Congress and the Muslim League: A Critical Study

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[*This article titled "Congress and the Muslim League: A Study in Conflict" was prepared by the Intelligence Bureau, Home Department, Government of India, as a secret document in August 1941. This article contains a lot of information about the differences between the Indian National Congress and the All-India Muslim League and the latter's commitment to the Idea of Pakistan and showing the sincerity of Jinnah in favour of Pakistan. This document was prepared by the Intelligence Bureau of the British Government of India on the basis of highly secret sources. In his letter No.36/CONG/41, dated 20-8-41, Assistant Director of the Intelligence Bureau advised the officials of the Viceroy House to handle this note with strict secrecy and high nature of carefulness.*

This is very important historical document in which the development of All-India Muslim League into a formidable party in 1938-1941 which challenged its opponent Indian National Congress and its work for the cause of Pakistan has been tactfully mentioned. It is for the purpose of readers, teachers, students that this document is hereby published with the permission from the British Royal Crown and British Library. For source see File No.L/P&J/12/644, Vol-2295, British Library (OIOC), London].

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1. The Indian National Congress was already a fully developed political organization when, in 1906, the All-India Muslim League was founded at Dacca by a small group of Muslim leaders subscribing to the Aligarh school of thought, with the triple object of promoting loyalty to the British Government, protecting and furthering the interests of the Muslim community and fostering inter-communal unity. Practically the first task which the newly formed body was called upon to undertake brought it, most ominously, into direct conflict with interests which Congress represented. The Minto-Morley reforms scheme was at that time in the making and the Muslim League put forward the demand that statutory provision should be made for separate electorates in the new constitution. There was a great deal of Congress opposition to this demand — opposition which has persisted to the present day — but Congress objections were ultimately withdrawn and, in the Council Act which came into force in 1909, the principle of separate electorates was formally recognised and enforced. Thus, in the first round of the battle which was destined to rage in the Indian political world with increasing fierceness in years to come, the Muslim League scored an easy victory over Congress.

2. The years immediately following 1909 were, however, a period of increasing collaboration between the two organizations. Many causes contributed to this development. The principal factor which drew the League within the agitational orbit of Congress was the hostility towards Britain (and other European powers) aroused amongst Indian Muslims generally as a result of the Balkan War, the Italian conquest of Turkey's African empire, Turkey's participation against the Allied Powers in the Great War, and the Khilafat agitation that followed its termination. By 1912, the "loyalty" clause was dropped from the statement of aims and objects of the League. In 1913, the League adopted a new constitution embodying in it a near variant of the then Congress objective, namely, the "attainment under the aegis of the British Crown of a system of self-government suitable to India through constitutional means." The climax of Congress-League collaboration was reached in 1916 when a scheme of constitutional reforms was formulated by the leaders of two organizations on the principles embodied in the Lucknow Pact. This Pact provided, firstly, that no measure affecting the vital interests of

a community should be undertaken if opposed by three-fourths of the members of that community in a legislative body and, secondly, that one-third of the Indian elected members of legislatures must be Muslims elected by separate electorates.

3. For some considerable time after the end of the Great War, the Khilafat movement more or less completely overshadowed the ordinary activities of the Muslim League. Under the .skilful management of M. K. Gandhi — who had lately emerged into political prominence in India and, in 1919, had actually presided over a Khilafat Conference at Delhi — the Hindu-Muslim concordat appeared for a time to have become firmly established. But the alliance proved to be temporary and before long the quest was resumed for a "formula" capable of satisfying adequately the political aspirations of the major communities. The formulation of a "National Pact" was inconclusively considered in 1923 at the Delhi Session of Congress and the Lucknow Session of the Muslim League, and a series of All-Parties Conferences was held in 1924 and 1925, but the discussions came to nothing. Congress, at its Madras Session in 1927, adopted Jawaharlal Nehru's resolution (subsequently elaborated at the Lahore Congress Session of 1929) declaring its goal to be the achievement of "complete national independence" and, at the same time, directed its Working Committee to draft, in consultation with other political parties, "a Swaraj Constitution for India on the basis of a Declaration of Rights". In compliance with this direction, an All-Parties Conference was held at Delhi in February, 1928, and a Committee was appointed, under the chairmanship of Pandit Motilal Nehru, to frame a constitution providing for the establishment of responsible government in India. The Nehru Report appeared in August, 1928, and was considered by the All-Parties National Convention which met at Calcutta towards the end of the year. There was much wrangling at the meeting among the various party representatives and, although a face-saving resolution of agreement was passed in very general terms by the Convention, the recommendations of the Nehru Committee failed to secure a substantial measure of support. At the Lahore Congress Session the following year, the Nehru Report was given a quiet burial.

4. It was in the later twenties that M.A. Jinnah made his first appearance on the Indian political stage as the "star" champion of the Muslim cause. Jinnah began his political career as an ardent nationalist with Congress inclinations, but he severed his connexion with Congress in 1920 on the issue of Gandhi's programme of non-cooperation sanctioned, by Congress at the Calcutta Special Session in September of that year. In 1927, immediately after the appointment of the Simon Commission had been announced and the various parties had begun taking stock pf their respective positions, Jinnah convened a Conference of Muslim leaders at Delhi, and placed before it his famous Fourteen Points which, although several of them have since been conceded or otherwise, become obsolete, constituted for a long time the charter of Muslim political rights. Besides restating the two important principles of separate electorates and communal legislation by consent embodied in the Lucknow Pact, the Fourteen Points included demands for a federal Indian government with residuary powers vested in the provinces; uniform provincial autonomy; adequate and effective representation of minorities in legislatures and other elected bodies, without reducing the majority to a minority or even an equality; at least one-third Muslim representation in the Central Legislature and in Central and Provincial cabinets: preservation of the territorial integrity of the Punjab, Bengal and the North-West Frontier Province; the separation of Sind; the grant of "reforms" to Baluchistan and the North-West Frontier Province; guarantees of religious liberty; safeguards for the protection of Muslim religion, culture and personal law; statutory provision for adequate Muslim representation in the Services; and a constitution alterable only .with the concurrence of the federating States. It was by his insistence on the more contentious of these demands that Jinnah succeeded in torpedoing the Nehru Report at the All- Parties National Convention. In 1929, to the further discomfiture of Congress, the programme outlined in Jinnah's Fourteen Points was formally adopted by the Muslim League.

