we are to secure any advantage for the nation. The other alternative is retention of the status quo.”\(^7\)

The policy of the Congress regarding the Communal Award contributed to a considerable lessening of tension between the Hindus and the Muslims in the political field. Jinnah, who returned from London in 1934\(^8\), voiced his unequivocal condemnation of the entire constitutional scheme\(^9\) and showed his interest to solve the communal triangle. He never seemed to tire with his failures and made fresh attempts at solving Hindu-Muslim question.

He himself said: “...Nothing will give me greater happiness than bring about complete co-operation and friendship between Hindus and Moslems and in this desire my impression is that I have the solid support of Mussalmans...”.\(^10\) Other Muslim leaders like Iqbal, Nawab of Chhatari, Fazl-ul-Haq etc. echoed more or less his sentiments of unity. Dr. Iqbal disliked the 1935 Act, as he believed that interest of the Muslims “even

\(^5\) Ibid, p.300.
\(^6\) The Tribune, 30 November 1933.
\(^7\) Syed Mahmud Papers: Gandhi to Malaviya, 1 April 1934, NMML.
\(^8\) Rajmohan Gandhi, Understanding the Muslim Mind, Penguin, New Delhi, 1986, p.143
in the Muslim majority provinces...are made entirely dependent on non-Muslims."\(^{11}\) Iqbal was also strongly opposed to the separate electorates and "thought that if the Muslim provinces were given autonomy, they might be able to arrive at a better understanding with the other communities rather than on the basis of separate electorate.\(^{12}\) On 23 December 1934, the Nawab of Chhatari observed that the Communal Award formed the basis of co-operation among the communities in the absence of any settlement among them.\(^{13}\)

Fazl-ul-Haq presiding over the All-Bengal Muslim Young Men’s Conference in October 1934 at Calcutta, urged the Muslims to end communal strife and jealousy which might "shatter all hopes of the future of India." He admonished the Muslims: "If we have not made ourselves fit for the changes that are coming we will be pushed to the wall despite all the provisions contained in the White Paper or the momentary Communal Award. The besetting sin of Muslim politics has all along been the unaltering faith in the sense of justice of the British officials."\(^{14}\)

The negotiations between the Hindus and the Muslims for the substitution of the Communal Award started particularly because of the efforts of the Congress and the Muslims to arrive at a "honourable compromise."\(^{15}\) On 1 January 1935, Dr. Iqbal wrote to Ansari, "I think the time has come for Hindus and Muslims to work together...If this opportunity is lost, present tensions will only stiffen more and more making co-operation impossible."\(^{16}\)

Rajendra Prasad, who was the President of the Congress, desired "to jointly formulate some proposals which you and I could put before our respective organizations as jointly emanating from us."\(^{17}\) He particularly pointed out the exigency to get rid of the separate

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\(^{14}\) Ibid, p. 311.


\(^{16}\) Ansari Papers: Iqbal to Ansari, 1 January 1935, JMI.

\(^{17}\) Rajendra Prasad Papers: Notes on Conversation held between M. A. Jinnah and Rajendra Prasad on 28 January 1935, NAI.
electorate and admonished joint electorate and reservation of seats on population basis with freedom to minorities to contest more seats, the franchise being so arranged as to reflect the proportion of various communities in the electorate.\textsuperscript{18}

Jinnah was also very keen to accept joint electorates and to arrive at "a settlement [which] would remove the cloud of suspicion and we would work together with confidence."\textsuperscript{19} Jinnah found the Prasad formula would be difficult to settle in Bengal where a large proportion of the seats had been reserved for Europeans. To this, Rajendra Prasad suggested joint efforts to secure seats from Europeans and to redistribute them between the Hindus and the Muslims in Bengal on population basis.

When the Report of the Joint Parliamentary Committee was tabled in the Central Assembly, the Congress and the Muslims both voted against it. In furthering the Hindu-Muslim unity, Jinnah suggested a formula to counter-balance the void of separate electorate. According to the formula:

1) Muslims should have the electoral register so framed as to reflect the proportion of their population, if necessary by a different franchise;

2) The constituencies should not be overlapping;

3) In Punjab, when the constituencies were demarcated, he would give the Sikhs, being the smallest community the first chance to select those they liked and then the Hindus would be given a similar chance and lastly what would be left would be given to the Muslims.

4) So far as Bengal was concerned, he was prepared to accept the proportion of seats allotted in the Award but wanted that joint efforts should be made to secure some seats from the Europeans.

5) Jinnah admitted that the caste-Hindus in Bengal had suffered a double blow – one in the Award that gave them less than their population and the other by the Poona Pact. He wanted the seats obtained from the Europeans to be redistributed among upper

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{19} Cited by Uma Kaura, \textit{Muslims and Indian Nationalism}, Manohar, New Delhi, 1977, p.100.
As a result of the conversation another formula was suggested so as to accommodate Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. The formula runs as follows:

1) Franchise should be so framed and adjusted as to reflect the proportion of population of the various communities in the electoral rolls for the provinces and the centre and for that purpose differential franchise should be adopted wherever necessary.

2) There should be no overlapping of electorates of different constituencies.

3) In the Punjab, the Sikhs should choose the number of constituencies for the seats allotted to them in the Award and thereafter the Hindus would have the choice to fix one such constituencies as they might desire for the number allotted to them. The remaining constituencies would be allotted to the Muslims according to the number of seats fixed in the Award, excluding the seats allotted to Europeans, Anglo Indians, Indian Christians and special constituencies.

4) In Bengal, it was agreed between the Hindus and the Muslims that if any seats were obtained from the Europeans, the same would be divided between them in proportion to their population in that province. Joint efforts would be made by the Hindus and the Muslims to persuade the Europeans to release as many seats as they possibly can from the quota allotted to them by the Award. Subject to this, the seats allotted to the Muslims under the Award were to remain reserved for them excluding the seats given to Europeans, Anglo-Indian, Indian-Christians and special constituencies.

5) Similar seats allotted to the Muslims for the Central Legislature by the Award were to remain reserved for them.

On this basis, it was agreed that joint electorates would replace separate electorates in all the provinces and in the centre. Rajendra Prasad was convinced with Jinnah’s proposals which “furnished a fair basis of agreement.” Maulana Azad requested Prasad to fully utilise the situation. He felt that if the Congress could get joint electorates by paying

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20 Rajendra Prasad Papers: Note on Conversation between Jinnah and Prasad held on 28 January 1935, NAI.
21 AICC Papers: Notes on Conversations between Jinnah and Prasad held on 13-14 February 1935, NMML.
22 Rajendra Prasad Papers: Prasad to Sardar Patel, 14 February 1935, (Microfilm), NMML.

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“some price”\textsuperscript{23} to the Muslims, for which the Congress should not stutter. In the absence of Dr. Ansari\textsuperscript{24}, Maulana Azad did not want to leave any stone unturned for securing joint electorates.\textsuperscript{25}

When the conciliatory talks with the Muslims fruitioned, Prasad began talks with the Hindus of Punjab and Bengal. Malaviya now adopted a rigid attitude and made it clear that no conciliatory demand would be entertained by him unless the 33 1/3 percent seats reserved for the Muslims in centre were reduced. He also desired the Hindus to get 44.5 per cent of seats in Bengal and Muslims to have 51 seats but this settlement was not to be in proportion to their population, as that would amount to turn them unfavourably.\textsuperscript{26}

Jinnah was not ready to entertain this. He expressed his difficulty to persuade his colleagues to expend them more than what he has already done. Jinnah acknowledged that “what may have been possible some years ago was not possible today and those who made such suggestions ignored the basic fact of the Award being in favour of Mussalmans.”\textsuperscript{27} His conciliatory mood was replaced by antagonism towards the Congress leaders.\textsuperscript{28}

Owing to the rigid opinion on the both sides, the Congress and Jinnah failed to achieve any concrete solution. On 1\textsuperscript{st} March, Jinnah and Prasad issued a joint statement announcing their inability to procure unity saying: “We had made an earnest effort to find a solution of the communal problem which would satisfy all the parties concerned. We regret that in spite of our best efforts we have not been able to find such a formula. We realise that communal harmony and concord are essential for the progress of our country

