

## ***The Significance of 1945-1946 Elections in the Creation of Pakistan***

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### **Abstract**

*All-India Muslim League, being a political platform of the Muslim in the Subcontinent, contested the elections of 1937 but it could not get desired success and faced failure by virtue of which the Muslims had to suffer for about two and a half years under the Congress Rule. In August 1945, the Viceroy of India announced that the next elections of Central and Provincial Legislative Assemblies would be held in the coming winter. They were to precede the convention of a constitution-making body for British India. The Muslim League had to succeed in this crucial test if its popular support of its demand for Pakistan was to be held credible. In these elections the League won 75 of the total Muslim seats. This improvement in its performance which had momentous implications for the future of the Sub-continent requires explanation. The purpose of this research paper is to highlight the role played by All India Muslim League in the elections of 1946, its election campaign and above all its significance in political and constitutional history of the sub-continent. It also throws light on the role played by students, women, intellectuals, journalists, Ulema, pirs and sajudanahins in these elections.*

The elections of 1946 have a unique significance in the Indian political history when a political party took part in the elections based on one point manifesto. In fact, Muslim League took part in these elections because of manifesto aimed at the creation of

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\* Principal, Donors Coordination, (UNDP) Abbotabad, NWFP.

Pakistan. Before taking part in the 1946 elections, Quaid-i-Azam announced on 10 October 1945, "Our demand of Pakistan is quite clear. Those parts of India, where Muslims are in majority should be amalgamated to form a free and sovereign state. If the Muslims voted against Pakistan, I shall accept my defeat."<sup>1</sup>

The President of the Indian National Congress, Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, sent a very detestable telegram to the Viceroy of India reacting against the announcement of these elections. Lord Wavell responded, "Azad [Maulana Abdul Kalam] has sent me a very loathsome telegram in reaction of not consulting him in the announcement of election programme. Actually, he is trying to relieve himself. He is trying to use these elections as an arm for the release of his other companions from jail."<sup>2</sup>

Lord Wavell announced the elections on 21 August 1945. On the same day he wrote a detailed letter to the Secretary of State for India, Lord Pethick Lawrence and besides accepting the validity of the demand of Pakistan, he wrote about Quaid-i-Azam:

I think there is much to be said for the Governor's view that the crudity of Jinnah's ideas should be exposed; and it seems to follow that some enquiry into the possibilities of Pakistan is a necessary preliminary to any further constitutional discussion. I have always wished to avoid an enquiry of this kind, as I believe Jinnah would boycott it, and it would give rise to much communal feelings. But I am sure that until we have cleared the ground and put forward counter proposals based on logical and convincing arguments, we cannot now make much progress.<sup>3</sup>

It will not be out of context to say that the Governor of Punjab Province, Sir B. Glancy, had also advised Lord Wavell to reject Mr. Jinnah's plan of Pakistan.<sup>4</sup>

Khan Abdul Qayyum Khan, member of the central assembly and deputy leader of the Congress parliamentary party declared to

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1 Jameeluddin Ahmad, *The Writings & Speeches of Mr. Jinnah*, Vol.II (Lahore: United Publishers, 1960), p.164.

2 Penderal Moon, *Wavell: The Viceroy's Journal* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1974), p.114.

3 Nicholas Manserg, *Transfer of Power {The Post War Phase} Vol.VI* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1976), p.114.

4 *Ibid.*

join Muslim League and said, "To oppose Jinnah is to oppose Islam."<sup>5</sup>

The daily *Dawn* published an appeal of Khan Abdul Qayyum Khan on 29 August as, "At the end of the procession arranged in his honour, Khan Abdul Qayyum Khan appealed politely to Khan Brothers and *Khudai Khidmatgars* to leave the Congress and join the Muslim League as they are excitingly awaited for welcome warmly."<sup>6</sup>

At the end of August 1945, a well-known leader of the Punjab and the member of Viceroy's Executive Council, Sir Feroz Khan Noon, gave his resignation and joined Muslim League. He requested to the Punjab people to vote in favour of the Muslim League. He further said, "To vote a non-Muslim League member will be against Islam and the Muslims."<sup>7</sup>

The British government was supporting the Congress keeping in view its international favours. It wanted to keep India united. It is surprising to note that in the broad based speeches of the British Prime Minister, Mr. Attlee and the Indian Viceroy Lord Wavell, which were released from England and Delhi simultaneously on 19 September 1945, there is no word about Pakistan. In his statement, Lord Wavell said:

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 authorized me [Lord Wavell] to undertake immediately after the elections, discussions with representatives of 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 therefore further authorized 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 parties.<sup>8</sup>

Quaid-i-Azam expressed his strong reaction to this idea. He warned the British government not to neglect the demand of the Muslims for the creation of Pakistan. He further explained that the

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5 *Dawn*, Delhi, 23 August 1945.