5. But the Muslim League was passing through difficult times, torn by internal disaccord. Opinion was actually divided on the advisability of Muslims associating themselves with the Simon Commission enquiry and the League was split into opposing

sections of cooperators and non-cooperators led by Sir Muhammad Shafi and Jinnah respectively. Thereafter the Muslim League steadily lost influence, but the politico-communal differences discussed interminably at many a Unity Conference in India and the various sessions of the Round Table Conference in London continued to defy adjustment. A serious, though anfractuous, attempt was made in February, 1935, by Rajendra Prasad and Jinnah to settle Congress-League differences on the basis of surrender by Muslims of separate electorates if increased representation in the legislature's and services was guaranteed, but the suggested compromise failed to find favour with large sections of the Hindu and Muslim communities. During this period, a new and highly controversial concept was introduced into Indian political thought—although at the time it aroused only mild interest — when, in 1930, Sir Muhammad Iqbal, in the course of his presidential address at the Allahabad Session of the Muslim League, for the first time propounded a scheme for the partition of India.

6. It was the eve of general elections to the provincial legislatures under the Government of India Act of 1935 that the Muslim League, under Jinnah's dynamic direction, began to rally its forces with the unmistakable object of challenging the supremacy of Congress in the political field. In 1936 Jinnah was elected President of the League — an appointment he has continued to hold uninterruptedly till the present day — and, in October, 1937 at the Lucknow Session, Muslim organizational unity was once again achieved and the objective of the League changed to "the establishment in India of full independence in the form of a federation of free democratic States in which the rights and interests of the Muslims and other minorities are adequately and effectively safeguarded in the Constitution". In his presidential address, Jinnah issued (what Gandhi subsequently called) "a declaration of war" against Congress. "The present leadership of the Congress", he said, "especially during the last ten years, has been responsible for alienating the Musalmans of India more and more by pursuing a policy which is exclusively Hindu, and since they have formed the governments in six provinces "where they are in a majority, they have by their words, deeds and programme shown more and more that the Musalmans cannot expect any justice or fair play at their

hands…. The Congress high command speaks in different voices. One opinion is that there is no such thing as a Hindu-Muslim question and there is no such thing as minorities question in the country. The other high opinion is that if a few crumbs are thrown to the Muslims in their present disorganized and helpless state, you can manage them. They are sadly mistaken if they think that the Musalmans can be imposed upon... The All-India Muslim League certainly and definitely stands to safeguard the rights and interests of the Musalmans and other minorities effectively. That is its basic and cardinal principle."

7. Congress was quick to recognise the note of challenge in the Lucknow deliberations and to realise the need for an early settlement of Congress-League differences if a serious deterioration of political relations was to be avoided. In February, 1938, Gandhi wrote to Jinnah suggesting a personal discussion between him and a Congress representative on the Hindu-Muslim question. Jinnah replied agreeing to the discussion but, at the same time, advanced a proposition which became, and has remained to this day, the most fruitful source of friction between Congress and the Muslim League. "We have reached a stage", he observed, "when no doubt should be left that you recognise the All-India Muslim-League as the one authoritative and representative organization of the Musalmans of India and on the other hand you represent Congress and other Hindus throughout the country. It is only on that basis that we can devise machinery of approach". In full appreciation of the real implications of Jinnah's stipulation, Gandhi answered: "You expect me to be able to speak on behalf of 'the Congress and other Hindus throughout the country'. I am afraid 1 cannot fulfil the test. I cannot represent either the Congress or the Hindus in the sense you mean. But I would exert to the utmost all the moral influence. I could, have with them in order to secure an honourable settlement". Simultaneously, at Gandhi's suggestion Jawaharlal Nehru, in his capacity as Congress President, opened a long correspondence, with Jinnah with a view to ascertaining and answering the League case against Congress. Throughout the correspondence, which began in January and ended in April 1938, Jinnah's tone was distinctly irascible and blustering, while Nehru maintained a pose of studied reasonableness and conciliation. In a carefully considered letter,

dated April 6th, which deserves more than a passing mention, Nehru drew up a statement of points of difference between Congress and the Muslim League and proceeded to indicate the Congress attitude towards them. He explained, firstly, that many of Jinnah's Fourteen Points had already been given effect to by means of the Communal Award and in other ways; some others were entirely acceptable to Congress but required constitutional changes which were beyond the competence of Congress; and the remaining few points, which remained unsettled, were contentious in the extreme. Secondly, Congress regarded the Communal Award as anti-national and reactionary but was prepared to seek its alteration only on the basis of mutual consent and goodwill of the parties concerned. Thirdly, statutory fixation of the Muslim share in the State services must involve the fixing of shares of other groups and communities in a rigid and compartmental manner likely to impede administrative development. Fourthly, Congress was fully prepared to ensure the protection of Muslim culture by making a suitable provision in the fundamental laws of the constitution. Fifthly, Congress had already guaranteed the right to perform religious ceremonies to all communities. Sixthly, Congress had no intention of undertaking legislative action to restrict the established rights of Muslims in the matter of cow slaughter. Seventhly, the question of territorial re-distribution of Provinces had not arisen but when it arose, it would be settled by mutual agreement and in a manner not likely to affect the Muslim majorities in Provinces. Eighthly, Congress had not formally adopted "Bande Mataram" as the Indian national anthem, but the song had been associated with Indian nationalism for many years and a national organization could not compel the people to give up what they had long valued and grown attached to without injuring the national movement itself. Ninthly, the Congress policy was to encourage all great provincial languages of India and at the same time to make Hindustani, as written both in Nagri and Urdu scripts, the national language. Tenthly, Congress had always held the opinion that joint electorates were preferable to separate electorates from the point of view of national unity, but that the introduction of joint electorates must depend on its free, acceptance by the affected parties. Eleventhly, the present National flag was originally adopted by Congress in 1929 in full consultation with leaders of all communities and could not now be altered. Twelfthly,