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{24} Due to health complications, Dr. Ansari retired from hectic public life in April 1935 and took to the affairs of Jamia Millia Islamia. He died on 10 May 1935.
\textsuperscript{25} Rajendra Prasad Papers: Maulana Azad to Prasad, 18 February 1935, NAI.
\textsuperscript{26} Rajendra Prasad Papers: Daily Notes taken by Prasad, 20 February 1935, NAI.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{28} Prabha Arun, \textit{Pathway to Pakistan}, Intellectual, New Delhi, 1992, p.62.
and we can only hope that forces will arise which will make a future attempt more fruitful."\textsuperscript{29}

In an overture of the provincial autonomy, although almost all the parties criticised the centralisation of power in the hands of Governor; the Indian parties began preparing for the election. In moving the resolution regarding the Constitution, Jinnah said that there were only two percent responsibilities and ninety-eight percent safeguards and special responsibility of the Governor-General. The Muslim League's election manifesto with the following programmes was adopted on 9 June 1936.\textsuperscript{30}

i) To protect religious rights of the Muslims in which connection, for all matters of religious character, due weight should be given to the opinion of the \textit{Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Hind} and \textit{Majrahi} to make every effort to secure the repeal of all repressive laws.

ii) To reject all measures which were detrimental to the interests of India, which encroached upon the fundamental liberties of the people and led to economic exploitation of the country.

iii) To reduce the heavy cost of the administrative machinery, central and provincial, and allocated substantial funds for nation-building departments.

iv) To nationalise the Indian army and reduce military expenditure.

v) To encourage development of industries.

vi) To work for social education and the economic uplift of the rural population.

vii) To make elementary education free and compulsory.

viii) To sponsor measures for the relief of agricultural indebtedness.

ix) To protect and promote the Urdu language and script.

x) Lastly, to devise measures for the amelioration of the general condition of the Muslims.\textsuperscript{31}

The Congress manifesto too reflected the same programmes. Although the Congress was

\textsuperscript{29} Rajendra Prasad Papers: \textit{Joint Statement by Prasad and Jinnah}, 1 March 1935, NAI.


vehemently opposed to many provision of the Act of 1935, yet it decided to contest election, not to work it but to wreck it from within.32 The object of the Congress was to make working of Provincial Autonomy impossible by refusing to co-operate with the government.33

The elections were to be held in February 1937 and Congress and the Muslim League tried “to avoid a conflict” and accommodated “each other”. A “number of Muslims” “were doubtful” whether to “stand on behalf of the Congress or the League.”34 Both of them saw the provincial pro-British parties such as the National Agriculturist Party35 and not each other, as rivals. In many a Muslim seat, Congress did not oppose the League candidate. Because it was felt that it might need the League’s goodwill after the elections36 and the Congress candidate went unopposed by Muslim League37.

The election results saw the Congress commanding a majority position in the Legislative Assemblies of six out of eleven provinces due to the “magic name of Mahatma”, “the whirlwind tours of Jawaharlal Nehru” and “the organising ability” of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.38 The Congress representative Rafi Ahmed Qidwai won one seat reserved for the Muslims in UP.

In the words of Humayun Kabir, “Among Hindus, Congress swept the polls and stalwarts of the past regime were overwhelmed. Among Mussalmans also, the reactionary elements were discredited, if not destroyed. In Bengal, the League representing the vested interest was demoralised by Mr. Fazl-ul-Haq’s victory on a Praja ticket over the Bengal leaders of the League. In the Punjab, the League standing for communal exclusiveness and reaction was routed by Sir Sikandar’s combination of the moderates among Hindus and Mussalmans. In the UP, the League, which represented a relatively progressive force,

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32 Orest Martyshin, Jawaharlal Nehru and His Political Views, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1989, p.34.
34 Jawaharlal Nehru Papers: Jawaharlal to Rajendra Prasad, 21 July 1937, NMML.
35 Ibid.
37 Khaiquzzaman, op.cit., p.158.
38 Ibid, p.376.
triumphed over the vested interests organised by the Nawab of Chhatari and his group. In the North Western Frontier Province, Congress trounced the League, which fared hardly better in Sind. In a word, all over India, the stage seemed set for a move forward in which the best elements among the Mussalmans and the Hindus could co-operate."

Muslim seats in all the Provincial Legislatures of 1937 totalled 482. Of these only 109 were won by the League - 39 in Bengal, 9 in Assam, 10 in Madras, one in Punjab, three in Sind, 20 in Bombay and 27 in United Provinces. Congress contested just 58 of 482 Muslim seats and won only 26, most of them in NWFP. Though two Congress Muslims were elected in the United Provinces from general seats, not one of the nine Congress Muslims standing for Muslim seats could be elected.

The League had performed remarkably poor in three Muslim majority provinces - Punjab, Sind and the NWFP; and its performance in Bengal, though a lot better, was not outstanding. Yet, it had fared conspicuous well in four Muslim minority provinces - Assam, Madras, Bombay and UP. The following table shows the election results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provinces</th>
<th>Total number of seats in Legislative Assembly</th>
<th>Seats won by Congress</th>
<th>Seats won by the Muslim League</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengal</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Provinces</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madras</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NWFP</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orissa</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sind</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Provinces</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


40 According to G.D. Khosla "Only 4.4 percent of the Muslims who went to the polls voted for the Muslim League." (G.D. Khosla, *Stern Reckoning: A Survey of the Events leading upto and Following the Partition of India*, OUP, New Delhi, 1989, p.18.) He accounts that the total number of Muslim votes cast was 7,319, 445 of these only 321, 772 voted for the Muslim League. (Ibid., f.n.2.)

41 Return Showing the Results of Elections in India, 1937. Cmd. 3589.
The League leaders, who had hoped to score big with the Communal Award, were dismayed. Jinnah clearly attributed the defeat to the "personal, parochial and regional loyalties and ambitions" of the provincial parties. In Bengal, Moulvi Fazl-ul Haq had set up the Krishak Praja Party. After having agreed to serve on the League Parliamentary Board along with the United Muslim Party of Maulana Akram Khan and the Presidency Muslim League, Fazl-ul-Haq backed out at the last minute, since his demand that all the parliamentary board members must sign his party’s pledge was not conceded.

The League in Assam was faction-ridden. The Muslim votes in Sind stood fragmented with three parties:

(i) Haroon’s Sind United Party
(ii) The Azad Party of Sheikh Abdul Majid Sindhi and
(iii) Hidayatullah’s Muslim Political Party.

The Frontier also had three groups namely

(i) Khudai Khidmatgars of Dr. Khan Saheb.
(ii) United Muslim Nationalist Party of Sir Abdul Qayyum
(iii) Muslim League
(iv) United Party of Syed Abdul Aziz;

Rauf Shah launched a Muslim Parliamentary Party in C.P, while in Madras Muslim Progressive Party of C. Abdul Hakim challenged the Muslim League on Muslim votes. The provincial leaders tried their luck at politics in order to play active roles and achieve power. Apart from this, the Muslim League had also suffered the handicaps of finance and the lack of an organ to back up its cause and candidates. Apart from that the League was defeated because of two reasons, one it could not set up parliamentary boards and put up candidates in NWFP, Sind, Bihar and Orissa and secondly, it could not contest

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43 *Inquilab*, 3 March 1937.
46 Ibid.
elections to all the Muslim seats.

