CHAPTER III
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Indian National Congress vis-à-vis Muslim League –
the Clash Captured by English Press

National Herald, 8th March, 1946 – “Police Open Fire Thrice in Delhi –
Five killed and 13 injured. Anti – Victory Day demonstrations – Municipal
Building set ablaze.”

National Herald, 19th August, 1946 – “Over 1,000 killed: 2000 injured – Calcutta
situation deteriorates.”

The Pioneer, Calcutta, 18th October, 1946 – “5000 killed in Noakhali riots, 50,000
forcibly abducted, married or converted.”

The above mentioned facts reported by the newspapers are the outcome of the
difference of opinion between the Congress and the Muslim League. Dominique
Lapierrre and Larry Collins have captured the blind lane in the mind of the stern,
admant and uncompromising leader of Muslim League Muhammad Ali Jinnah –
“In a tent outside Bombay in August 1946, he had evaluated for his followers in
the Muslim League the meaning of Direct Action Day. “We shall have India
divided,” he vowed, “or we shall have India destroyed.”

The clash between Congress and Muslim League not only changed the History
of India but History started with the freedom of India and birth of Pakistan. But
behind this clash was the shrewd political acumen of the British which can be
understood if we look back.

The first session of Indian National Congress was held on 27th December 1885
which was attended by Seventy-two delegates from all over India under the
presidentship of W.C.Bonnerji. The aim of Congress was enlargement of the
legislative councils and their powers, simultaneous examinations for the I.C.S. in
India and in Britain and certain other administrative reforms. From that date
onwards the annual meetings of the Congress were held at the time of Christmas
and its resolutions were duly forwarded to the Government of India and to the
Secretary of State.

In 1899 Lord Curzon came to India as Governor General. He had imperial
mission and under his regime many administrative measures were initiated. The
partition of Bengal was vehemently resisted although Lord Curzon’s view was –
the province was too big for administrative efficiency, because the dividing line
was so crudely drawn that it meant the splitting of the province into two
communal blocks – the one in which the Hindus were in the majority and the other in which the Muslims predominated. "The measure was construed as an attempt on the part of Lord Curzon to cripple the new renaissance in Bengal."\(^2\)

When Lord Curzon resigned in 1905, he left behind much ill feeling and discontent. He was succeeded by Lord Minto and Lord Morley became the Secretary of State of India. He declined to contemplate such a popularization of the system of the government in India as would lead to relaxation of control by Parliament.

To trace the development of Muslim and Congress politics in India, it is worth mentioning here that British resentment immediately after the Mutiny was more against the Muslims than the Hindus. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan – the founder of the Mohamedan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh which later developed into the Aligarh University, made it his special endeavours to persuade his co-religionists to keep aloof from the Congress which was showing growing signs of opposition towards British policy and administration. He tried his best to put the Muslims back into the favour of the British. In 1888 Sir Syed Ahmad established the United Patriotic Association, which included Muslims as well as Hindu members, all of whom were opposed to the Congress. In 1893 he formed the Mahomedan Anglo- Oriental Defence Association of Upper India, confining its membership to Muslims and Englishmen. In October 1906, a deputation of Muslims headed by His Highness the Aga Khan, requested the Viceroy at Simla for separate representation based on the value of their contribution to the defence of the empire and on their traditions of past political greatness. Lord Minto dismissed them in order to save from opposition and The All India Muslim League was established the first session of which was held in December 1906.

In their official communication to the Secretary of State in October 1908, the Government of India recommended that the Muslims should be granted separate electorates. "The Indian Muhammadans, they averred, "are much more than a religious body. They form in fact an absolute separate community, distinct by marriage, food and customs and claiming in many cases to belong to a different race from the Hindus."\(^3\) Lord Morley accepted this principle of separate electorate. The Muslims had the fear that unless seats were actually reserved
they would secure very less seats against the Hindus. They wanted political importance.

When we consider the history of the Congress we find – the radical wing had formulated a policy of the boycott of British goods as a protest against the partition of Bengal. In 1906 the veteran Dadabhai Naoroji came from England to preside over the Calcutta session of the Congress. He mentioned about the 'Swaraj' for the first time in his Presidential address. The session of the Congress held at Surat in 1907 brought about a parting of the ways between the extremists and the moderates. It was under such circumstances that the Minto-Morley reforms were launched. The Muslims were conceded separate representation in Madras Bombay, Bengal, the United Provinces and in East Bengal and Assam.

The declaration of war in 1914 evoked expression of loyalty and support from the Congress as well as the Muslim League. In December 1915 the Congress and the All India Muslim League held their respective annual session in Bombay. The Congress authorised the All India Congress Committee to prepare a scheme of reforms and to confer with the Committee of the All India Muslim League for that purpose. The two committees prepared a scheme jointly. In 1916 the Congress and the League held their annual sessions simultaneously in Lucknow. The breach in the Congress between the extremists and the moderates had by now been bridged and an agreement was reached between the Congress and the League in regard to the representation of Muslims in the various legislative councils. This agreement is known as Lucknow Pact which was prepared by the Indian National Congress and the All India Muslim League. As in the case of the provincial councils, the total proportion of Muslim seats was fixed in accordance with the Lucknow Pact. Muhammadan representation was practically in accordance with the Lucknow pact. The hopes which raised due to the facts were never realized. The Act was regarded inadequate, disappointing and unsatisfactory. The first elections to the provincial and central legislatures were held in November 1920. The Congress as well as the Khilafat Committee boycotted the elections. The Muslim League took up a neutral attitude. The goal of the Congress was changed to the attainment of Swaraj by peaceful and legitimate methods.
The Hindu-Muslim unity which Gandhiji sought to build up on the Khilafat issue did not last long. In 1921, there was Moplah (Muslim) outbreak in Malabar. Turkey repudiated Khilafat and rejected all extraneous meditation in this matter. The Congress leaders tried to bring about an understanding between the two communities. In 1926 – 27 the country was in a state of frustration. The Congress had no active programme except Khadi. In absence of able leaders the Swarajists had test their discipline. The Muslim League was also a leaderless organisation at that time. The communal situation created tension and anxiety in the country. In these conditions the appointment of the Simons Commission was a boon to the Congress. But very soon it was found to be unacceptable as the Indians were excluded from the personnel of the Commission and were denied the right to participate in the determination of the constitution of their own country. In December 1927, in the Madras session of the Congress a resolution was passed to boycott Simon Commission. In the Muslim League there was a split. Jinnah and his followers were for boycotting the Commission while Sir Muhammad Shafi and his group were against such a decision. 'Nehru Report' was published in 1928, but was killed by the rallying tactics of the Simon Commission which the Muslims now felt in their favour. In December 1928 All Parties Conference met in Calcutta, where Jinnah moved certain amendments to the proposals of the Nehru Report which were not accepted. His group referred to participate further in the Conference. Next, a Muslim All Parties Conference was held in Delhi which was attended even by some of the nationalist Muslims. They made it clear that they would not accept any constitution until and unless their demands were considered. Jinnah, with the consultation of several Muslim Leaders formulated his 'fourteen points' for safeguarding the rights and interest of the Muslims. The 'fourteen points' of Jinnah are as follows:

