
CHAPTER-II

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The spectacular success of the Congress in the elections of 1937 especially when contrasted with the miserable performance of the Muslim League - was not only galling to the pride of the leaders of the Muslim League, but it also disturbed many of their comfortable assumptions. While the Congress leaders occupied the centre of the political stage in India in 1937 and decided the fates of ministries, M.A. Jinnah and his colleagues in the Muslim League were in the political wilderness, sadly learning the lessons of their debacle and struggling hard to check their small following from defecting to the Congress.

The poor showing by the Muslim League in the elections was neither surprising nor unexpected. The League was essentially an urban-based political party and had little or no contact with the masses in 1937. It has been pointed out by Khaliqzaman that from its birth in 1906 the League's activities were always confined to 'indoor political shows.' He further writes: 'Even its annual sessions were held either in well decorated pandals or in big halls where a few honourable invites were allowed by special cards. Mass public meetings were

unknown.¹ In 1937, the year which marked the beginning of the 'parting of the ways' between the Congress and the League, it was claimed by some Congressmen that the Congress had more Muslim members on its rolls than its Muslim rival. It is also perhaps true that Gandhiji and Nehru were better known to the Muslim masses than was Jinnah.²

The lessons of the 1937 elections were clear and unmistakable and the Muslim League did not fail to learn them. From its Lucknow session onwards the League made determined and ultimately successful efforts to build up a more populist image. So building a mass party became the Quaid-i-Azam's primary occupation during 1938 and 1939. From its winter session at Lucknow in 1937 to the spring League meeting at Lahore in 1940, the Muslim League's membership multiplied from a few thousand to well over half a million. Membership dues were dropped after Lucknow to half the purely nominal four anna fee charged by Congress, inviting any Muslim of India with two annas to his name to join the All India Muslim League. The League's constitution was revised in many other ways as well and modernised into a vehicle of mass national capability under its inspiring new great leader.³

1. Khaliquzzaman, Pathway to Pakistan, p. 137.

2. The Pioneer (Lucknow), 26 Sept. 1937.

3. Stanley Wolpert, Jinnah of Pakistan, p.155.

In 1937 provincial elections the electorate had given the Congress confidence in ample measure, and the Congressmen were naturally jubilant. The successful operation of the new constitution would largely depend on the Congress's attitude; it was in a position to assume ministerial responsibilities in seven provinces. Therefore as soon as the election results were known, the question of whether or not the Congress would accept office came to a head. The Congress, while it had contested the elections, was still undecided about the acceptance of office, but a decision could no longer be delayed since the British Government had announced its intention of inaugurating the provincial part of the constitution on 1 April, 1937. There were two options open to the Congress in the wake of its electoral victory. The first was to work the constitution and press for such modifications, within the frame-work of the Act, as would commend themselves to progressive Indian opinion. This was the policy adopted by the Indian Liberal Party. In doing so the Liberals were acting logically because they were committed to a policy of striving for independence constitutionally. But could the Congress take the same view? The answer, it seemed at first, had to be no. The Congress had long given up its belief in constitutionalism and had embraced direct action by a mass movement as its policy. 'Direct action' and 'Constitutionalism' were incompatible. The Congress could not honestly profess its

faith in the former if it agreed to accept office. Refusal by the Congress to accept office would have been a natural policy: it would have forced the governors to carry on the administration by the exercise of their emergency powers which were given to them under the new Act.

Throughout India a wave of speculation followed the election results. Opinion within the Congress was divided and naturally coloured by local successes or failures. 'The attraction of the Congress in Madras', Dr.C.J.Baker confirms, 'depended very much on its potential for capturing the new positions of powers that were becoming available.'⁴ Congress failure was followed, predictably by strong opposition to the constitution, as for example in Bengal and the Punjab, two provinces where the Congress could not have any hope of forming ministries.⁵ In provinces such as Bihar, Bombay, Central Provinces and Madras, the views of the delegates tended to reflect a desire to assume office.⁶ The U.P., the home province of Nehru, despite a Congress majority in the provincial legislature, decided against an acceptance of office.⁷

4. Baker, C.J., Politics of South India, 1920-37, pp. 294-5.

5. Pioneer, 19 Feb. 1937.

6. Leader, 20 Feb. 1937.

7. A.W.Rixon, 'The office Acceptance Issue and the U.P. Congress: February-July 1937', (MA Thesis, University of Sussex, 1968), pp.27-8.cited in G.Rizvi, Linlithgow and India, p.30.