As in the case of Punjab, it contested only seven seats out of 84 seats allotted to the Muslims, winning one; only 35 out of 64 Muslim seats in UP bagging 27 of them and only 11 out of 29 seats in Madras securing ten of them.\(^47\) It was about 23 percent of the total Muslim seats allotted. Yet, the Muslim League redeemed two factors - firstly, that, although the Congress swept the polls in the general constituencies, securing 711 out of 1,585 seats, it could barely win 26 Muslim seats, 19 of them in the NWFP.\(^48\)

Secondly, no Congressite was elected from Muslim constituencies in eight out of India's eleven provinces – Punjab, Sind, Bengal, Assam, UP, CP, Orissa and Bombay. Even Jawaharlal Nehru admitted this and remarked: “Only in regard to the Muslim seats did we lack success... we failed because we had long neglected working among Muslims masses and we could not reach them in time.”\(^49\)

In view of all this, the elections, though a little disappointing in terms of the number of seats won by the League, were cherished as hopes for future\(^50\) and the Congress decided to plank on the Muslim sentiments through Muslim-mass contact programmes.\(^51\)

Congress had scored huge victories but it was not clear that it was going to accept office.\(^52\) There raged for a time acute controversy in the Congress circles over the question of the formation of ministries\(^53\). On 7 July 1937, the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress of which Maulana Azad was a member decided in favour of office acceptance.\(^54\)

\(^{47}\) *Return Showing the Results of the Elections in India, 1937*, Cmd, 5589.
\(^{48}\) Ibid.
\(^{49}\) *The Times of India*, 3 March 1937.
\(^{52}\) Rajmohan Gandhi, *op.cit.*, p.144.
The Congress formed ministries in provinces with and without coalition. The Muslim League encouraged by the pre-election rants looked forward to form a coalition government with the Congress.55 While the Congress decided upon forming the coalition in NWFP, Sind and some other provinces; it 'insisted upon' one-party government in the Hindu-majority province of UP56. In UP, Abul Kalam Azad was asked by the Congress to supervise the formation of ministries in northern India57. He sent Pt. Govind Ballabh Pant to the Muslim League leaders to enquire as to how many seats in the cabinet were expected by the Muslim League in case of a coalition government is formed between the Congress and the Muslim League.58

Chowdhry Khaliquzzaman, a Congressman, who had fought elections on League ticket and was elected the leader of the Muslim League party in UP, replied that his party would stand for 1/3 of the total number of seats i.e. two seats out of six and three seats out of nine.59 He also agreed upon Muslim League quitting the Assembly with the Congress in case of Congress disagreement with the British government on any issue.

Maulana Azad, who cherished the possibility of the whole of Muslim League ceasing to exist as a separate group and being practically absorbed by the Congress60, prepared the following conditions to be signed before entering coalition:

1) The Muslim League in the UP Legislature shall cease to function as a separate group.
2) The Muslim League in UP Assembly shall become part of the Congress Party and would be subject to the control and discipline of the Congress.
3) The Muslim League Parliamentary Board in UP would be dissolved, and no candidate would thereafter be set up by the said Board at any bye-election.
4) If the Congress decided to resign, the members of the League party would be bound

57 Rajmohan Gandhi, op.cit., p.145.
59 Khaliquzzaman, Pathway to Pakistan, Green Longmans, Lahore, 1961, p.160.
60 Prabha Arun, op.cit., p. 110.
Though, Nehru considered the conditions as “stringent” yet, he fully supported them, as is corroborated by his 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 UP and its absorption in the Congress. This would have a great affect not only in the UP but also all over India and outside. This would mean a free field for our work without communal troubles. This would knock over the British government which relied so much on these troubles.”  

According to Frank Moraes, “Had the Congress handled the League more tactfully after the (1937) elections, Pakistan might never have come into being.” Penderal Moon also described this as the Congress failure, which resulted in the creation of Pakistan. Though Khaliquzzaman criticised the Congress yet he agreed to the conditions excepting the two that needed the winding up of the League’s Parliamentary Board and desisting from setting up separate candidates at the bye-elections. But he insisted upon two Leaguers – himself and Nawab Ismail Khan to be taken in and signed the document.

Like Nehru some Congressmen were also averse to the idea of a political alliance with the Muslim League. Rajendra Prasad writes, “Congressmen thought it contrary to the spirit of parliamentary democracy to appoint any outsider in their ministry. Besides, there were Muslims in Congress and preference to non-Congress Muslims would have been unfair to them. Appointment of Muslim Leaguers as ministers in provinces where Congress had been returned in a majority would have been unconstitutional.

61 Choudhary Khaliquzzaman, op.cit., p.161.
62 Jawaharlal Nehru Papers: Nehru to Rajendra Prasad, 21 July 1937, NMML.
64 Penderal Moon, Divide and Quit, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1962, p.15.
65 Nehru Papers: Nehru to Prasad, 21 July 1937, NMML.
66 Khaliquzzaman, op.cit., p.158 citing a letter received from Maulana Ahmed Said, the Secretary of Jamait-ul-Ulema.
“As a matter of fact, the Muslim League had not acquired any prestige and popularity at that time. It had put up only a few candidates here and there and had failed in many places. The Congress, therefore, had no reason to take a Muslim Leaguer as Minister.”

However, Nehru intervened. The failure of the Muslim League to win enough seats was interpreted as the vindication of the Congress policy towards the communal problem and Nehru began to stress that “the time has gone when religious groups as such can take part in the political and economic struggle. That may have been so in medieval times: it is inconceivable today.”

In the same zeal, he wrote to Khaliquzzaman asking “…Why should I accept it (League) as the representative of the Muslims of India when I know it represents the handful of Muslims at the top who deliberately seek refuse in the name of religion to avoid discussing mass problem? I have a certain measure of intelligence and I have studied political, economic and allied problems. Am I to insult my intelligence by talking baby talk of an age gone by? … Do you not see that this communal policy which the Muslim League here has fathered is a policy more injurious to the Muslims of India than anything that a majority could do would be? To this Khaliquzzaman replied that he was “torn between two loyalties” and justified himself of joining the League for rooting out the influence of the reactionary groups in League.

But Nehru continuously began to impertinently insisting upon giving not more than one seat in the Ministry to the League. However, Nehru left it upto the League to decide whom they would like to include. Maulana Azad sulked Nehru’s attitude and sought Gandhi’s help.

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69 The Times of India, 23 April 1937.
70 Nehru Papers: Nehru to Khaliquzzaman, 1 July 1937, NMML.
71 Nehru Papers: Nehru to Prasad, 21 July 1937, NMML.
73 Rajmohan Gandhi, op.cit.
Even Gandhi failed to convince. In a subsequent meeting with Maulana Azad, Khaliquzzaman increasingly became desperate and offered Maulana Azad ‘a blank cheque’ provided he was prepared to include himself and Nawab Ismail Khan into the ministry. But Maulana Azad failed.

If Azad had put his foot down and threatened to resign from his position and thwarted at his efforts at settlement, things would have perhaps changed. The League group could not settle for one seat and thus, Maulana Azad’s attempt for a Congress-League alliance in the UP resulted in an utter failure. Even Maulana Azad himself regretted this as he had been hoping that the League would have “for all practical purposes merged with the Congress.”

R.C. Majumdar records that “to sacrifice collaborations with the Muslim League in the name of ideals which did not at all correspond with the existing facts, was an extremely unwise, almost fatal step for which India had to pay very dear.” The arrogance and lack of political foresight of the Congress was blamed.

Jinnah bitterly assaulted the Congress government and reiterated “that the Mussalmans could not expect any justice or fair-play at their hands.” Jinnah did not take these factors lying and while re-organising the League from grassroots did everything in his power to check the smooth working of the Congress ministries. He became such a menace that C. Rajagopalachari the premier of the Madras government, remarked “The League is puncturing the tyre and stopping the progress of the Indian car”.

74 Uma Kaura, op.cit., p.113-114.
76 A.K. Azad, op. cit.
80 Sharif Al Mujahid, op.cit., p.34.
On the one hand, Jinnah wanted to unify the Muslims in order to mould it into a formidable force. The nationalist Muslims on the other were ruthlessly criticised by him as mere show boys of the Congress and were warned that they were committing sins and were answerable to the creator.82 Though, the Muslim League began to organise Muslim mass-contact programmes, it condemned the Congress when the Congress took steps for mass-contact programmes with the Muslims.

The Congress was wrong to assume that through the mass-contact programme it could strengthen the unity of India, rather it paved the way to the communalism. Nehru agrees to this and writes, “there is no doubt that we have been unable to check the growth of communalism and anti-Congress feelings...”83 It has been said that the Congress chose a wrong time to approach the Muslim masses.