1. The form of the future constitution should be Federal, with the residuary power vested in the provinces.

2. A uniform measure of autonomy shall be granted to all provinces.

3. All legislatures in the country and other elected bodies shall be constituted on the definite principle of adequate and effective representation of
minorities in every province without reducing the majority in any province to a minority or even equality.

4. In the Central Legislature, Muslim representation shall not be less than one third.

5. Representation of communal groups shall continue to be by separate electorates provided that it shall be open to any community at any time to abandon its separate electorate in favour of joint electorates.

6. Any territorial redistribution that might at any time be necessary shall not in any way affect the Muslim majority in the Punjab, Bengal and the N.W.F.Province.

7. Full religious liberty, that is liberty of belief, worship and observance, propaganda, association and education shall be guaranteed to all communities.

8. No Bill or Resolution or any part thereof shall be passed in any legislature or any other elected body if three-fourths of the members of any community in that particular body oppose it as being injurious to the interests of that community.

9. Sind should be separated from the Bombay Presidency.

10. Reforms should be introduced in the North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan as in other provinces.

11. Provision should be made in the constitution giving Muslims an adequate share along with the other Indians in all the services of the State and in local self governing bodies having due regard to the requirements of efficiency.

12. The Constitution should embody adequate safeguards for the protection of Muslim culture and for the protection and promotion of Muslim, education, language, religion, personal laws and Muslim charitable institutions and for their due share in grants – in – aid.

13. No cabinet, either central or provincial should be formed without there being at least one-third of Muslim ministers.
14. No change shall be made in the Constitution by the Central legislature except with the concurrence of the States constituting the Indian Federation.

The Congress session in Calcutta observed an open split between those who stood for Dominion Status and those who advocated Independence. The Simon Commission met with a hostile reception everywhere. At the session held in Lahore in December 1929, the Congress changed its creed to one of Complete Independence and decided not to attend the Round Table Conference.

When Gandhiji decided to start Civil Disobedience Movement, Mohammad Ali, an erstwhile supporter of Gandhiji and the Congress, allegedly went to the extent of appealing to the Muslims not to participate in the Congress movement. Contrary to general expectation, the First Round Table Conference achieved outstanding results with the agreement of all parties on the issue of federation. Sir Muhammed Shafi for one wing of the Muslim League and Jinnah for the other also welcomed the proposal.

The Second Round Table Conference was not so successful and was an absolute failure to secure an agreed solution to the communal problem. The outcome of this conference was a broader gap between the two communities.

The year 1934 saw radical changes in Congress politics. The Civil Disobedience Movement was decided to be withdrawn. Several pacts and Acts continued to be formed. Various decisions were taken regarding the Indian States and Provinces. The Muslim League denounced the safeguard in the Government of India Act but wholeheartedly supported the Communal Award. In early 1936, the Muslim League became active with the election of Jinnah as its President. It appointed a Central Parliamentary Board to direct the elections. When the Congress decided to accept office there was a proposal that it should form coalition ministries with the Muslim League. The Congress decided to have homogeneous ministries from amongst those who were members of the Congress party. This was the beginning of a serious rift between the Congress and the League and was a factor which induced neutral Muslim opinion to turn to the support of Jinnah.
Jinnah felt that the Congress had taken advantage of the weakness of the League and from that point he took great effort in strengthening the power of the League. He started a propaganda that the Congress was only a Hindu body in support of which he gave examples of Bande Mataram’ song, the Tri-colour flag, the Vidya Mandir scheme of education and the Hindu-Urdu controversy. He instigated the Muslims and tried to bring all Muslim political parties under the banner of the League. By 1938, Jinnah was able to consolidate his position. When efforts were made by Gandhiji, Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose to come to a settlement with Jinnah he insisted that the Muslim League should be recognised as the only body that represented the entire Muslim Community and that the Congress should speak only on behalf of the Hindus. All India Federation became a failure at the outbreak of the Second World War. The Council of the Muslim League passed a resolution on 27th August deploring the treatment meted out to the Muslim by the British Government and stressed that if the latter desired the support of the Muslims of the world, the demands of Muslims in India would have to be met without delay. All war-time negotiations between Congress and the Muslim League failed when Congress refused to discuss any question until the British Government clarified its war aim. This decision of the Congress was given a communal colour instead of a political one by the League as well as the British.

In an article in "Time and Tide’ Jinnah made it clear that the League would strenuously resist resumption of purely party governments in the provinces and any arrangements on similar lines at the centre. The article concluded that the reform must recognize "that there are in India two Nations who must both share the governance of their common motherland."

The Muslim world realized that there was a strong Muslim element in India. Jinnah made it clear to the Viceroy that if His Majesty’s Government wished Muslim India to give definite and effective help, it must not “sell the pass behind the backs of the Muslims.” He made it clear that if the British Government could not improve on its solution for the problem of India’s constitutional development, the Muslims would have no option but to fall back on some form of partition of the country. He also said that Muslims were not a minority but a Nation and democracy for all India was impossible.
The Viceroy spoke to Jinnah about three possibilities which are:

(1) In course of time the operation of the constitution embodied in the Act of 1935 would result in the complete removal of Hindu-Muslim differences and of the causes of collision between the two communities.

(2) On the assumption that Britain was ultimately going to withdraw, there would be a conflict between the two communities, the outcome of which would be disastrous.

