CHAPTER IV

SARDAR PATEL AND THE FREEDOM MOVEMENT -

SECOND PHASE
In this chapter an attempt is made to assess the vital role played by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in the second phase of the Freedom Movement in India along with some of the events leading to the ultimate transfer of power by the British. It may be said that with the announcement of the Wavell plan the British government made its first sincere attempt in granting freedom to Indian people. Therefore, it may rightly be said that it was the Wavell Plan which sowed the seeds for the transfer of power which bore fruits with the appointment of Mountbatten. Besides, other events like the General Elections to the Central and Provincial Legislatures, the Revolt of the Royal Navy, the Cabinet Mission, the Interim Government, the Constituent Assembly, the conflict between the Congress and the League, 'Direct Action' of the League, Communal Riots, etc., are critically examined in this chapter as it is imperative for a proper appreciation of Patel's significant role in India's freedom struggle.
Sardar Patel and other members of the Congress Working Committee were secretly removed to Ahmednagar Fort. It was an opportunity for Patel to know his colleagues at close quarters. It was here that Patel found Azad being too conscious of his erudition. In daily discussions, Patel was generally opposing Azad on many points. Patel and others wanted to know the reasons for his detention along with others, but they were told that they would soon be put on trial for their role in the disturbances of 1942. Meanwhile the Viceroy went to London. Patel and his colleagues were asked to "forget and forgive" and when they were released, they were told that mistakes had occurred on both sides.

Due to the detention of the Sardar for a long time in jail, his health broke down. His health was worse than even what it was in 1941, when he was released on the ground of ill-health. But this time, there were strict orders not to release him.
As to the second World War, Germany surrendered on May 7th 1945. Britain expected that war with Japan would take a year or more. But she felt that the war would come to an end if India cooperated actively with her. Since Britain was aware that India's cooperation would not be forthcoming unless the political deadlock was resolved, the Viceroy Lord Wavell, announced that he was anxious to ease the present political situation and to advance India towards her goal of full self-government. He announced the proposals for constitutional changes 'within the framework of the Government of India Act' 1935. He also announced that the future Constitution of India would have to be framed by Indians themselves. He envisaged a new and enlarged Executive Council which 'would represent the main communities and would include equal proportions of caste Hindus and Moslems'. The *modus operandi* consisted in transforming political parity into communal parity. Equal representation to the main communities was an attempt to equate the Hindus, a majority community, with the Muslims who were a minority. The Executive Council was to work under the 1935
constitution, but it would be an entirely Indian Council except for the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief.¹ He invited 21 leaders of India including the Chief-Ministers of the provinces, the leaders of the Congress and the Muslim League in the Central Assembly and the Council of state, a representative each of the Sikhs and the Scheduled castes, Gandhi and Jinnah 'as the recognised leaders of the two main political parties', for a conference at Simla on June 25th, 1945. To create a healthy atmosphere, he ordered the release of all political leaders. Gandhi and Patel went to Simla but did not attend the conference. The Congress was represented by its President Maulana Azad. Patel had felt and expressed to his close friends that the Conference would not be successful as Mr. Jinnah asserted that he alone had the right to represent all the 90 million Muslims in the country.

In the conference, Jinnah asserted that League would not join the new Council unless all the 5 Muslim

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¹ For the full text of Wavell's Proposals, see Great Britain House of Commons Debates 1944-45, Vol.411, Cols. 1831, and 1834-40.
members of the new Council were his own nominees and the Governor General's power of veto were reinforced by a special safeguard for the Muslims within the Councils, for e.g., a provision that no decision objected to by the Muslims should be taken except by a clear two-thirds majority or something of the kind. The Viceroy refused to oblige Jinnah. Jinnah, therefore did not join the Council and the Simla Conference ended in failure. The Viceroy attributed the failure of the Conference to the Muslim League. The Viceroy said, "The root cause of the failure was Jinnah's intransigence and obstinacy." This was a sure indication that the League had become so powerful that Jinnah had acquired the power of veto in political matters. The failure


3. Ibid., Document 603, p.1279.
of the conference was not a happy thing for Patel, for it indicated that during the three years, the Congress was outlawed and the Muslim League was strengthened. The method that was followed by the Viceroy was not suitable. He should have taken the leaders of the parties into confidence to solve the constitutional problem. It would have been better had he announced the list of members prepared by him. The Congress party would have accepted this with or without minor changes. He should not have allowed Jinnah to sabotage the whole plan. This amounted to the grant of veto power to the League which obstructed constitutional advancement of the country and the unnecessary postponement of India's freedom.

The claim of Jinnah that the Muslim League represented all Muslims 'at that time' was not valid. The Unionist Party was powerful in the Punjab, the Congress was strong in North-West Frontier Province and Sind was depending upon the support of the Congress for a strong and stable ministry. Bengal was under Governor's rule under section 93. In Punjab, the Unionist Party would have continued to dominate the politics, if the Viceroy
had taken a firm decision without yielding to Jinnah's demand and this would have avoided the partition of India. If a new Executive Council was formed with the League, an effective all-community political government would have been in power during the war-period and for sometime afterwards, which would have changed the very course of Indian political history.

The British could not find out an equitable solution to the problem, for they got themselves entangled with the communal problem and this misguided their judgement. The Viceroy was not very sure of the British Government's approval for a Government formed with the support of the Congress and other minor elements. The British government was reluctant to hand over power to the Congress at that particular moment because many of those Congressmen who had been released to participate in the conference were earlier imprisoned for their revolutionary acts. Therefore many in London considered it an act of political suicide.

The Simla Conference was the last opportunity to
bring together the forces of nationalism to preserve the unity and integrity of the country, but unfortunately due to communalism, it could not succeed. As V.P. Menon writes, it "had been conceived as a gathering of politically eminent persons who could sit together and collectively advise the Viceroy about the formation of a new central Government. Very soon, however, it became transformed into the familiar pattern of futile discussions between the Congress and the Muslim League and between party leaders and the Viceroy. The formal sessions of the conference served as the forum for party leaders to set out their points of view whilst other members functioned as the audience or the chorus."  

Patel asked his followers not to lose heart, nor shed tears over the fiasco. He did not wholly blame Lord Wavell though he said: 'while the Government was always ready to use the big stick against Congress, it was afraid to raise, even a little finger against the League'. Patel would have appreciated Wavell, had he

formed the Executive Council without the League members as other eminent and patriotic Muslim leaders were willing to work with the Congress and other parties. V.P. Menon who was one of the Secretaries to the Conference writes: "I personally was terribly disappointed for I had been pressing consistently on the Viceroy that Jinnah's claim that the Muslim League represented the will of all the Muslims of India was quite untenable; that we could not let down the Unionist Party which alone, contrary to the League's claims, could speak for the Punjab; that in the interests of the Punjab, we should not compromise with the League; but should go ahead with our plans. My argument was that if we conceded Jinnah's claims, we should logically be conceding his demand for Pakistan."  

The Viceroy admitted defeat in his first major political adventure. Failure of the Conference proved that from then onwards the unity of India and the country's political destiny was no longer in the hands of the British or Congress. It had passed in to the hands of Jinnah and the Muslim League.

