

Second Simla Conference 1946: An Appraisal

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The First Simla Conference held in 1945¹ failed primarily because the British Government and the Congress refused to recognize the Muslim League as the sole representative body of Indian Muslims. Similarly, the League rejected the claim of the Congress to represent all communities especially the Muslims of India. The only way left for Wavell was to hold elections to testify their claims. If on one hand, the Simla Conference brought about instability in the country, the unexpected developments outside India, like the landslide victory of the Labour Party in England² and the sudden end of the war with Japan³ accentuated the considerably, viceroy's problems in India. The Labour Party had announced, during its election campaign to give India a complete independence. But the viceroy, Lord Wavell (1943-47) had reservations regarding its understanding of the Indian problem and thought that the Labour had weird ideas.⁴ On 10 July 1945, Clement Attlee replaced Churchill as Prime Minister of England.

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1 Muhammad Iqbal Chawla, "Quaid-i-Azam and the Simla Conference", in Dr. Riaz Ahmad (ed.), *Scholars on Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah* (Islamabad: National Institute of Pakistan Studies, Quaid-i-Azam University, 1999), pp.410-22.

2 General election gave Labour a huge majority, and under Clement Attlee, Labour formed a first majority government on 10 July 1945, see John Cook and John Stevenson, *Modern British History* (Essex: Longman, 1988), p.31.

3 Bernard Fergusson, *Wavell Portrait of a Soldier* (London: Collins Clear-Type Press, 1961, p.41; Chris Cook and John Stevenson, *Modern European History, 1763-1985* (London: Longmans, 1989), pp.162-67.

4 *Wavell Viceroy's Journal* (London: OUP, 1974), p.159.

He issued a number of statements regarding India in which complete freedom for India was unequivocally promised.⁵

The Governor's Conference, held on 1-2 August, 1945, strongly felt to hold general elections, for "Jinnah had staked everything on a great gamble that could only be determined by results in the general elections."⁶ The Muslim League however had a different assessment to make about the outcome of the elections. Khawaja Nazimuddin, a prominent leader of the Muslim League met with R.G. Casey, the Governor of Bengal, and said that he believed the elections throughout India would result in the Congress wiping out the Mahasabha and the Muslim League wiping out the non-League Muslims.⁷

The general elections were eventually held in 1945-46. The Muslim voters gave an overwhelming mandate in favour of Pakistan while the Hindus, on the whole, voted for the Congress which stood for a united India. Strangely, this glaring victory of the League, was neither accepted by the Congress nor by the British as a complete and wholehearted mandate on the part of Indian Muslims in favour of Pakistan. As a result, they with this mindset, tried to sideline the Pakistan issue and, therefore, committed blunders for which they had to pay consequently a high price. Some historians also tend to belittle the significance of this election by saying that "the electorate was heavily restricted about 10 per cent of the population; (and that even) this was interpreted as popular mandate."⁸ If this was the case with Muslims what was the position of the Hindus and Sikhs? Did they have universal franchise for elections? In fact, how could they speak for their nations? The yardstick to gauge the popularity of a Party or the demand of a people should obviously be the same, why then in the case of Pakistan, they brought out another yardstick?

The League's victory in the 1946 elections particularly in the provinces of Bengal and Punjab ensured that its political base for

5 See, *Transfer of Power*.

6 Personal Diary R.G. Casey, May 1945 to 1946, Casey Collection (herein Casey Collection), IOR/EUR/048/4, 13 July, 1945, p.96.

7 *Ibid.*, 23 July 1945, pp.112-13.

8 Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, *From Plassey to Partition* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman Private Limited, Reprint 2004), p.448.

Pakistan was secure. In the pre-election period the League had tried hard, particularly in Bengal, to strengthen its rural base by calling upon the religious sentiments of the people. This combined with the call for end of 'landlordism' and 'land for the people' gave the League a breakthrough in these Muslim majority areas.⁹ Jinnah had been emerging as the sole spokesman for the Muslims during the period of World II, and the Simla Conference further strengthened his position. The electoral victory in the Muslim majority provinces made his conviction for Pakistan even stronger.

The British Government, in the meantime, made their efforts to send a fact finding mission. The Labour Government had decided on 23 November 1945, to send a Parliamentary Delegation consisting of ten members. The delegation which included suitable members of both houses of the Parliament,¹⁰ reached India on 5 January 1946 to study the Indian situation and to assure the Indian leaders that the British Parliament sincerely wanted India to attain full self-government.¹¹

Wavell observed that "their knowledge of India is not very comprehensive but they are keen and interested. I knew four of them before — Sorensen, Low, Nicholson, and Munster."¹² The Secretary of State for India in his letter to the presidents of Congress and League stated that the purpose of the Delegation was to make personal contacts; they were not empowered to act on behalf of the British Government, but their impressions would be passed on by them to Ministers and others in Parliament.¹³ The delegation met various political leaders including Gandhi, Azad, Nehru and Jinnah. In his talks with the delegation, Jinnah

9 Bhashyam Kasturi, *Walking Alone: Gandhi and India's Partition* (New Delhi: Vision Books Ltd., 2001), p.25.

10 The following were the members of the delegation: R. Richards (leader of the Delegation), R. Sorensen, Mrs. Muriel H. Nichol, A.G Bottomley, Major Woodrow Wyatt, Godfrey Nicholson, A.R. Low, R. Hopkins Morris, MP, Lab, The Earl of Munster, The Lord Chorley of Kendal.

11 Lawrence to Attlee, 10 December 1945, *India: The Transfer of Power, 1942-7*, Vol.VI, 278, p.632.

12 Wavell to Secretary of State, Wavell letters to the Secretary of State, Wavell Collection, (hereafter, *Wavell Collection*) MSS, EUR D, 977/2.

13 G.A. Allana, *Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah: The Story of a Nation* (Lahore: Ferozsons Ltd., 1988), p.386.

explained the League's stand with regard to the constitutional developments. The League, he asserted, would take no part in an interim government without a prior declaration accepting the principle of Pakistan¹⁴ and the parity with other parties. He further remarked that there should be two constitution-making bodies which would decide the question of the frontier between Hindustan and Pakistan through negotiations; relations with two countries would be diplomatic; any attempt to impose a unified constitution or majority decision by a single constitution-making body would be resisted.¹⁵

The Parliamentary delegation got the finding that there was no "right" solution; there existed only a middle course or the lesser of the two evils. In their eyes, neither Congress nor Muslim League could agree on anything. Though the Congress fully realized that India could not continue to have 100 million of permanently dissatisfied people (i.e.— Muslims), and that they would have to work out a *modus vivendi* with them, yet they held that the Congress represented 75 per cent of All-India and so, transfer power into their hands and let them settle with the minorities. On the other hand, the Muslim League maintained that this was not just a difference of opinion between the two political parties. Both parties represented the two nations. Thus, the Parliamentary delegation frankly admitted that the creation of Pakistan could hardly be prevented. Therefore they suggested that necessary action should be taken to circumvent it.¹⁶

14 Casey writing on 24 July, 1945 remarks: "I saw Sir Henry Richardson, "he is sure that Jinnah is mainly motivated by fear of the Hindus and that he means Pakistan and nothing else." *Casey Collection*, pp.116-17.