The All India Congress Committee was thus faced with the problem of placating Congressmen throughout India. But opinion within the Congress Working Committee was itself divided. Gandhi and the 'Moderates', who seemed to be in effective control of the party, maintained that by accepting ministerial responsibilities the Congress could improve its position in the fight against the new constitution. They argued with some truth that, if the Congress declined to accept office, it would surrender the advantage to the government, or to the parties opposed to the Congress. Many Congressmen believed that, despite its many inadequacies, the constitution could be used to serve the masses. Dr.K.M. Munshi, the Congress leader from Bombay, clearly saw such possibilities: "I had little doubt that, if the Act were worked properly, the transition to full fledged Dominion status for the whole of India would have been easy, with the executives in the provinces being made responsible to their respective legislature."⁸ Moreover many other, basically 'moderate', men within the Congress were also keen to take office: the lure of power is always great, and some were genuinely anxious to implement the social and agrarian reforms promised in the election manifesto which, they knew, bore more closely on the lives of the

8. K.M.Munshi, Pilgrimage to Freedom (Bombay, 1967),i.41-2.

ordinary people than the struggle for constitutional changes and independence.⁹ Those who were in favour of accepting office began to press Gandhi to support their effort.¹⁰

The Madras Congress in particular was anxious to form a ministry and began to flood the AICC with copies of resolutions passed by the various Congress gatherings urging the Congress to accept office.¹¹ S.Satyamurthi had been campaigning for a 'return to a Council strategy' ever since it had been abandoned in 1929; and C. Raja Gopalachari, leader of the Congress party in Madras, had stated: 'My own view is that ... as much benefit should be wrung out of the Councils as possible for strengthening the prestige and position of the Congress.'¹²

But despite their desire to accept office, many Congress men were genuinely apprehensive and their minds were torn by alternating hopes and fears. They were suspicious of the honesty of British intentions and believed that 'special powers' might be used to keep real

9. Rixon, 'The Office Acceptance Issue', p.18 cited in G.Rizvi. op.cit., p.38.

10. Munshi, Pilgrimage, p.43.

11. Baker, Politics of South India, p.314.

12. Rajagopalacharito R.Prasad, cited in Baker, Politics of India, p.294.

power in the hands of the British governors. Allied with this suspicion was the fear that members of the Indian Civil Service might try to obstruct the Congress reform programmes.¹³

Nehru and the left wing group were strongly opposed to taking office, on the grounds that to participate in a British controlled administration would be a fatal compromise of the Congress position and a betrayal of the nationalist movement. They believed that the Congress would have to bear the odium of forming a government under the constitution without securing real relief for the people; and that the Congress would go the way of the 'moderate parties' by ceasing to be revolutionary organisation.¹⁴ They distrusted the moderate group's cautious 'constitutionalism', and were afraid that, once in office, the ministers would tend to cooperate with the conservative industrial and landlord interests, and would become luke-warm towards nationalist agitation. Involvement in reformist activity would mean

13. P.J.Griffiths, The British Impact on India (London, 1952), p.337.

14. See Nehru's speeches at Lucknow and Faizpur, I.A.R. 1936; 271-74 and Ibid, ii 226-28; for the attitude of the Congress Socialist Party - the left wing group of the Congress see S.C.Bose, The Indian Struggle 1920-42 (London, reprint, 1964), pp.328-9.

relegating the freedom struggle to the background. The initiative would thus pass from masses, and the activities of the Congress would be confined to the limited sphere of the council chambers.¹⁵ Nehru maintained that the whole policy would be inconsistent with the declared policy of entering the legislature only to destroy the constitution. 'To accept office and ministry is to negative our rejection of it and to stand self-condemned.'¹⁶

A 'National Convention' of the Congress was held at Delhi in March, after the election results had been declared, in order to decide the issue. Nehru urged that the Congress should refuse to accept office, force the Governors to form minority ministries, defeat such ministries by a vote of no confidence (thereby forcing an impasse which would oblige the Governors to resort to 'Section 93')¹⁷ and thus demonstrate the failure of the constitution. Many of the delegates, however, apparently anxious to assume ministerial offices and press ahead with 'constructive work', were little impressed by these some-