5. Ibid., p.208.
For sometime, the political horizon was dim, but with the victory of the Labour Party in British elections, and the surrender of Japan, India's chances towards independence again brightened. The Labour Party which formed the government in July 1945 was sympathetic to Indian nationalism. Lord Wavell was called to London for consultations. Immediately, after his return, he issued a new policy statement. "His Majesty's Government are determined to do their utmost to promote in conjunction with the leaders of Indian opinion the early realisation of full self-government for India... It is the intention of his Majesty's Government to convene as soon as possible a Constitution making body and as a preliminary step they have authorised me to undertake, immediately after the election, discussions with the Legislative Assemblies in the Provinces, to ascertain whether the proposals contained in the 1942 Declaration are acceptable or whether some alternative or modified scheme is preferable... His Majesty's Government have further authorised me, as soon as the results of the Provincial elections are published, to take steps to bring into being an Executive Council which will have the support of the main Indian
The Congress leaders were happy with the appointment of Lord Patrick Lawrence as Secretary of state for India. But Sardar Patel, with his foresight, did not expect too much from the Labour Party for it had committed to continue the India Policy framed by the defeated Conservatives. Patel and other Congress leaders vehemently criticized the lukewarm attitude of the Labour Party and condemned men like Ramsay Macdonald and Sir Stafford Cripps. But the Congress Party knew that of all political parties in Britain, Labour Party was the most sympathetic to India's demand for freedom. Therefore, the leaders looked forward with great hope.

On 19th September, 1945, the Prime Minister Clement Attlee announced that Provincial autonomy would be restored in India after the elections. A Constituent Assembly would be set up as soon as possible to frame India's future Constitution and the Viceroy's Council would be reconstituted, in consultation with the principal Indian parties.

The Congress accepted in principle to participate in elections, though it had some reservations about the declaration. The nationalists were utterly disappointed by the conspicuous omission of any reference to 'independence'. They characterised it as 'vague and inadequate and unsatisfactory'.

But Wavell, in his personal message assured that his Government was determined to go ahead and solve the problem, of India whatever the difficulties. He also announced that the General Elections for the Central and Provincial Legislatures would be held soon.\footnote{For the text of Wavell's statement, see 'Governor General's announcement on Elections and Constitutional changes', Durga Das (Ed.), Sardar Patel's Correspondence 1945-50, (Ahmedabad, Navajivan publishing House), Vol.II, pp.LVIII-LX.}

Naturally, this announcement of Wavell was greeted by both the parties. Therefore, the Congress and the League started campaigning for the ensuing elections with much enthusiasm.
As in the elections of 1937, Patel was again entrusted with the responsibility for selecting the Congress Party candidates, collecting the funds, organising party's campaign and financing elections. Patel was the kingpin of the organisation as the Chairman of the Parliamentary Sub-Committee. Maulana Azad, as the Congress President was the Chairman of the Parliamentary Board. Nehru kept himself aloof from the organisational part of the election campaign. Patel issued a statement to the press in Poona on 28th August 1945 pressing the Government for release of political prisoners who were covered by the understanding on creating a proper atmosphere for fair elections.8

As soon as the responsibility of selecting the candidates, organising election campaign and financing elections was entrusted to Sardar Patel, he started working with much dexterity and confidence and showed his remarkable courage, tact, organising skill, sound judgement and integrity. All these qualities of Patel

8. Ibid., pp.LX-LXI, for the text of Sardar Patel's statement.
helped in collecting huge funds to run the election machinery. Funds poured into the treasury of the party due to the tact and honesty of Patel. He opened his election office in Bombay in October 1945 with Shantilal Shah as its Secretary.

As a great statesman and seasoned politician, he knew the issue that would attract the attention, not only of the Hindu voters but also of the foreign countries. He wrote to Nehru on 1st October 1945 to send him "a small draft of the election manifesto for the Central Assembly elections." He added; "I think it would do if you would base the manifesto on the main issue of independence or Quit India." Nehru promptly prepared the Draft Manifesto and sent it to Sardar Patel.

9. Ibid., Letter No.1, p.1. The full text of the Letter of Sardar Patel to Nehru is found in this.

10. Ibid., pp.7-10 for the text of the 'Draft Manifesto' for Central Legislative Assembly Elections.
In selecting the candidates, Sardar was most vigilant and pragmatic. This was evident in the selections for the Bombay Province. He asked S.K. Patil to send information regarding the number of voters of the various communities, so that he could select a candidate to whom the majority community would vote. This is a clear testimony to the fact that election was not free from communal feelings. As Sardar was fundamentally a realist and his main intention was to win the elections at that crucial time, he had to take into consideration the important factors that played a dominant role in commanding the votes and the communal factor was one of those.

11. Ibid., Letter No.15, p.17, for the full text of Sardar Patel's letter to S.K. Patil asking him to send the number of voters in different communities in Bombay Province.

12. Sardar's innumerable letters written to Maulana Azad, who was the President, of the Congress at the time of elections to the Central Legislative Assembly and Provincial Assemblies show how much care Vallabhbhai took in selecting the candidates. For the text of a few important letters, Letter No.22, pp.23-24; Letter No.27, pp.27-28; Letter No.31, pp.32-35; No.34 (Telegram), p. 36; Letter No.35, pp.36-39; Letter No.44, pp.42-43; Letter No.47, pp.44-45; Letter No.102, pp.102-103; Letter No.49, pp.45-46, letter 102-103 addressed to Rajendra Prasad.
12. (continued from back page)

addressed to Asaf Ali, Congress Leader of Punjab, letter No.101, pp.100-101; Letter to Kripalani No.103, p.103; Letter to Gangadhar Rao Deshpande, Belgaum, Letter No.110, pp.107-108; Letter to the Secretary, Maharashtra Provincial Congress Committee, Poona, Letter No.115, p.110; Letter No.116, pp.110-111; Letter Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, Letter No.127, p.118; Letter to the Secretary U.P. Provincial Congress Committee, Lucknow, Letter No.128, pp.118-119; Letter to V.R.Kallappa, Nagpur, Letter No.146, pp.130-51; Letter to Sri C.Rajagopalachari, Madras, Letter No.149, p.133; Letter to the President of Tamil Nadu Congress Committee Letter No.194, pp.174-75. The former President of India, V.V.Giri was selected to contest from 'Sarvasiddha' a constituency in Vizag district from where he was elected unopposed. For details, see the text of letter from V.V.Giri to Sardar, Letter No.269, p.231; from Sardar to V.V.Giri, Letter No.270, p.231 and also Letter from Sardar Patel to V.V.Giri, Letter No.272, p.232.
The correspondence between the Sardar and other members of the Congress Working Committee and the Parliamentary Working Committee focus attention on the manner in which other members of the Congress High Command worked with Sardar Patel. The members of the Congress Working Committee and the Parliamentary Working Committee extended all their cooperation and assistance to Sardar Vallabhbhai as they held him in high esteem and respected his pragmatic and firm ideas and decisions.

It is worth discussing here some instances regarding the selection of candidates in different provinces. They bring to light Sardar's broad pragmatism.