15 Casey gives his and Major Wyatt's views "Major W. Wyatt arrived today. I then reminded them that the predicament in which HMG through Viceroy was placed was a most unenviable one. I said I could not accept the "two nations" theory. The real difference was economic, caused by the backwardness and the lack of education of the Muslims. The Muslim resented the fact the little shop in a village and the shops and industries and businesses generally in the towns and cities were predominantly owned and run by Hindus, even in Muslim majority areas. "Pakistan" to the great extent majority of Muslims meant that they would own the stores and business — and not the Hindus." 27th January 1946, *Casey Collection*, pp.320-23.

16 Enclosure to No. 429, *Transfer of Power*, Vol.VI, pp.970-75.

In his address to the newly elected Central Legislature on 28 January 1946, the Viceroy revealed the Government's will to establish a new Executive Council composed of political leaders, and to bring about a constitution-making body or convention as soon as possible.¹⁷ Commenting on Wavell's speech, Jinnah said that there was no reason now to talk of any arrangements to set up interim government; the war had come to an end and they had to tackle the main issues which would result in a permanent settlement of India's constitutional problems. He said that it was far better to expedite means of arriving at a permanent settlement in which the question of Pakistan must form a major issue. He also made it clear that the League would never agree to one constitution-making body which would be perfectly futile, as the preliminary and paramount issue in such an assembly would be the division of India on which there could be no agreement and no decision could be forced by the Hindu majority on the Muslims.

There had been few important persons, right from the foundation of the Congress in 1885 till the last days of the British Raj, in the British Government like Lord Cripps who took special interest in Indian politics. The most important goal before these people had been the appeasement of the Congress. When the British were planning to leave India, they wished to transfer power to those who could safeguard their interests in the long run. The Labour Government had close ties with the Congress which they thought was inclined towards socialism but different than that of the USSR. Cripps, through his letter of 12 January 1946 to Nehru, wished to understand Indian situation through the Congress point of view. Nehru in his reply gave a critical appreciation of the political situation in India. He opined that British policy, in order to maintain British rule, was inevitably one of balance and counterpoise, one of preventing and strengthening the reactionary elements in the country. In pursuance of this policy, he remarked separate electorates were introduced. The seed of the poisonous tree had now grown to "poison all our national life and to prevent progress of national movement. The British Government and its agents [here] intensified their support of separatist tendencies. In

17 B.N. Pandey, (ed.), *The Indian Nationalist Movement 1885-1947, Select Documents* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1979).

particular they encouraged the growth of the Muslim League.”¹⁸ He alleged that there had been scandalous corruption wherever Muslim League Ministries functioned. He believed that Pakistan as such was hardly understood or appreciated by most members of the League; it was a sentimental slogan which they got used to. He said that “in the result there is likely to be Congress majority in 8 provinces that is in all except Sind, Punjab and Bengal. Jinnah appeared to be wholly intransigent and threatened bloodshed and rioting if anything was done without his consent.”¹⁹ It would be impossible to hang up everything simply because Jinnah did not agree. Nehru wanted to touch a sympathy chord among the Labour with regard to its socialist programme by suggesting that the Muslim League membership was far too reactionary (they were mostly landlords) and opposed to social change to dare indulge in any form of direct action. He said, “They are incapable of it, having spent their lives in soft jobs. It was very likely that there might be riots, especially in the U.P. probably encouraged by local officials and the police who wanted to discredit Congress.”²⁰ There would be no real strength behind them, he said, and even if there was some strength it was impossible to hold everything for fear of them. He warned that the other consequences were of graver import.

Moreover, he said that the British could not force Pakistan on India, in the form demanded by Jinnah, for certainly it would lead to a civil war.²¹ Jinnah’s demand included Assam, Delhi, the whole of the Punjab and Bengal, the NWFP, Sind and Baluchistan. Nehru thought by no stretch of imagination could Assam, Delhi and large parts of Punjab and Bengal, which had a non-Muslim majority, be included in Pakistan. Jinnah had rejected the division of Punjab and Bengal. Nehru could only visualize a Pakistan consisting of only part of Punjab and part of Bengal, no separation at all.²² He suggested the establishment of a federation of autonomous units with minimum list of compulsory common subjects such as

18 Nehru to Cripps, 27 January 1946, *Transfer of Power*, Vol.VII, 338, pp.851-59.

19 *Ibid.*

20 *Ibid.*

21 *Ibid.*

22 *Ibid.*

defence, foreign affairs, communications, currency, etc. This would give maximum freedom and self-reliance to the units and a sense of functioning too. Further, there could be any number of safeguards for minorities and finally a supreme court would be empowered to protect the minority rights. He proposed that “finally if a definite area expresses its will clearly in favour of separatism and this is feasible, no compulsion will be exercised to force it to remain in the Federation or Union. But it cannot take other areas away with it against their will, and there must be a clear decision by plebiscite of all the adult voters of that area.”²³

He demanded from the British Government “to declare in clear terms possible that they accepted the independence of India and constitution of free India will be determined by India’s elected representatives without any interference from the British Government or any other external authority.”²⁴ In addition to that, the British Government should declare that it considered any division of India harmful to India’s interest, as well as to the interest of any party or religious group. He warned if this emotional and psychological aspect of the Indian problem that was so vitally important today, was ignored there would be severe conflict between the British and Indians (Hindus).²⁵

The viceroy did not miss any moment in tabulating election results but also kept himself busy in preparing plans to take a fresh initiative to resolve the political deadlock. He communicated his views in various telegrams and letters to the Secretary of State for India, which covered the entire field of constitutional reforms. The Labour Party gave these proposals a careful consideration, and after modifications suggested to send a Cabinet Mission to resolve the constitutional deadlock of India through negotiations. On 28 January, 1946 Wavell announced that he would establish a new Executive Council composed of political leaders and also set up a Constitution-making Body as soon as possible.²⁶ His Majesty’s Government agreed with these proposals, but held that instead of

23 *Ibid.*

24 *Ibid.*

25 *Ibid.*

26 His Excellency The Viceroy’s Speech to the Central Legislative Assembly on 28th January 1946. *Transfer of Power*, Annexure 111, No.44, pp.1013-015.

the Viceroy discussing separately with the leaders about each stage of progress, these members of the British Cabinet should proceed to India, to conduct, in association with the Viceroy, negotiations with the leaders.²⁷ Thus, Lord Pethic Lawrence and the Prime Minister Attlee announced on 19 February, 1946, in Parliament that a Cabinet Mission consisting of three Cabinet Members would soon be going to India in order to facilitate self government in conjunction with the Viceroy and in consultation with recognized party leaders.²⁸ Nehru's letter to Cripps had worked, for Attlee spoke almost in the same line, approach and language. In a debate in the House of Commons on 15 March on the Mission's visit to India,²⁹ Attlee said that "I am aware of that when I speak of India I speak of a country containing congeries of races, religions and languages, and I know well the difficulties thereby created but these difficulties can be overcome by Indians... We are mindful of rights of minorities and the minorities should be able to live free from fear. On the other hand we cannot allow a minority to place veto on the advance of majority."³⁰

The Hindus and the Congress were extremely happy with the announcements and ideas and approach of the Labour Party. This pleased Gandhi³¹ as well as Nehru who became very optimistic about it. But, the Cabinet Delegation with its aims and objectives became controversial in the eyes of Muslim League, from the very beginning. Jinnah took notice of the ideas expressed by Attlee in the debate. He regretted that Attlee, though in a guarded and qualified manner, "had fallen into a trap of false propaganda that

27 Lawrence to Attlee, dated 29 January 1946, *Attlee Papers* (now on Attlee papers) Ms Attlee dep Bodleian Library, Oxford University.