6 *Ibid.*, 29 August 1945.

7 *Ibid.*

8 Nicholas, Vol.VI, p.282.

only solution to the constitutional problem of India was the partition of India. On 20 September 1945, he said:

I have listened the speeches of Prime Minister Attlee and Lord Wavell on the constitutional issue of India by radio. I shall think over this in cold print, and we should have a careful study of the points given by them in their speeches. But no struggle except Pakistan can be succeeded. This is a great problem to be solved by all those who are the well wishers of India and want to win true freedom for India sincerely. The only solution of the complicated constitutional issue of India is "the partition" and this is responsible for the happiness, prosperity and security of 40 crore people of India.<sup>9</sup>

### **Election Campaign**

The elections of 1946 were decisive in the future political scene as Muslim League and Congress both were claiming that they are representing the cause of India. In these elections there were only two major opponent parties, Muslim League and Congress.

The election manifesto and the standpoint of Muslim League were:

- The Muslims of India are one nation.
- The only solution of the complicated constitutional problem of India is the creation of Pakistan.

In contrast, the Congress manifesto claimed to stand for all Indians and stressed on Indian unity. The Congress failed to win the hearts of the Muslims through Nationalist *Ulema*. Muslims of those parts of India, which were not included in the proposed Pakistan, played an important role in these elections.

### **The Role of Students**

The role of Muslim students in these elections was also brilliant, especially the Aligarh students. About 1500 in number, they were busy in the election campaign for the Muslim League, in various groups. There was a training centre in Aligarh for such students, where they were educated how to propagate the message of the Muslim League and to organise electioneering campaign. In addition, how to contact the Muslim inhabitants of far flung areas and communicate the rationale of an independent state, Pakistan.

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9 *Dawn*, Delhi, 21 September 1945.

It is significant to note that in the Punjab, the government was of the Unionist Party and despite of the Muslim majority in this province, Muslim League was facing intense difficulties. The Muslim League was facing Indian National Congress as well as Unionist, *Majlis-e-Ahrar* and all other Muslim groups at the same time. Muslim League office was opened in Islamia College Lahore, where at the beginning 200 students were sent to 400 villages for election campaign. As soon as the work extended, their number went on increasing. These students used to work for 18 hours daily, even they used to eat and sleep in wagon containing loudspeakers. These students travelled more than 50,000 miles and addressed more than 7 lakh people in the Punjab province.<sup>10</sup>

### **The Role of Journalists/ Intellectuals**

Beside the students, Muslim journalists and intellectuals also played a historical role in making popular the demand of Pakistan. They introduced in their editorials, columns, news reports and articles the demand, aims and objectives of Pakistan. Lahore, Delhi, Bombay and Hyderabad Daccan were the centres of the Muslim journalism. Apart from this, various dailies, periodicals and weeklies were published from Peshawar, Quetta and Karachi. Some of the prominent newspapers were as following:

- The daily “*Zamindar*”, Lahore (Maulana Zafar Ali Khan)
- The daily “*Ihsan*”, Lahore (Maulana Murtaza Ahmad Maikash)
- *Sa’adat*, Faisalabad (Nasikh Saifi)
- ‘*Al’aman and Wahdat*’, Delhi (Maulana Mazharuddin Shaheed)
- The daily “*Dawn*”, Delhi (Altaf Hussain)
- The daily “*Mansoor*”, Delhi.
- The daily “*Azad*”, Calcutta (Maulana Muhammad Akram)
- “*A’sr-i- Jadid*”, Calcutta (Maulana Shaiq Ahmad)
- The daily “*Khilafat*”, Bombay.
- The daily “*Hamdam*”, Lukhnow (Maulana Jamal Mian Farangi Mahal)
- The daily “*Rahbar*”, Daccan.

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10 A.H. Dani, *Quaid-i-A’zam and Pakistan* (Islamabad: Quaid-i-Azam University, 1981), p.202.

- The daily “*Ittihad*”, and “*Mizan*”, Hyderabad Daccan
- “*Daccan Times*”, Madras. (Mahmud Hassan)

Some famous local and regional journalists like Allah Bakhsh Yousafi, Rahim Bakhsh Ghaznavi, Ghulam Ghous Sahrai, Abdul Akbar Khan, Amir Hilali, Dost Muhammad Kamil, Maulana Muhammad Shuaib, Abdul Aziz Chishti, Amir A’lam A’wan, Maulana Abdur Rauf and Mazhar Gilani were propagating the cause of Pakistan. Moreover, the daily *Al-waheed* in Sindh Province played a vital role in the election campaign.