in regard to the demand for the recognition of Muslim League as the sole representative Muslim organization, Nehru said: "I cannot understand what is meant by our recognition of the Muslim League as the one and only organization of Indian Muslims. Obviously, the Muslim League is an important communal organization and would be dealt with as such. But we have to deal with all organizations and individuals that come within our ken…. There are special Muslim organizations such as the Jamiat-ul-Ulema, the Proja Party, the Ahrars and others who claim attention…. (These) organizations, even though they might be younger and smaller, cannot be ignored". And lastly, in connexion with the League proposal for the formation of coalition ministries, Nehru argued that the Congress governments were pursuing definite legislative programmes and were ready to co-operate with the other political groups in the legislatures in the furtherance of these programmes; on this basis alone was it possible to conceive of coalition ministries being formed, but not otherwise.

8. Throughout 1938, conversations and correspondence continued intermittently between Jinnah and the Congress leaders till in December of that year Subhas Bose, the Congress President, informed Jinnah that the discussions, instead of promoting communal unity, were only retarding the settlement of the communal problem. Jinnah continued to insist that the essential pre-condition of any agreement between Congress and the Muslim League was the recognition by Congress that the Muslim League was the sole authoritative and representative political organization of Muslims in India. Congress refused to admit this position, since it saw in Jinnah's proposition the sinister implication that the Indian National Congress was a purely Hindu body. Congress claimed that it was a national organization representing all the communities and that consequently it was prepared to examine the complaints of the Muslim League and to meet such of them as were fair and reasonable, but no more. In December, 1938, the Congress Working Committee met at Wardha and declared the Muslim League to be a communal organization whose political activities were anti-national and in conflict with those of Congress and whose members could not, therefore, be elected to any constituent Congress committee. At the same time, it urged the Provincial Congress Committees to ensure that the Muslims were adequately represented on local

committees. The Working Committee met again at Bardoli in January, 1939, and considered the desirability of making a declaration on the communal problem with a view to further elucidating its policy in the matter. It was, however, decided that no useful purpose would be served by making such a declaration and that all that was necessary was for Congress to continue its efforts to "ensure justice to all communities as well as to remove such doubts as might arise from time to time". An "Instrument of Instructions" to Congress Ministries concerning the treatment of Muslims and other minority communities was prepared and discussed at the meeting. In this document, the determination of Congress to safeguard the religious, cultural and linguistic rights of the minorities was reiterated and certain broad lines of policy were laid down regarding the representation of Muslims and other minority communities in public services and various local and provincial bodies, the playing of music before mosques and cow slaughter, the recitation of the "Bande Mataram" and the flying of Congress flags over public buildings. There is no information, however, that the "Instrument of Instructions", for which Gandhi was said to be primarily responsible, was ever actually communicated to the Congress governments; but some months later, in an article in the *Harijan* in July, 1939, Gandhi publicly emphasised the importance of respecting the sentiments of minority communities, particularly, the Muslims, in the matter of recitation of the "Bande Mataram" and the flying of Congress flags. About the same time, a Muslim mass contact campaign was started by Congress, at Nehru's instance, in several Provinces — a move which was immediately, and with some reason, interpreted by the Muslim League as designed to destroy Muslim unity and isolate the League.

9. The Congress-League "war" was now in full swing. With the federal scheme envisaged in the Government of India Act looming large before the country, political antagonisms developed sharply and the Congress agitation to compel the Princes, who were to form an integral part of the federal scheme, to lend their support to Congress provoked the Muslim League into announcing at the Patna Session in 1938 that no interference by the British Indian political parties in the affairs of the Muslim States would be tolerated. The dominant note of the provincial and all-India Muslim League

conferences at this period was a call to Muslims to fight for their rights since the Hindu Congress had maliciously combined with the anti-Muslim British and the predominantly Hindu Princes to damage Muslim interests. The scheme to divide India into communal regions was revived and subjected to careful examination by the Muslim League leaders. Plans were discussed for enlisting the sympathy of Islamic and other foreign countries on behalf of Indian Muslims and for exposing the malevolence of Congress.

10. The present War broke out on September 3rd, 1939, and when a week later the Governor-General announced the suspension of the Federal scheme, there was great rejoicing in Muslim League circles and the announcement was hailed as a personal triumph for Jinnah, Muslim distrust of the ultimate motives of Gandhi and the Congress high command (which Jinnah publicly denounced as a "Fascist Grand Council") continued to increase. A strong agitation was started against the Congress governments for their alleged autocratic disregard of Muslim interests and great play was made with the real and imaginary grievances of Muslims in the Congress-governed provinces. This question of Congress "atrocities" on Muslims had been engaging the attention of the Muslim League since March, 1938, when the Pirpur Committee was appointed to investigate Muslim complaints against the Congress governments of Bihar, the United Provinces and the Central Provinces. The Pirpur Report was considered by the League at the Patna Session in December, 1938, and a resolution was passed demanding the immediate redress of Muslim grievances and authorising the Working Committee of the League in this connexion to resort to direct action if and when necessary. The Council of the Muslim League in August, 1939, passed a resolution at Delhi deploring the failure of the Viceroy and Governors of Congress-administered provinces to exercise their special powers to protect the minorities from Congress, "tyranny". In October, 1939, Rajendra Prasad offered to request the Federal Chief Justice or some other person of similar status and judicial position to investigate any specific charges which the Muslim League might formulate against the Congress Ministries, but Jinnah replied that he had already placed the whole case before the Governor-General for adjudication.