28 Quite surprisingly *Hindustan Times*, in its report from its London office leaked the report that the British Government would send a Mission to India, even the Government had been thinking in those lines. Therefore, in his memorandum to the India and Burma Committee, Secretary of State suggested "to make the proposed announcement rather earlier than we had contemplated" *Transfer of Power*, Vol.VI, 385, p.859.

29 I.H. Qureshi, *The Struggle for Pakistan* (Karachi: University of Karachi, reprint 1987), p.245.

30 Justice Syed Shameem Hussain Kadri, *Creation of Pakistan* (Rawalpindi: Army Book Club, 1983), pp.327-28.

31 Sh. Mohammad Ashraf, *Cabinet Mission and After* (Lahore: Mohammad Ashraf, n.d.), p.2.

had been carried on for some time... there was no question of holding up the advance of constitutional progress or of obstructing the independence of India. I want to reiterate that the Muslims of India are not a minority, but a nation, and self-determination is their birthright.”³²

The Cabinet Delegation which consisted of Lord Pethic-Lawrence, a gentle, charming elder statesman; Alexander, very much on the ball and keen to learn; and Cripps who seemed to “know all the answers” and was much influenced by his old friend, Jawaharlal Nehru, left England for India. The Cabinet Delegation whom Wavell called “three Magi”³³ reached India on 24 March 1946 and stayed there till the end of June. During their stay in India, the Cabinet Delegation, in association with Wavell, worked judiciously to discuss with the Indian leaders and her elected representatives how best to speed up the transfer of power. When they came to India, the Congress, including some Muslims in their ranks, claimed to speak for All India. The Congress insisted that the sovereignty of the people must be exercised through their elected representatives in a strong central government, with powers to overrule the provinces. On the other side, Jinnah claimed to speak for all Muslims. The Muslim League wanted the division of India and establishment of Pakistan on the basis of Lahore Resolution. Both sides hoped that the British should take the initiative and decide. However, the British would not as they held to the principle that India should draft her own constitution.³⁴

From the outset, the Delegation declared that India would get its independence³⁵ and this issue of freedom and self-determination had been settled in principle.³⁶ They wanted to work out in

32 *Ibid.*

33 Ronald Lewin, *The Chief: Field Marshal Lord Wavell, Commander-in-Chief and Viceroy, 1939-1947* (London: Hutchinson, 1980), p.237.

34 Jack Bazalgette, *The Captains and the Kings Depart* (Oxford: The Amate Press Ltd., 1984), IOR, M5S EUR/F226/2, part 2, Chapter 10, End of the empire.

35 Though in its Press statement he had said that their aim was to grant India an independence, but yet Azad in his letter to Mission asked them to declare explicitly, which they did, that the principle of independence was the main goal of the Mission.

36 Statement made by Lord Pethic-Lawrence and Lord Cripps on their arrival at Karachi on 23 March 1946, *Transfer of Power*, Vol.VII, 1, pp.1-2.

conjunction with Wavell, the means by which Indians could themselves decide the form of their new constitution with the minimum of disturbance and maximum of speed.³⁷ It was also visualized that at the same time, the Viceroy, in consultation with the Mission, would open negotiations with the two main political parties, the Congress and League, for the formation of a new "Interim Government" which would hold office while the constitution was being framed and would include no British except the viceroy himself.³⁸ Since due to the proclaimed objectives, both parties were diametrically opposite in their approach, the Mission's task of bringing them to an agreement was difficult, indeed seemingly, impossible. The Muslim League wanted India to be divided into Pakistan and Hindustan while the Congress wanted a united India. But the Mission started their work with a positive frame of mind, for as its members remarked, "we have not come with any set views. We are here to investigate and inquire."³⁹

The Congress had won an overwhelming success in the General constituencies, the Hindu Mahasabha and other opposing candidates preferring in most cases to withdraw rather than risk defeat. The election results also proved that the Muslim League dominated the Muslims as completely as the Congress dominated the Hindus. According to K.M. Munshi "these results of the elections should have been an eye opener to some of the Hindu leaders who would not believe that Jinnah had acquired complete hold over the Muslim masses."⁴⁰ But the election results were played down as it became very obvious particularly when negotiations between League and Congress, before and after the Cabinet Mission Plan, for a long and short-term settlement between the Hindus and the Muslims were taking place. The Congress deliberately ignored all these realities and tried to bypass Jinnah and the League, and thus paid a high price in the form of the division of India, for their complacency.

37 Statement made by Lord Pethic-Lawrence at a Press Conference at Delhi on 25 March 1946. *Transfer of Power*, Vol.VII 2, pp.2-5.

38 Record of meeting of Cabinet Delegation and Wavell on 28 March 1946, *ibid.*, pp.24-29.

39 Statement by Lord Pethic-Lawrence and Cripps on their arrival in India 23 March 1946, L/I/i/760: 641, *ibid.*, pp.1-2.

40 K.M. Munshi, *Pilgrimage to Freedom*, Vol.1, pp.970-5.

On behalf of the Congress, Azad, as the President of the Congress, met the Mission on 3 April. He presented to them a plan for Indian Federation. For federal subjects, he remarked, there would be two lists. One comprising essential subjects would be compulsory; the other consisting of further subjects would be optional. He believed that this would make the fullest possible allowance for predominantly Muslim Provinces to accept only the compulsory subjects and not to federate for the optional subjects. He contemplated compulsory subjects might be defence, foreign affairs, communication and such others which might be absolutely necessary for the administration of India as a whole.⁴¹ He gave a new theory that if there were a division, Muslims domiciled in Hindustan and Hindus living in Pakistan would be “aliens”, which Cripps said was juridically impossible. Azad made the claim that the Centre should be chosen by provincial nomination.⁴² Wavell remarked that it would obviously give Congress a majority of nine to two over the League.⁴³ Probably the most important gesture on Azad’s part was that he admitted the right of a Province or Area to stand out altogether under certain conditions.⁴⁴

Gandhi, who was interviewed in his personal capacity, began with the demand for the abolition of the salt tax and release of prisoners whom he declared “the flower of the Indian nation.”⁴⁵ He alleged that he had no intention of knowing the origins and growth of the Muslim nationalism, and that this division was the British creation.⁴⁶ To Wavell’s mind, the meeting with Gandhi⁴⁷ was rather a deplorable affair, for Gandhi not only remained non-

41 Record of Meeting between Cabinet Delegation, Wavell and Azad, 3 April, 1946, *Transfer of Power*, Vol.VII, 46, pp.110-16.