### **The Role of *Ulema*, *Pirs* and *Sajjadanashins***

After passing of the Lahore Resolution on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1940, Muslim League became very popular amongst the Muslims of India. They became convinced that the only solution of their problem was the creation of Pakistan. These circumstances put the “*Ahrars*” and “*Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind*” in a political crisis, weakening the role of *Darul-ulum Deoband* as well as *Jamiat*. After 1942, the differences over the Pakistan issue increased and Maulana Anwar Shah Kashmiri, Mufti Azizur-Rahman and Maulana Shabbir Ahmed Usmani quit the *Deoband Darul-Ulum* and founded a separate organisation, *Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam* in 1945.<sup>11</sup>

These *Ulema* were hopeful that the demand for Pakistan was a passionate hope of Islamic order in the Muslim state. They not only responded enthusiastically to Jinnah’s call by issuing *Fatawas* in favour of the League but also became involved into active politics to support the League. They defended wholeheartedly Jinnah’s leadership from attacks of the dissenting *Ulema*. Maulana Shabbir Ahmed Usmani believed that Jinnah was an honest and incorruptible person and was absolutely convinced that he was the only Muslim leader of the time who understood fully well the intricacies of the then Modern day politics in India. He had thus nothing but contempt and ridicule for those *Ulema* who dubbed Jinnah as “*Kafir-i-Azam*” and issued *fatawas* to the effect that the act of associating with the League was un-Islamic. Maulana’s faith in Jinnah’s leadership and trust in the League was fully vindicated

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11 Abdur Rasheed Arshad, *Twenty Great Muslims* (Lahore: Maktaba-i-Rasheedia, 1983), p.284.

in the 1945-46 elections and the 1947 referendum in the North-West Frontier Province and Sylhet.<sup>12</sup> One can imagine the devotion of Maulana Shabbir Ahmed Usmani, when he desired that “If I died before the Creation of Pakistan, I should be buried in that area which would become a part of Pakistan.”<sup>13</sup>

The *Ulema* toured all over the country, particularly Sindh, the Punjab and the NWFP exhorting the Muslims to vote for the League. “Any man”, they declared, “who gives his vote to the opponents of the League, must think of the ultimate consequences of his action in terms of the interests of his nation and the answer that he would be called upon to produce on the Day of the Judgment.”<sup>14</sup> They voted overwhelmingly in favour of the League candidates. In the NWFP where the League failed to do relatively well, the *Ulema* had to wage yet another campaign in early 1947 to secure the support of the Province for Pakistan. Led by Pir of Manki Sharif, Maulana Shabbir Ahmad Usmani, Pir Jama’at Ali Shah and Maulana Abdus Sattar Khan Niazi, the *Ulema* toured various parts of the province, telling their Pathan gatherings that “A Pathan is a Muslim first and a Muslim last, and thus he must vote for Pakistan.” The result was not unexpected. The League won the 1947 referendum convincingly, securing 289,244 votes as against 2,874 votes for India, 99.02% of the total votes cast; the Khudai Khidmatgars and the Congress boycotted it. Led by Maulana Zafar Ahmed Usmani, the *Ulema* also helped the League secure Sylhet adhesion to Pakistan. The district voted overwhelmingly in favour of Pakistan.<sup>15</sup>

### The Role of Women

Women were associated with the League activities since 1938. A large number of Muslim women responded to Jinnah’s efforts to

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12 Sikandar Hayat, “Quaid-i-Azam, Muslim League and Achievement of Pakistan” in *Pakistan Journal of History & Culture*, Vol.VII, No.2, July-Dec, (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, 1984), p.51.

13 Fazlur Rahman, “Maulana Mufti Mahmud: A Profile”, in Pervez Khan Toru and Fazlur Raheem Marwat eds. *Celebrities of NWFP*, Vol.I, II, (Peshawar: Pakistan Study Centre, University of Peshawar, 2005), p.213.

14 Khalid B. Sayeed, *Pakistan: The Formative Phase 1857-1948* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p.204.

15 Sikandar Hayat, p.51.

ameliorate their conditions by uniting themselves increasingly under the banner of the League. Many of them went so far as to sever all connections with other women organizations in India. Prominent women leaders associated with the Unionists, pro-Congress all India Women's Conference and other organizations joined the League.

They played active role in 1945-46 elections in mobilizing Muslim masses, especially in the NWFP and the Punjab. They organized themselves into several groups and proceeded to canvass for the League candidates in their respective constituencies and to encourage the Muslim masses to vote for the League. In areas where women leaders could not personally visit, they assigned the task to the Punjab Girls Students Federation and Women's National Guards, the two auxiliary organizations attached to the League. They tried their best to enrol maximum number of women as voters. The result was that according to Mian Mumtaz Daulatana, "almost one third of the audience in the Punjab comprised women."<sup>16</sup> They also took the responsibility to facilitate women in providing transportation to the polling stations and taking them back to their residences. The Muslim League captured overwhelming majority in the Punjab legislature through the labour of these organizations. Two women candidates also won their seats.