Expressing his regret that Jinnah had rejected Rajendra Prasad's proffered hand of friendship, Gandhi pertinently observed that "those who raised the cry of minority in danger have nothing to fear from the so-called majority, which is a paper majority and which in any event is ineffective because it is weak in the military sense. Paradoxical as it may appear, it is literally true that the so-called minorities' fear has some bottom only so long as the weak majority has the backing of the British bayonets to enable it to play with democracy". But Jinnah was unmoved by such arguments and in December, 1939, in a press statement, he demanded the appointment of a Royal Commission with a purely judicial personnel drawn from His Majesty's High Court and under the chairmanship of one of the Law Lords of the Privy Council to investigate Muslim charges against the Congress Ministries.

11. Meanwhile the Congress Working Committee had decided to make an earnest and final attempt "to reach a settlement with the Muslim League and had appointed Nehru to discuss the communal problem with Jinnah at the earliest opportunity. But before negotiations could be resumed, an event took place which made fresh peace moves wholly impracticable. Under Gandhi's instructions, the Congress Ministries tendered their resignations in October-November, 1939, as a protest against the association of India with Britain's war policy, with the result that provincial autonomy was suspended in all Provinces where Congress governments had been functioning. Thereupon Jinnah promptly ordered that the Muslim League should, on December 22nd, observe a "Day of Deliverance and Thanksgiving" to mark the extreme satisfaction of the Muslim community on the disappearance of (as he put it) the tyrannical, oppressive and unjust Congress governments, which had done their utmost to destroy Muslim culture and suppress Muslim rights, and to pray that these governments might never return to power. In the circumstances created by Jinnah's action, Nehru felt that to approach Jinnah with proposals for a communal settlement could serve no useful purpose; Rajendra Prasad agreed that further conversations with Jinnah were liable to be gravely misunderstood not only by Congressmen but also by those outside Congress; and even Gandhi remarked, in anger and despair: "Let the Muslims spoil the position: we will allow them

to spoil it". Henceforward, no direct approaches were made by Congress to the Muslim League for a settlement of the communal problem. Nehru, writing to Krishna Menon at the time summed up the position succinctly: "It is true that for the moment the communal issue is dominant in the people's mind. All question of talks with Jinnah is off. It seems to me that he has deliberately brought this about as he has nothing to talk about and wanted to avoid coming to a political decision".

12. During 1940, the breach between Congress and the Muslim League was complete. For some time past Jinnah's mind had been running on separatist lines and when in March the Muslim League held its plenary session at Lahore, Jinnah startled the Indian political world by making an unequivocal demand for the partition of the country on a communal basis into regions exercising sovereign powers. "The problem in India", he said in his presidential speech, ''is not of an inter-communal character, but mainly of an international one and it must be treated as such. The Musalmans are not a minority, as it is commonly known and understood. The Musalmans are a nation according to any definition of a nation and they must have their homeland, their territory, and their State. We wish to live in peace and harmony with our neighbours as a free and independent people." A revolutionary decision was taken by the Muslim League when, influenced by Jinnah's views, it proceeded to pass a resolution demanding the division of India into "autonomous national States". The resolution urged that geographically contiguous units should, after necessary territorial adjustments, be demarcated into regions so constituted that the areas in which Muslims enjoy a numerical majority, as in the north-western and eastern-zones of India, should be grouped into "independent States" in which the constituent groups should be autonomous and sovereign; effective and mandatory safeguards should be framed for the protection of Muslim minority rights and interests in consultation with Muslims in minority areas and specifically embodied in the constitution; and similar protection should be afforded to non-Muslim minorities in the Muslim zones. The die was cast.

13. There was no holding Jinnah now. He had raised before Congress eyes the terrifying spectre of disruption of the country. He

had made plain his determination to resist the demand for independence of the Congress conception even if his action should involve the continuance of British domination. He had taken a frankly communal stand and by publicly sponsoring the Pakistan scheme made a strong appeal to the imagination of the Muslim masses. Jinnah's prestige, at this juncture, stood higher amongst his coreligionists than at any other period of his political career. Congress efforts to disconcert the Muslim League and split Muslim opinion in the country by organizing a series of "Independent Muslim" conferences were a dismal failure and merely helped to exacerbate communal ill-feeling. When early in July, 1940, the Congress Working Committee passed a resolution offering to cooperate in the formation of a provisional National Government at the Centre if Britain made an immediate and unequivocal declaration acknowledging the complete independence of India — a suggestion that was subsequently supplemented by Rajagopalachariar's "sporting offer" that if the proposed National Government was formed at once. Congress would agree to the Muslim League nominating a Prime Minister and letting him select his cabinet — Jinnah's immediate reaction was that the Congress move was solely intended to establish a "permanent Hindu majority government". The same month, when Abul Kalam Azad, the Congress President, approached him with a request for the clarification of certain disputed issues, Jinnah brusquely answered: "I refuse to discuss with you either by correspondence or otherwise as you have completely forfeited the confidence of Muslim India. Can't you realise you are made a Muslim show-boy Congress president to give it colour that it is national and deceive foreign countries?"— a rebuke that evoked a fierce outcry in pro-Congress Circles against Jinnah's questionable taste in repartee. The Viceregal declaration of August 8th that the British 'Government would not be a party to the coercion of large and powerful elements in India's national life into submission to a system of government whose authority was directly denied by them, was regarded by Jinnah as a clear recognition of the special status and importance of the Muslim League. In October 1940, Congress launched the civil disobedience campaign as a protest against the Viceroy's refusal to permit unrestricted freedom to Congress speakers to preach against war. Jinnah was convinced that the campaign was a deliberate