42 *Transfer of Power*, Vol.VI.

43 Penderal Moon (ed.), *Wavell Viceroy’s Journal*, pp.236-37.

44 Azad believed that it would be left for the constitution-making body to frame a constitution of this general nature, and if afterwards some particular areas, which must be well defined, should wish to stand out of the constitution so framed, they will not be compelled to come in. Record of Meeting between Cabinet Delegation, Wavell and Azad, 3 April, 1946, *Wavell Collections*, IOR, MSS/EUR/D997/18.

45 Record of Meeting between Cabinet Delegation, Wavell and Gandhi, *ibid*.

46 *Ibid*.

47 *Wavell Viceroy’s Journal*, p.236.

serious but also refused to pin down details, as usual.⁴⁸ The discussion between Jinnah and the Delegation on 4 April centred on the Pakistan Issue and relating problems.⁴⁹ In reply to a query from the Delegation as to why was Pakistan the best solution for all parties including Muslims and Hindus, Jinnah explained that the unity of India was British creation and an artificial one.⁵⁰ Its unity would vanish the day the foreign power, which had welded it into one unit, due to its political and administrative interests, would depart from India. He said “India is really many and is held by the British as one.”⁵¹ Their talks with Jinnah were crucial in which the Delegation gave him a tough time. Secretary of State was unmoved by Jinnah’s rationalization of two-nation theory. He and Lord Cripps usually remained hostile towards Jinnah.⁵² Jinnah remained firm and cogently advocated the cause of Pakistan.⁵³

48 He claimed, on one hand to be sincere friend of the Muslims, nevertheless, advocated the case for the Hindus and Sikhs; on the other, refused to acknowledge himself as the chief of the Congress party, rather even four *anna* member of that party but always tried not only to present and defend its case but got ready to guide and direct it. As a result, he failed to make any positive contribution in bringing unity between both parties and nations. No wonder Gandhi like Nehru, not afraid of any risks of civil war in case the League was by-passed suggested to the Delegation that “after having exhausting all friendly resources, if you feel a stage must arrive when you find you must say that there shall only be a constitution-making Body, you must take the risks of that. There must be a considerable interim period, what is to happen in that period and what is to happen to your promise?” Record of Meeting between Cabinet Delegation, Wavell and Gandhi, 3 April, 1946, *Wavell Collections*, IOR, MSS/EUR/D997/18; *Transfer of Power*, Vol.VII, 47, pp.116-18.

49 Dewan Ram Parkash, *Cabinet Mission in India* (Lahore: Tagore Memorial Publications, 1946), p.43.

50 Jinnah said that throughout her history from the days of Chandra Gupta Mauria there had never been any Government of India in the sense of a single Government. The Mughal Empire had had the largest control but even in those days the Marathas and Rajputs were not under Muslim rule. When the British came they gradually established their rule in a large part of India but, even then India was only one-third united. The big states and sovereign states are constitutionally and legally already Pakistan. Record of Meeting between Cabinet Delegation, Wavell and Jinnah, 4 April, 1946, *Wavell Collections*, IOR, MSS/EUR/D997/18, *Transfer of Power*, Vol.VII, 47, pp.118-24.

51 *Ibid.*

52 In his letter, Lawrence wrote to Jinnah that ‘Dear Jinnah, some of your public utterances which have been recently reinforced from our private sources nearby me form point – I gather that you feel that not only did I commit a breach of faith towards you but in addition I was guilty of personal discourtesy to you when we met at the Viceroy’s House on June 25. The issues at table in India are so fraught with good or ill for millions of people that it would be trogon if any hasty words

Meanwhile, other communities like Sikhs and Low-caste Hindus⁵⁴ became active in claiming their rights. The Sikhs showed their concern about the demand of the Muslim League for division of India into Pakistan and Hindustan. They demanded 'Sikhistan/Khalistan' or the separate Sikh State.⁵⁵ According to Baldev Singh, the Khalistan could be formulated in the Punjab excluding the Multan and Rawalpindi divisions, with an approximate boundary along the Chenab River. But he strongly favoured a united India and considered the division of India unwise.⁵⁶ The Delegation seemed to value their grievances and thought the Sikhs could not be ignored.⁵⁷ At that moment, Jinnah would not like to see the division of the Punjab and Bengal; therefore he did not take Sikh problem as a serious one. He issued statements about Sikhs telling them of their greater significance in a smaller Pakistan than they would have in a larger India. He could have done more for Muslim-Sikh rapprochement but on the one side, he was preoccupied with much graver issues and, on other, history of Muslim-Sikh antagonism left him little choice. It may also be suggested that the Sikh demand for an autonomous Sikhistan could not be satisfied without transfer of power of population, as Sikhs were not in majority in any compact area in the Punjab.⁵⁸ However, Jinnah soon realized that things were not

were to mark these more difficult of solution." Lawrence to Jinnah, dated 15 August 1946 Lawrence Collections, IOR, MSS/EUR.

53 Stanley Wolpert, *Jinnah of Pakistan*, p.260.

54 Dr. Ambedkar presented the case of Scheduled-Castes Hindus and denounced the Pakistan demand, and also showed dissatisfaction over the growing influence of the High-Castes Hindus and suggested measures to ensure the interests of his sect or class. Record of Meeting between Cabinet Delegation, Wavell and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, 5 April, 1946, *Transfer of Power*, Vol.VII, 56, pp.144-46.

55 Record of Meeting between Cabinet Delegation, Wavell and Representatives of the Sikh Community, 5 April, 1946, *Wavell Collections*.

56 Record of Meeting between Cabinet Delegation, Wavell and Sardar Baldev Singh, 5 April, 1946, *Wavell Collections*.

57 In their strong arguments against the division of Pakistan, the Delegation and Wavell always put forward case of the Sikhs and suggested the division of the Punjab along with the division of India. Though they never promised that Sikhs would be getting the Khalistan, they exploited Sikhs fears of Muslim domination against Jinnah's demand for Pakistan.