Shri P.B. Ugargol, Chairman, District Central Co-operative Bank Ltd., Belgaum wrote to Sardar to select a veteran cooperator who supported the unification of Karnataka.13 Sardar Patel being a practical man did not like to select candidates on trivial considerations and fight the elections on petty issues which would yield small advantages to the people. But to him,

elections were to be fought on bigger issues like Independence of India. Therefore, it was no use selecting a veteran cooperator. Regarding the unification of Karnataka, he said that the Congress had already accepted the principle of forming Provinces based on language.  

Sardar did encourage minority communities. In reply to a letter from F.M. Pinto, a nationalist Christian from Bombay who had requested Patel to allot four seats to local Christians, Patel wrote to R.R. Diwakar, Chairman, Karnataka Provincial Congress Parliamentary Board, that only one seat might be allotted to nationalist Christian as it was a minority community.


From Karnataka, some complaints were received by Sardar in connection with the selection of candidates. One complaint was from Sjt. Sambrani, Market Road, Dharwad. Sambrani was stated to have a long and faithful record as a Congressman and served the cause of Harijan uplift. R.R. Diwakar, informed Mr. Sambrani that his application would be considered after government nominations were announced. Sambrani met Sardar Patel and submitted a representation for his selection.\textsuperscript{17} Diwakar sent a list of the total number of votes polled in the last election in 1937 and the number of votes polled by each candidate. The vote polled by Mr. Sambrani was not encouraging and therefore, he was not successful in this election. But in order to console him, Sardar gave ticket to Mrs. Sambrani\textsuperscript{18} instead of Mr. Sambrani.

Regarding the selection of Sat. Mane of Nipani, Karnataka State, Gangadhara, B. Deshpande had written a recommendatory letter to Sardar.\textsuperscript{19}

\begin{itemize}
\item [17.] Ibid., Enclosure to letter No. 311 addressed to R.R. Diwakar by the Sardar, pp. 260-61, for the text of Sambrani's representation to the Sardar.
\item [18.] Ibid., Letter No. 315, p. 263, for details, see letter from the Sardar to S.Y. Sambrani.
\item [19.] Ibid., letter No. 316, p. 263, for the text of the letter from Gangadhara B. Deshpande to the Sardar and Letter No. 317, p. 264, for the text of the Sardar's reply to Gangadhara B. Deshpande.
\end{itemize}
Diwakar and Mallya were assaulted and manhandled in the Parliamentary Board meeting at Hubli, alleging that Diwakar was responsible for changing Congress candidates by Central Parliamentary Board. In this incident, it is mentioned that Shri Dundappa Sonshuddi, L.S. Patil, Shantinath Ingale, Basawanneppa Sanikopp, Itagi and Shri Yajaman Shantarudrappa of Bellary and about 20 others were involved. Sardar wrote to Dr. N.S. Hardikar "The incident is disgraceful and distressing and I hope the Committee will take proper action." To the President, Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee, Hubli, the Sardar advised, "I would advise you to issue notice against all those people asking them to explain their conduct and if the allegation made are proved to be true, they should be expelled from the Congress Organisation. Please inform me the action taken."
With regard to the selection of candidates, many letters, representations and recommendations from innumerable persons of different provinces like Punjab, Sind, Oriya, Andhra, Central Province (C.P.), Bengal, Bihar, and U.P. were received. 23

Sardar Patel never tolerated the wrong selection of candidates and wasting or misusing Congress funds over them. In Punjab, the Ahrar Party candidates sought the support of and the financial help from the Congress party. Sardar did not like to help that party, as he did not find them loyal to the party.

It is worth noting here that the correspondence between Sardar and the Congress President Azad throws a flood of light on their relationship. It shows that Sardar was a disciplinarian and was much interested in the party. He held President Azad in high esteem. To be more appropriate, Sardar showed due respect to the

chair and followed his instructions even though, he did not like all of them.

During the election campaign, there were disturbances in Calcutta from students. Sardar Patel never encouraged student indiscipline and their participation in politics. He wrote to Jawaharlal Nehru: "It is unfortunate that the local organisation of the Congress and also the local leadership have not been able to control the students. From all accounts, it appears that the students acted against the advice of the local leaders. This is not a good sign."\(^{24}\)

The Revolt of the Royal Indian Navy:

Although there is no evidence to connect the announcement made by Lord Pathic Lawrence in Parliament on February 19, 1946, that His Majesty's Government would soon send a Cabinet Mission to India to discuss with the representatives of India, and the revolt of a section of Indians serving in the Royal Indian Navy on the 18th February, a brief reference to the letter would not be

\(^{24}\) Ibid., Letter No.82, pp.79-80.
out of place here as Sardar Patel played a decisive part in it. It was another achievement to his credit.

The members of the Signal School in Bombay went on hunger strike in protest against 'untold hardships regarding pay and food and the most outrageous racial discrimination' and the derogatory references made to their national character by their Commander. The Indians could not tolerate ill-treatment as compared to English ratings. It was the political awakening among the Asians that made them to go on strike. As Vallabhbhai writes, "They cannot any longer brook inferior treatment to themselves as compared to their English counterpart. Nor, can they tolerate insult and humiliation at the hands of English Officers. All this has added to the racial bitterness. The upsurge of consciousness among the Asians may too have prompted to it - albeit indirectly."

25. G.M. Fandurkar and Manibehn Vallabhbhai Patel (Ed.), 'How long should we tolerate such acts?' Sardar's Letters - Mostly Unknown - 1, (Ahmedabad, Sardar Vallabhbhai Smarak Bhavan, 1977), Vol.IV. pp.160-61. Ibid., for other interesting discussions on the R.I.N.Revolt see letters written by Vallabhbhai to (1) Khurshedbehn, Nooraj dt.24-2-1946, p.158. (2) Bapu to Vallabhbhai dt.23rd February 1936 with footnotes, p.159, (3) Konda Venkatappaya, Guntur, dt. 1st March 1946, p.167, published under the titles (1)'There is enough Violence in air', (2)'These Distressing Events', (3)'There may be a formal Enquiry Only', respectively. Also see enclosures I, II & III, pp.162-165.
The R.I.N. strikers had organised the revolt carefully and maintained admirable discipline among themselves. They soon got completely out of hand, took possession of some of the ships, mounted the guns and prepared to open fire on the military guards. There was a sympathetic strike from the Indian Ratings in Calcutta, Karachi, and Madras. About a thousand men in the Royal Indian Air Force stationed in Bombay also went on sympathetic strike. There was a strong rumour of an Army revolt, but it was proved baseless. However, these strikes in the Defence Services of the country were a disturbing development. In Bombay, there were riots, hooligans, looting the shops and setting fire to houses. This was an explosive and ugly situation. Admiral Godfrey, the Flag Officer Commanding of the Navy sent reinforcement and asked the ratings to surrender. The people of Bombay were terrified last the strikers opened fire in desperation.