anti-Muslim move designed to bring pressure to bear on the British Government to cancel assurances of special consideration extended to Muslims and other minorities and to concede the Congress demands in disregard of the vital interests of the Muslim community. In his presidential address at the Madras Session of the Muslim League in April, 1941, Jinnah developed the theme at some length. "Congress Satyagraha", he said, "is nothing but a weapon of coercion for blackmailing the British, who are in a tight corner, to concede the Congress demands. The British Government ought to be grateful to the Muslim League for saving 'them the maximum amount of ' trouble the Congress was determined to give them. Congress found that the British Government would not possibly accept the demand which, for Muslims, meant complete destruction. The Muslim League, therefore, opposed it and so Congress thought that if they could not get what they wanted by a frontal attack they should try a flanking movement. The Muslim League is the only power which is holding up the diabolical machinations of Congress whose attitude is of sometimes dictation, sometimes cajoling, sometimes fooling and bamboozling and sometimes trying to deceive you". The climax of Congress-League disagreement over political objectives was reached when the momentous decision was taken at Madras to amend the constitution of the Muslim League so as to adopt the establishment of Pakistan, instead of "full independence in the form of a federation of free democratic States", as the declared aim of the League.

14. While Pakistan was henceforward to be the accepted goal of the Muslim League, Jinnah was not unprepared to associate his party, for the duration of the war, with provisional arrangements for the governance of the country. During a debate in the Central Legislative Assembly in March, 1941, Jinnah explained: "Our position is this. We divide the problem of India into two parts — the present and the future. AS far as the future is concerned, we say that when the time comes to change the whole constitution we shall then discuss the various schemes. We believe in Pakistan. As far as the present is concerned, our position is that we are willing, only for the prosecution of the war successfully, to co-operate in forming a government within the frame-work of this constitution. Our present quarrel with the Government is that the Muslim League has not been

given real and substantial share in the government both at the Centre and in the Provinces." His proposals for constitutional readjustment were interesting. During the war, the Viceroy's Executive Council should consist of twelve members in charge of portfolios of Defence; Finance; Communications; External Affairs; Internal Affairs; Commerce, Trade and Industry; Justice; Culture and Education; Lands, Canals and Forests; Health; Labour; and Development. While Congress non-co-operated, the Muslim League should furnish seven members and the Viceroy should nominate five, including a Sikh and Christian, and the Viceroy should continue to exercise the powers of certification. When Congress decided to co-operate, Congress, Muslim League and the Viceroy should nominate an equal number of members to the Council and the Viceroy's powers of certification should lapse. The Indian States should not be affected by these arrangements. At the end of the war — and herein lay the sting — Britain should agree to the establishment of Pakistan.

15. Jinnah's attitude towards the Indian States deserves some notice. His anxiety not to disturb the *status quo* in respect of States — perhaps not unconnected with the feeling that a rigid insistence on territorial readjustment on a communal basis must affect the powerful Muslim State of Hyderabad adversely — was the outcome of his desire as much not to frighten the Princes by demanding relinquishment of sovereign and other rights as to enlist their active and willing co-operation in undermining Congress power. In the summer of 1939, when Congress agitation in the Indian States was causing the Rulers very considerable concern, Jinnah initiated tentative negotiations with the Jam Saheb of Nawanagar, Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes, with a view to exploring the possibility of united action to defeat Congress designs. Nearly two years later, in March 1941, in a letter to the Jam Saheb, he again urged closer collaboration between the Muslim League and the Princely Order. Neither party, he suggested, should commit itself to a constitutional settlement with the British Government, Congress or any other party without previous mutual consultation. He further explained that any scheme based on the principle of Central Federal Government or any other form of democratic government was entirely unsuited to Indian conditions.; the only satisfactory solution

lay in the formation of Muslim "zones" in the North-West and the East enjoying direct relationship with the Crown; and the integrity of Indian States must not be disturbed and no State should be required to "federate" with the rest of India except at its own request and on fair and reasonable terms. The Jam Saheb's reactions are not known, but Jinnah's intentions are unmistakable.

16. And yet, for Jinnah, it was not all plain sailing. Latent, but acute, differences of opinion existed within the Muslim League organization over Jinnah's headlong descent into political extremism. The Aga Khan, whose connexion with the League dates back to 1910 when he was appointed its "permanent" President, was highly sceptical of the wisdom of Jinnah'a attitude of intractability in his dealings with Congress and the Hindus generally. During a brief visit to India early in 1939, the Aga Khan declared that the question of Hindu-Muslim unity had always been one of the things nearest to his heart and that he intended to bring about unity and meet important leaders of both the communities during his stay in India. He felt that Jinnah had mishandled the situation and that the Indian Muslims were bound to suffer in the long run if they did not come to a workable arrangement with Congress, After an interview with Gandhi at Bardoli when the problems, *inter alia*, of Muslim representation in services, the *lingua franca* of India and the Tribal? Territory were discussed, the Aga Khan was satisfied that Congress was willing to meet the Muslim League demands on many points but was not prepared to recognise the Muslim League, in a formal pact, as the sole representative Muslim organization. Sir Feroze Khan Noon to whom the Aga Khan communicated these views, however, felt that Muslim rights were not safe in Congress hands and the time was not opportune for Muslims to come to an agreement with Congress. In April, 1939, Sir Shafaat Ahmad Khan, who claims to be the Aga Khan's mouthpiece in political matters, strongly urged Sir Abdulla Haroon, Jinnah's trusted henchman, to recognise the importance of the Muslim League's resuming immediate contact with Congress. "If the Congress, the British Government and the Indian States combine and arrange everything over the heads of the Muslims", he wrote, "where shall the Muslims of India be then?... Would it not be possible to resume negotiations with the Congress and explore further avenues? Statesmanship