58 Saleem M.M. Qureshi, *The Politics of Jinnah* (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 1988), p.115.

moving to the right direction for the Muslim League. So, in order to consolidate his case for Pakistan and multiply the pressure on the Delegation, Jinnah called the Convention of those Muslim League members who had been elected in the Central and Provincial Assemblies.⁵⁹ The Convention held in Delhi on 9-11 April, was attended by four hundred delegates. Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy moved a resolution, demanding one unified Pakistan, instead of two zones. It also demanded that there should be two Constitution-making bodies, one for Pakistan and other for Hindustan. A number of exciting speeches were delivered, showing strong commitment to achieve their goal. Jinnah warned the British Government that no power on earth could deprive the Muslims getting their self-determination. He said that "Britain can only delay Pakistan, but no power on earth can deny Pakistan."⁶⁰

Wavell thought at the end of the first round of talks with Jinnah that "We have got through the first round of the Cabinet Delegation Mission; it has all been Jinnah [but he] has not given up one acre of his Pakistan."⁶¹

The Delegation persuaded the Congress to accept some compromise formula but they remained unyielding as Congress held that they would not agree to any form of Government, which would make Pakistan a future possibility.⁶² In their letter to Attlee, dated 18 April, the Delegation wrote him that they through interviews with Indian leaders had failed to bring a compromise on Pakistan. They held that there was "no prospect of settlement of Pakistan issue on basis of agreement and failing some unexpected development we shall have to propound the basis for settlement ourselves."⁶³

On failing to convince the hostile parties to come to some acceptable formula, the Cabinet Mission after four weeks'

59 Jamil-ud-din, *The Final Phase of the Struggle for Pakistan* (Lahore: Publisher United, 1966), pp.34-6.

60 *Ibid.*, p.38.

61 Wavell to Lascelles, 13 April 1946, *Wavell Collections*.

62 Cabinet Delegation to Attlee, 8 April 1946, *Attlee Papers*.

63 *Ibid.*

demanding efforts proceeded to Kashmir for a short rest.⁶⁴ They had tried in the hot weather of Delhi and needed a cool climate to deliberate over the situation. They drafted on a three-tier plan, envisaging autonomous provinces and groups of provinces topped by a strictly federal structure. This plan was reported to have been broached by the Congress and the Muslim League by Cripps. Mission's negotiations with Jinnah and other Indian leaders did not result in some agreement between the Congress⁶⁵ and the League⁶⁶ with regard to the constitutional framework for India. But schism between the two parties proved too wide to be bridged.

Eventually, on 27 April the Delegation drafted a letter to be sent to Jinnah and Azad, asking them to delegate four representatives each to meet Cabinet Mission at Simla for negotiations on a 3-tier proposal as a basis.⁶⁷ Ultimately on 27 April the Secretary of State wrote letters to presidents of the Congress and the League inviting them to send four representatives each to meet the Mission with a view to discussing the possibility of an agreement upon a scheme based on two fundamental principles, i.e., (a) a union government dealing with foreign affairs, defence and communications, (b) two groups of provinces, the one predominantly Hindu and the other predominantly Muslim, dealing with other subjects which provinces in the respective groups desired to take in common, the provincial governments dealing with all subjects and possessing all the residuary sovereign rights.⁶⁸ Though both the parties accepted the invitation to meet at Simla, both upheld their point of view and position inflexible.⁶⁹ From the

64 Record of Meeting of Cabinet Delegation and Wavell, 24 April, 1946, *Wavell Collections; Transfer of Power*, Vol.VII, 134, pp.323-24.

65 *Record of Meeting of Cabinet Delegation and Wavell*, 25 April, 1946, *Wavell Collections*.

66 *Ibid.*

67 *Record of Meeting of Cabinet Delegation and Wavell*, 27 April, 1946, *Wavell Collections; Transfer of Power*, Vol.VII, 147, pp.349-50.

68 Cabinet Delegation to Attlee, telegram dated 27 April 1946, *Attlee Papers*.

69 Maulana Azad, in his letter to the Cabinet Mission, dated 27 April 1946, expressed the point of view of the Congress on the proposed scheme. He said that "...the Congress has never accepted the division of India into predominately Hindu and predominantly Muslim Provinces. It however recognizes that there may be provinces which are willing to delegate to the Central Government subjects in the optional list, while others may agree to delegate only compulsory subjects like

outset they were interpreting the basis for negotiations quite differently and were poles apart.⁷⁰

The Second Simla Conference took place on 5 April and lasted till 12 April 1946. The Muslim League nominated Jinnah, Liaquat Ali Khan, Nawab Muhammad Ismail and Sardar Abdur Rab Nishtar as its representatives⁷¹ for the Conference while from the Congress Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan participated in the Conference.⁷² No wonder, Gandhi also reached Simla without invitation. He was there to control the thoughts and actions of the Congress as he had done in the First Simla Conference of 1945 to guide the Congress and the British.⁷³

There were seven rounds of talks that took place among the three parties, British, Congress and the League, upon the basis of three-tier plan prepared by the Cabinet delegation and the Viceroy.⁷⁴ On 5 May, while welcoming the delegates at Simla from Congress and the League, Secretary of State made it clear that this meeting was “to make a final attempt to reach agreement between the parties.”⁷⁵ He explained that basis of discussion was the form of solution given in his letter of invitation. The delegation

Foreign Affairs, Defence and Communications. The Congress has agreed that residuary powers are to vest in the Provinces, but the use of the term “sovereign” in that connection would tend to cause misunderstanding. I would therefore, request that the word may be taken out.”

70 Dewan Ram Parkash, *Cabinet Mission in India*, p.55; Wavell in his letter to the King of England wrote, “we have got through the first round of the Cabinet Delegation mission; it has all been [but Jinnah] has not given up one acre of his Pakistan. We have listened to an almost inter-mixable repetition of these two cases, stated by various degrees of skill and plausibility, hardly ever with the least originality or the least recognition of the British passion for compromise.” Wavell to Lascelles, 13 April 1946, *Wavell Collections*.

71 Jinnah to Lawrence, 29 April 1946, *Lawrence Collections*, IOR, MSS/EUR.

72 Maulana Azad to Lawrence, 28 April 1946, *Lawrence Collections*.

73 Gandhi once again remained an enigma. He should have come up as a fair and straightforward politician to deal with the political situation. He would have been useful in bringing some acceptable formula, had he openly conceded that he belonged to one group, party and Nation. But he preferred to work behind the scene for one party for one agenda and for one nation that was Hindu nation.

74 *Transfer of Power*, Vol.VII, pp.425-26.