During the pre-election days, owing to factional wars among its leaders, the Muslim League and its politics was in a state of confusion. The League did not have a specific policy to improve the economic conditions of its community and was still the citadel of only the elite Muslim upper class.

If the Congress felt it would be difficult to have a political understanding with the League which had a different ideology, it could have tried to contact the Muslim masses before the elections and could have made them appreciate the secular ideology of the Congress and its economic programmes. But the Congress missed that opportunity to reach the Muslim mass in time. Because the Congress policy had small appeal for the Muslim masses who were not prepared to hand their security to a party which had done very little to win their confidence.”84

During the Congress ministries, the League complained that the Muslim masses were ill treated and lived under threat as the Congressmen had turned to communalism.85

82 The Pioneer, 16 October 1937.
83 Nehru Papers: Nehru to Rajendra Prasad, 10 October 1939, NMML.
Although the Muslim League might have exaggerated about the maltreatment to the minority community, yet, one might admit that the Congress instead of ignoring should have checked for precautions. As it gave the Muslim League, “a route hitherto blocked to the centre of Indian Government.”

The nationalist comments were interpreted to be anti-League and anti-Hindu by communalists. While on the one hand ‘Islam’ and ‘Islamic culture’ was supposed to be ‘in danger’, the ‘Hindu sentiments, culture and rashtra’ was in danger for Golwalker—the Hindu Mahasabha leader.

Maulana Azad himself accredits “that the Congress did not live up to its professed ideals” of nationalism and secularism. He meant the internal strife within the Congress which led to the expurgation of a Parsi and a Muslim from the key posts and not communal apathy towards Muslims in UP. In Bombay, Mr. Nariman, a Parsi, was to be appointed as the Chief Minister, but Sardar Patel unjustly deposed him and Mr. B.G. Kher was elected as the Congress premier of the Bombay government. Similarly in Bihar, Rajendra Prasad deposed Dr. Syed Mahmud in favour of Sri Krishna Sinha.

But Azad completely denied any untoward incident and the charges against the Congress regarding injustice to any minority group. He avows, “From personal knowledge and with a full sense of responsibility, I can...say that the charges levelled by Mr. Jinnah and the Muslim League about injustice to Muslims and other minorities were absolutely false. If there had been an iota of truth in any of these changes, I would have seen to it that the injustice was rectified. I was prepared even to resign if necessary on an issue like this.

Similarly, Rajendra Prasad wrote in response to Muslim League propaganda: “So far as I am concerned, the Congress ministry has done nothing to the prejudice of

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87 Bipin Chandra, India’s Struggle for Independence Penguin, New Delhi, 1988, p.400.
89 Ibid, p.16.
Mussalmans."92 "In not a single case was any Governor able to point out an instance."93 In view of all this, the charge of atrocities to the Muslims levelled against the Congress Ministries must be dismissed. Yet, when the Congress ministries decided to resign due to the outbreak of the Second World War, the Muslim League celebrated the day of deliverance on 22 December 1939.94

Maulana Azad interrogated "why is Mr. Jinnah advising the Mussalmans to celebrate the day of ‘deliverance’?" "This is a direct insult to the sense of self-respect of the Muslims of India. It is administering poison to them in place of nectar. The days have long gone when it was possible for men to tolerate such tyrannical Government. Now-a-days, it is impossible for my Provincial Government to carry on administration even for a short time after practising the tyrannies attributed to them by Mr. Jinnah."

He further challenged Mr. Jinnah that "if even a fraction of the allegations...were correct, I am not a man who would tolerate the Congress Ministries to remain in their seats even for twenty-four hours."95 In a press statement, Maulana Azad said: "I have often declared before, and I do the same again, with all possible sense of responsibility that all these accusations against the Congress Ministries are absolutely baseless. It is a mountain of falsehood to say that the policy of the Congress Ministries was decidedly anti-Muslim and that they have been ‘trampling down the religious, political and economic rights of the Mussalmans’. "96

The Congress remained in power for twenty-seven months from July 1937 to October 1939. In this short period, the Congress was able to achieve some success in undertaking programmes of education for both children and adults. The most important execution was the legislation undertaken for the abolition of zamindari and dissolution of agricultural indebtedness. At many places, the Congress met with stiff opposition and in Bihar,

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92 Rajendra Prasad Papers: Prasad to Sultan Ahmed, 2 February 1938, NAI.
93 Rajendra Prasad, India Divided, Asia Publication, Bombay, 1957, p.146-47.
94 R.C. Majumdar, Struggle for Freedom, Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, Bombay, 1988, p.610.
96 The Hindustan Times, 13 December 1939.
Maulana Azad personally intervened for setting an issue. His mediation was acceptable, as he neither was associated with the right wing nor the left wing.\textsuperscript{97}

It must be said that the Muslim League had not been able to win the complete support of the landed feudal interest until the bill for her abolition of zamindari system was legislated in the UP Assembly by Rafi Ahmed Qidwai. It was a storm signal for the nascent Muslim bourgeoisie, when “idea of a state, however poor, (was one) in which they and not the Hindus would be rich men and hold all the best posts in government service, industry and commerce”.\textsuperscript{98} They began to join the Muslim League, which had no such economic programme, en-mass.\textsuperscript{99}

The Muslim League employed shrewd tactics and gathered mass-support not by any introduction of programmes but by playing upon the fears of the people. The League which had got only 23 per cent of the Muslim votes in the 1937 provincial assembly elections was transformed into a mass party.

S. Gopal asserts that it was “an illogical, [and] impractical undertaking. The wealthy landholders, the aspiring men of business and the anglicised lawyers and politicians who constituted the members of the League had clearly no point of contact with the people. Moreover, they were mostly from those areas where the Muslims were in minority.”\textsuperscript{100}

The cumulative effect of the aggravation of Muslim fears and uneasiness was the growth of opposition in the Muslim League to the idea of an All-India Federation. The Muslim leaders too, were determined not to let the Muslims be dominated by the Hindus in a future central government. They began to feel that the Congress demand for complete independence was detrimental to Muslim interest, as it would place the Hindus permanently in power at the centre.

\textsuperscript{97} A.K. Azad, \textit{op.cit.}, p.25.
\textsuperscript{100} S. Gopal, \textit{Modern India.}, Historical Association, London, 1967, p.23.
Rather, now they began to aim for a federation of Muslim provinces and states in northwest India, a federation of Bengal and Assam, and a federation of Bihar and Orissa in the east.\textsuperscript{101} Even, Jinnah exhibited such fears. The British government, which was always ready and anxious to support such feisty, pretended to believe it. They openly stated, "it would be the greatest mistake in any way to discount the importance of expression of opinion (that the government should redress Muslim grievances) particularly from a man of the standing of Jinnah and we must give full weight to them."\textsuperscript{102}

The Working Committee of the Muslim League in September 1939, passed a resolution stating, "the Muslim India is irrevocably opposed to any 'Federal objective' which must necessarily result in a majority community rule under the guise of democracy and a parliamentary system of government."\textsuperscript{103}

It appointed a Committee under the Presidentship of Jinnah 'to examine various schemes propounded by those who are fully versed in the constitutional developments of India and other countries, and those that may be submitted to the President, and report to the Working Committee.'\textsuperscript{104}

Meanwhile, the Second World War broke out in Europe and Asia on 3 September 1939, and India found herself in the depth of throes of war, even without being consulted by Viceroy Linlithgow.\textsuperscript{105} The AICC resolution protested against the Viceroy having dragged India into the war without the people's consent and declared that peace and freedom depended on the extension of democracy and the application of the principle of self-determination to all colonial countries.\textsuperscript{106}

\textsuperscript{101} Uma Kaura, \textit{op.cit.}, p.128,130.
\textsuperscript{102} Linlithgow Papers: Linlithgow to Zetland, 28 March 1939, (Microfilm), NMML.
\textsuperscript{103} Indian Annual Register, Calcutta, 1975, p.351.
\textsuperscript{104} S.S. Pirzada (ed.), \textit{op.cit.}, p. xxi.
\textsuperscript{106} Nehru Papers: AICC Resolutions of Wardha, 1939, NMML.
In order to associate Indian public opinion with the persecution of the war, the Viceroy proposed “the establishment of a consultative group representative of all major political parties in British India and of the Indian Princes, over which the Governor-General would himself preside.”