requires that we should try to resume contact with the Congress.... You must recognise the fact that the alliance between Wardha and Whitehall is complete; that the alliance between Wardha, Whitehall and Indian States will soon be an accomplished fact. As a practical man you should ask yourself the question 'Where are the Muslims going'?... Can they fight the combined forces when they have no money, resources, organization and numbers?" Sir Abdulla Haroon replied that as negotiations with Congress in the existing circumstances could only mean surrender to Congress, there was no point in negotiating. Sir Shafaat Ahmad Khan, however, repeated his advice that before Congress and Indian States combined, an attempt should be made to arrive at a settlement with Congress. This, he said, was also the Aga Khan's view. In January 1940, the Aga Khan in a letter to a friend gave an interesting appreciation of the Indian political situation: "The youngmen of our community will see a time when the Hindus (bitterly remembering that at this time of crisis the Muslims organised their community into a hostile body) will deal with us in India as the Germans have dealt with the Jews or as Spaniards dealt with the Arabs.... The bitter enmity now raised by the League and its leaders will have to be paid for a hundred per cent. In these circumstances the present policy of the League is such as will lead to disaster." Significantly, he concluded: "Alas, the only source of escape if they continue this policy, namely, to insist on Pakistan and the separation of Eastern Bengal from India (as the Burmans have done) — neither of these is on the programme of the League which wants to remain in India everywhere and yet is the unnecessarily bitter enemy of the overwhelming Hindu majority." (Within a few months of the Aga Khan's warning — in March 1940 — the Muslim League was to approve the principle of Pakistan and within another year — in April 1941 — to adopt it as its fixed and ultimate objective.)

17. The most important dissentient from Jinnah's extremist policy is Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan. When he joined the Muslim League after assuming office as Premier of the Punjab, he made it absolutely clear that he would on no account tolerate Jinnah's interference in the internal affair of his Province. In the All-India field, Sir Sikandar deprecated isolationist tactics and favoured a policy of responsiveness in League dealings with the other political

parties. The result was a good deal of covert friction between Jinnah and Sir Sikandar, although neither party, 'fully realising the mutual advantages of maintaining at least a facade of unity, had the courage to precipitate a crisis. In July, 1939, Sir Sikandar on his own responsibility had two meetings with Gandhi in Bombay with a view to reopening negotiations for a balanced communal agreement in the Provinces and at the Centre. Jinnah countered this by having a resolution passed by the Working Committee vesting the sole authority for a decision of the communal question and for conducting negotiations in this behalf with the other political parties in his own hands as President of the Muslim League. Jinnah's skilful handling of the difficult situation arising from the Khaksar disturbances in Lahore in 1940 was largely responsible for "saving" Sir Sikandar's political reputation among his co-religionists and, for a time, placed him under a-special debt of gratitude to the Muslim League leader. The Pakistan resolution passed at the Lahore Session of the Muslim League was endorsed by Sir Sikandar in spite of his personal inclinations against the communal division of the country and in favour of some kind of unifying Centre. But it was not long before he began to drift away from Jinnah and his separatist policy, and within three months of the adoption by the Muslim League of the Pakistan resolution, he came forward with alternative proposals postulating the abandonment of the partition scheme. His suggestion was that the British Government should make a declaration pledging itself to grant 'India Dominion Status of the Westminster variety immediately after the war or as soon as a constitutional scheme was formulated by Indians by mutual agreement; the machinery for devising the constitution should be settled with the consent of affected parties and interests; during the transitional period, certain subjects such as Defence, External Affairs, British commercial interests and Indian States should be dealt with by special arrangement; and the duration of the transition and the character of the temporary arrangements during the transitional period should be determined by representatives of Britain and India and embodied in a separate agreement. (Incidentally, when Sir Sikandar's scheme was presented to Gandhi for consideration, the latter's comment was that it would not be acceptable to Congress "without-drastic amendments"). Jinnah was not unaware of Sir Sikandar's conciliatory intentions and in July,

1940, writing to a friend, he said: "I am deeply disappointed with the way in winch Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan is going on. It is becoming intolerable. He is doing the greatest harm to Muslims of India and to himself". But, as a shrewd observer put it at the time, "Sikandar (or Fazlul Huq) cannot do without Jinnah nor Jinnah without Sikandar (or Fazlul Huq)" — and so the game went on. Early in 1941, Sir Sikandar supplemented his earlier proposal by suggesting the drawing up of a constitution on the basis of full Dominion Status by a representative committee consisting primarily of Premiers and ex-Premiers of Provinces, the adjustment of outstanding issues between India and Britain by direct negotiation between their respective representatives, and the reconstitution of the Viceroy's Council by *ad hoc* appointment of prominent Indians, irrespective of party, affiliations, and the transference of all portfolios to them. And in March 1941, speaking in the Punjab Legislative Assembly, Sir Sikandar publicly admitted that the most vital part of the Lahore resolution of the Muslim League, relating to the establishment of a Centre to co-ordinate the working of the constituent units, had been rejected by the Muslim League Working Committee. He had urged the establishment of a central agency which was to be an elastic body administering subjects of common interest to the various autonomous units, such as defence, customs and currency, and liable to be abolished if it proved unsatisfactory. It is noteworthy that Sir Sikandar did not attend the Madras Session of the League — when Pakistan was made the League objective — and that the public explanations of his absence were not altogether convincing.

18. Another of Jinnah's important critics is Mr. Fazlul Huq, the Bengal Chief Minister, although his excursions into "opposition" to Jinnah have been comparatively less frequent and more hesitant than Sir Sikandar's. In December 1940, he seriously proposed that a meeting of the Muslim League Working Committee should be called to discuss the possibility of opening negotiations with Congress, but Jinnah immediately silenced him by ruling out the proposal as ill-timed and as likely, if proceeded with, to damage the League's bargaining capacity in the constitutional field. Fazlul Huq remonstrated: "Some day or other these communal differences will be made up, but I do not see any reason why the Muslim League

should not take the wind out of the sails of other organization and secure to itself the credit of having done the greatest possible services to India and her people. A meeting of the Working Committee of the All-India Muslim League should be convened to consider the communal problem". But Jinnah was adamant: "When the other party has declared a war and is holding a pistol at your head what do you propose that I should do ? What do you think is the aim and object of the Congress in launching civil disobedience? Is it not obvious that they want to bend the British Government to surrender or yield to their demands? At whose cost? Over our head and at our cost." Among other occasional protestants against Jinnah's policy was Sir Sultan Ahmad who, at one time in 1939, was emphatically of the opinion that "there must be some settlement with the Hindus, and I have got very strong reasons to think that there is great anxiety on the part of the Congress to come to terms with us. It would be a pity if we could not come to terms with them and reject their offer of settlement on the ground of their not recognising the League as the only Muslim organization in India. I have got reasons to think that they may be prepared to say, should a settlement be arrived at, that the Muslim League was the premier Muslim organization in India". But Jinnah paid no heed, determined not to seek a settlement of the political problem except by his own endeavour and in his own way.