In the NWFP beside their best efforts under the leadership of Lady Abdullah Haroon, the League could not secure majority in the provincial legislature. The women, however, did not give in and maintained the pressure until Dr. Khan Sahib's ministry was forced to resign and the province finally voted for the League and Pakistan in the 1947 referendum. But then in the Punjab too they were called upon to launch a new struggle to salvage the League position when Khizar Hayat Khan Tiwana, the Chief Minister, in spite of a crushing defeat of the Unionist party in the elections, went on to form another ministry in the province in coalition with the non-Muslim members of the legislature. Some of the prominent women who took active part were Fatima Jinnah, Nurussabah

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16 Sharif al Mujahid, "Fatima Jinnah: The Voice of the People" in *Pakistan Journal of History & Culture* (Fatima Jinnah Number), Vol.XXIV, NO.1, (Islamabad: NIHCR, 2003), p.16.



(UP), Shamim Jullundhri, Begum Salma Tasadaq Hussain, Shaista Ikramullah, etc.<sup>17</sup>

### Analysis of 1946 Elections

The elections to the Central Legislative Assembly were held in December 1945 and the provincial elections were held in January 1946. The most spectacular outcome of these elections was the resounding victory of the Muslim League, which won all the thirty Muslim seats in Central Legislative Assembly.<sup>18</sup> The Congress did not officially put up any candidate for these Muslim seats, although they claimed to be a "National" body representing the Muslim as well as Hindus. The other nationalist Muslim candidates in many cases lost their deposits. The most bitterly contested election was in Meerut division where Liaquat Ali Khan defeated a Congressite Muslim candidate who was backed by the finances and propaganda machinery of the Congress. The League's success thus was even more impressive than that of the Congress. Referring to the League's cent-per-cent success, the Quaid-i-Azam remarked that the League had made rapid strides during the past five or six years, so much so that Britain, America and other powers realized that it was the only authoritative body of the 100 million Muslims of India.<sup>19</sup> On January 11, 1946 Muslim League celebrated its success by observing the Victory Day.

Earlier, on 4 December 1945, the Secretary of State for India had come out with a statement to the effect that the full significance of the proposals contained in the Viceroy's announcement of 19 September had not been properly appreciated, that the holding of discussions for the setting up of a constitution-making body after the elections was not intended to delay matters; on the other hand His Majesty's government regarded the setting

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17 For detail see, Sarfaraz Hussain Mirza, *Muslim Women's Role in the Pakistan Movement* (Lahore: Research Society of Pakistan, 1969), pp. 38, 42, 48, 49, Nurussabah, *Tahrik-e-Pakistan Aur Khawateen* (Lahore: Sheikh Ghulam Ali & Sons, 1970), pp.49-53, Shamim Jullundhri, *Tahrik-e-Pakistan Mein Khawateen ka Kirdar* (Lahore: Idara-e-Mussanifat, 1981), Begum Salma Tassadaq Hussain, *Azadi Ka Safar: Tahreek-e-Pakistan aur Muslim Khawateen* (Lahore: Pakistan Study Centre, Punjab University, 1990) and Shaista Ikramullah, *From Purdah to Parliament* (London: The Crescent Press, 1963).

18 M.A. Aziz, *A History of Pakistan* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publishers, 1979), p.180.

19 Jamaluddin Ahmad, *Creation of Pakistan* (Lahore: United Publishers, 1976), p.236.

up of a constitution making body by which Indians would decide their own future as a matter of great urgency. The statement also expressed government's intention to send out to India a parliamentary delegation drawn from all parties, so that they could meet leading political Indian personalities in order to learn their views at first hand as also to convey the general desire of the people of England that India should speedily attain her rightful position as an independent partner in the Commonwealth of Nations.<sup>20</sup>

Quaid-i-Azam declared that the Muslims of India would never accept any method of framing the constitution by the means of one constitution making body for all India where the Muslims will be in a hopeless minority. He declared further that any attempt to set up a provisional government at the centre that prejudiced or militated against the Pakistan demand would not be acceptable to the Muslims, as it would be the thin end of the wedge.<sup>21</sup>

Meanwhile, the British parliamentary delegation arrived in India on 5 January 1946 and toured the country for about a month. In his talks with the delegation, the Quaid-i-Azam explained the League's stand with regard to the constitutional developments. He told them that the League would take no part in an interim government without a prior declaration accepting the principle of Pakistan and parity with other parties, there should be two constitution making bodies which would decide the question of frontier between Hindustan and Pakistan through negotiations, relations between the two counties would be diplomatic; any attempt to impose a unified constitution or a majority decision by a single constitution making body would be resisted.<sup>22</sup>

### **Provincial Assembly Elections**

Elections to the provincial assemblies were held in February 1946. The League was faced with a formidable task. It had to contend with several hostile elements. The Congress with its mighty organization, propaganda machinery and finance; the numerous "quisling" Muslim groups encouraged by the Congress

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20 *Ibid.*

21 *Ibid.*, p.237.