15. Jawaharlal Nehru, The Unity of India (London), 1941) p.60.

16. Statesman, (Calcutta) 16 April, 1937.

17. Section 93 of the 1935 Act provided that if the Governor of a province was satisfied that a situation had arisen in which government could not be 'carried on in accordance with the provisions, of the Act', he might, by proclamation, 'assume to himself all or any of the powers vested in or exercisable by any Provincial body or authority.'

what dubious arguments. Thus the convention at once revealed a sharp division of opinion between the 'moderates' and 'left wing'. Even amongst the 'moderates' who were willing to accept office, opinion varied regarding the approach to be taken. One section wanted to accept office provided an assurance was given by the Governors that they would not use their 'special powers'. The second group held that, since it was believed that the Governors would not wish the Congress ministries to remain in office for a long time, the initial attempt of the Congress ministries should be directed towards ameliorative measures, and that as their work developed conflict with the executive should be precipitated.¹⁸ Both groups, however, were unanimous that the Congress ministries should cooperate with the Governors but rather attempt to override them, and that, should any Governor invoke his 'special powers' against a ministry, it should resign.

On 18 March, after prolonged discussion, the moderates, backed by Gandhi were able to carry a resolution permitting the acceptance of office. The resolution, however, contained a rider; office would be accepted only if the governors gave an assurance that they would not use their 'special powers' or set aside the

18. Statesman, 4 March, 1937.

advice of the ministers in regard to 'constitutional activities.'¹⁹ Thus 'conditional clause' was an astute Gandhian device for patching up the differences within the Congress and presenting a united front against the government: the permission to accept office was given to pacify the moderates and the condition was imposed to placate the left wing.

The AICC decision provided Jinnah with an opportunity to renew his offer of cooperation with Congress ministries. The election results proved that neither the Congress nor the League could claim to represent Muslims. But the success of the Congress in the general constituencies showed its popularity at the all India level; for the Muslim League, the future did not appear very promising as it had failed to capture a majority of the Muslim votes; and more significantly, it was not in a position to form a government on its own in any province. This realization lay behind the almost conciliatory posture taken up by Jinnah after the elections. He therefore expressed the League's willingness to cooperate 'with any group or party if the basic principles are determined by common consent.'²⁰ Jinnah's position in March 1937 was an unenviable one. Not

19. Gwyer and Appadorai, Speeches and Documents, i. pp. 392-3 Statesman, 18 March, 1937.

20. Leader, 1 March, 1937.

only had the Muslim League failed to capture a majority of Muslim votes; there were few signs of the Muslim unity which Jinnah had tried to build up since 1934, as provincial Muslim leaders of the League were showing no interest in a united Muslim front and some Leaguers were even suggesting that it would be better if the Congress and the Muslim League could reach some sort of understanding.²¹ Jinnah, therefore, had to reconcile his personal antagonism towards the Congress with the conciliatory mood of the League towards it, as well as of the need of the League to cooperate with it, without appearing to be confessing the League's weakness and swallowing his pride. This is illustrated by a statement in which he said there was no difference between the Congress and the 'Moslems' except that the latter stood for the establishment of the rights of the minority community, while at the same time he attacked Congress propaganda which, he said, had no other object than capturing votes.

Jinnah skilfully veiled his apprehension about the future of the League as he persisted in upholding its separate identity. He exhorted the Muslims to rally round the Muslim League banner.²² It was not possible for

21. Leader, 16 March, 1937.

22. Leader, 22 March, 1937.

Muslims and Hindus to merge their identities; and while it was not feasible for them to march together towards the goal of freedom, he did not want Muslims to do this to please every particular person or organization. He did not want them to be camp followers but to be in the vanguard.²³

Nehru was not inclined to respond sympathetically to Jinnah's call and his terms, for cooperation, especially at the time when he felt confident that the Congress itself could win over the Muslim masses on the basis of economic issues. The Congress was not interested in pacts with a few persons representing communal organisations, 'with no common political background, meeting together and discussing and quarrelling.'²⁴ Clearly, Nehru, whether or not he saw the motives behind Jinnah's cautious overtures to the Congress, turned them down.