75 Record of First Meeting of Second Simla Conference held on 5 May 1946, *Wavell Collections*, IOR, MSS/EUR/ D997/18; *Transfer of Power*, Vol.VII, 194, pp.425-28.

considered that there must be some form of Central Union for India to deal with certain compulsory subjects, but they thought some system of grouping of provinces provided the best hope of solving the communal problem. They thought that like the demand for Pakistan, the Congress demand for one Federal Centre with compulsory and optional subjects was also impracticable. Therefore, they suggested that every effort should be made to make some acceptable solution through showing a spirit of sacrifice.⁷⁶

Discussion started on the Union subjects. Wavell explained that it was proposed that these should be Defence, Foreign Affairs and Communications as a minimum.⁷⁷ Nehru said that the Congress wanted that certain ancillary subjects must necessarily go with these and that the Centre must be self-sufficient in its own right in regard to finance and has control over ancillary subjects essential for this purpose.⁷⁸ From Jinnah's argument it was noticed that this would mean that there would be discussion of Defence and Foreign Affairs in the Group Legislature and that, in effect, the Union subjects would not be delegated to the Centre at all.⁷⁹

Cripps explained that there could be a legislative body formed by indirect election from the units either by Groups or by Provinces or, alternatively, there could be direct election. The Groups could be represented equally in the Legislature and although theoretically there could be a deadlock through a fifty-fifty vote, however this was thought unlikely after full discussion.⁸⁰

In the second meeting on the same day, discussion started on the relationship between the Groups and Union in the absence of a Union Legislature. Jinnah said that a joint session of the Group Legislatures would take place in order to provide a forum. No decision would be taken at such a joint session. He said that he was against a Union Legislature and all matters would be settled by the executive. Pethic-Lawrence suggested that since Jinnah was

76 *Ibid.*

77 *Ibid.*

78 *Ibid.*

79 *Ibid.*

80 *Ibid.*

against the Legislature, the composition of the Union Executive might be considered in the first place.⁸¹ Cripps said that the Executive might be composed by taking a representative from each of the Provinces or by election from the Groups, or of course if there was a Legislature, by election of the Legislature. In any case, the members of the Executive would be responsible to those who nominated them.

On the other hand, Jinnah agreed with Lawrence that if there was to be a Legislature, the most reasonable agreement would be for the members to be elected in equal numbers by the Group Legislatures. But this was subject to the picture being completed by fitting in the States, for it would upset the balance in the central Legislature.⁸²

Wavell suggested that there should be a Union Court to deal with disputes between the units, and might also deal with the fundamental rights as included in the Constitution.⁸³ Nehru agreed but Jinnah did not. He said that on the assumption that there would be no communal trouble once the Union was set up; there was no need of a Court. But Cripps argued that since the Constitution would be a written one, there must be a tribunal to decide, for instance, dispute about the jurisdiction of the Centre and the Groups.

On the start of third meeting, the Secretary of State explained that one must face the fact that the main reason for the Groups was to get over the communal difficulty, and to make it possible to call together a Constitution-making Body. Nehru repeated the old 'theory of conspiracy' that the main problem was the independence of India from the British, and the communal problem would be solved after their departure. He said that though most points in the Constitution-making Body must be settled by the normal procedure, certain fundamental matters would not be decided by a majority. The Congress would not only exercise no compulsion on units to stay in the All-India Federation, rather they would see that the minorities were duly shielded in the Constitution. The

81 Record of the Second Meeting of Second 5 Conference held on 6 May 1946, *Wavell Collections*.

82 *Ibid.*

83 *Ibid.*

Congress did not wish to encourage any tendencies towards splitting up India. The Union of India, even if the list of subjects was short, must be strong and organic. Provinces would not be prevented from co-operating among themselves over such subjects as education and health; but they would not need a Group Executive. He invited the Muslim League to come into the Constitution-making Body on the assurance that there would be no compulsion.⁸⁴ Jinnah replied that the League could not accept the invitation but if the Congress and the Muslim League agreed that the Muslim Provinces should group together and have their own Legislature and Executive, he had no doubt that there would be no difficulty at all. He said that if the Congress would accept the Groups, the Muslim League would accept the Union subject to agreement about its machinery. Jinnah told the Congress leaders that he had no desire to ask the British to stay in India, rather he would be glad to sit together with Nehru for whom he had a great regard.⁸⁵ Nehru pointed out that Jinnah had accepted no feature of the Union. The Union without a Legislature would be futile and entirely unacceptable. He said that his position came nearer to Jinnah, but it was difficult for him to accept grouping because the decision must be made by the Provinces.⁸⁶

The agenda for the fourth meeting held on 6 May was to discuss the Constitution-making Body.⁸⁷ Nehru thought that as regards the functions, the Constitution-making Body would decide the Union constitution, and also would settle the main lines of Provincial constitutions. The Congress was against the two Chambers and desired joint electorate. Nehru said that their original proposal for a Constitution-making Body based on adult suffrage would cause a delay and therefore existing machinery must in some way be the basis. The States must be represented by elected representatives of the people. He said that the Congress was against the grouping but believed in the provincial autonomy.

84 Record of third Meeting of Second Simla Conference held on 6 May 1946, *Wavell Collections*.

85 *Ibid.*

86 *Ibid.*

87 Record of fourth Meeting of Second Simla Conference held on 6 May 1946 at 4 pm, *Wavell Collections*.

To him, some provinces might wish to group themselves and others might not. Others might be divided almost equally on the subject. But Sikhs and Hindus in the Punjab who were a large minority might be averse to the Punjab being grouped with the North-Western Provinces. He said if any Province declined to come into the Constitution-making Body, the Constitution-making Body should proceed without it. Nehru made it clear that they were ready to pay a high price for freedom.⁸⁸

Wavell argued that if the Provinces stayed out of the Union of India, it would be dismemberment of India which he hated the most, and he said that the Cabinet Mission was trying to avoid it. He said that the psychologies of the situation were bitter realities and he advised to adopt the path of prudence to make some compromise in advance of the Constitution-making Body which would avoid the risk of a disastrous conflict.⁸⁹

Disagreeing with Wavell's proposition, Jinnah maintained that it was more than mere psychology or vague feeling of sentiment that was in question. To his mind, only way to prevent complete division was that Provinces should group themselves together by choice. They should set up constitution-making machinery which *de facto* would be sovereign though not *de jure*. These group constitution-making bodies would deal with all matters, including the Provincial constitutions and only the three subjects would be given to the Union. These bodies might be formed by election by the Provincial Legislatures of a proportion of their number. Those eligible for election would not be confined to the members of the Provincial Legislatures. The States should set up their own constitution-making machinery in their ways on proportionate basis. The two group Constitution-making Bodies and the States representatives would meet together to decide the constitution of the Union in respect of three subjects. All other matters would be decided in the Group Constitution-making Body, both matters of common concern to the Group and other matters not of common concern. There could at the outset be a joint meeting of three bodies to decide the agenda and procedure but thereafter they

88 *Ibid.*

89 *Ibid.*

would meet separately except for the determination of the Union Constitution-making Body in which decisions on major issues could not be reached without the majority vote of both Groups and with freedom to withdraw from it. On the question of the right of secession, Jinnah made it clear that Union should not be for more than a period of five years in the first instance.⁹⁰ Lawrence suggested that it should be after 15 years.⁹¹ Patel pointed out that this suggestion clearly indicated the reality behind the grouping proposal and that Jinnah was not sincere in the proposed Union and wanted to sabotage it.⁹² Jinnah explained that he was not in any way for breaking down the Union but thought there should be a constitutional means to bringing it to an end if it proved impossible in the light of experience.⁹³ Cripps suggested that a similar provision would be required with regard to the Groups.⁹⁴

The fifth meeting of the Second Simla Conference took place on 9 May.⁹⁵ In the light of meetings it had dawned upon the Delegation that there were some important points which might bring both parties together. In this connection, the Delegation had drafted a document entitled “Suggested Points for Agreement between the representatives of the Congress and the Muslim League.” It was sent to the presidents of the Congress and the League on 8 May 1946.⁹⁶ The Secretary of State, in his introductory remarks, made it clear that the document circulated had been intended to focus the result of the previous conversation in Simla. As a result of the reactions in the Conference and

90 *Ibid.*

91 *Ibid.*

92 Wavell believed that Patel was enraged by Jinnah’s suggestion that the right of a Group to secede from the Union should be 5 years, Patel immediately suggested that if the League wanted a separation from India then, ‘there we have it now, what has been after all the time’. *Wavell Viceroy’s Journal*, 259.