But thanks to the efforts of Sardar Patel who happened to be in Bombay at that time, that the crisis was averted. He met their leaders privately and told them frankly that he disliked the idea of the Defence
Personnel staging a strike. He said: "In any case, discipline in the Army cannot be tampered with. To do so would be to court disaster." He assured them that he would do his utmost to redress their grievances and to prevent any victimization and to end racial treatment. He asked them to bear in mind that 'the country was on the threshold of freedom and they would soon be the proud servants of a free and independent India, their motherland. They should not set a bad example by striking.' Finally, he told the leader of the ratings to 'Go back and surrender. If you have to suffer indignities, remember, it is only for a short time more. The dawn of freedom is breaking and the sun will rise in the next few months'. The leaders heeded to the advice of Patel and expressed full confidence in him and surrendered on 23rd February. V.P. Menon who had the opportunity of observing the incident from inside the Government, writes: 'It was largely due to the efforts of Vallabhbhai Patel that, on 23rd February, the ratings surrendered.'

28. op.cit., p.231.
Nevertheless, this revolt of the Naval Ratings had a considerable effect on the British Government. It conveyed to them in clear terms that India could not be held in bondage for long.

The Cabinet Mission:

In the beginning of 1946, the Secretary of State for India, Lord Pethick Lawrence in a broadcast message told the Congress and League leaders that there was no longer any need for denunciation or organised pressure to secure recognition of India's due position in the world, as the British Government and people earnestly desired to see India rise quickly to the full and free status of an equal partner in the British Commonwealth.

Immediately after this broadcast, an all-party delegation arrived in Delhi on January 5, 1946. Many had reservations as to the wisdom of meeting this delegation; but not the Sardar. He said that the Congress would meet the Parliamentary delegation. He was now assured of the sincerity of the British Government and said; 'The ship has reached the shore... The
freedom of India is near at hand. However, he was aware of the stumbling block in the way - Jinnah. At this stage, perhaps, Patel began to think of 'cutting the diseased limb' (by which he meant conceding Pakistan) to save the rest of the country from communal violence and chaos. It was clear to him that the Viceroy could never have a showdown with Jinnah and his League; therefore Pakistan had to be accepted. But he did not express his ideas for the time was not yet ripe.

The delegation toured India, but saw only anti-British feelings and reported to the Prime Minister that the political situation in the country had become grave and immediate action should be taken. The British Prime Minister accepted the advice of the Delegation and agreed to send a high-powered Cabinet Mission consisting of Lord Pethick Lawrence, Sir Stafford Cripps and Mr. A.V. Alexander to work out a rational and acceptable plan of action. "Prime Minister Attlee announced that his colleagues were going to India with the intention of using their utmost endeavour to help her to attain freedom as speedily and as fully as possible. He also said that he would heed to the minorities and they should
be able to live freely. However, he also made it clear that he would not allow a minority to place a veto on the advance of the majority.

The Congress was jubilant over Attlee's speech, but it evoked a strong and adverse reaction from Jinnah, who angrily protested that 90 million Muslims were 'not a minority but a nation' and if they were to be regarded as a minority, the Cabinet Mission should not expect any cooperation from the Muslim League in the Constitution-making machinery to be set up. Further, he reiterated his firm stand on Pakistan.

The Cabinet Mission arrived in New Delhi on 23rd March, 1946. The scheme of Lord Pethick Lawrence proposed to constitute "a Union Government dealing with Foreign Affairs, Defence and Communications... (and) two groups of Provinces, one of the predominantly Muslim Provinces dealing with all other subjects which the Provinces in the respective group desire to be dealt with in common. The Provincial Governments will deal with all other subjects and will have all the residuary sovereign rights. It is contemplated that
the Indian (Princely) States will take their appropriate place in this structure on terms to be negotiated with them."\textsuperscript{29}

The arrival of the mission convinced Indians that the British Government was keen on transferring power. Patel welcomed them as 'a further friendly gesture of the Labour Government'. Jinnah hoped to convince the Cabinet Mission that the only solution to the Indian problem was the division of the country into two independent states, Pakistan and Hindustan. Patel vehemently opposed the suggestion to divide India and the Congress, on the other hand, supported a strong Central Government. Patel in his letter to Shri Siddhiman Sarma, General Secretary of Assam, Provincial Congress Committee, Gauhati wrote: "The Congress stands for a strong Central Government and therefore, there is no question of division of India."\textsuperscript{30} The legal

\textsuperscript{29} Correspondence and Documents connected with the Conference between the Cabinet Mission and His Excellency the Viceroy and the Representatives of the Congress and the Muslim League, May 1946, C\textsuperscript{m}d 6829, 1948, p.3. The text of the 'Statement' by the Cabinet Mission 16th May, 1946 is to be found in 'India Statement by the Cabinet Mission and His Excellency the Viceroy', C\textsuperscript{m}d. 6821 (1946).

\textsuperscript{30} G.M. Handurkar and Manibehn Vallabh bhai Patel (Ed.), \textit{op.cit.}, Vol.4, p.192.
The Cabinet Mission consulted 472 leaders of different parties and Communities, including the leaders of the Congress and the Muslim League. To resolve the differences between the Congress and the League, a special tripartite conference was convened in Simla in which representatives of both the parties participated. The Congress was represented by Sardar Patel, Jawaharlal Nehru, Azad and Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, while the Muslim League was represented by Jinnah, Liaquat Ali, Nishtar and Mohammed Ismail. The League and the Congress submitted their respective viewpoints on the constitutional settlement. The Congress viewpoint presented to the Mission by its President Azad were: (i) A constitution-making body should be set up to frame the future Constitution of India; (ii) the future Constitution should be federal in form, with defence, communications and foreign affairs as federal subjects and all other subjects and residuary powers being vested in the federating units; (iii) there would be a list of optional subjects and it would be open to any province
to decide for itself whether or not to transfer some or all of the optional subjects to the federal government; (iv) after the Constitution was ready, any province could opt out of the federation or join the federation in respect of the three compulsory subjects alone, or of the compulsory subjects and all or some of the optional subjects; (v) during the intervening period an interim government should be formed consisting of fifteen members of which eleven should come from the eleven provinces while the remaining four would be allotted to the minorities.

Azad admitted that under his scheme, the Muslims might not get more than two or three seats in the Executive Council. But he agreed to make provision for more seats. He suggested that the constitution-making body might be elected by the Provincial Legislatures voting together as one body rather than elected on the widest possible franchise as originally proposed by the Congress.

The League's leader Mr. Jinnah was firm on his old demand for Pakistan. His chief argument was that the
Muslims had a different conception of life from the Hindus, and also a different culture based on Arabic and Persian origins. Pakistan was to consist of the 6 Muslim majority provinces of the Punjab, Sind, Bengal, the North-West Frontier, Baluchistan and Assam with power to deal with all subjects except foreign affairs, defence and communications; these three were to be dealt with by the constitution-making body of the two groups - Pakistan and 'Hindu-India' - sitting together in a joint session.

Jinnah had no answer to the objection raised by the Mission that the setting up of a separate sovereign state of Pakistan would not solve the minority problem. Millions of Muslims would be left in Hindustan and millions of Hindus in Pakistan. Hindus and Muslims were so mixed up in every city and village of India that it was absolutely impossible to separate them, one from the other. The Mission also saw no justification for including in the Sovereign State of Pakistan those districts of the Punjab and Bengal and Assam in which the population was predominantly non-Muslim. Every argument that could be used in favour of Pakistan could
equally be used in favour of the exclusion of non-Muslim areas from Pakistan. This argument was applicable to the Sikhs also.