19. We may pause at this point to consider the manner in which the more important members of the Congress high command were all this time reacting to Jinnah's tactics. Gandhi, outwardly conciliatory and accommodating, had no illusions about what Jinnah's real intentions were. In November 1939, he shrewdly observed in the *Harijan:* "Jinnah looks to the British power to safeguard the Muslim rights. Nothing Congress can do and concede will satisfy him. For he can always, and naturally from his own standpoint, ask for more than the British can give or guarantee" — rather in the approved Congress style! That was the crux of the problem. Fighting Congress with its own weapons, Jinnah disdainfully spurned every move that Congress made for conciliation. Only once, in March 1940, Gandhi lost patience when he told a friend: "The Muslim League with its impossible demands cannot be allowed to interfere with the progress of the country", but

he soon regained composure and began to reason with Jinnah, suavely, endlessly. After the League had passed the Pakistan resolution at Lahore, Gandhi wrote: "I admit that the step taken by the Muslim League at Lahore creates a baffling situation.... I know no non-violent method of compelling the obedience of eight crores of Muslims to the will of the rest of India, however powerful a majority the rest may represent. And the Muslims must have the same right of self-determination that the rest of India has. Thus, so far as I am concerned, my proposition that there is no Swaraj without communal unity holds as good today as when I first enunciated it in 1919.... I do not believe that Muslims, when it comes to a matter of actual decision, will ever want vivisection. Their good sense will prevent them. Their self-interest will deter them. Their religion will forbid the obvious suicide which the partition would mean. The two-nations theory is an untruth.... I feel deeply hurt over what is now going on in the name of the Muslim League. I should be failing in my duty if I did not warn the Muslims of India against the untruth that is being propagated amongst them". And again: "As a man of non-violence I cannot forcibly resist the proposed partition if the Muslims of India really insist upon it. But I can never be a willing party to the vivisection. I would employ every non-violent means to prevent it… Naturally, on an issue such as this there can be no arbitration. It is purely and simply a matter of self-determination". And finally: "I have never understood the reason behind the demand for the recognition by the Congress of the All-India Muslim League as the sole authoritative Muslim body. Why should such an admission be demanded or expected? How is it compatible with a genuine desire for a settlement? The Congress attempts to represent all but it has never demanded recognition as such from anybody. The all-India status has to be deserved. The Congress has never claimed that it represents the whole of Indian Muslims. It has not claimed to represent any single community wholly. But it does claim to represent every single national interest irrespective of class, caste, colour, or creed. My case is incredibly simple. I must not be called upon to make any admissions about the status of the League before thinking of unity through the League. I must not be disloyal to the Muslim nationalists however insignificant they may be considered to be". When early in 1941, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru tried to bring about a meeting between Gandhi

and Jinnah for the settlement of the communal problem, Jinnah refused to meet Gandhi unless he agreed to come forward as a representative of the Hindu community. Gandhi's comment was unusually penetrating: "My impression is that Jinnah does not want a settlement till he has so consolidated the League's position that he can dictate his terms to all the parties concerned including the Rulers." Later, Gandhi told Sapru: ''Mr. Jinnah says I can only talk to him as a Hindu for Hindus. I cannot do it. If 1 write to him that I want to meet him, he won't decline to meet me. But I know the result. He will immediately distort our meeting. You may have seen how he has distorted the present civil disobedience as anti-Muslim! "But Gandhi's last argument, on a close examination, was hardly sustainable. For Jinnah's contention had not been altogether without justification, and Gandhi had evidently forgotten what he had publicly stated not very long before: "There can be no civil resistance so long as, first, the Viceroy is exploring the possibilities of a settlement, secondly, the Muslim League blocks the way, and thirdly, there is indiscipline and disunity in Congress ranks. The second condition should not offend Muslim friends. So long as there is no workable arrangement with the Muslim League, civil resistance must involve resistance against the League. No Congressman can be party to it."* For Sir Tej Bahadur and the Non-Party Leaders Conferences convened by him in Bombay and Poona in March and July, 1941, Jinnah had no word of praise. He was convinced, though without good cause, that a concerted attempt was being made by Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha leaders through the medium of these conferences to secure the acceptance of their demands by the British Government in total disregard of the position of the Muslim League".

20. Among other critics in the Congress directorate of Jinnah and the Muslim League of his making were Rejendra Prasad, Rajagopalachariar, Vallabhbhai Patel and Nehru. Of these Rajendra Prasad was the most, and Nehru the least, accommodating. Rajagopalachariar advocated a middle course. Like Gandhi, in November 1939, he saw the limitations of Congress plans for direct action. He maintained that Congress must recognize that Muslims

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* The *Harijan*, dated November 11th 1939: "End of the Game of See-Saw".