(3) There might be some tripartite arrangement by which the presence of His Majesty's Government, in a manner as little out of tune with Indian aspirations as possible, would be needed in India; longer even than some imagined. In such an arrangement Britain would have predominant responsibility for Defence.

According to Jinnah the 3rd possibility was the best but even some difficulties were sure to arise there. He was in favour of a Muslim area run by Muslims in collaboration with Great Britain. Inspite of all hardships he wanted absolute liberty and independence for the Muslims.

On 19th March Congress held an open session in Ramgarh in which various left wing amendments were rejected. Simultaneously an Anti – Compromise Conference, presided over by Subhash Bose was held. The Muslim League’s annual session was held in London where Jinnah in his Presidential address said, "Islam and Hinduism are not religions in the strict sense of the word, but are in fact different and distinct social orders and it is only a dream that the Hindus and the Muslims can ever evolve a common nationality." He also said "Muslims are a nation, according to any definition of a nation and they must have their homelands their territory and their State "The Pakistan Resolution was passed which is as follows:

"Resolved that it is the considered view of this session of the All India Muslim League that no constitutional plan would be workable in this country or be acceptable to the Muslims unless it is designed on the following basis, principles, namely, that geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be so constituted, with such territorial readjustments as may be necessary, that the 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.\textsuperscript{6}

The Muslim League session at Lahore created widespread concern. The Hindus became angry, other minorities were unhappy. Even the Muslims who were in Congress were confused. The League's Lahore resolution instigated the representatives of various Muslim Nationalist groups like the Ahrars, Jamiat-ul-Ulema, the Shia Political Conference etc. to gather in Delhi in April. This 'Azad Muslim Conference' was presided over by Allah Bakhsh, the premier of Sind. The Conference supported the Congress plan for the Constituent Assembly and condemned the demand for partition by the Muslim League. It condemned the claim of the Muslim League to be the only representative organization of the Muslims. This Conference started meeting frequently but could not become popular like Muslim League which had an increasing hold on the Muslim masses.

The Congress leaders suspected that Gandhiji had failed to present the Congress point of view to the Viceroy in their interview on 5\textsuperscript{th} February. Gandhiji asked the Viceroy to confirm in writing that there was no misunderstanding and it was clear that Dominion Status even of the Statute of Westminster variety would not be acceptable to the Congress; the Viceroy did so. After the passing of the Ramgarh resolution with its threat of civil disobedience, the Viceroy definitely turned his back on the congress and decided not to alienate the Muslim opinion. In a letter to Jinnah dated 19\textsuperscript{th} April 1940, the viceroy assured him that no declaration would be made and that no constitution would be enforced by His Majesty's Government or enacted by Parliament, without the approval and consent of the Musalmans of India.\textsuperscript{7}

On 15\textsuperscript{th} June the Working Committee of the Muslim League met to endorse Jinnah's policy and to authorize him to proceed with his negotiations with the Viceroy. No other member of the Committee was to negotiate with the Congress leaders without Jinnah's permission nor were Muslims to serve on war committees pending further instructions from him.

The Working Committee of the Congress which met in Wardha on 17\textsuperscript{th} June refused to accept Gandhiji's extreme stand on non-violence. They declared that the war Committees sponsored by Government should not be supported and no
Congressmen should constitute to the war funds or enlist in civil guards under official control.

The Viceroy interviewed Jinnah and two days later – Gandhiji. Jinnah expressed his wish to co-operate but only from inside the Government. He was eager to expand the executive Council. He suggested that if the offer were renewed and the Congress, refused to take advantage of it, His Majesty's Government should not wait for the Congress. He was in favour of destroying the monopolistic position of the Congress. Further he said that the Muslim League was to support the Government, the declaration should make it clear that whatever the constitutional status conceded to her, India should remain in relations with Britain.

In his interview with Gandhiji, the Viceroy gave a tentative sketch of the possible declaration of giving India a status similar to that of a self governing dominions within one year after the termination of the war. He assured setting up of appropriate machinery in accordance with the agreement of those concerned, for the working out of a new constitution, subject to an agreed understanding of British commercial interest, defence, external affairs, right of minorities and treaty obligations to the Princes. But Gandhiji was against all these. After his interview with the Viceroy, Jinnah sent him a memorandum with the proposal that no pronouncement should be made by His Majesty's Government which would in any way go against the 'two nations' position which had become the universal faith of Muslim India. He wanted a definite assurance from His Majesty's Government that no interim or final scheme of constitution would be adopted by the British Government without the previous approval and consent of Muslim India. The Muslim Leaders should be treated as equals and have an equal share in the authority and control of the governments, Central and provincial. During the war the following provisional steps should be taken: The Governor General's Executive Council should be enlarged within the framework of the existing constitution. Muslims should have equal representation with Hindus if the Congress came in, otherwise they should have a majority; in Section 93 provinces non official advisers should be appointed with Muslims in a majority; there should be a War Council of not less than 15 members, including representatives of the Princes, which would meet at regular intervals; here also
Muslims should have equal representation with Hindus if the Congress came in, otherwise they should have a majority. Lastly, the Muslim representatives on the proposed War Council and Governor General's Executive Council and the Muslim non-official advisers of the Governors, should be chosen by the League. The Viceroy gave a reply stating the problems and impossibility of accepting Jinnah’s demands. An emergence meeting of the Congress Working Committee was held in Delhi from 3rd to 7th July in which a resolution was passed renewing the demand for an immediate and unequivocal declaration of full independence for India. Later at a meeting in Poona in the same month the All-India Congress Committee demanded an acknowledgement of the complete independence of India and the establishment of a provisional National Government at the centre. The ‘August offer’ was announced by the Viceroy on behalf of His Majesty’s Government on 8th August. Advance copies were sent to the Presidents of the Congress, The Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha. Abul Kalam Azad sent a reply to the effect that he could find in these terms no meeting ground for the Congress; that apart from other fundamental questions, there was no kind of suggestion for a National government and that, in circumstances, he was unable to find any scope for further discussion.  
Gandhi wrote to the Viceroy: ”I have very carefully read your pronouncement and slept over it. It has made me sad. Its implications frighten me. I cannot help feeling that a profound mistake has been made.  
Jinnah met the Viceroy and asked for clarification on a number of points but did not commit himself. The Congress Working Committee met in Wardha and discussed that “the rejection of the Congress proposals is proof of the British Government's determination to continue to hold India by sword.” One day after this meeting Rajagopalachari gave an offer to promote an agreement with the Muslim League. “If His Majesty’s Government agree to a provisional national government being formed at once, I will undertake to persuade any colleagues to agree to the Muslim League being invited to nominate the Prime Minister and to let him form a government as he would consider best.”  
Gandhiji however was disturbed and wanted further negotiation with the Viceroy. Very soon the Working Committee of Congress passed a resolution calling upon Congress organisations to refrain from all civil disobedience. The ‘August Offer'
was rejected by the Congress on the ground that their demand for a national
government had not been considered. The Working Committee of the Muslim
League considered the ‘August Offer’ satisfactory to some extent but the
League’s full co-operation in the war effort was stated to be conditional on the
Viceroy clearing certain points with Jinnah.