On fundamental issues, the differences between the Congress and the League were deep-rooted and no amount of goodwill could bridge the gap between these irreconcilable views. The Congress with the ideal of an United India demanded the framing of the Union Constitution on a priority basis, but the League suggested that it could be framed only after the Group Constitutions were drafted. For Congress, the formation of groups was to be voluntary, but the League wanted that they should be compulsory. The Congress-League conflict was between 'Union first, then consider how far Pakistan could go by way of Provisional and group autonomy', and 'Pakistan first, then consider how far Union could go by way of federation or treaty for common subjects'. The Congress desired that the right to collect revenue by taxation should be given to the Union but the League refused. The negotiation ended in a deadlock.
The Mission then considered the question of a smaller Pakistan by excluding from it non-Muslim areas. Although it was not acceptable to the League, the Commission did not favour it on the reason that it involved a radical partition of the Provinces of Punjab and Bengal which was contrary to the wishes of a very large number of the inhabitants of these provinces. Bengal and the Punjab had their own common language and a long history and tradition. Moreover any division of the Punjab would necessarily divide the Sikhs, leaving substantial number of Sikhs on both sides of the boundary. "We have, therefore been forced to the conclusion that neither a larger nor a smaller sovereign state of Pakistan would provide an acceptable solution for the communal problem."³¹

The Commission further pointed out the serious consequences of the partition of India as follows: "Apart from the great force of the foregoing arguments, there are weighty administrative, economic and military considerations. The whole of the transportation and postal and

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telegraphs systems of India have been established on the basis of united India. To disintegrate them would gravely injure both parts of India. The Indian armed forces have been built up as a whole for the defence of India and to break them into two would inflict a deadly blow to the long traditions and high degree of efficiency of the Indian Army and would entail the gravest dangers. The Indian Navy and the Indian Air Force would become much less effective. The two sections of the suggested Pakistan contain the two most vulnerable frontiers in India and for a successful defence in depth the area of Pakistan would be insufficient. A further consideration of importance is the greater difficulty which the Indian States would find in associating themselves with a divided British India."

Finally, the Mission pointed out the geographical fact that the two halves of the proposed Pakistan state would be separated by some seven hundred miles and the communications between them both in war and peace would be dependent on the goodwill

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32. Ibid., pp.196-197. Enclosure 'Pertinent extracts from Cabinet Mission's Statement of 16th May 1946 disfavouring the partition of the country' to the letter of Vallabhbhai Patel to K.M. Munshi dt. 17th May 1946. 'This Authoritative Pronouncement, pp.195-196.
of Hindustan, as another vital argument against the League demand for the partition of the country.

The Cabinet Mission suggested its own plan based on the following fundamental principles: India was to have a Union Government dealing with foreign affairs, defence and communications; the provinces were to be formed into three groups, one comprising the predominantly Hindu provinces, and the others the predominantly Muslim provinces in the East and the North-West. Each group was to deal with such of the remaining subjects as the provinces in it might desire to be dealt with in common. The provincial governments were to deal with all the other subjects and were to have residuary sovereign rights.

33. For the complete text of the 'Statement of the Cabinet Mission and the Viceroy, 16th May 1946,' see, V.P. Menon, *op.cit.*, Appendix, IV, pp. 475-484.
For the text of 'Suggested points for Agreement between the Representatives of the Congress and Muslim League', given by the Cabinet Mission, see, V.P. Menon, *op.cit.*, pp. 259-260.
The full text of the Cabinet Mission Statement of 16th May 1946 is also found in *The Indian Annual Register, 1946*, Vol.I, pp.144-150.
Regarding the constitution-making machinery, the Mission decided: (a) "to allot to each province a total number of seats proportional to its population, roughly in the ratio of the one to a million, as the nearest substitute for representation by adult suffrage; (b) to divide the provincial allocation of seats between the main communities in each province in proportion to their population and (c) to provide that the representatives allotted to each community in a province shall be elected by the members of the community in its Legislative Assembly." For these purposes the Cabinet Mission recognised only three main categories - General, Muslim and Sikh. The total strength of the Constituent Assembly was fixed at 385. The British India was to have 292 members from the Governor's provinces and four from the Chief-Commissioner's Provinces. The Indian states were to have 93 representatives at the maximum. The representatives of British India were distributed among the various provinces and communities as follows:

34. Ibid., Appendix IV, pp. 480-481.
### Table of Representation

#### Section 'A'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>General</th>
<th>Muslim</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Madras</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Provinces</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Provinces</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orissa</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>20</strong></td>
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#### Section 'B'

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<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28</td>
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<tr>
<td>North-West Frontier Province</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sind</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td><strong>22</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td><strong>35</strong></td>
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#### Section 'C'

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<th>Province</th>
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<th>Muslim</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bengal</td>
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<td>33</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>34</strong></td>
<td><strong>36</strong></td>
<td><strong>70</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total for British India... 292
Maximum for Indian states.. 93

**TOTAL:** 385

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The representation of the states was not to exceed 93 on the same basis of calculation. The exact method of their selection was to be settled by consultation. At the preliminary stage, the states were to be represented by a Negotiating Committee.

The Cabinet Mission Plan of May 16th contemplated a treaty to be negotiated between the Constituent Assembly of the Union and the United Kingdom to provide for certain matters arising out of the transfer of power. It attached the greatest importance to the setting up at once of an Interim Government having the support of the major political parties. In this Interim Government all the portfolios, including that of the "war Member were to be held by 'Indian leaders having full confidence of the people'. The British Government would give the fullest measure of cooperation to the Government so formed in the accomplishment of its task of administration and in bringing about as rapid and smooth a transition as possible.

The Viceroy, Lord Wavell, in a broadcast from Delhi
on May 17th very lucidly pointed out the merits of the Cabinet Mission Scheme.

According to Wavell the scheme would offer a reasonable and workable basis to frame the future Indian Constitution. It would preserve the unity of India and remove the danger of the disruptions in the Indian Army on whose strength unity and efficiency security depended. It would preserve the right of the Muslims to develop their culture, education etc. For Sikhs it would preserve the unity of Punjab. The minority interests would also be protected. For Indians it would offer peace and prosperity.

Ultimately, the Cabinet Mission expressed: "we are ... unable to advise the British Government that the power which at present resides in British hands should be handed over to two entirely separate sovereign states." 36

Sardar Patel examined the plan carefully and called this cumbersome. He was convinced that it would set India on the slippery slope of fragmentation. He was unhappy over the right given to states and groups of states, the Western Zone comprising of Punjab, Sind, N.W.F.P. and Baluchistan and the Eastern Zone consisting of Assam and Bengal would probably exercise their option of seceding from the union. India then would have Muslim-majority states on both sides. The plan would lead to balkanisation of India. Sardar was also against compulsory grouping of provinces. He expressed this opinion in his letter of 15th June 1946 to Sri Thakurdas Bhargava. 37

Controversy over the Interim Government:

The Cabinet Mission proposed to set up an Interim Government having the support of the major political parties. This task was entrusted to the Viceroy. It

came to be described as distinguished from the setting up of the constitution-making machinery which was described as the *Long-term Plan*.