22 *Ibid.*

and last but not least the Unionists in the Punjab — a group of powerful landlords and affluent classes enjoying the blessing and support of the British authorities. The League in conducting its election campaign had only one asset - a band of sincere and devoted workers, imbued with missionary zeal to fight for the national cause. The most decisive election battle was fought in the Punjab which was the corner stone of the edifice of Pakistan.

A noteworthy feature of the elections in the province of Bengal was the voluntary withdrawal of Khwaja Nazimuddin from elections in order to eliminate the possibility of dissensions inside the Muslim League Parliamentary Party and to ensure solidarity in the ranks of the party. He and his followers in cooperation with the other groups led by Hussain Shaheed Suharwardy worked zealously for the success of the League candidates with the result that the League captured 95% seats in Bengal.

The break up of the Muslim seats won by the Muslim League Province-wise was as follows:<sup>23</sup>

Assam	31	out of	34
Bengal	113	out of	119
Punjab	79	out of	88
Bihar	34	out of	40
U. P.	54	out of	66
NWFP	17	out of	38
Sindh	28	out of	35

(Later in the second general elections held in December 1946, the position went up to 35 out of 35).

Bombay	30	out of	30
Madrass	29	out of	29
C. P.	13	out of	14
Orissa	4	out of	4

The remaining later joined the League. The League thus won 440 (in some sources 446) out of 495 seats.<sup>24</sup>

23 Hasan Riaz, *Pakistan Naguzeer Tha* (Karachi: University of Karachi, 1967), pp.382-385.

24 Muhammad Rafi, *Presidential Government in Pakistan* (Lahore: The Caravan Book House, 1967), p.19. He mentions the figure as 446, while Sharif al Mujahid mentions the figure as 453 including the seats won by Muslim League in centre

### Reasons of Failure of the Muslim League in NWFP

Regrettably, Muslim League could not perform well in NWFP.

The reasons of failure in NWFP were:

- Personality clash between various League leaders
- Most of them had joined the Muslim League a little before the elections, like Khan Abdul Qayoum Khan, etc.
- They were fighting against their own Pathan brothers who had turned to the only effective political organization at that time, the Indian National Congress. The Congress, working for a united India, seized the opportunity with both hands. The enormous preponderance of Muslims in the Frontier population discounted any fear of Indian domination, and Congress could give what the Pushtun needed, namely backing, organizational and financial, to fight the British for its rights. Thus, at first communal fears did not arise, and the alliance was made. The majority of Pathans were not ready to accept the philosophy of the Hindu domination.<sup>25</sup>

### Aftermath of the Elections

After success in these elections, the Muslim League held a convention of the All India Muslim League legislatures at Delhi from April 7-9, 1946. In this convention, they once again reiterated the demand for Pakistan. They asked the British government to act upon the resolution without any delay. Hussain Shaheed Suharwardy presented the resolution. The charter of Resolution was as follows;

The provinces at the North-East of India including Bengal and Asam and in the North-West [sic] including Punjab, NWFP, Sindh and Baluchistan are the parts of Pakistan as Muslims are in majority there, should be amalgamated together to form a free and sovereign state [instead of States]. Moreover, the government should give an undoubtful surety that the Pakistan demand will be acted upon without any delay. Secondly that the people of Pakistan and India should have an opportunity of forming their legislative assemblies, to form their respective constituencies. Thirdly, for the formation of central interim government Muslim League's demand of Pakistan should be accepted and acted.<sup>26</sup>

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(Sharif al Mujahid, *Ideology of Pakistan* (Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, IIU, 2001), p.113.

25 Olaf Caroe, *The Pathans* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1985), p.425.

26 *The Daily Civil & Military Gazette*, Lahore, 10 April 1946.

This resolution was passed un-opposed, and the Muslim representatives took oath that they will suffer every trouble in their way and accept every challenge. Addressing Presidential speech, Quaid-i-Azam warned British government as “Can British decide the fate of 10 crore Muslims? No, no one can do this. They can delay our demands but they cannot prevent us from achieving our goal. Therefore, we must be fully optimistic with courage and faith that we will win.”<sup>27</sup>

### **British Government Attitude on Muslim League’s Success**

The ratio of the Muslim population in Bengal, the Punjab and Sindh were 55%, 57% and 80% respectively. Due to the heavy weightage given to non-Muslim minorities, however, the Muslim representation in the legislatures of these provinces had been reduced to 47.6%, 48% and 58% respectively. The League was thus placed in a very difficult position so far as formation of ministries was concerned.