The Viceroy had a long discussion with Jinnah but ultimately his attempt to
improve the Muslim League position in terms of seats failed. He regretted
expressing inability to accept the offer. The Working Committee of the Muslim
League met in Delhi to pass a resolution not to accept the offer stating the
reasons.

In his interview with the Viceroy Gandhiji declared that “the immediate issue is
the right of existence, that is, the right of self-expression, which, broadly put,
means free speech. Thus the Congress wants not merely for itself but for all.”

On this issue, Gandhiji desired to launch his campaign of civil disobedience.

On 13th October the Congress Working Committee met in Wardha where
Gandhiji disclosed his plan of individual civil disobedience, which was approved.
Thereafter the Congress leaders were arrested one after another, but the
movement suffered apathy from the general mass.

Abul Kalam Azad, the Congress President was arrested for making an
objectionable speech. Subhas Chandra Bose, who was standing his trial for
certain speeches and articles was released from the jail following a hunger strike,
left the country and reached Germany. In the middle of February a press report
made people aware of a scheme attributed to a sub-committee of the Muslim
League which had been commissioned to study the various proposals for
Pakistan.

Although the demand for Pakistan had served the political ends of Jinnah, he
was still unaware of any definite idea of his own wishes. The Indian Muslims
were divided amongst their opinion regarding partition of the country. A non-
party Conference under the Presidentship of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru was held in
Bombay in March 1941. A resolution was adopted that while India should not
take advantage of Britain’s difficulties in her struggle it was equally desirable that
India’s domestic problems should not be pressed to her disadvantage. Jinnah’s
reaction was that the claim put forward by the non-party conference, if accepted
by the British Government would mean the cancellation of the ‘August Offer’ and would constitute breach of faith with Muslim India and other minorities. The Congress and Muslim League Working Committees continued to meet and discuss the situations, taking various resolutions and conditions started deteriorating. In the beginning of 1942 a group of eminent persons in India appealed to the British Government for a far sighted and efficient administration so that India can stand parallel with other anti-Axis powers equally in the Common struggle for the freedom of humanity. “As the war crisis deepened, people expected that there would be a change in the British Governments’ attitude to the Indian problem. This actually happened and the outcome was the Cripps Mission of 1942.”

Sir Stafford Cripps wanted to meet the leaders of Congress, Muslim League and all other minorities and group leaders. The Conference was held in Delhi which was attended by about 1400 delegates from all over India. “The session was so impressive that even the British and the Anglo-Indian press, which normally tried to belittle the importance of nationalist Muslims, could not ignore it. They were compelled to acknowledge that this Conference proved that nationalist Muslims were not a negligible factor. Even the Statesman and the Times of India wrote leading articles on the conference.”

All these parties were called to show that Congress was not the only part to speak but there were many parties in India. Perhaps this was the only way to exert pressure on Congress.

Cripps proposal was for a new Executive Council of the Viceroy. The nominees would be sent by the National Congress and other representative organisations. This Council would function at the time of war. The question of Indian independence would be taken up by the British at the end of the war. The Executive Council would comprise Indians only. The British officers would remain as Secretaries but not as Members of the Council. Sir Stafford said that power would rest with the council as it rested with the British Cabinet. Gandhiji was against the proposal. Jawaharlal was inclined to consider the proposal favourably. Most of the Congress members depended on Gandhiji; the only exception was Shri Rajagopalachari, who was all for acceptance. Regarding the question of the position of the Viceroy there was no clear cut answer. Cripps
views on the power of the council members was also ambiguous. Whether India would become independent after the war was also not clear.

The Press criticised the War Cabinet’s proposals. The most critical were the papers which generally expressed the Congress point of view. Cripps wrote a letter to Maulana Abul Kalam Azad expressing his hopes that his proposals would be considered by him since they were not accepted by the Hindu press. Regarding the solution of the communal problem Cripps had faith on Sir Sikandar, Hayat Khan who believed that Cripp’s offer was the best possible solution of the communal problem.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad had several meetings with Cripps but he noticed the change in the attitude and statement of Cripps in the later meetings. He realised that the hopes of a settlement had completely faded out. When Sir Stafford threatened to publish his letter to him, Abul Kalam also said that he would also publish the entire correspondence. These were released to the Press on 11th April. The attitude of Jawaharlal Nehru and Rajagopalachari were different. When Cripps left India Jawaharlal gave an interview to the representatives of the News Chronicle and what he said was absolutely to minimise the differences between Congress and the British. He was also ready for a broadcast from All India Radio but at the request of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad refrained himself from doing so. Shri Rajagopalachari was also highly disturbed by the deteriorating communal situation in the country. He believed that due to the differences between the Congress and the League India was not getting her independence. He openly declared if only the Congress would accept the League’s demands the obstacles to Indian freedom would be removed. Rajagopalachari also sponsored a resolution in Madras creating great resentment among Congressmen. Later on he offered his resignation from the Congress Working Committee.

The British put the blame for the failure of the Cripps Mission on Mahatma Gandhi. He is reported to have stated that the Cripps proposals were like a post dated cheque on a bank that was failing. Gandhi was convinced that no solution of the communal problem was possible without the Hindu – Muslim unity. He was determined to launch the Quit India Movement in 1942 because he believed that Japan was invading India because India was under the British control and it
was his firm conviction that there could be no solution of the communal problem so long the Hindus and the Muslims had a third party, namely the British to look up to.  