A good deal of correspondence took place between Lord Wavell and the Presidents of the Congress and the League on this topic.\(^38\) The Congress Working Committee on 24th May 1946 resolved\(^39\) that it should ask the Mission a declaration to the effect that the Interim Government would function as a Dominion Cabinet and be responsible to the Central Legislative Assembly, with the Governor-General functioning as the constitutional head. In reply, the Governor-General said that greatest possible freedom would be given in the day to day administration. The Muslim League wanted parity with the Congress in the new Government to which the Congress was irrevocably opposed. The Congress rejected the


\(^{39}\) The text of the 'Resolution of the Congress Working Committee', 24th May 1946 is to be found in *India Statement by the Cabinet Mission*, Cmd, 6835, (1945).
proposal that the Interim Government should have 12 members, viz: five representatives of the Congress, five of the League, and one Anglo-Indian or Indian-Christian and one Sikh made by the Viceroy on the suggestion of Mr. Jinnah.

The Congress suggested a Cabinet of 15 members consisting of 5 Congress Hindus, 4 League Muslims, 1 non-League Muslim, 1 non-Congress Hindu, 1 Sikh, 1 Congress Scheduled Class, 1 Indian Christian and 1 Congress woman. The Viceroy rejected this proposal and suggested a Cabinet consisting of 6 Congressmen (including one Scheduled Class representative), 5 League Muslims and 2 minorities. But the Congress rejected this proposal as it had excluded a Nationalist Muslim.

Negotiations reached an impasse which led to a deadlock on the composition of the Interim Government. It, therefore, became necessary for the Mission and the Viceroy to intervene and set forth their own 'award' for final acceptance or rejection. In the event of the two major parties or either of them were unwilling
to join the Coalition Government, then the Viceroy would proceed with the formation of Interim Government which might include representatives of those parties willing to accept the Statement of May 16, 1946.

The gravest defect of the 'award' was the exclusion of a Nationalist Muslim. What was worse was that the Viceroy privately assured Mr. Jinnah that the Congress would not be allowed to nominate a Muslim in the Interim Government and that the proportion of members community-wise would not be changed without the agreement of the two major parties. He also assured Mr. Jinnah that no major communal issue could be taken up in the Interim Government, if the majority of either of the parties were opposed to it. This assurance of the Viceroy amounted to a complete surrender to Mr. Jinnah. The commitments made to him seemed to have been made without sufficient consideration. His acts were considered to be the beginning of a new policy of favouring the Muslim League. When the contents of the secret communication to Jinnah leaked out, the Congress became greatly annoyed and insisted on the inclusion of a Nationalist Muslim. The Viceroy did not accept this because Mr. Jinnah strongly objected to it. When the
Congress rejected the Statement of June 16, Mr. Jinnah expected (in view of the definite indication contained in paragraph 8 of the Statement) that the League would be invited to form the Interim Government without the Congress as it had accepted the formula proposed by the Viceroy and the Mission. The Viceroy, however, wished to renew the efforts after a cooling-off period.

Mr. Jinnah considered all this to be a breach of faith on the part of the Mission and the Viceroy.

Meanwhile, a temporary care-taker Government of officials was to be set up to carry on the work of the Government and of elections to the Constituent Assembly. The Cabinet Mission left for England on June 29 and on that very day the names of the seven members of the care-taker Government were announced.

Formation of the Indian National Government or the Interim Government:

The Cabinet Mission left for England on June 29.
without solving the Indian problem. The Congress accepted the longer-range scheme of May 16, but rejected the short-range plan of June 16. It agreed to participate in the short-range plan of June 16, but declined to join the Interim Coalition Government as it felt that the terms as proposed by the Viceroy were unfair to the Hindus and other minorities. The Muslim League manoeuvred to form one without the Congress, but the Governor-General did not permit. Lord Wavell continued his efforts to form the Coalition Government with his own fresh proposals. The Muslim League refused to join the Coalition Government for two reasons: firstly, the proposals constituted a departure from the principle of Congress-League Party. Secondly, the Mission gave the Congress the right to include a non-League Nationalist Muslim in the list of its nominees. Since the Congress accepted the proposals and agreed to join the Interim Government, the Viceroy invited Janardan Narayen to make proposals for the formation of the Interim Government. At this moment, Sardar wrote to C.R. Reddy, former Director of Public Instruction, Mysore, and Vice-Chancellor of Andhra University and organiser of the United Nationalist Party: "The Congress President has..."
been invited to form the Interim Government and for the first time, the British Government have (shown) the Muslim League its proper place. They have thus given proof of their bonafides and it is now for us to make or mar the future of India... If the British Government and the Congress play the game well, I have no doubt that we shall see India free sooner than many people imagine and neither the League nor any other group of people or interests, however strong or powerful, will be able to (have) it." Nehru proposed to include some of the members with respective portfolios in provisional Government.

Finally, the Interim Government was constituted with Nehru, Patel, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Mr. Asaf Ali, Mr. C. Rajagopalachari, Mr. Fazlul Huq, Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose, Dr. John Mathai, Sardar Baldev Singh, Sir Shafat Ahmad Khan, Mr. Jagjivan Ram, Syed Ali Zaheer and Mr. C. H. Bhabha. Two more Muslims were to be appointed. Thus, an Indian National Government was formed for the first time in the annals of India. Sardar wrote to

41. Ibid., Vol. II, Letter No. 264, pp. 252-53 and also Letter No. 268, pp. 255-56, for the details of the members proposed by Nehru with portfolios.
Dr. Sh. Mohammed Alam, MLA, Lahore; "The Interim Government has been announced... This is an event of unusual importance in the history of our country and we can feel proud to have seen the day when an Indian National Government has been formed for the first time." 42

The League stayed out of the Interim Government. The difficulties involved in the formation of the Interim Government should be clearly understood before any judgement on its composition is to be passed. They were implicit in the fact that the Congress and the League were deeply divided on their objectives and standpoints. The League claimed parity with the Congress in the composition of the Viceroy's Executive Council even though the Muslims constituted about 25% of the total population of British India. The Congress could not possibly accept this unjust demand. Further the League would not tolerate the idea of a Nationalist Muslim being appointed as a member of the Interim Government. It was on this issue that the Simla Conference broke down and the Congress rejected the Cabinet.

Mission Short-term Plan of June 16. There could be no via-media between the conflicting demands of the League and the Congress in this matter. At long last, the Viceroy and the British Government recognised the just stand of the Congress and therefore put forth the proposals of July 22 as the most suitable and equitable basis for the formation of the Interim Government.

League's 'Direct Action':

The decision of the Viceroy to form the Interim Government in the absence of League infuriated Mr. Jinnah who purposefully started a policy on non-cooperation with the Mission. At the meeting of the All India Muslim League in Bombay on 27th July, Jinnah accused the Cabinet Mission of bad faith and of having 'played into the hands of the Congress'. He condemned the Congress for its 'pettifogging' and begging attitude. The League felt that its interests would not be safe in the Constituent Assembly. It called upon all the members to renounce any titles which they had received from the Government.
He withdrew the League's support to the long and short-term plans of the Mission and decided to resort to 'direct action', to achieve his aim of Pakistan. In a mood of frustration, he announced, "To day we bid good bye to constitutional method'. He told his followers, 'To-day, we have forged a pistol and are in a position to use it'. When asked at a press conference, if that meant violence, he declined to 'discuss ethics'. The deathknell of the Mission had been sounded and the disastrous chain of events was set in motion which was to engulf the sub-continent in a virtual civil-war for the next one and half year.