In Sindh, the League having a slight overall majority initially could form a ministry on its own. After sometime, due to machination of the dissident Muslim group, and the Congress, the strength of the Muslim League party and the opposition party became equal. The Governor dissolved the assembly and ordered fresh elections which resulted in the Muslim League capturing all the 35 Muslim seats. A stable Muslim League ministry was thus formed. In Bengal it was able to form a ministry with the cooperation of some independent and scheduled caste Hindu members who were given due representation in the cabinet. So far as the Punjab was concerned, the League as a single largest party was, according to established practices and convention of the parliamentary system, entitled to receive the first commission to form the ministry. The leader of the Muslim League party, if he had received the commission, was sure to form the ministry with the support of some independent and non-Muslim members. But here a number of hostile forces – the Congress, the Akali Sikhs, the defeated and discredited Unionist coterie and the British Governor combined and made a deliberate and determined attempt to deprive the Muslim League of the fruits of its victory; in other words, to

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27 *Ibid.*, 11 April 1946.

keep the Muslim majority out of the its legitimate share in administration. With the blessing and tacit support of the Governor a “rump” ministry was formed which presented the strange spectacle of a combination of minority elements ruling a Muslim majority province to the exclusion of the party representing the overwhelming majority of the Muslims.<sup>28</sup>

### **Congress Attitude**

With regard to the formation of the Ministries, the Congress had claimed to stand by three principles:

1. It should have a majority in the legislature concerned;
2. It would not work with a party which does not subscribe to its policy and programme;
3. It would not join hands with reactionary groups.

In the Punjab, however, the Congress threw away all these principles due to its implacable hostility towards the Muslim Leagues and descended to the level of accepting office under the leadership of most discredited and reactionary element in Indian political life — a group of seven Unionist Muslim members who also owed loyalty to the British government and did not subscribe to the Congress policy and programme.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad conducted negotiations on behalf of the Congress with other parties. He was proud to keep the League out of any share in power and to bring the Punjab under a Congress dominated government.<sup>29</sup>

Liaquat Ali Khan therefore stated that no single individual had done greater harm to the cause of Muslim India during the last nine years than Rashtraphathi Azad. He himself admitted that Mr. Nehru was in favour of Congress cooperation with League instead of the Unionists. If a League-Congress entente had been established in the Punjab it is reasonable to surmise that the calamities which befell East Punjab and the neighbouring area a year later would have been mitigated, if not altogether avoided.

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28 Jamaluddin Ahmad, p.241.

29 *Ibid.*

### **The Impact of Elections**

When Muslim League clearly demanded for the partition of India, all the opponents gathered under the banner of Congress. They objected that Muslim League has no solution for those Muslims who were in minority in their area. Quaid-i-Azam and Muslim League were in favour of united India for a long time, and tried their best for the constitutional rights of the Muslims. Due to the failure of this idea they put forth the demand for Pakistan. Moreover, from the beginning up to the last, Jinnah was in favour of constitutional fight and wanted to solve the problem of Hindu-Muslim relations by the constitutional means. Quaid-i-Azam was conscious that in Pakistan too, there would be a sizeable non-Muslims minority. He equally stressed upon the rights of minorities. Both in Lahore Resolution and in the Resolution of Legislature's Convention, it was demanded that the right of minorities of both the countries should be secured. It is interesting to note that those parts of India where Muslims were in minority were conscious of the fact that they will not be the citizens of Pakistan, still they played an important role in the Pakistan movement. They were sure that in such a way at least those Muslims, who are in majority, will secure freedom.

Congress tried its best to keep India united; even they were ready to take risk of fierce bloodshed. To create obstacles in the way of the creation of Pakistan, Gandhi, once had said "if killing and destruction is must, it will come beside non-violence."<sup>30</sup>

Lord Wavell disliked Quaid-i-Azam on Pakistan issue, which he had stated in many places in his diary, but according to him, Gandhi too was clever and cunning, not a 'Mahatma'. He wrote, "So far as I see this old man, I found him to be an un-trustworthy and hypocrite one. He does not hesitate in doing violence and for achieving his goal he never hesitates from bloodshed...."<sup>31</sup>

Wavell, after the elections tried for the security of Muslim's rights in the United India but Muslims of the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent were not ready to accept any other option except Pakistan. The British Prime Minister, Attlee, on February 19, 1946

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30 Moon, p.341.