On 22 October 1939, the Congress Working Committee met at Wardha. It adopted a resolution rejecting the Viceroy’s proposals and reiterating the view that the British government was using the differences among several parties in India as a screen for hiding its true intentions of denying the fulfilment of legitimate aspirations of the Indian people for freedom and democracy. The resolution *inter alia* called upon the Congress Ministries to tender their resignation.

All the Congress Ministries resigned between 27 October and 15 November 1939. Gandhi welcomed the proposal of resignation and he wrote to C. Rajagopalachari on 23 October: “I am quite clear in my mind that what has happened in best for the cause. It is a bitter pill I know. But it was needed. It will drive away all the parasites from the body. We have been obliged to do wrong things which we shall be able to avoid.”

The All-India Ahirar Conference fully supported the Congress and its Working Committee passed a resolution on 11 September 1939 at Amritsar refusing to help the Government in their war efforts.

Differences as to whether the Congress should support or oppose the British war effort arose. Maulana Azad advocated support for the democracies against Fascism and Nazism, provided India was free. He was clear that if the British did not recognise Indian freedom, Indian should neither co-operate nor offer any help to the British government in

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its war efforts. However, Gandhi wanted to commit suicide rather than see the devastation caused by the war.  

While Gandhi lectured the British Government to discard weapons and use spiritual force to win the war, Maulana Azad could not be convinced a for him non-violence was a policy and not creed and was ready to pick the sword. Although, many a Congressmen supported Azad’s view, they deflected to the stand taken by Gandhi and tendered resignation from the Working Committee. Maulana Azad was deeply hurt to see the name of Jawaharlal Nehru and Abdul Ghaffar Khan among the signatories. Because Jawaharlal regarded the struggle against fascism as the international duty of all democrats and “was anxious about the fate of democracies.”

The Congress Working Committee in August 1939 protested strongly against the despatch of Indian troops of Egypt and Singapore and directed all Congress members of Central Legislative Assembly not to attend the next session of the Assembly. The Provincial Congress Ministries were also instructed not to assist the war preparation of the British government. However, a change in Britain’s policy occurred with Churchill succeeding Chamberlain. Although his party was not at all sympathetic to the Indian wishes, yet the war situation compelled him to pacify Indians by conceding some demands.

The Viceroy, under his instruction invited the leaders of public opinion and after consultations issued on 8 August, a statement known as August Offer. The statement said, India would have constitutional talks, not freedom, at the end of the war. A decorative and powerless consultative committee was proposed for the duration of the war; and dominion status for India was declared as the intention of the British.

112 A.K. Azad, op.cit., p.27.
113 Ibid, p.32.
114 Ibid, p. 35,32.
115 Ibid, p.34.
118 Rajmohan Gandhi, The Rajaji Story, p.46.
offer was non-committal to any Congress demand and only promised to include Indian to the Executive Council, but no hope was raised that any Indian would be allowed into Defence Council as well.

Besides, it had the seeds of further spread of communalism as League was promised a veto of the future constitutional progress of India. The Congress outrightly rejected the offer. The Muslim League was satisfied. Its demand that that the government could not transfer power “to any system of Government whose authority is directly denied by large and powerful elements in India’s national life...”\textsuperscript{119} was accepted.

When Mr. Amery, the Secretary of State decidedly took the line that the British Government was bursting with impatience to hand over power to Indians, but as there existed disension among the various groups they are confused as to whom to hand over power. The moment the Indian political parties agreed, power would be handed over to Indians. Mr. Jinnah spilled the beans on Mr. Amery by rejecting the offer.

On 28 September 1939, by a resolution the League rejected the offer as its demand that its representatives should be appointed as non-official advisers to the Governors in the provinces administered by them under section 93 was not accepted. In February 1940, Jinnah said that the Muslims of India would not accept the arbitrament of anybody Indian or English, but would determine their destiny themselves.\textsuperscript{120}

By early 1940, the League Committee had completed its examination of the various proposals and the Working Committee in its meeting on 4 February decided to propose a separate homeland for Muslims in the forthcoming session of All India Muslim League in March.\textsuperscript{121}

\textsuperscript{120} Shanti Prasad Varma, \textit{The Problem of Democracy in India}, S. Chand & Co, Delhi, 1946, p. 71.
\textsuperscript{121} Hasan Zaheer, \textit{The Separation of East Pakistan – The Rise and Realisation of Bengali Muslim Nationalism} OUP, Karachi, 1994, p. 5.
The twenty-seventh session of the All India Muslim League commenced on 22 March 1940 at Lahore. Jinnah was still thinking about "A plan must be evolved that recognizes that there are in India two nations but both must share the governance of their common motherland. In evolving such a constitution the Muslims are ready to co-operate with the British government, the Congress or any party so that the present enmities may cease and India may take its place among the great countries of the World."  

Jinnah reiterated this view in his presidential speech at Lahore session. He declared the Muslims of India, stood unequivocally for the freedom of India, but it must be freedom for all India and not for one section only. The problem of India could not be solved if merely was treated as an inter-communal question. It was an international issue and must be dealt with as such.

"That Hindus and Muslims could ever evolve a common nationality was an ideal dream. To yoke together two such nations under a single state, one as a numerical minority and the other as a majority, must lead to growing discontent and final destruction of any fabric that may be so built up for the government of such a state ...We wish to live in peace and harmony with our neighbours as a free and independent people. We wish our people to develop to the fullest our spiritual, cultural, economic, social and political life in a way that we think best and in consonance with our own ideals and according to the genius of our people."  

On 23 March, the famous Lahore resolution was moved in the open session by Fazl-ul Haq. It resolved that no constitutional plan would be workable in this country or acceptable to the Muslims unless it was designed on the following basic principles, viz."that geographical contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be so constituted with such territorial readjustments as may be necessary with the area in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority, as in the North-Western and Eastern zones of

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122 Time and Tide, January 1940. Also in S.P. Varma, op.cit., p.72.
India, should be grouped to constitute “Independent States” in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign…”\textsuperscript{125}

The Resolution is vague and indefinite which leaves a number of things undefined. It is also a controversial subject regarding its interpretation. On a plain reading of the text, the Resolution neither conveys the concept of a single Muslim state nor the Pakistan scheme. It speaks on ‘territorial readjustment but does not point out the how and what factors of the readjustment. It does not even refer to a plebiscite or of the nature or form of government that was to be brought into existence into the newly created state or states.

In the third paragraph, the Resolution speaks of ‘Independent States’ of the group of areas in which the Muslims are numerically in majority and in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign. The term ‘constituent unit’ seems to imply a federation, but the Units in the federation are never sovereign. The fifth paragraph again refers to the assumption by the respective regions (not one region) of all sovereign powers. It was, therefore, natural that the resolution was not taken very seriously in the country. It was generally supposed to be merely adopted for the sake of improving the bargaining position of the Muslim League.\textsuperscript{126}

In the annual session at Madras in 1941, the Muslim League Constitution was amended by incorporating a slightly modified version of the Lahore Resolution. Instead of just ‘grouped’ of para three of the Resolution, the word ‘together’ was added after it; and to the “Independent States”, ‘as Muslim Free National Homeland’ was supplemented. This merely emphasised the federative nature of the Independent States encompassing each zone.

Alternatively, if it is interpreted that the idea was to group together the independent States then, by virtue of the constituent units being sovereign and autonomous, the linkage could only be confederal and not federative. The idea of a single Federal Muslim


\textsuperscript{126} S.P Varma, op.cit., p.73.
State, comprising the north-western and eastern zones came to acquire legitimacy only through popular perception of the Lahore Resolution. It was not borne out either by the text of the Resolution or the thinking of the founding fathers, as reflected in their speeches and political literature of the period preceding or immediately following the passage of the resolution.