The Quit India resolution was passed by All India Congress Committee at its Bombay meeting on 7th August 1942. Gandhi's slogan to the Indians was "Do or Die." It was decided that a Hartal would be taken up but the Government was serious about it and arrested Gandhi, Nehru, Azad and other leaders of the Congress Working Committee on 9th August 1942. The Hindu reported about Nehru's reply to the British and American critics – referring to the opposition to the Congress demand, both in England and in America, "Mr. Nehru expressed surprise how intelligent people there could have misunderstood the Congress stand unless, of course, they deliberately chose to misunderstand it." (9th Aug. 1942).

The following excerpts from a report in the Hindu of 10th August on Gandhiji's concluding speech at the AICC session in Bombay on 8th August 1942 – "Freedom should be your Mantra – I take up my task of leading you in this struggle not as your commander, not as your controller, but as the humble servant of you all.......that is how I look at it,...........I want to share all the shocks that you have to fear........There is nothing secret about our plans. It is an open campaign......It is an utter impossibility for the authorities to oppose and crush the congress with the aid of mushroom parties. We are opposing an empire and it is a powerful empire......There should be no sub-terranean activity.....Do not be cowards, because cowards have no right to live. Freedom should be your Mantra." (15)

There was a violent reaction all over the country. When Gandhi came to know about the capture of police stations and setting ablaze of Govt. buildings he undertook fast for twenty one days. Viceroy Lord Linlithgow described the fact as a political blackmail. The mind cannot long act the role of the heart.

In the Muslim League camp the reaction was different. They took advantage of the difference between the Congress and the British Govt. and observed 'Pakistan Day' on 23rd March 1943. Muhammad Ali Jinnah shamelessly announced that the scheme of Pakistan was the final 'national goal' of the Muslims in India. A formal resolution on this regard was observed by the Muslim
League on 26th April 1943. The British also secretly nurtured this growing demand for Pakistan by Muslim League because they wanted a permanent enmity between the two communities in order to weaken the country.

India's last war of Independence was fought by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and his I.N.A. which has been discussed in a previous chapter.

At the end of the Second World War the economic condition of England was very bad; hence she seriously thought of winding up her empire from India in a peaceful settlement. The Viceroy Lord Wavell announced his desire to settle the Indian problem through a negotiation at Simla. This is known in History as the Simla Conference. All Congress leaders were released from the jail.

The Simla Conference began on 25th June 1945 but Muhammad Ali Jinnah was against any agreement. He insisted that the Muslim League should be regarded as the only representative of the Muslims in India and it would not be open to the British Government to include a non-League Muslim in the Muslim list in the Council. Wavell could not accept this and it was on this point the Simla Conference failed. According to Maulana Abul Kalam Azad: "The Simla Conference marks a break water in Indian political history. If the Simla Conference failed it was not the fault of the British. The cause of the failure was communal not political." The Muslims, although a majority in some provinces were a minority in India as a whole and had the fear that their position and status in independent India would not be secure. Jinnah had placed religion above the country and because of his adamant attitude and arrogance the cabinet Mission also failed.

The Congress members who were outside jail, in alliance with the Muslim League members, defeated a series of Government measures, including the Finance Bill. The British rulers had provoked the Muslims for forty years to counter the Congress in order to thwart the demand for self-government. It was impossible for the Muslims and their leaders to consider any alternative plan than formation of Pakistan.

**The Clash Captured by English Newspapers**

"Organised lawlessness in East Bengal, Large scale murders and looting in Noakhali district."— reported the Pioneer, Calcutta edition. Two days later the
news reported was “5000 killed in Noakhali riots; 50,000 forcibly abducted, married or converted. Armed league demonstration against Nehru – member for External Affairs, Interim Government. Unruly scene on arrival in Peshwar.” The same paper discussed an important issue in its 20th October, New Delhi issue – “Why the Nehru – Jinnah talk fails? Congress insisted on having Nationalist. Muslim League wanted Gandhi formula on basis of settlement.” The paper reported in its issue of 21.10.46 about the incident at Landi-kosar “Nehru’s car fired upon. Frontier troops five minutes batter with tribesman. Stone throwing by Muslim League.” There started violent and continuous communal rioting in Calcutta which was captured by the paper in its issue of 31.10.46 – “Unbated communal rioting in Calcutta.”

If we turn back to the middle of 1946, we will observe the same unrest and disturbances. The Amrit Bazar Patrika in its July 24 issue writes – “Bombay Telegraphists Down Tools – City cut off from rest of India – Industrial workers back postmen – 300,000 men observe one day general strike.” A situation unprecedented in Bombay’s History was today precipitated by the general strike of over seventy labour unions, involving nearly three hundred thousand workers, in response to a call by the Bombay – Provincial Trade Union Congress. Bombay – one of the most important hubs in the telegraphic net work of the country was particularly cut off from the rest of India along the telegraphic lines due to the strike of the non-gazetted staff of the Central Telegraphic Office. It also said – “Strikers in Calcutta Reinforced – P.M.G.Office Deserted – 8,000 Men of Alipore Tel.Store Yard Also to Join- The Calcutta Post – Telegraph – Telephone strike is assuming gigantic proportions with workers of allied service joining it. The Post Master General’s Office staff who gave strike notice on Tuesday, July 23 are stopping work from 11 on Wednesday, July 24 morning. Over 8,000 employees of the Alipore Telegraph Store Yard also have decided to go on strike from Thursday.

The same issue also reported about the stoppage of transport services in Madras, one day general strike in sympathy with P&T Employees and Delhi Textile Workers’ strike.

The July 25th issue also reported about the communal flare up in Bhadrak – “Communal Flare up in Bhadrak – Two Killed and Nine Injured in Police Firing.”
Two persons were killed and 9 injured when police opened fire to disperse Muslim and Hindu crowds this morning in Bhadrak town following a communal dispute according to reports received from Bhadrak. Nine rounds were fired and a posse of armed police has been sent from Cuttak to the scene of trouble.  

The July 29 issue reports – “General Strike in Calcutta Today – Spontaneous Response From All Quarters – Picketer stabbed in front of G.P.O.”  

The same issue captured Jinnah’s voice – “League Reconsiders Mission’s Proposals – Council Meeting – Pakistan Demand only course left open” – Jinnah.  

In the issue of July 31 we get a glimpse of the situation in Calcutta – Historic Hartal in Calcutta and Suburbs – General Strike by All Communities Support to P&T Demands.