were determined to stand apart from Hindus and unless Congress devised some programme of securing active Muslim co-operation, instead of arousing Muslim jealousy and opposition, a civil resistance movement would most likely be regarded as subtly directed against Muslims and would exacerbate communal relations. But when, some months later, Jinnah curtly refused to negotiate with Abul Kalam Azad, Rajagopalachariar wrote: "I am of the opinion that it is not advisable to approach the Muslim League with any proposal at the present moment. In any event, it is not possible for any Congressman to think of approaching Mr. Jinnah with any proposal so long as his offence to the Congress President stands un-purged". Patel's reading of the situation led him to declare, as early as October 1939, that Congress should take no initiative in placating the Muslim League. He said: "I think we are spoiling our case by making persistent approaches… I have a strong conviction that there can be no settlement of the communal question till Mr. Jinnah thinks that he cannot coerce the Congress". Nehru's attitude is best exemplified by two interesting extracts from his 1939 correspondence. In November, explaining the position to Rajendra Prasad, he observed: "Certain remarks of Bapu in a recent statement seem to be unfortunate. He said: 'We cannot have civil disobedience... so long as we have not come to an agreement on the Hindu-Muslim question'.... A positive statement of the kind made by Bapu really makes settlement and agreement far more difficult because it leads the other parties to feel that they have the key in their hands. Jinnah has... nothing to talk to us about except on the basis of Provincial and Central Governments. This we cannot do till a satisfactory declaration is made by the British Government. If, however, we say to him that we are going to do nothing in the nature of aggressive action till he agrees to it, he knows that he is in a dominant position and can play the tune". A month later, he informed Krishna Menon: "If Jinnah claims to represent the Muslims why is he afraid of an election by adult franchise for the Constituent Assembly on separate electorates?[**] What he is after now is to have a statutory provision to have Muslim League

** Jinnah strongly maintains that the Constituent Assembly method of framing a constitution is entirely unsuited to Indian conditions and cannot secure adequate protection of minority interests.

ministers in every cabinet. It is possible to have coalition cabinets by agreement, though a cabinet of this type will always create difficulties and prevent rapid progress. It will mean that there are two parties in the cabinet and this will inevitably bring in a third party as a kind of arbitrator. Under the present circumstances the third party as going to be the Governor. The whole idea of cabinet responsibility goes and the Governor stops in as the real boss. This idea of statutory coalition will mean the consolidation of the reactionary Muslim League elements and very great dissatisfaction in Congress and other circles. Jinnah has now asked for a Royal Commission to enquire into 'Congress atrocities'. I do not suppose there is the faintest chance of such a Commission being appointed, and in any event, we cannot accept such a thing. What Jinnah wants is not the investigation of any specific instances but a sitting in judgment on the whole administration of the Congress Provinces. Every effort made by us for an enquiry on any matter that he wanted, by judicial enquiry or otherwise, has been rejected. Fazlul Huq has also backed out of such an enquiry which he had himself suggested in a moment of excitement. Having done so, he now produces a long list of so-called atrocities. It is really astonishing and fantastic how these people behave". As for the possibility of a Congress settlement with Jinnah and the Muslim League, Nehru frankly did not believe in it.

21. Such was the general position of Congress League relations in July 1941 when the announcement was made of the enlargement of the Viceroy's Executive Council and the establishment of the National Defence Council and the Defence Advisory Committee to secure the increased association of important elements in India's public life with the supreme government of the country, with a view, among other things, of stimulating the country's war effort. The acceptance by the Muslim League Premiers of the Punjab, Bengal and Assam and some other League members of appointments on these bodies, without Jinnah's previous consent, came to Jinnah as a severe shock, and created a situation involving considerable danger to the organizational solidarity of the Muslim League. Jinnah saw in the new arrangements the hidden hand of Sir Sikandar Hyat Khan and, to a lesser degree, of Mr. Fazlul Huq, and he felt that the storm of revolt against his authority, which had been brewing in

some quarters for, some time past was at last about to break. His confidence in his ability to weather the storm was, however, to all appearances unshaken. But whether or not the recent developments have materially increased the chances of disruption of the Muslim League and the consequent weakening of its position in the fight against Congress, remains to be seen.

22. The picture, as it presents itself today, is now complete. The problem of Congress League relations is, in its essence, the political problem of India. For good or ill, the present direction of Indian political thought lies largely in the hands of the two great adversaries, Gandhi and Jinnah: vainglorious, determined, domineering men, impatient of opposition, clever in their various ways but completely obsessed with conflicting ideals which they are pursuing with an almost appalling relentlessness. Gandhi's stand is nationalistic, although Congress is primarily a Hindu organization; Jinnah's stand is essentially communal, although by his recent advocacy of "Dravidastan" as the homeland of the South Indian non-Brahmins, he has sought to 'impart a non-communal character to his separatist schemes. The first consideration of Gandhi, and of all Hindus, is the preservation of the territorial integrity of the country; the principal aim of Jinnah, and of many Muslims, is to resist the realisation of the Hindu conception of that unity. Organizationally, the Congress position is well-nigh unassailable, although fissiparous tendencies have been appearing of late and, as a result largely of Congress demission of office in Provinces and the present ineffective and ill-advised disobedience movement, the Congress (as distinct from Gandhi's) hold on the Country has weakened appreciably... The Muslim League, built up by Jinnah with infinite care from a dead-alive organization into a political body of first-class importance, lacks cohesion and unity of purpose and its hold on the community it represents is precarious, though by no means negligible. While the Muslim League, therefore, is at present in no position to damage Congress effectively, the best hope of Congress lies in a split in the Muslim League which will immediately lower, if not altogether destroy, its bargaining power *vis-à-vis* Congress as well as the British Government. Both Gandhi and Jinnah are playing for high stakes and whoever loses will lose heavily. Both want power for themselves and are contemptuous of

power, exercised by a third party; but each is mortally afraid of isolation by the other. Therefore, once the two protagonists are genuinely convinced that the British Government is determined to transfer real and substantial authority to Indian hands, a consideration of all available material suggests that they will probably not hesitate to abandon their present entrenched positions and to enter the field of negotiation and adjustment immediately the contest for power starts. Whether Gandhi or Jinnah will come out on top in the ensuing fight for political ascendancy depends on circumstances which cannot at present be foreseen.