No objection was raised from any quarter to the idea of more than one Muslim homeland.\(^{127}\) C. Rajagopalachari at the AICC meeting held on 29 April to 2 May 1942 at Allahabad introduced a resolution recommending the acceptance of the Lahore Resolution, in principle, as a basis of settlement between the Congress and the League.\(^{128}\) He said: “Let us dare. Let us give to the Mussalmans what they are asking. They will themselves say they do not want it if you do not keep it in your pocket but throw it on the table.”\(^{129}\)

His motion was strongly opposed by Nehru and others and was defeated by 120 to 15 votes.\(^{130}\) As a result, he resigned from the Congress Working Committee.\(^{131}\) Yet, he did not give up the cause and continued to acknowledge the Muslim’s right of self-determination that he expected would induce unity rather than partition of the country. He was supported by Mian Iftikharuddin, President of the Punjab Congress as well as by Khaliquzzaman, Nazimuddin and Nawab Mohammed Ismail and members of League Working Committee. Independent Muslims like Sir Mohammed Usman defended him.\(^{132}\) Even Khaksars\(^{133}\) cheered his speeches and supported him.\(^{134}\)

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133 Khaksars were a group of Muslim volunteers who were organised in 1926 under M. Inayatullah Khan, popularly known as Allama Mashriqi. They were continuously associated with the National Movements and was intended for social service to all irrespective of caste, colour and religion. They had participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement of Congress. Though non-violent they sometime took to violent actions.
It was the shortsightedness of Maulana Azad and other Congressmen to have missed such an opportunity. Maulana Azad was “greatly astonished”\textsuperscript{135}, and he seems to have daunted even his hopes which he had exhibited some seven years ago. But Azad himself realised folly and began to support the Lahore resolution’s compulsorily grouping schemes until 1946 as shall be seen. The Hindu Mahasabha leaders encouraged by such moves leapt to the forefront. They confronted C. Rajagopalachari with Black flags and V.D. Savarkar denounced his proposal as uncompromising.\textsuperscript{136}

In 1941, the Allies had suffered heavy losses due to German attacks. Japan’s entry in war as an ally of Germany threatened the smashing of British Empire in Asia. Japan’s continuous victories in Burma, Malaysia, Singapore, etc. through land and sea routes “has shaken the confidence of the Indian people in Britain’s capability and power to save India from invasion.”\textsuperscript{137} It also seemed imminent that Japan would soon attack India, when Andaman and Nicobar Islands was captured by Japanese navy.\textsuperscript{138}

Interestingly, some Indians had developed pro-Japanese feelings hoping that Japan would free the Indian off the shackles of British Imperialism\textsuperscript{139} and began rallying in favour of Japan. Subash Bose too had formed on alliance with the Axis Powers and was broadcasting his views from Berlin.\textsuperscript{140} Many Muslims were impressed by Subash Bose and jumped all leaps and bounds and joined the INA.

**INDIAN NATIONAL ARMY**

The birth of Forward Block as an all-India party in April 1939 under the leadership of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose opened a new chapter in the history of anti-colonial movement. Muslims also associated themselves with Netaji’s efforts to achieve freedom. Akbar Shah of the NWFP was a close associate of Netaji in his historic escape from India in the year 1941. The foundation of *Azad Hind Fouj* and the subsequent revolutionary

\textsuperscript{135} *The Hindu*, 26 April 1942.

\textsuperscript{136} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{139} Rajmohan Gandhi, *The Rajaji Story*, p.82.

endeavours of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose are significant in the history of freedom struggle. In the *Azad Hind Fouz* Major General Shah Nawaz Khan and Colonel Habibur Rehman were his important comrades-in-arms. The latter had the honour of being his last associate in the reported fatal air crash in Tokyo.\(^{141}\)

In his provisional government Lt. Col. Aziz Ahmad, Lt. Col. M. K. Kiani, Lt. Col. Ehsan Qadir, Lt. Col. Shah Nawaz, Karim Gani and D. M. Khan occupied very important and responsible portfolios.\(^{142}\) In his 90-day submarine dash from Berlin he was accompanied by only one Indian, Abid Hussan, who acted as his Secretary. Among his other followers the names of Rashid Ali and Col. S. M. Isac are worth mentioning. About one hundred Muslim martyrs may be counted among those of *Azad Hind Fouz* of whom mentions should be made of: Lt. Ashrafi Mandal, Abu Hussain, Yusuf, Lt. S.M. Ali, Abdul Aziz, Amir Hayat, Abdur Razak Ali, Akhtar Ali, Mohammed Ali Shah, Altaf Hussain, Ata Muhammed, Ahmed Khan, A. K. Mirza, Ayub Khan, S. Akhtarali, Ahmadullah, Abdar Rehman Khan etc.\(^{143}\)

Subhas Chandra Bose deep faith in fighting tradition of Muslims will be evident from the following extract: "British propaganda has deliberately created the impression that the Indian Mohammedans are against the independence movement. The fact is that in the nationalist movement there is a large percentage of Mohammedans. The President of Indian National Congress today is Azad – a Mohammedan. A vast majority of the Indian Mohammedans are anti-British and want to see India free. There are no doubt pro-British parties among both Hindus and Mohammedans which are organised as religious parties. But they should not be regarded as representing the people."\(^{144}\)

As the war came to an end with the defeat of fascist powers in Europe and Asia, freedom struggle entered into its last significant period. Massive agrarian struggles in Bengal, Maharashtra and struggle in Andhra, Kerala and Kashmir, began. The trial of INA

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143 Ibid.
prisoners Shah Nawaz Khan, Dhillon, Rashid Ali electrified the whole country from Kashmir to Cape Comorin. Major political parties demanded the release of INA prisoners backed by massive demonstration of students in Calcutta, Delhi and Bombay. Students clashed with police and the army. Rashid Ali Day was observed by Muslim League, Congress, Communist Party, Congress Socialist Party, Forward Block and RSP.145

After dusk the whole city was besieged by the active partisans of Hindu-Muslim youths busy in armed encounter with the army and police. More than 250 people gave their lives. Nearly 200 of them were Muslim youths and sons of toiling masses. It was in the thick of this battle that many working class and student leaders, intellectuals and poets got their baptism in left-oriented secular revolutionary national movement. The great young poet Sukanto came to flourish in the barricade fight of 1946 in the streets of Calcutta with his famous couplets.146

**Imphal and Kohima Campaigns**

The main Japanese offensive in Burma started in February 1944. About 1,00,000 well trained, well equipped and well organised Japanese troops took part in these campaigns. Whereas only about 7,000 of INA troops were allowed to take part and they were all ill equipped. Thus, these troops could only play a very secondary role. Before proceeding, Shah Nawaz Khan made every effort to arm, equip and clothe his regiment but without success. This is what Shah Nawaz Khan says, “The Japanese were not giving all the assistance which they could and should have given. They made all sorts of vague promises that the INA would be supplied with every thing when it reached the front lines but this, of course, was never done.”147

The Japanese had lost vital time for their offensive in Burma and India, that is from the end of 1942 till nearly end of 1943. The campaign that started with the Japanese in February 1944, was doomed from the very inception, as the Anglo-Americans had by now not only fully prepared for defence but were ready to launch their own offensive as

146 Ibid, p.89.
well. Thus, along with the Japanese, INA had to face defeats within a few months of the offensive. And the Japanese were forced to start their retreat by May 1944. Here is what Shah Nawaz says about the retreat in his book My Memories of INA and its Netaji. “The men made fresh tracks which soon became almost a knee-deep of mud in which many of our men got stuck and died there. At that time, there was no transport of any type with us. Almost every man was suffering from dysentery and malaria. No one had any strength left to help any one else. It was a question of every man for himself and devil take the hindmost. In that retreat, I saw men eating horses, which had been dead four days ago. There were hundreds of dead bodies of Japanese and Indian soldiers lying on both sides of the road...some had committed suicide to escape capture by the British...during this retreat, there were several instances when severe clashes took place between the Japanese and our men and Kundat and Youve, we had regular machinegun battles. When the Haka Garrison was returning to Kelewa, the Japanese captured one of our small detachments of approximately 10 men in the early hours of the morning and bayoneted them as enemy spies, after tying them with the trees, most of them died but a few lived with as many as 10 bayonet wounds to tell the ghastly story...it is difficult to explain why the Japanese acted towards the INA in such a manner. The only explanation that I can think of is that in the early stages of the battle they were too sure of themselves and of capturing Imphal. It is quite likely, in fact probable, that they had certain designs on India and they were afraid of allowing the INA to be too powerful and one day turning round and fighting the Japanese in case of their betrayal...”