31 Jamaluddin Ahmad, p.353.

announced in the 'House of Commons' and Lord Pethick-Lawrence in the 'House of Lords' respectively, that they had decided to send a three member mission to India. They will work with the help of the Indian Viceroy, Lord Wavell. The members of the delegation were:

1. Lord Pethick-Lawrence (Secretary of State for India)
2. Sir Stafford Cripps (President Board of Trade)
3. Mr. A. V. Alexander (First Lord of Admiralty)

The behaviour of the British government towards League's demand of Pakistan can be understood by a very secret letter of 7<sup>th</sup> March, 1946 which was sent to the British Cabinet Mission from the Secretary of State for India. He wrote:

You should pay every attention to the claims and anxieties of minority parties, and do your utmost to obtain their consent to any agreement. But you are authorised to come to an agreement within the terms of this directive with those whom you consider to represent best the view of major political parties and provinces, and the government will be prepared to take necessary steps to give effect to the arrangements so come to.<sup>32</sup>

In a course of debate in the Parliament on 15<sup>th</sup> March, 1946, Prime Minister Attlee said that the Cabinet Mission was going to India in a "Positive Mood" with the intention of using their best endeavours to help India to attain freedom as speedily as possible. He added: "We are mindful to the 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 their veto on the advance of the majority."<sup>33</sup>

In both the above statements the British government meant "Whom you consider best..." as the Congress and by "minority" they considered Muslims and the League. Quaid-i-Azam took notice of these remarks and said, "says the spider to the fly: 'walk into my parlour', and if the fly refused, it is said the veto is being exercised and the fly is being intransigent."<sup>34</sup>

The Quaid-i-Azam reasserted that the Muslims of India were a nation and self determination was their birthright. If the expression

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32 Nicholas, p.1125.

33 *Civil & Military Gazette*, Lahore, 16 March 1946.

34 Jamaluddin Ahmad, p.244.



that the Cabinet Mission was going in a positive mood meant that we were resolved that a machinery should be set up by way of a single constitution making body or Constituent Assembly, then it was futile for Mr. Attlee to say in the next breath, "We seek utmost cooperation of all Indian Leaders to do so."<sup>35</sup>

On the other hand the Congress reaction towards these statements was exciting. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad said, "I think, the statement of the British Prime Minister, in the House of Commons, as a whole helps in creating favourite atmosphere which we want to maintain during the Cabinet Mission's visit to India."<sup>36</sup>

Members of the Cabinet Mission came to Delhi on 24 March 1946 and after their arrival, they had meetings with Viceroy, members of the Executive Council, Provincial Governors and Provincial Chief Ministers. Although they were conscious of the importance of Pakistan's problem, still they had no aim of making Pakistan. Actually, they wanted to sideline this problem and to solve the Indian constitutional problem. Their policy was to make Quaid-i-Azam agree to cancel his demand for Pakistan. This fact can be verified from the documents of sessions of the meeting which were held on 26<sup>th</sup> March 1946, between the members of Cabinet Mission, the Viceroy and the members of his Executive Council. Moreover, this can be ascertained from the documents of the session of a meeting which was held between the Viceroy Lord Wavell, the Cabinet Mission and the provincial governors on March 28, 1946. In all these meetings they were against the Muslim League's demand for Pakistan.<sup>37</sup>

When the stage for the meeting with the Congress and Muslim League came (which remained continuous from 1 April 1946 to December 1946), Muslim League and Congress both expressed their view point in detail. Quaid-i-Azam said, "Before talks on the Interim Government, the demand of Pakistan should be accepted first and no compromise is possible on this problem."<sup>38</sup>

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35 *Civil & Military Gazette*, Lahore, March 17, 1946.

36 *Ibid.*

37 Nicholas, Vol.VII, pp.7-9, 39-45.

38 *Civil & Military Gazette*, 2 April 1946.

On the other hand, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, after having consultation with Gandhi, declared that Congress will never agree on the partition of India nor will discuss the issue of forming two Constituent Assemblies.<sup>39</sup>

The Cabinet Mission held its parleys at Simla from May 5-12, 1946. Talks with both parties failed. On 16<sup>th</sup> May 1946, the mission came out with a policy statement in which they made certain observations with regard to the Muslim demand for Pakistan with a view to appeasing the Hindu majority in disregard of Muslim sentiments and claims.

Professedly with a view to meeting Muslim needs and apprehensions and providing a balanced constitution for all elements of the body politic, the Cabinet Mission came out with an ingeniously conceived plan for a three tier constitution, envisaging autonomous provinces, groups of such provinces as wanted to take certain subjects in common and a Federal Centre or Union limited to three subjects — Defence, External affairs and Communications, with the powers necessary to raise the finance required for the above subjects.