93 Record of fourth Meeting of Second Simla Conference held on 6 May 1946, *Wavell Collections*.

94 Cripps and other members of the Delegation thought that the right of Provinces to opt out of the Group would force Jinnah to consider his inflexible stand on Pakistan and to accept the three tier Plan.

95 *Record of fifth Meeting of Second Simla Conference held on 9 May 1946, Transfer of Power*, Vol.VII, 234, pp.489-90.

96 For details of the suggested points for agreement see, Turnbull to Maulana Azad and Mr. Jinnah, dated 8 May 1946, *Transfer of Power*, Vol.VII, 220, pp.462-63.

informal contacts, the Delegation understood that there were some points of agreement.

Maulana Azad said that the Congress had not definitely agreed that there should be Executives and Legislatures in the Groups. This was a point that had been discussed but was not agreed upon.⁹⁷ Nehru said that all those present desired an agreement as soon as possible, and suggested that the League and the Congress might sit together and try to find a solution, but as that might not yield results, there should be an umpire. Perhaps one representative on each side might sit with an umpire, and in case of disagreement, the umpire's decision should be accepted as final. The umpire would, of course, have to be a person accepted by both parties. There was a short interval for discussion between Jinnah and Nehru and they could not reach any agreement. They suggested that there should be an adjournment till Saturday, when Nehru and Jinnah would report to the Delegation about the outcome of their talks.⁹⁸

In his letter to Jinnah, Nehru suggested that it would probably be desirable to exclude Englishmen, Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims to become an umpire. He said that they had drawn up a considerable list from which a choice could be made. He also asked Jinnah to do so. He requested Jinnah to meet for this purpose. After they had met, Nehru suggested that their recommendation could be considered by the eight nominated members four from each party, and a final choice could be made, which would be placed before the Conference.⁹⁹

When Jinnah and Nehru met in Conference chamber alone, and then at the former's residence, hopes ran high and optimists forecast a miracle; but the miracle did not happen.¹⁰⁰ Jinnah, in his reply said that they discussed many points besides fixing of an umpire during their meeting at the Viceregal Lodge on 9 May. It was decided that Nehru's proposals would be discussed with other colleagues and after consultation both leaders would meet. Jinnah

97 Record of fifth Meeting of Second Simla Conference held on 9 May 1946, *Transfer of Power*, Vol.VII, 234, pp.489-90.

98 *Ibid.*

99 Nehru to Jinnah, 10 May 1946, *Transfer of Power*, Vol.VII, 244, pp.402-03.

100 A.A. Ravoof, *Meet Mr. Jinnah* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1955), p.191.

said he was ready to meet Nehru at any time tomorrow.¹⁰¹ Nehru in his next letter once again claimed as if there was some kind of decision between the two and they were ready to move into next step that was to suggest names.¹⁰² Nehru thought the real problem would be that the parties should agree that the decision of the umpire would be final.¹⁰³ Jinnah declined and said that it was never decided that they were agreed to refer the case to an umpire but it was decided that they would consult their colleagues, for there were many implications of it.¹⁰⁴

The sixth meeting of 11 May discussed the results of Jinnah-Nehru talks. Lawrence said that they got the understanding that the agreement between the League and the Congress regarding the outstanding points of difference should be settled by an umpire. Jinnah, explaining the position of the League, said that there was no such agreement between him and Nehru. He said that the result of this examination of the proposal was that if there was to be arbitration there must be terms of reference. He clarified that the Muslim League regarded it as an 'established fact' as the Muslims had given a heavy mandate in the elections. It was conceivable that a matter of this sort should ever be the subject for arbitration. If there was a decision against partition, the arbitrator would decide the Union Constitution. There would be no means of enforcing the arbitrator's decisions and difficulty would arise over the selection of a single arbitrator.¹⁰⁵

Nehru elucidated that his suggestion was that there should be discussion between representatives of each side who would agree beforehand on an arbitrator. The arbitrator would decide points of difference which could not be resolved by discussion. Jinnah said that if anything at all were agreed there might be some question of arbitration. Until the Muslim League knew that there would be Groups of Provinces and what Provinces would be in them, they could not consider arbitration. He also made it clear that he could

101 Jinnah to Nehru 10 May 1946, *Transfer of Power*, Vol.VII, 247, p.504.

102 Nehru to Jinnah 11 May 1946, *Transfer of Power*, Vol.VII, 250, p.507.

103 *Ibid.*

104 Jinnah to Nehru 10 May 1946, *ibid.*

105 Record of sixth Meeting of Second Simla Conference held on 11 May 1946, *Wavell Collections*, MSS/EUR/D997/18; *Transfer of Power*, Vol.253, pp.508-11.

not agree to an arbitrator deciding on the question of the sovereignty of Pakistan. He was ready to consider arbitration on other points when he knew what they were. However, he believed that the character of the Groups could not be referred to arbitration. The arbitrator might decide that there would be no Executives or Legislatures and in effect there would be no Groups.¹⁰⁶ Jinnah agreed to Cripps suggestion that named Provinces might form a Constitution-making Body for the Group, subject to opting out after the constitution had been framed.¹⁰⁷

Jinnah suggested that first important thing was that the provinces must be grouped. This was not the subject of arbitration. The Group Constitution-making Bodies would then meet, of course, on the basis of parity. There were many important communal issues and there were precedents for equal representation of unequal parts in a federation. They would not decide as one body. Nehru remarked that on Jinnah's proposal no constitution for the Union would ever be framed. He said that Congress did not agree to parity in the Central Legislature. Provision could be made to safeguard the rights of a community without parity which would give rise to trouble. If the constitution did not reflect realities of the situation it would be unstable and produce a state of bitterness and frustration. The Congress was entirely opposed to the Groups being sovereign bodies. They were ready however for the question of Legislatures and Executives for the Groups to be put to arbitration.¹⁰⁸

In the Second Simla Conference no agreement could be reached between the parties and therefore, the Delegation asked the League and Congress to present in writing the precise conditions on which both parties would be prepared to negotiate further. Congress and League agreed to do so. The last meeting of the Simla Conference held on 12 May¹⁰⁹ was just a procedure to announce officially the failure of the Conference, for no agreement

106 *Ibid.*

107 *Ibid.*

108 *Ibid.*

109 Record of seventh Meeting of Second Simla Conference held on 12 May 1946, *Wavell Collections*, IOR, MSS/EUR/D997/18; *Transfer of Power*, Vol.VII, pp.264, 525-26.

had been reached between the parties.¹¹⁰ Both parties attempted to settle the issues but failed. No single party could be held responsible, as no party seemed to make serious attempt to arrive at the agreement. The more they talked, the greater became the differences.