Jinnah's consternation was not eased by the attempts being made by some members of the Muslim League parliamentary board in the U.P. for cooperation between the Congress and the League in the province. Discussions between G.B.Pant and Khaliquzzaman, leader of the provincial M.L.P.B., started almost as soon as the elections were over, and were encouraged by 'the amicable

23. Leader, 24 March, 1937.

24. 'The Congress and Muslims', 4 April 1937, E.M.I.I., p.161.

manner' in which the elections had been fought by both the Congress and League.²⁵ For during the elections there had not been much conflict between the two parties, and in some places they had cooperated against the National Agriculturist Party. The Congress had supported the Muslim League candidate, where there was no Congress Muslim candidate, 'if he was not an obvious reactionary.'²⁶

Uncertainty prevailed in Muslim League ranks in the U.P. after the elections. Some Muslim Leaguers were sympathetic to the 'interim' government headed by Chhatari.²⁷ While Khaliqazzaman spurned an offer to join it. Pant reportedly offered the League two seats in a possible Congress Ministry²⁸ and earned Nehru's displeasure.²⁹ At a time when he stressed the need for

25. Khaliquzzaman, Pathway to Pakistan, p.153; see also note by Donaldson dated 14 Aug. 1940, Reforms office file 89/40-R referred to hereafter as Donaldson.

26. Nehru to R.Prasad, 21 July 1937, NC, Vol.85, and Donaldson.

27. Chhatari was invited by the British to form an 'interim' government in the U.P. following the Congress refused to form a ministry in the province because it had not received an assurance from the Governor that he would not interfere in the working of the ministry.

28. Haig to Linlithgow, 7 April, 1937, H.C. Vol.17A.

29. Nehru to Pant, 30 March 1937, AICC File E.I., 1936-37 p.7.

unity and discipline among Congress legislative parties,³⁰ the Congress objectives of independence and mass betterment,³¹ Nehru was not inclined to support moves for pacts with communal organizations which had no common political and economic policy, were dominated by reactionaries, and looked to the British for favours.³² Nehru thus rebuffed the overtures of the League for a Congress-League ministry, even as he chided Congressmen who talked 'in terms of pacts and compromises with Muslims or other religious groups.'³³

The negotiations between Pant and Khaliquzzaman did not get off to a very promising start. On 2 April Pant informed Nehru that he had received not definite response to a suggestion made by him that nationalist Muslims join the Congress actively both inside and outside the legislature.³⁴

Meanwhile, the manoeuvres of Khaliquzzaman for a Congress-League settlement on the one hand; the announcement of the Congress Muslim mass contact programme on the other, created some consternation in the U.P.

30. EMII, p.126

31. Ibid., p.157.

32. Ibid., p.160.

33. Ibid., p.157.

34. Pant to Nehru, NC, 2 April 1937, Vol.79.

Muslim League. Many provincial Leaguers were alarmed at the political implications of the Congress programme, and it was believed that a majority of them were not likely to support Khaliquzzaman's overtures to the Congress. Even as Khaliquzzaman wavered between taking the risk of being defeated in the Muslim League³⁵ and fulfilling his ambition of securing a ministerial post in a Congress government, a majority of the members of the U.P. Muslim League appeared willing to take a lead from Jinnah.³⁶ Jinnah now made open his opposition to Khaliquzzaman's flirtation with the Congress. '...I want to make it clear', he admonished Khaliquzzaman, 'that it will be useless for any individual or individuals to effectively carry the Muslims behind them if any settlement is arrived at with a particular group of even.. with the whole province. I say that it is a pity that these round about efforts are being made. The only object of it can be create some differences between Mussalmans.'³⁷

Jinnah's warning went home. On 7 May, 1937, at a meeting of the U.P. Muslim League at which he was also present, it was decided that the Muslim League would not

35. Haig to Linlithgow, 23 April, 1937, H.C.Vol.17A.

36. Haig to Linlithgow, 7 May, 1937, ibid.

37. Leader, 10 May 1937.

merge with the Congress or lose its independence either inside or outside the legislature. Khaliqzaman was asked to make it plain to the Congress that Muslim Leagues would not accept Congress decisions on matters affecting the communal award.³⁸ A resolution was passed which emphasized the differences in the aims of the Congress and the League. It said that the Muslim League party in the legislature could not and should not join the Congress in its policy of wrecking the constitution.³⁹ The resolution was considered a personal triumph of Jinnah. Khaliqzaman accepted the situation.⁴⁰

The animosity displayed by the Muslim League towards the Congress on the occasion of the Bundelkhand by-election symbolised 'the alarm that has been caused among the Muslims generally by the Congress attempts to capture the Muslim masses,' the strong feeling among them 'that if the community is to retain its individuality, no efforts must be spared in resisting the attempts of the Congress to absorb them.'⁴¹