Mammoth rally at maidan – business at standstill. League rejects Mission’s proposals – Threat to launch Direct Action – Muslims called upon to renounce titles. Mr. Jinnah announced that after a great deal of consideration the working committee had decided to withdraw its acceptance of the cabinet delegation’s proposals. He said that the decision had been taken after full consideration of all aspects and added that the Committee had spent considerable time in preparing the draft resolution.

The month of August 1946 also witnessed clashes and loss of lives everywhere. The Pioneer, August 31 issue reported “600 murdered in Metiabruz – Harrowing Tales of Loot & Carnage - 7 Temples Destroyed. The Calcutta Police were deliberately deluded by some members of the Muslim League Ministry into believing there would be no trouble in Calcutta on August 16 – such is the charge made by Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose, Member Designate of the Interim Government in an exclusive interview with the Untied Press of America in Calcutta on Thursday afternoon.”


The Times of India Bombay Edition in its issue of 25th October flashed “Critics face Indian Interim Government, Political storm in Delhi. Raging fight over ownership of Home portfolio. Congress may have to out or League may stay away.”  

The 22nd November issue resounded Nehru’s voice – Nehru charge against Viceroy
& Muslim League and hinted at inevitable struggle if things do not improve. Constitution making must go ahead even if Muslims do not join the Constituent Assembly. In the January 1 issue of ‘Morning News’ the report was – Karachi, Jan 6 – ‘Victory Day’ was observed by the Muslim League throughout Sind yesterday to celebrate its complete success at the polls during the recent Assembly elections. Muslim institutions and business houses hoisted League flags and the National Guards paraded through the main streets. The January 7 issue of the same paper reported – Gandhi Interprets “Do or Die.” Ahmedabad, Jan 5 – “I never experienced such darkness in my life before. The nights seem to be pretty long, the only consolation is that I feel neither baffled nor disappointed. I am prepared to any eventuality. “Do or Die” has to be put to test here. Do here means Hindus and Mussalmans should learn to live together in peace and amity. Otherwise I should die in the attempt. It is really a difficult task. God’s will be done,” says Mr.Gandhi in the course of a letter to Mr.Narandas, Gandhi of Rajkot published in today’s, Harijan.

The Morning News of 12th January reported – New Delhi, Jan 11 – “Unless, the Congress categorically accepts H.M.G’s statement of December 6, there is not the remotest chance of the Muslim League participating in the long term plan envisaged in the ‘State Paper’ is the considered view of informed League circles here.

The January 13 issue reported – Allahabad Jan 11 – Nawab Mohammad Ismail, Chairman of the Committee of Action, All India Muslim League and President of the Provincial League who visited Allahabad to study the communal situation in the city in a statement to the Associated Press has urged upon the U.P.Government to immediately set up an independent inquiry committee and adopt effective measures for restoration of confidence among the Mussalmans “who have legitimate grounds to feel that unless the present police officials are transferred and due enquiry is made into the conduct of those guilty of partisan behaviour, the communal tension of the city can not be relieved.”

The January 18 issue reported – “Inquiry into Calcutta Disturbances – Further Cross – Examination of Norton Jones Continued – Secret Hindu Preparations – Further Cross – examination of Mr.Norton Jones, Deputy Commissioner of
Police, Calcutta was continued before the Calcutta Disturbances Commission of Enquiry, with Sir Patrick Spens as President. Questioned by Mr. J. P. Mitter about the requisitioning of lorries and motor cars by the Muslim League before the Direct Action Day, Mr. Norton Jones replied that he had no such knowledge. He also denied any report of searches having been made in some mosques after the riots and swords and other weapons found. Further asked whether he ignored any private call for help while in the control room, he answered in the negative.  

The same paper also wrote – "victimisation and boycott of Muslims – Government urged to take immediate steps –

Mr. Mohammad Rafique, J.P., M.L.A. Secy, Muslim Relief and Defence Committee in a statement says that immediate and firm steps should be taken by the Government of Bengal to prevent further victimisation and economic boycott of Muslim labourers in the Mills.

The January 24th issue voiced the opinion of Professor Laik Nayyar – "Congress Digging Its Own Grave"-

Peshwar, Jan 23 – "The Congress is digging its grave with its own misdeeds and its anti-Muslim Policy," said Professor Laik Nayyar of Aligarh while giving his impressions after staying in the N.W.F.P. for the last few months. He said it was high time for every Muslim to gird up his loins and fight to the last breath for the achievement of his cherished goal of Pakistan.

Punjab Government's declaration upon the Muslim National Guard was published in the Jan 25 issue of the paper: Punjab Govt.'s Affront to Muslim League – Muslim India and the world will be astounded to hear that yesterday afternoon, Friday, January 24, 1947, the Punjab Government declared that the Muslim National Guard, an unlawful body and searched its offices in Lahore and throughout the provinces. But this is not enough. This insolent Government, arrested the leaders of the Muslim League in the Punjab. This was criticised in the next day's paper – "Muslim Leaders condemned High Handed Action of Punjab Government – Muslim Leaders all over India join in condemning the arbitrary and high handed actions of the Punjab Coalition Govt. in declaring the Muslim National Guard an unlawful organisation and arresting the top-ranking
1947 was a period of great turmoil which had been depicted by the newspapers.