The crux of the whole plan from the Muslim point of view was the provision relating to sections of the constitution-making body and grouping of provinces. It was clearly laid down that after a preliminary meeting of the constitution making body at which the general order of business would be decided and a chairman and other officers elected, the provincial representative would divide up into three sections:

- Section A: Consisting of Hindu majority Provinces
- Section B: Consisting of Muslim majority provinces in the North-West
- Section C: Consisting of Bengal and Assam

The issue of the formation of interim government was to be solved by the Viceroy, who was entitled to hold meeting with the Congress and Muslim League for this purpose. There was wide gulf between the Congress and Muslim League on the formation of Provincial groups. Congress could see Pakistan in the provincial groups especially in the groups 'B' and 'C'.

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39 *Ibid.*, 13 April 1946.

The League accepted Cabinet Mission's proposals but apart from this it declared that Pakistan is its objective and no one can deny this right. It also declared that this acceptance is dependable on the attitude of Congress. The reasons for the League's acceptance were:

1. Six undivided provinces were included in section B and C with a clear Muslim majority;
2. These sections could, by simple majority, frame both provincial group constitutions with regard to all but three subjects, and the framing of these constitutions was to precede that of the Union Constitution;
3. The provision relating to major communal issue could be used to safeguard Muslim interests in the Union Assembly and prevent the Union Centre from encroaching on the autonomy of the provinces and the group;
4. The Muslim majority in the sections B and C was in a position to negotiate with the Hindu majority in the section A to ensure safeguard for minorities on reciprocal basis;
5. The whole constitution would be open to revision at the end of ten years which meant, by implication, that the provinces and groups would have freedom to opt out of the Union.<sup>40</sup>

The Cabinet Mission released its announcement on 16 June, 1946, that for taking part in the interior government, the proposals of 16 May must be accepted. The Congress was taken by surprise as it thought the League would reject the plan and then it would be plain sailing for the Congress. The Congress pleasure did not last long, and on realising its implications they began to misinterpret and twist the plan, particularly the provision about proposals of 16 June 1946.

When, in July 1946, Jawahir Lal Nehru became the president of Congress, he gave such statements which made Muslim League to withdraw its acceptance of the plan. Now Muslim League announced to start Direct Action for the objective of Pakistan. The date fixed was 16 August 1946.

British government damaged the prestige of Lord Wavell. He himself has commented as, "the hazardous weakness of Cabinet

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40 Jamaluddin Ahmad, p.258.

Commission, the vulgar treatment and hypocritic attitude of Cripps made the situation so miserable that no one can change it. Congress was conscious that British government was afraid of it, and will never create problem in their way. Jinnah and Muslim League were certain that their rights have been altered. Therefore they were suspicious... I did not show firmness because of Cripps attitude”....<sup>41</sup>

Wavell was forced to resign because of the Congress demand. Lord Mountbatten was appointed the Viceroy of India who was closest friend of Nehru. He arrived on 22 March 1947. The British Prime Minister's letter of instructions to the new Viceroy clearly shows his government's pronounced partiality for the concept of one India and, what is more, one Indian Army and continued British supremacy over the Indian ocean. The letter says, "It is the definite objective of His Majesty's Government to obtain a unitary government for British India and the Indian states, if possible within the British Commonwealth, through the medium of the Constituent Assembly, set up and run in accordance with the Cabinet Mission's plan".

The new Viceroy's conduct from the very beginning showed his proclivities towards one of the major parties concerned... the Congress, V. P. Menon, and then a high official of the Government of India, acted as an intermediary in these confabulations.

Lord Mountbatten was convinced that there was no change of the Cabinet Mission's plan. He held a secret meeting with Nehru and drew a new plan, in which he envisaged demission of authority to the provinces; he divided the Punjab and Bengal, elections in NWFP etc. He sent this plan to London, where it was approved with some amendments. This plan was announced on 3 June 1947.

It is interesting to note that the original date for transfer of power was June 1948. It was made earlier by ten and a half months at the insistence of the Congress leaders because they signified willingness to agree to partition only on this condition. They had at the back of their mind the idea that it will be well-nigh impossible for Pakistan to establish and consolidate itself within this

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41 Moon, Vol.VII, pp.366-67.

extremely short period, and soon rather than later it would be reabsorbed in India.<sup>42</sup>

All India Muslim League succeeded in the central and provincial elections of 1946. This was possible because it had captured the support of many of the landlords, *Ulema*, Muslim students and women, *pirs* and *sajjadanashins*. The League's demand for Pakistan was certainly legitimized in the minds of the Muslim voters by its religious appeal, especially as this was delivered by the *pirs* and *sajjadanashins*, the religious elite in the countryside. Although the Congress tried her best to counter the League but this time she could not succeed in her own plans. Beside all these conspiracies Pakistan appeared on the world map and still it is surviving as a free sovereign state.

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42 *Ibid.*