38. Bombay Chronicle, 8 May, 1937.

39. Leader, 10 May 1937.

40. Haig to Linlithgow, 8 May 1937, H.C.Vol.17A.

41. Haig to Linlithgow, 24 May 1937, ibid.

Jinnah now demonstrated his strategy for survival. On 30 June, 1937, a statement, allegedly written by him, appeared in the Urdu newspaper Khilafat, which made a frankly communal appeal to the Muslim voter: '...Mussalmans should unite among themselves as they have been ordered to do by God and his Prophet... Thank God our efforts are proving fruitful. Our success and progress is becoming an eye-sore to the enemies of Islam. They want to frighten and bully us. Their putting up a candidate for the by-election from Bundelkhand in opposition to the Muslim League is also one of such efforts.'

Jinnah denied authorship of the statement⁴² but it is significant that he did not condemn the exploitation of religious sentiments for political ends. Meanwhile, Shaukat Ali raised the cry of 'Islam in danger'. Exhorting Muslims to vote for Refiuddin, Shaukat Ali said, 'Do it in the name of Islam in the name of religion and its honour'.⁴³

Nehru was shocked at the tactics of the League - 'this is communalism in excels'⁴⁴ - even as he was determined that the Congress must face the challenge with all its strength.⁴⁵ But even Nehru urged that the

42. Bombay Chronicle, 2 July 1937.

43. N.C.Part II, File 114, p.8, from extract entitled 'Maulana Shaukat Ali Sahib', pp.6-8.

44. Bombay Chronicle, 1 July 1937.

45. Nehru to Kidwai, 1 July 1937, AICC file G-61,1937, p.213.

Congress should approach the Muslim electorate in Bundelkhand 'on economic lines'.

The Muslim League emerged victorious at Bundelkhand. The success of the Muslim League was a personal triumph for Jinnah. But its real significance lay in the nature of the League's challenge to the Congress.

Even as the battle for Bundelkhand was on, Khaliquzzaman and Ismail Khan approached Pant with the question of seats in a possible Congress Ministry in the U.P. Azad and other members of Congress Working Committee disliked the bargaining for seats in the ministry. Yet the Congress Working Committee were willing to consider the proposal as it held out the possibility of the winding up of the Muslim League in the U.P. and its absorption in the Congress; which would undoubtedly clear the political field of communal troubles. It would also 'knock over the British Government which relied so much on these troubles.'

But stringent conditions were offered to the U.P. Muslim League parliamentary group, and it was decided that Khaliquzzaman and Ismail would be taken into a Congress ministry only if they accepted all of them.⁴⁶

46. Nehru to Prasad, 21 July 1937, N.C. Vol.85.

The Congress expected Muslim Leaguers to abide by decisions taken by the Congress party both inside and outside the legislatures, and called for the dissolution of the Muslim League would support Congress candidates during by-elections. Members of the Board also be bound by any Congress decision to resign from the legislature or from the ministry.⁴⁷

Khaliquzzaman writes that he rejected the terms, which, to him, meant signing 'the death warrant' of the provincial Muslim League Parliamentary Board as well as of the Muslim League organization.⁴⁸

Khaliquzzaman writes that a few days later on 24 July, Azad presented him with a modified version of the conditions laid down by the Congress for a coalition. Khaliquzzaman then demanded that 'the Muslim League party members in the U.P. Assembly will be free to vote in accordance with their conscience, on communal matters', which would include religion, religious ceremonies, languages, culture, services, etc.'⁴⁹ The Congress refused to accept such a provision, as it would have given the League a communal veto on many matters, and thus the possibility of a Congress-League coalition in the U.P. ended.

47. Khaliquzzaman, Pathway to Pakistan, p.161.

48. Ibid., p.161.

49. Khaliquzzaman, Pathway to Pakistan, pp.162-3.

According to Maulana Azad, the negotiations foundered when Nehru, with his 'theoretical bias' turned down Khaliquzzaman's proposal to include both himself and Ismail Khan in the U.P.Ministry.⁵⁰ But Nehru does not seem to have been directly involved in the negotiations, or even been fully informed of all that had taken place since March, until the beginning of July.⁵¹ In any case, as Nehru himself pointed out, he alone was not responsible for the final decision. G.B.Pant, Rafi Ahmad Kidwai⁵² and Azad⁵³, among others, were also instrumental in arriving at the decision not to form a coalition with the League. From Wardha, Gandhi signalled his approval of the terms of the Congress offer to the League.⁵⁴ There was also no necessity for the Congress to form a coalition with any party as it had a clear majority in the U.P. It was, in fact, the League which got valuable assistance from the Congress in the elections the direct benefits of the