The Jan 27 issue of Morning News brought before public the news that -

"Province wide defiance movement started –

Lahore, Jan 26 – The Punjab Lahore Assembly Party has accepted the challenge thrown out by the government in regard to the fundamental rights of Mussalmans by declaring the National Guards an unlawful organisation and by arresting the League leaders. Instructions have been issued for defiance of the ban on meetings and proceedings all over the province. The movement thus started, the party emphasised must be 'peaceful' and 'non-violent'. Individual instructions have been issued to league members of the legislative assembly regarding their role in this movement, which will be province wide. Mr.Jinnah calls upon Viceroy to intervene. Mr.M.A.Jinnah, President of the All India Muslim League has issued the following statement to the press - "I am shocked to read the report in the press of the decision of the Punjab Government to declare the Muslim National Guards organisation unlawful under the guise of and the plea that the Govt.can not allow private armies." The situation in Bihar was also grave with the implementation of section 144. Jan 27 issue of the paper covered the news: Indignation Felt All Over India – Section 144 Defied in Patna – Muslims prepared for Even Greater Sacrifices. Muslim students of the local colleges took out a large procession, defying Section 144. They paraded the main thoroughfares with such slogans as "Pakistan Zindabad," "Khizir Hayat Murdabad." "Release our leaders" etc. Even the press reacted as 4 Lahore Muslim papers stopped publication for 15 days. This decision was made as a protest against the order served by the Punjab Government directing them not to publish in any of their issues for a period of 15 days any statement or report which is not official concerning or bearing on the agitations against the provisions of the Punjab Safety Ordinance. The Jan 31 issue reported – Police Evidence Before Enquiry Commission – Incidents in North Town during Great Calcutta Killing. Rai Sahib P.K.Chatterjee further cross examined. Questioned by Mr.Bashiruddin, representing the Muslim
League, whether there was any complaint from Burtollah Police station of any Hindu being killed the Rai Sahib said there was no such complaint.\textsuperscript{46}

The Feb 1 issue reported – Karachi, Jan 31 – In a 3,000 word resolution on the constitutional question, the Committee of the All India Muslim League, when met again this evening holds that the Congress as a major contracting party has not accepted the statement of May 16, 1946, as claimed by the statement of His Majesty’s Government of December 8, 1946 and feels that no usual purpose will be served by summoning a meeting of the Council of the All India Muslim League to reconsider its decision whereby it had withdrawn the acceptance of the Cabinet Mission’s plan of May 16, 1947.\textsuperscript{47}

In next day’s paper came the news – Mass Civil Disobedience throughout Punjab – To the Muslim League however, with its democratic principles and the great popular and historic tasks, which it had imposed upon itself freedom of political expression and activity was the very breath of life.\textsuperscript{48}

Congress was asked to quit Interim Government which was covered in the paper of Feb 3, 1947:

New Delhi, Feb 2 – The long resolution on the constitutional question passed by the Muslim League Working Committee at Karachi has not caused any surprise in the New Delhi Muslim political circles. Satisfaction is expressed at the brutal way in which the Resolution tears off the mask of hypocrisy so long downed by the Congress.\textsuperscript{49}

The same paper also wrote “Fighting For Issue Just and Right One – Karachi, Feb 2 – “I once more draw the attention of the Punjab Government, the Governor and the Viceroy not to indulge in any camouflage and deal with the situation boldly and frankly and restore civil liberties of the people of the Punjab “said Mr.Jinnah, President of the All India Muslim League in a statement on the Punjab situation today “I hope that the Muslims of the Punjab will be able to get a copy of the resolution of the Working Committee of the All India Muslim League that was passed in Karachi on Feb 1. It is unfortunate and I am sorry to say that the Punjab Press is censored and news is blacked out by the executive orders of the Punjab Govt.”\textsuperscript{50}

Feb 4, 1947 issue reported –

Bihar Muslim League to Boycott Assembly Session
Patna, Feb 2 – The Bihar Muslim League Assembly Party which met here this afternoon decided to boycott the session of the Bihar Assembly which begins tomorrow after making a formal presence and thus record the complete lack of confidence of the Mussalmans of the province in the Congress Government.

It also reported – Systematic Oppression of Muslims, Congress Govt. will have to Answer – Karachi, Feb 2 – The Governments and officials in Congress governed provinces have not only failed to protect the life and property of Mussalmans in these provinces but have also been undermining their economic interests in the distribution of daily necessities of life, which have come under the direct control of provincial Governments, says one of four more resolutions adopted by the League Executive which concluded its session yesterday.51

Mr. Suhrawardy's message to the newly started 'Pakistan Times' of Lahore: Mr. H.S. Suhrawardy, Chief Minister of Bengal said: "The inauguration of 'Pakistan Times' is most opportune in this critical period of our history. The last few months have clearly brought out how truth is perverted and suppressed by partisan papers of our opponent. It is of the greatest importance that we should be in a position to give true information to our nation so as to enable them to form correct decisions."52

'Morning News' of February 7 reported – Great indignation felt here at the receipt of news from Lahore indicating that Punjab Muslim ladies of noble birth including Begum Feroz Khan Noon have been most barbarously treated by the Punjab Police. The incident was so revolting in character that Mr. Liquat Ali Khan has declared in the course of a Press statement – "I could not easily believe that any civilized Government could be guilty of such shocking and barbarous treatment towards any women prisoners to say nothing of women holding high position in life courting arrest in a movement of civil disobedience in a moral fight for popular right."53

The same issue threw light on the murders and brutalities in Bihar which eclipsed Noakhali:

Srinagar (Noakhali), Feb 5 – The murder and brutalities in Bihar eclipsed those committed in Noakhali, said Mr. Gandhi addressing a gathering of Hindus and Muslims here, in the course of his post-prayer speech today. He said: "Unless
you all sincerely believe that without a real peace between two communities there can be neither Pakistan nor Hindustan. Slavery is your lot."

"Begum Noon Severely Burnt On Face and Neck – This will not deter us from doing our duty. " A brutal and barbarous attempt to suffocate 11 arrested ladies in a closed police van, 12 miles out of Lahore was the highlight of the Khiza Administration’s ruthless repression on the 11th day of the Civil Disobedient Movement, says the Lahore correspondent of ‘Dawn.’

The heroines of the occasion were none else than Begum Feroz Khan Noon and 10 other ladies who had been arrested before the Civil Secretariat and removed by the police in a van to be dumped."

Feb 9 issue described the disruptive elements again, the busy plan to crush the Bengal Ministry and stirring appeal by Calcutta League Secretary.

"I do hope the Muslims of Calcutta and Bengal will stand as one man behind the leadership of Mr.H.S.Suhrawardy and the Presidentship of Maulana Akram Khan. We can not change horses in midstream. It will be fatal. That is the lead, the Calcutta Muslim League is giving to Bengal" – declared Mr.S.M.Usman, Secretary of the Calcutta District Muslim League in the course of a statement to the Press yesterday."

Next important news which was highlighted by Press was: Congress Presumption Resented By League – No Acceptance of May 16 Plan by Congress At Any Time.

New Delhi, Feb 10 – It is reliably understood that the Muslim League Members in the Interim Govt. have written to the Viceroy with regard to the demand made by the Congress members for their resignation. They maintain that if acceptance of the May 16 plan was the criterion of the Muslim League alone and done so, which subsequently it withdrew because no other party had accepted it."