The direct action was directed not against the British Government but against Hindus whom he considered the root cause for the trouble and the main obstacle for the achievement of Pakistan. It set the Hindus and Muslims into two warring camps and was directly responsible for the bloodshed, brutality, bestiality, barbarities and gangsterism on the Hindus of Hoakhali (East Bengal) and Calcutta, the Muslims of Bihar and later on in the Punjab, both before and after partition.
Sardar wrote to Dr. Sh. Mohamad Alam, MLA, Lahore:

"Unfortunately the Muslim Leadership of to-day has chosen to take a different course. We all feel ashamed of what has happened in Calcutta. No Indian can help feeling sorry about it. It has brought discredit to the country and has disgraced the League all over."

Regarding the most cruel and inhuman activities to be carried out under 'direct action', a circular was alleged to have been distributed in large numbers in Punjab and a copy of which was sent to Sardar by Dr. Gopichand Bhargava, Lahore. Though Sardar did not take this circular as authentic, it may be noted here that most of the proposed cruel, ghastly and inhuman activities came true. Besides this, this circular had a country-wide circulation. Therefore, it provided the basis for anybody to suspect the League's hand in the circular.

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43. Ibid., Letter No.102, p.83. Nehru in the course of his report to the Constituent Assembly said "There appears to be a competition in murder and brutality" (A summary of his speech on 14th November 1946 is to be found in 'The Indian Annual Register', Vol.11, 1946, pp.212-214) (Text of Nehru’s speech is to be found in Indian Legislative Assembly Debates, Vol.8, (1946) pp.1053-55).

44. Ibid., Letter No.108, pp.86-88, for the most cruel and inhuman activities to be carried out by Muslim League as a programme under 'direct action'.
League Joins the Interim Government:

Lord Wavell renewed his efforts to induce the League to rescind its resolution and join the Interim Government and the Constituent Assembly. Mr. Jinnah, being a frigid, disdainful, a 'vain, cold-hearted, clever, impressive demagogue' did not lose this opportunity and therefore immediately agreed to join the Executive Council with a view to using not the policy of co-operation but of sabotaging the Congress from within and to work 'as the sentinel of exclusively Muslim interests'.

Mr. Jinnah, explaining his position to a group of foreign correspondents said that he did not regard the new set up in the Central Government as either a Cabinet or a Coalition Government, it was simply the Executive Council of the Governor-General formed under the Government of India Act of 1919. It can be concluded that he wanted neither responsible government nor Dominion Status in action; what he seemed to desire was to free Lord Wavell from Indian control. To that extent, his role was highly reactionary.
Under such circumstances, there could be joint responsibility of the Executive Council. It could not function as a Cabinet. After the entry of Muslim League, the Government of India could not work collectively as an integrated whole as the Congress was trying to make it.

Due to the entry of five Muslim League nominees, the Interim Government was reconstituted. The following were the new members appointed:

1. Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan.
2. Mr. I. I. Chundrigar.
3. Mr. Abdur Rab Wajidfar.
5. Mr. Jogendra Nath Mandal.

The following old members continued to serve,

1. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.
2. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.
3. Dr. Rajendra Prasad.
5. Mr. C. Rajagopalachari.
7. Mr. Jagjivan Ram.
8. Dr. John Mathai.

The new Interim Government of October 26, 1946 consisted of 14 persons, six of whom were Congressmen.
five Muslim League's and three belonged to other minorities. It was nicely balanced as between communities also as regards distribution of important portfolios.

The League and the Constituent Assembly:

When the League rejected the Cabinet Mission Plan of May 16, Lord Wavell spared no efforts to bring it into the Interim Government. Nehru asked for specific assurances from the League that it would cooperate in the work of Government and the Constituent Assembly. In reply, the Viceroy wrote to Nehru that Mr.Jinnah had assured him to join the Interim Government and the Constituent Assembly with the intention of cooperating. But when invitations were issued with the Viceroy's signature of 25th November, 1946 to assemble at New Delhi on 9th December, 1946 to transact business outlined in the Cabinet Mission statement, Mr.Jinnah declined to attend it as he 'smelt treachery' in the affair and felt convinced that the Congress did not mean to work the Cabinet Mission Plan in the true spirit. Mr.Jinnah smelt this in Jawaharlal Nehru's statement made at a Press Conference.
Tactless Press Statement of Nehru:

Though the Congress had accepted the plan, Nehru was happy over some of the recommendations as was clear in his 'explosive and fiery' and tactless statement made in a Press Conference on 10th July 1946. In reply to the question put by a press representative whether the approval by the Congress of the Cabinet Mission Plan meant their acceptance of it in toto, Nehru, soon after assuming office as the President of Congress stated that Congress would enter the Constituent Assembly, 'completely unfettered by agreements and free to meet all situations as they arise'. To a further question whether this meant that the Cabinet Mission Plan could be modified, he replied emphatically that Congress had agreed only to participate in the Constituent Assembly and regarded itself free to change or modify the Plan as it thought best. He made it clear that the Congress would accept no interference on the part of the British Government in its working. Regarding grouping of Provinces as contemplated by Mission Plan, he said that there would be a possibility of a strong Central Government as visualised by the Mission Plan.45

According to Maulana Azad, the Press Conference held by Nehru had grave consequences for the future of the country. Azad writes, "Now happened one of those unfortunate events which change the course of history. On 10th July (1946) Jawaharal held a Press Conference in Bombay in which he made a statement which in normal circumstances might have passed almost unnoticed, but in the existing atmosphere of suspicion and hatred, set in train a most unfortunate series of consequences.\(^\text{46}\) Nehru's tactless press statement came as a bombshell to Mr. Jinnah who had accepted the Cabinet Mission plan as there was no alternative. The League had accepted the Plan because it was assured that the Congress also had accepted it and would be the basis of the future Constitution of India. According to Mr. Jinnah, the only two meritorious features of the Plan which made it worthwhile to sacrifice the idea of a sovereign Pakistan were the grouping of provinces and a weak

centre with residuary powers vested in the Provinces or Provincial groups. When Nehru, not just Nehru, the Congress President Nehru declared that the Congress could change the scheme through its majority in the Constituent Assembly, Mr. Jinnah apprehended that the Muslims would be at the mercy of the Hindu majority.

The Working Committee tried to undo the mischief caused by the highly impolitic and unrealistic statement of Nehru by adopting a resolution reiterating the faith of the Congress in the Mission Plan and deprecating President's remark. The Secretary of State and Sir Stafford Cripps assured Jinnah that the Government would stick to the Cabinet Mission Plan as it stood. But Mr. Jinnah remained unmoved. He held that the Press Statement of Nehru 'represented the real mind of the Congress'. Therefore, he urged the League to pass a resolution to observe 16th August, 1946 as the 'Direct Action Day' when the Muslims of India would demonstrate their determination to divide India, to 'get rid of British slavery' and to form a separate Muslim nation, Pakistan. The rioting and the great communal holocaust that took place at Calcutta on 16th August 1946 and the
following days in which about 6000 persons were 'beated, battered, burned, stabbed or shot', and another 20,000 raped, abducted and maimed was nothing less than a civil war. The malady spread from Calcutta to Noakhali and other places in East Bengal where the Muslims perpetrated undesirable barbarities on the small Hindu minority. The Hindus of Bihar retaliated by killing and loosing Muslims and destroying their property in the same brutal and wanton manner. Bihar Hindus did not spare even children and women. In Bengal, the Governor did nothing to prevent the mischief if he had to avoid it. Deeply touched by these ghastly massacres and impertinence on the part of British Government, Sardar Patel wrote seriously to Sir Stafford Cripps.