50. M.A.K.Azad, India Wins Freedom. (New York, 1960), pp.187-8.

51. Nehru to Prasad, 21 July 1937, NC Vol.85.

52. The Hindu, 8 February, 1959.

53. Azad had opposed a Congress-League pact even in March, Nehru to Abdul Walli, 30 March 1937, AICC file G-5 (K.W) (v) 1937, p.139. It is clear (Nehru to Prasad 21 July 1937) that he was a party to the final decision not to form a coalition with the Muslim League.

54. Gandhi to Nehru, 22 July 1937, NC Vol.25.

electoral understanding went to the League.⁵⁵

Whatever the reasons of failure, the main significance of the failure of the negotiations for a Congress-League coalition in the U.P. was that it provided the Muslim League with excellent propaganda material to 'expose' the 'Hindu' bias of the Congress. Disagreements with the League on political and economic issues were made to imply that the Congress was biased against Muslims as a community. Jinnah alleged that the Congress had, 'by their words, deeds and programme shown, more and more, that the Mussalmans cannot expect any justice or fair play at their hands. Wherever they were in a majority and whatever it suited them, they refused to co-operate with the Muslim League parties, and demanded unconditional surrender and the signing of their pledges'.⁵⁶

Nevertheless, the failure to form a coalition ministry in the United Provinces has been the subject of much controversy. Sir Penderal Moon maintains that had Congress not refused to form an alliance with the Muslim League, the course of Indian history might have been different. He regards this failure as the 'fons et origo malorum' and argues that the Congress leaders were

55. Donaldson.

56. Pirzada, Documents, p. 267.

'responsible thought quite unwittingly' for the critical change in the Muslims' sentiment from readiness to contemplate cooperation in all-India federation to insistence upon separation. The Congress 'passionately desired to preserve the unity of India. They consistently acted so as to make its partition certain'.⁵⁷ Ian Stephens, a former editor of The Statesman, shares this view: 'The effect of this, simultaneously on many Muslim minds throughout India was a lightening flash. What had before been guessed at, now leapt forth in a horridly clear outline. The Congress, a Hindu dominated body was bent on the Muslims eventual absorption.'⁵⁸

This is to make a mountain of a molehill. The failure to form coalition ministry in the United Province may have annoyed some Muslim Leaguers, but it was too trivial an event to set in motion currents which have determined the course of Indian history.⁵⁹ There were other, more deep-rooted causes for the League's hostility to the Congress; the issue of coalition was used largely as a facade to cover up the real motives. These we examine below.

57. Penderel Moon, Divide and Quit, (London,1995), p.14.

58. Ian Stephens, Pakistan, (London,1963), p.76.

59. A Prased, Rafi Ahmad Kidwai, (London,1965), pp.35-36.

After the disastrous defeat in the 1936-37 elections and failure of coalition talks in the United Provinces in the summer of 1937, Jinnah was faced with the hard reality that his party scarcely figured on the political map of India. But Jinnah was not the man to accept defeat. For him the moral of the 1936 elections was the necessity of building up the Muslim League as the spokesman of the Muslim. In this task he was helped not only by the course of events and the policies of both the Congress and the British Government, but also by his skilful strategy. 'In politics', he said, 'one has to play one's game as on the chess board'.⁶⁰ In his strategy the first was to consolidate the Muslim League.

Since it would take time before it could become a strong rival to the Congress, the Muslim League should not be in a hurry to reach a settlement. Jinnah held that since the ultimate power was with the British, it was they who could confer and transfer power: he did not need to come to terms with the Congress. Meanwhile the best course open to the League was to consolidate its own organisation and only then negotiate with the Congress

60. Star of India, 31 Dec. 1938.

from a position of strength.

For acquiring this position of strength, Jinnah was ready to resort to any method without considering its dangerous consequences for the country and its people. Jinnah had to survive and emerge from the dismal, disarrayed and disorganisational state of affairs of Muslim politics. He had to protect and prevent his followers from defection. Zamindars who were the main followers of League were to be protected and to create the new following for him. So he declared war against the Congress and inculcated a strong communal feeling among his followers to create a psyche of fear among Muslims.