Feb. 12 issue reported: The Punjab People’s gallant fight for Civil liberties on its 14th day found the officials visibly nervous outworn and completely demoralised. From Muslim League quarters comes the information that about 13,000 persons have been arrested upto now by the Punjab Government. The latest directive issued by the government to editors of local newspapers teaches its own lessons, says the Lahore correspondent of ‘Dawn.’
The editors have been asked to submit for pre-censorship even headlines of news regarding the movement. This order is regarded as a confession that the communiques daily issued from the Secretariat declaring that the movement was subsiding were nothing but 'Mac Donaldianlies'. The question asked here is: "why these fresh attempts to gag the press if the movement is fizzling out?" The February 13th issue of the paper included a piece of news quoted from London Times. No hope of constitution which will unite India.

London, Feb 12 "Visions of a Constitution which will unite All India are being increasingly shown to be a mirage"- declare the conservative 'Yorkshire Post' in a leading article entitled "Grave Future in India." The same paper also discussed about the most critical period in History of Indian Muslims. The fifteenth day of the movement was observed throughout the Punjab as 'Simla Martyr's Day' in honour of the first victim of Khizr Ministry's violence who succumbed to injuries received in a police lathi-charge," says the Lahore correspondent of 'Dawn.' The paper also reported – Charge Against 'Morning News' and two other League papers. Patna Commissioner sues for Defamation – Patna, Feb 12 – Three cases of defamation were filed on Thursday in the Court of the District Magistrate of Patna against the Editor, Printer and Publisher respectively of the ‘Dawn’ of Delhi, ‘Morning News’ Calcutta and the ‘Patna Times’ by Mr.Bakshi, after securing the necessary permissions from the Bihar Govt. According to the complaint filed by Mr.Bakshi the defamation arose out of the publication in the beginning of November 1946, the contents of a letter of one Imamuddin Ahmed in which he alleged that he asked for police trucks and medical aid for doing relief work on Oct 31, 1946 from Mr.Bakshi at the Patna Junction Railway platform and the latter replied this is not my job. Your Muslim League should have pre-arranged for this catastrophe as it is responsible for the Noakhali massacre. My wife is still weeping for her brother who has been killed at Noakhali and now you ask help from me." 

Feb 18th issue reported: Procession of 100,000 Fired Upon By the Police New Delhi, Feb-17 – The Lahore correspondent of 'Dawn' writes – "At 10.00 a.m. on Monday the police will handover the charge of the situation in the Punjab to the Army all over the province, it is reliably understood." 

Feb 21 issue reported: "We Must Kill the Muslim League."
Patna, Feb 18 – "The British are dead. Their power is fast decaying. It is no use whipping a dead horse. But we must fight the enemies within our own camp. We should not do any harm to the Muslims. But we must kill the Muslim League," said Acharya Kripalani, Congress President addressing a public meeting on the Bankipara Maidan yesterday. Mr. Kripalani also made it clear that their final struggle was to be launched very shortly and that they must make all possible preparations for it.62

Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan’s remarks were published in March 17 issue of Morning News: “Hindusthan On Inferno of Madness”-

Patna, March 16 – “Hindustan today seems an inferno of madness and my heart weeps to see our homes set on fire by ourselves,” Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan said addressing a gathering at the Sikh Gurudwara in Patna City this morning. He added: "I find today darkness reigning over Hindustan and my eyes vainly turn from one direction to another to see light."63

March 27 issue reported: Fresh outbreak of Riots in Calcutta.

Despite police precautions following last night’s incidents some further incidents occurred in the city today between the hours of 11.30 a.m. and 5 p.m. says a press note issued yesterday by the director of publicity to the Govt. of Bengal. The trouble originated in a locality in North Calcutta where several persons were arrested on the spot carrying weapons.64 March 30 issue reflected: Curfew in Calcutta To Continue Till April. Tension continues in the affected areas. The police fired 63 rounds and have arrested 51 persons on the spot.65 Next day’s paper gave a detailed description of the riots – Serious Riots Break Out in Bombay –

Communal disturbances suddenly broke out in 3 localities of Central Bombay late in the evening. Strong assaults are reported from various localities. Calcutta situation remains unchanged. Military called out in Howrah. Over 30 rounds fired, 200 arrested. Varsity Exams postponed, suburban trains curtailed.66

The Hitavada exclaimed –

Indian unity has gone with the wind. New British plan provides for vivisection. Principle of self-determination to be applied to Punjab and Bengal. Transfer of power soon to two Govts of Dominion Status.67
July 10 issue reported about the disturbances in Calcutta – Police fire 53 rounds – bombs and firearms used.68

August 14 issue reported about “ugly scenes opposite Gandhiji’s residence – Prayer meeting cancelled – Demonstrators shout ‘Go Back’ Slogans.”69

August 21 issue describes the clash between two dominions’ Boundary Forces. The ‘National Call’ evening daily publishes the following report: 100 armed forces of the Boundary Force belonging to Pakistan Dominion rushed in three police lorries to villages in Amritsar district in the Indian dominion and started firing indiscriminately at Hindu and Sikh villagers.70

August 30 issue reported – West Punjab situation worsening. Looting, killing, abductions, forcible conversions galore.71

The 2nd September issue of the paper reported: Gandhi goes on Fast to End Communal Riots. Calcutta’s Harmony proves a Dream Communal Violence takes Heavy Toll -- Noakhali Trip Postponed.72

India got independence amidst the clashes between Congress and Muslim League which later on turned out to be clashes between Hindus and Muslims. The newspapers remained witnesses and chroniclers of the incidents and the leaders in pursuit of power let the country split up into two parts. There were regrets about the division of the country but the people reconciled themselves in a ‘spirit of realism.” The English papers of the provincial press expressed approval of the plan though they said that “it was imperfect and bitter pill to swallow.”

Press was fully alive to the events and clashes taking place in the country. It was nationalist in its approach and badly expressed opinions against British Government’s policy in setting Hindus and Muslims against each other. The never ending difference of opinion between the Congress and the Muslim League which resulted ultimately in the partition of India was nothing else but the successful implementation of the crafty British policy which could not escape the observation of the Press and was depicted in various issues of the newspapers as their protests.
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