48. For the details of Sardar Patel's letter to Sir Stafford Cripps, see G.M. Navdulkar, op.cit., Letter No.1 and 2, pp.214-217, and also Sardar Patel's telegram, no.3 p.218, and also 'Sardar Patel's note to Lord Pwemell on the situation in Bengal'.

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The London Conference:

In view of these peculiar and imminent circumstances and to avoid a Civil War in the country, the British Prime Minister Mr. Attlee invited the Viceroy, Pandit Nehru, Sardar Patel, Mr. Jinnah, Sardar Baldev Singh, and Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan to attend a Conference in London to secure the implementation of the plan in full.

Sardar Patel, being sure of the futility of the talks refused to accompany Nehru. Therefore, only Nehru attended the Conference. Sardar advised Nehru to decline the invitation to go to London. But Nehru did not heed to his advice.

The London Conference highlighted on the vexed question of the procedure for groups—whether the decisions of the groups should be taken group-wise or province-wise. The stand of the League was supported by the British Government. Therefore, "the decisions of the sections should, in the absence of an agreement to the contrary, be taken by a single majority vote of the representatives in the sections." 49

49. For the text of the 6th December Declaration, see The Times, (London), 7th December, 1946.
to decide both as to grouping and as to their own Constitutions". The Congress was forced to accept this stand as it would create interest in League to enter the Constituent Assembly.

The amazing part of the 6th December 1946 statement was the concluding paragraph which indicated a thorough reversal of the British policy. "There has never been any prospect of success for the Constituent Assembly except upon the basis of the agreed procedure. Should a Constitution come to be framed by the Constituent Assembly in which a large section of the Indian population has not been represented. His Majesty's Government could not, of course, contemplate - as the Congress have stated they would not contemplate - forcing such a Constitution upon any unwilling parts of the country." 50

The London Conference failed to resolve the differences between the Congress and the League as expected earlier by Sardar Patel. Patel opened his heart to

50. Ibid.
Sir Stafford Cripps in a letter dated 16th December 1946. Stating that Nehru returned from London sadly disappointed, Sardar Patel wrote "you called the League delegation there to London at a time when there was some realisation that violence is a game at which both parties can play and mild Hindu also, when driven to desperation, can retaliate as brutally as a frantic Muslim. Just when the time for settlement was reached Jinnah got the invitation and he was able to convince the Muslims once again that he has been able to get more concessions by creating trouble and violence... you must have seen what Jinnah has said in London immediately after the debate. He swears by Pakistan and everything conceded to him is to be used as a lever to work to that end. You wish that we should agree to help him in his mad dream... Every action of the Viceroy (Lord Wavell) since the great Calcutta killing has been in the direction of encouraging the Muslim League and putting pressure on us towards appeasement... you know when Gandhi was strongly against settlement I threw my weight in favour of it. You have created a very unfortunate situation for me. All of us here feel that there has been
This letter of Sardar is a testimony to his frank, straightforward and bold opinion. It throws a flood of light on the bad diplomacy of the British in encouraging Jinnah in his venture to divide India and creating enmity between Hindus and Muslims. Therefore, Sardar charged this London Conference 'as a betrayal' of the Viceroy.

The London Conference yielded rich dividends to Mr. Jinnah. It secured the endorsement of the British Government to the League interpretation of the Clause concerning the grouping of provinces which was a vital part of the Mission Plan. It gave assurance to the League that a Constitution framed by a Constituent Assembly in which it was not represented would not be forced upon the Muslim Community. The Congress leaders drew a contrast between this statement and previous declaration of Mr. Attlee in which he had declared that no minority would be allowed to hold up the political progress of the majority. It provided a handle to the League to justify the continued presence of its nominees.

51. Turga Das (Ed.), *op.cit.*, Vol. III, pp. LII-LIII.
in the Interim Government, notwithstanding its refusal to accept the statement of May 16. It urged that the Congress also could not be said to have accepted the said scheme until it accepted the principle of grouping as interpreted by the Mission. It gave the green signal for the Muslim League to persist on its goal of Pakistan.

Session of the Constituent Assembly:

Meanwhile, the Constituent Assembly was convened on 9th December 1946. The League made its abortive attempt to get the session postponed. In his inaugural address, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the permanent President, laid stress on the claim of the Constituent Assembly to be 'a self-governing and self-determining independent body in whose proceedings no outside authority can interfere and whose decision, no one outside can upset, alter, or modify'. Nehru moved the Objectives Resolution which was the handiwork of Nehru and contained the essence of the socio-economic and political ideas. All the great leaders of the country, Sardar Patel, Pandit Nehru, Moulana Azad, Rajagopalachari, Acharya Kripalani,
Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, who had guided and moulded the activities of the Congress during the preceding half a century and were managing its affairs, adorned its benches and contributed to the task of the Constitution-making when the Constituent Assembly came into being.

The Muslim League criticised the Resolution as a 'dishonest trick and jugglery of words'. It also held the view that the adoption of the Resolution was not within the competence of the Constituent Assembly. The League accepted nothing short of Pakistan. 52

In the Constituent Assembly, on 20th January 1947 Rajendra Prasad said that in the House of Commons and the House of Lords in December 1946, "Mr. Churchill observed that the Assembly (Constituent Assembly) ... represented only one major community in India." 53

Rajendra Prasad continued to say that Viscount Simon was more specific and referred to the Assembly as "a body of Hindus". He went on further to ask "whether

52. The text of the Muslim League Resolution on 31st Jan., 1947 is to be found in *The Indian Annual Register, Vol.I, 1947*, pp.147-51.

this meeting of caste-Hindus at Delhi can be regarded by the Government as the Constituent Assembly they meant at all."

As a reply to this criticism of Churchill and Simon, President Rajendra Prasad said

"It is for this reason that I have considered it necessary...

to state the facts. Out of a total of 296 members who
were to take part in the preliminary session, 210 members
attended. These 210 members consisted of 155 Hindus
out of a total of 160, 30 Scheduled Caste representatives
out of a total of 33, all the 5 Sikhs, 6 Indian Christians
out of a total of 7, all the 5 representatives of
Backward Tribes, all 3 Anglo-Indians, all 3 Parsis and
4 Muslims out of 80. The significant absence of course
is that of the representatives of Muslim League, an absence which we all deeply regret. But it is clear from the figures I have quoted that with the exception of representatives of the Muslim League, every community in India, whatever the party affiliation of the person representing that community was represented in the Assembly, and therefore, to describe the Assembly as representing "only one major community in India" or as a "body of Hindu" or as a "meeting of Caste-Hindus" is a complete travesty of facts."