The Conference ended in fiasco, for it was quite obvious from the terms and conditions presented by both parties that there would be no compromise between them. The Muslim League wanted the acceptance of grouping system, only then it would accept a loose Union but the Congress hated grouping system and wanted federation with a strong centre. Nor, did they solve the parity issue which propped up in the conference. There were three possible forms of parity — first between the Muslim League and Congress on party basis; second, between Muslims and Hindus on communal basis; third, between Muslims and Hindus excluding the Scheduled Castes.¹¹¹

The Muslim League thought that, in its earnest desire for a peaceful and amicable settlement, it had offered a solution which retained a broad Union of South Asia without sacrificing essential Muslim interests. The Congress also thought that it had done everything to meet the League's demands. There was a general impression at the end of the Conference that nonetheless, there were some positive developments which might bring a union of India and avoid the creation of Pakistan imminently provided the Congress showed willingness to accommodate the League's point of view.

The viceroy observed that they listened to an "almost inter-mixable repetition of these two cases, stated by various degrees of skill and plausibility, hardly ever with the least originality or the

110 For details of their points see, Jinnah to Lawrence, dated 12 May 1946, *Transfer of Power*, Vol.VII, 259, pp.516-17; Maulana Azad to Lawrence, dated 12 May 1946, *Transfer of Power*, Vol.VII, 260, pp.518-21.

111 Lord Cripps speech in the House of Commons, There are three possible forms of parity — first, between the Muslim League and Congress on party basis; second, between Muslims and Hindus on communal basis; third, between Muslims and Hindus other than scheduled castes. Speech of Lord Cripps, Parliamentary Debates [Hansard] House Of Commons [Official Report] Volume 425, No.179, London, 18th July, 1946, IOR, MSS/EUR/F 189/15, pp.1400, 1406.

least recognition of the British passion for compromising”.¹¹² He said that “the close contact and discussion between Congress and Muslim League has merely enhanced their dislike of one another... I am afraid the further negotiations are more likely to be more difficult. The depressing thing that one should have to hand over the control of India to such small men; the mentality of most of them is that of small, lower and *bania*. I feel sometime inclined to cry.”¹¹³

Wavell believed that the direct ways, may be crude and clumsy but they were best suited to deal with the situation. He thought it was quite unfair and morally wrong on the part of Delegation like Cripps’ to make daily contacts with Congress which jeopardized the fair dealing and honesty of the Delegation.¹¹⁴ However, the Cabinet Mission contemplated that neither League nor Congress had made serious efforts to reach at some acceptable settlement but held no party responsible for its failure.¹¹⁵ Though the tripartite Conference failed,¹¹⁶ the Mission and the Viceroy, continued even after Simla, their negotiations with the party leaders.¹¹⁷ Mission produced a scheme of its own when they discovered the impossibility of persuading the two opposing parties to find a solution between them. The Mission in a statement announced that though the Conference had failed, it was their intention to issue a statement in the next few days expressing their views as to the next steps to be taken.¹¹⁸

Conclusion

The Conference ended in fiasco, for it was quite obvious from the terms and conditions laid down by both parties that they could reach no compromise. The Muslim League, although pledged to

112 Wavell Viceroy’s Journal.

113 Wavell Viceroy’s Journal, p.267.

114 *Ibid.*

115 Cabinet Delegation to Henderson, 12 May 1946, *Wavell Collection*, IOR, MSS/EUR/D997/18; *Transfer of Power*, Vol.VII, 265, p.526.

116 I.H. Qureshi, *The Struggle for Pakistan*, p.248; Hodson, *Great Divide* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp.146-47.

117 Wavell–Jinnah meeting, 13 May 1946, *Transfer of Power*, Vol.VII, 271, pp.540-41.

118 Cabinet Delegation to Henderson, 12 May 1946, *Transfer of Power*, Vol.VII, 266, pp.526-27.

the ideal of Pakistan, thought that if the grouping system was accepted by the Congress, it would accept a loose Union. But the Congress which was wedded to the crown of indivisible India hated the grouping system on communal basis. She wanted a federation with a strong centre. The Muslim League thought that in its earnest desire for a peaceful and amicable settlement, it had offered a solution which could retain a broad Union of South Asia without sacrificing essential Muslim interests. The Congress also thought that it had done everything to meet the League's demands. But the fact remained that the Congress opposed the Muslim League at every turn and vice versa. It had been the history of both parties that they never reached any compromise save the Lucknow Pact of 1916. Now it was the British cabinet Mission and the viceroy, who had to award the plan and they did it to serve their own ends.

Simla Conference was not a loss at all. It had narrowed the issues between Congress and League, got Pakistan defined at last, and proved the British Government's sincerity. Besides, the Conference made the following points very clear. Jinnah wanted a definite and well-defined Pakistan whereas others did not endorse it. Nevertheless, Jinnah held that if the principle of Pakistan was accepted by the Congress, the only way to prevent complete division was that Provinces should group themselves together by choice. They should set up constitution-making machinery which *de facto* would be sovereign. These group constitution-making bodies would deal with all matters, including the Provincial constitutions and only the three subjects would be given to the Union.

The Congress wanted a strong and live centre with the utmost autonomy for the federal units which would enjoy residuary powers and definite and defined subjects for the centre and the provinces along with a concurrent list. The Congress was against the grouping but believed in the provincial autonomy. It gave clear indications that in case Pakistan became a reality, they would seek the division of Punjab and Bengal on communal basis.

Wavell thought that the Second Simla Conference met with much the same fate as the first Conference had. He observed that "they had listened to an almost inter-mixable repetition of these

two cases, stated by various degrees of skill and plausibility, hardly ever with the least originality or the least recognition of the British passion for compromise. Besides, he thought Cripps's and Lawrence's continued and daily contacts with Congress camp were all wrong.

However, contrary to Wavell, the Congress leaders got frustrated with the work of the Cabinet Mission and Wavell who was anxious to reach a settlement acceptable to main political parties — Hindus and Muslims — not on the basis of the overwhelming Hindu majority. They thought it was a clear violation of the promise made by Attlee in his speech in Parliament that a minority (Muslims) would not be allowed to impede the political progress of the majority. But it seemed, at the end of the day, that the Delegation had moved and got converted to the belief that they were not ready to ignore the Muslim interest because of ground realities in India, which Attlee had failed to realize.

The most positive outcome of the Second Simla Conference was that the British Delegation gave their own verdict, in the shape of the Cabinet Mission Plan, almost on the same points that had been discussed, understood and contemplated by the two main parties. However, they had not yet given their formal consent and approval which they had to give if the League wanted to avoid a mutilated, maimed and moth-eaten Pakistan, and the Congress to retain the unity of India.