_Netaji’s Final Journey_

After discussions with his colleagues, Netaji flew from Singapore on August 16, 1945 for Bangkok. Major Abid Hussain, Col. Gulzar Singh and Deb Nath Das also joined the party. Netaji was hoping if he could go to Russia, he could carry on his struggle for India’s independence. This request drew the following response from the Japanese. “Mr. Bose should know it better than to write off Japan and go over to Russia after having received whole hearted assistance and cooperation from Japan.” In spite of this message, some high Japanese officers were keen to help Netaji to go to Russia. But destiny was to

148 Quoted by P. N. Chopra, op.cit., p.523.
intervene immediately. From Bangkok Netaji and his party flew to Saigon in two planes next day. Soon after arrival at Saigon, Netaji was informed that a special plane was about to leave for Tajpeh and then to Darein. He was told that only one seat was available in this plane. With great difficulty the Japanese agreed to another seat for Habibur Rehman. The plane left Saigon on August 17, 1945. That night they all stayed at Toorane (Indo-China). The plane took off again but after a steep ascent and when the plane was hardly a hundred feet above the ground, loud explosion took place and the plane crashed and caught fire on 18 August 1945. 149

Netaji was removed to the local army hospital where he retained consciousness for quite some time. According to Habibur Rehman, who was himself injured, a few minute before his end, Netaji spoke to him saying “Habib, I feel, I shall die very soon. I have fought for India’s freedom until the last. Tell my countrymen India will be free before long. Long Live Free India.” 150

Impact of INA Movement

Though the INA movement failed to overthrow the British government, the movement made a significant impact on Indian politics. Firstly, the struggle forged a workable unity among men of communities and castes which was largely lacking in India. The movement proved that it could be carried on secular lines without the tinge of communal discords. The Government of India was not wrong in recognising this strange fact that they were likely to forget their caste or religious differences and would make a common cause to overthrow the British. 151

Secondly, it was the force and power of this revolutionary propaganda and its impact on the Indian national movement that compelled the government to win to over the moderates to their side by giving them some concessions from time to time. Their policy

149 Ibid, p.525.
150 Ibid.
151 Note by R. H. Craddock, dated 14 July 1914. Home Political Deposit, July 1914, No. 34, N.A.I.
had been to repress the most openly active revolutionaries and at the same time to conciliate the lukewarm members of the party and the general public. 152

Thirdly, before the beginning of the revolutionary movements abroad, the French, Germans, Turkish, Japanese, Russians and Americans knew hardly anything about the political developments in India. It was the propaganda of the Indian revolutionaries in different countries which created interest among some foreign powers in the future of India.

Last but not least, even in India, the movement was never static; on the contrary it continued to widen its sphere of influence and to swell the number of its adherents. And in both these respects it succeeded in making a considerable headway to the extent that there was a steady increase in numbers both of active revolutionaries and still more of revolutionary minded people who might not themselves care to resort to violence but who favoured its use in the fight against British domination. After the war, the revolutionary movement both in India and abroad, slackened but it again emerged with renewed vigour after 1923 and posed in the opinion of the Director of Criminal Intelligence a more formidable menace to the British authority than at any previous period 153, since their demand for political independence was now treated as a means to promote social revolution, the emancipation of workers and peasants.

CRIPPS MISSION

With the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, a new situation arose. America, which had always been pressing Churchill to come to terms with India, now endorsed huge pressures to win Indian co-operation. Chinese leader Marshall Chiang Kai Shek undertook a visit to India for the same purpose 154 and Australia too pressurised the British Government to resolve the Indian Constitutional crisis. 155

153 Minute by D. Petrie, Home Political, F.No.133/1930, N.A.I.
155 Shan Muhammad, Muslims and India's Freedom Movement, p.185.
In view of all these developments and pressures, the British government sent Sir Stafford Cripps, a member of War Cabinet, to negotiate with the political parties certain, constitutional proposals acceptable to the government. He arrived in India on 23 March 1942. His arrival put a greater strain of Maulana Azad, who was the President of the Congress and the press flocked him for a comment.

Maulana Azad met Sir Stafford Cripps on 29 March 1942 and probed Cripps on the national government he was offering. Cripps offered full dominion status after the war, with the right of secession from the Commonwealth; a constituent assembly whose members would be chosen by provincial legislatures or nomination by the princes; and immediately, a national government composed of representatives of the leading political parties. Not only Maulana Azad but also the whole Congress body, however, rejected the proposals.

Maulana Azad, who firmly believed that the Muslim leaders of the Muslim minority of the Muslim minority provinces must continue their struggle within the Congress\textsuperscript{156}, rejected the principle of self-determination by which the provinces were given the right not to join the Indian Union and to form separate independent states.\textsuperscript{157} Although, the Congress was willing enough to concentrate on the formation of a national government and fully co-operated with the British in the war, it could not agree to the British Government’s specific proposals for the future as these involved all manner of dangerous commitments.\textsuperscript{158}

The rejection of the proposals, however, were on different grounds. Gandhi opposed it due to his opposition to war and remarked that it was a post-dated cheque on a crashing bank.\textsuperscript{159} Jawaharlal, in spite of his “attachment to the democracies”\textsuperscript{160} was afraid of ‘dangerous commitments’ and for Maulana Azad it was only “the issue of Indian

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[156] M.S. Korejo, \textit{op.cit.}, p.135.
\item[158] \textit{Ibid}, p.459.
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\end{footnotesize}
freedom.” As the British were not willing to declare India’s independence, Maulana Azad rejected the proposals hoping that ‘India would become free’ after the war was over. He was fully convinced of the fact that “war had given India an opportunity for achieving her freedom. We must not lose it by depending upon a mere promise.”

The Congress Working Committee met on 6 July 1942 and rejected the Cripps proposals. The rejection was complete, uncompromising and related to the whole set of proposals. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru regretted the failure of the Cripps Mission and feared that “if the deadlock continues there may again be a conflict between the Government and one or other of the political parties which, in view of the present war situation, will be disastrous.” Nevertheless, Gandhi went on with his opposition to the war and he wrote to the Viceroy “this manslaughter must be stopped. You are losing; if you persist, it will only result in greater bloodshed. Hitler is not a bad man. If you will call it off today, he will follow suit.” Again on 6 July he issued an appeal “to every Briton” pleading to “lay down the arms you have as being useless for saving you or humanity.”

On 14 July 1942, the Congress Working Committee passed a resolution demanding the British to withdraw. It stated, “The freedom of India is...necessary not only in the interest of India, but also for the safety of the world and for the ending of Nazism, Fascism, militarism and other forms of imperialism, and the aggression of one nation over another.”

“It is the earnest desire of the Congress to enable India to resist aggression effectively with the people’s united will and strength behind it. In making the proposal for the withdrawal of the British rule from India, the Congress had no desire whatsoever to

161 Ibid.
164 Press Statement of 28 April 1942, issued from Allahabad was carried by almost all newspapers of 29 April 1942.
embarrass Great Britain or the Allied Powers in their prosecution of war nor in any way
to encourage aggression on India or increase pressure on China by Japanese or any other
power associated with the Axis Group. Nor does the Congress intend to jeopardise the
defensive capacity of the Allied Powers.

“The Congress, is therefore, agreeable to the stationing of the armed forces of the Allies
in India, should they so desire, in order to war off and resist Japanese or other aggression
and to protect and help China...[If] this appeal fail, the Congress will then be reluctantly
compelled to utilise all the non-violent strength it might have gathered since 1920...”163
and a “mass struggle on non-violent lines on the widest possible scale would be started
under the leadership of Gandhiji.”169 Gandhi, earnestly, believed that as in 1931, the
Government would come to terms as soon as the movement was launched.170 But to
begin with Maulana Azad was not convinced, as he believed that if Congress abjure non­
violence, there was scope for a movement otherwise it would be impossible to keep the
people non-violent, prophetically assessing the circumstance which would force the
government to arrest all the leaders.171

In fact arrests of leaders had already begun. Rafi Ahmed Qidwai was arrested early in
May. Shri Krishnadat Palliwal, President of UP Provincial Congress Committee followed
soon after.172 Nehru was afraid that Quit India movement would hurt the defence of
China and Russia against the Axis attacks. But he began thinking “If India perishes it
does not do me any good if other nations survives.”173 Rajagopalachari said that Britain
would not and should not leave. He said, “She cannot add to her crimes the crowing
offence of leaving the country in chaos to become a certain prey to foreign ambition”.174

170 A.K. Azad, op.cit., p.76.
171 Ibid, p.77.
172 Nehru, op. cit., p.469.
173 Nehru quoted by B. Shiva Rao, India’s Freedom Movement, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1972, p.182.
But this pessimism could not forbid Gandhi from taking the drastic step. He said that he did not need Congress for his move. The sands of India would throw up a movement larger than Congress.\textsuperscript{175} Yet, the Communists\textsuperscript{176} and Rajagopalachari\textsuperscript{177} kept on opposing Gandhi’s resolution. As the President of the Congress, Maulana Azad gave the movement its whole-hearted support and said that the Congress wanted to show that – the war was declared without the concerning the people of India and even members of the Central Legislature which was government’s own creation.\textsuperscript{178}

**QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT**

The Quit-India Movement was to start on 9\textsuperscript{th} August. But the government had already planned the action against those who violated the law. Charging the Congress “for unlawful, dangerous and violent activities directed to the interruption of communication and public utility services, the organization of strikes, tampering with the loyalty of Government servants and interference, with defence measures including recruitment”\textsuperscript{179} arrested almost all national, provincial and even district Congress leaders and kept them in different jails. Maulana Azad alongwith Nehru, Asaf Ali, Sardar Patel and others was kept at Ahmednagar Fort, while Gandhi was imprisoned at Aga Khan Palace in Poona. These leaders were kept in confinement until 1944-45.

The fateful resolution for a Quit India Movement by Nehru on 8 August and the subsequent arrest of the members of the Congress Working Committee provoked the masses all over India and within no time it took the form of an open rebellion.\textsuperscript{180} Public reaction was immediate and spontaneous. Police station, post offices and railway stations that were considered as the symbols of the Raj’s authority were attacked.\textsuperscript{181}

\textsuperscript{175} Rajmohan Gandhi, *ibid*, p.90.
\textsuperscript{176} A.K. Azad, *op.cit.*, p.86.
\textsuperscript{177} Rajmohan Gandhi, *The Rajaji Story*, p.88
\textsuperscript{178} Amrita Bazaar Patrika, 3 January 1941.
\textsuperscript{179} Tarachand, *op.cit.*, p.375.
\textsuperscript{180} P.N Chopra (ed.) *Quit India Movement: British Secret Documents*, New Delhi, 1986, p. 9.
The railway lines between Allahabad-Jaunpur and Faizabad were badly damaged and the railway stations between Benaras and Balia burnt to ashes. The national flag was hoisted on the District Court of Benaras and it was for sometime under the control of the people. Public life came to a standstill; all business was suspended. Every city and town observed a hartal. There were demonstrations and processions everywhere. National songs and slogans demanding the release of the leaders rent the air.

Hindus and Muslims joined together all over India. The students, workers and the peasants spearheaded the revolt. There were strikes in factories, colleges and schools. They raised the slogans of Thana jalao, Station phoonk do, Angrez bhag gaya. The agitation was yet non-violent and peaceful. But there was so much tension and the very size of the crowds made the government nervous.

When the crowds did not heed to the warnings and refused to dispense, the police invariably opened fire. In Delhi alone during two days (11 and 12 August) the police opened fire on unarmed crowds on 47 different occasions. 76 persons were killed and 114 severely injured. In a few days the figure reached to 600 dead. This turned the non-violent agitation into a violent one.

The Muslims who had also participated in the movement were undeterred. About 60,000 Muslims were arrested and 31 killed. In Delhi, the news of the arrest mobilised Mir Mushtaq, Farid-ul-Haq Ansari, Muqeemuddin Farooqi etc. to get involve in the underground activities and were subsequently arrested. A procession was taken out by Hakim Khalil-ur-Rahman, who hoisted the national flag at the Clock Tower and was arrested.

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183 Bipin Chandra, Freedom Struggle, p. 212.
184 Rajmohan Gandhi, Understanding the Muslim Mind, p.158.
186 Ibid, p.188.
In the NWFP, the Khudai Khidmatgars were very active. Abdul Qaiyyum, MLA sent a confidential letter to the Central Directorate of the Congress informing, “Congress work in North West Frontier Province is proceeding without a break. Red Shirt organized many demonstrations that harassed the government. Congress propaganda in the Frontier Province is being carried an extensively.” Underground work was on and it needed money.188

In Sind, the premier Allah Baksh was dismissed because he renounced the title of Khan Bahadur and wrote a letter to the Viceroy in protest against the British policy.189 In Bihar and Assam, the government incarcerated many Muslims but they continued their protest peacefully. One Sher Afzal met A. K. Datta and was told that groups of boys were organised to do sabotage work in Assam. Afzal told him that he was going to NWFP to bring the tribal leaders to Assam for sabotage.190

They were charged, fined and imprisoned. Syed Ibrahim Fikri names a hundred Muslims district-wise who participated in it. Muslim Muhammad, Abdul Rahim, Nazir Muhammad Khan, Mustafa Rasheed Sherwani, Moulvi Ashrafullah Chowdhry, Maulana Khalid Saifullah Ansari, Aruna Asaf Ali, Sultan Khan, Dr Khan Saheb, Yusuf Meherally, Hashim Muhammad, Mohammed Yunus, Ansar Harvani, Ishaq Moin, Maulana Husain Ahmed Madni, Mohammed Ismail, Allama Anwar Sabri, Abdul Momin etc. were to name some. Husain Ahmed Madni sent a message to the Jamiat-i-Ulema through Moulvi Abdul Halim to join the Movement.192 Husain Ahmed Madni said, “whole world should know and realise that we cannot forget our aims of freedom and self-government even to the end of our lives.”193

Even Jinnah and the Muslim League aspired for independence but in the Congress call for Quit India movement, Jinnah saw a drive not towards freedom but as “the culminating

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189 Ibid, p.399.
190 Ibid, p. 293.
192 Shan Muhammad, op.cit, p.189.
point in the policy and programme of Mr. Gandhi and his Hindu Congress of blackmailing and coercing the British to transfer power to a Hindu raj immediately." Therefore, it wanted the creation of a ‘separate homeland’ for the Muslims and gave the slogan of ‘Divide and Quit India’. The failure of the Quit India Movement with the total absence of leadership gave strength to Jinnah’s movement.

The passion of the people mounted who broke the law in the most violent form. Viceroy Linlithgow reported to the Prime Minister Churchill, “I am engaged here in meeting by far the most serious rebellion since that of 1857, the gravity and extent of which we have so far concealed from the world for reasons of military security.” Churchill even told the king in desperation that he would give up India after the war though he changed his mind on the termination of the war when he was out of power.

A terrible repression was carried on by the government, which led to the systematic dismantling of the Congress machinery. When the leaders were released after thirty-four months and six days, they were tired, ill and in some cases physically shattered.

195 Shan Muhammad, op.cit., p.189.
196 Linlithgow Papers: Viceroy to Churchill, 31 August 1942, (Microfilm), NMML.