But power and strength could not be built up until Jinnah had gained a foothold in the Muslim majority provinces which was first of his strategy for consolidation of Muslim League. His ability to achieve this depended on the position of provincial muslim politicians, rather than on the strength of any communal sentiment. In Bengal, no single party had obtained a majority in the elections. As leader of the largest single group, (Krishak Proja Party), Fazlul Huq had some difficulty in forming a ministry. The provincial Congress

was willing to form a coalition with him,⁶¹ but the Congress high command called a halt to the negotiations because of Huq's refusal to promise that his government would release political prisoners. Huq then turned to an assortment of groups - the Hindu Nationalist Group, the Europeans and the Scheduled Caste for support. The family of his old adversary, the Nawab of Dacca, was given three posts in the ministry.⁶²

The accommodation with Dacca and his group lost Huq the support of a radical group in the Krishak Proja Party (K.P.P.), led by Nausher Ali and Shamsuddin, who crossed the floor of the House. Deserted by a section of his own followers, Huq now made overtures to the League, which was the largest single muslim group in the Assembly. Declaring that 'no problem... relating to the administration of India can be solved without the League',⁶³ he successfully wooed Jinnah in order to ensure the support of the provincial League for his ministry. At the Lucknow session of the League, he rounded on the

61. John Gallagher, 'The Congress in Bengal: The Period of Decline 1930-1939', Modern Asian Studies, 7,7,1993 p.643.

62. Zaidi, Introduction to Jinnah Ispahani Correspondence, p.26.

63. IAR, 1938, Vol.I, p.377.

Congress in terms that could have done credit to Jinnah himself. Acceptance of Congress offers, said Huq would have meant signing 'with my own hands the death warrant of Islam'. Coalition with the Congress could only be 'on such terms as amount to the virtual effacement of the Muslims as a separate political entity'.⁶⁴

But the strains were never far from the surface in this political marriage of convenience. Ispahani, one of Jinnah's most loyal lieutenants in Bengal, complained that the moment the ministry was formed, 'the League was shelved. No meeting of the League Board or Party, no League whips, leaders or other office bearers'.⁶⁵ Yet Jinnah himself believed rightly that he could only strengthen his hand through compromise and patience. He had no intention of throwing away the gains his alliance with Huq had brought him. 'You must not mix up the aims we have with the achievements. The aims are not achieved immediately, they are laid down. But I think, on the whole, Bengal has done well and we must be thankful for small mercies. As you go on, of course with patience and tact, things are bound to develop and improve more and more in accordance with our ideals and aims'.⁶⁶

64. Ibid., p.386.

65. Ispahani to Jinnah, 23 July 1937, Jinnah-Ispahani Correspondent, p.83.

66. Jinnah to Ispahani, 4 April 1937, Ibid., p.81.

Why Sikandar Hyat Khan joined up with Jinnah at the Lucknow session of the League is not quite clear. Sikandar himself was known to have little sympathy with the 'virulent communalism' of the League. But sympathy for the League of a section of Muslim Unionists, caused by their alarm that the Congress would have no regard for the 'position of muslims' in a federal government, persuaded Sikandar, in the interests of maintaining unity within the party, to join the Muslim League.⁶⁷ It is also possible that Sikandar saw the growing strength of the Congress as a threat to his own political interests. Ahmad Yar Khan Daulatana, Chief Parliamentary Secretary of the Unionist Party, said that Congress attempts to organize a Muslim Mass Contact Campaign in the Punjab would open a fresh chapter of communal controversy,⁶⁸ as it would attack one of the bases of Unionist strength.

The path to an understanding with the Unionists was not a smooth one for Jinnah. Sikandar wanted the Unionists to control the League's parliamentary board in the Punjab and also the finances of the League.⁶⁹ Whether he achieved this objective is not known, but it was not until April 1938 that Muslim Unionist actually signed the membership forms of the League.⁷⁰ The understanding

67. P.Moon, Divide and Quit, p.17.

68. Bombay Chronicle, 8 May, 1937.

69. Iqbal to Jinnah, 10 November, G.Allana, Pakistan Movement: Historic Documents, 2nd edition (Lahore,1968), pp. 148-9.

70. Emerson to Linlithgow, 12 April 1938, Linlithgow Collection, Vol.86.

appears to have been that Jinnah would not interfere in provincial politics, while he would speak for Muslims at the all India level.⁷¹

Ikram Ali Malik in his book traces the background of Sikandar-Jinnah Pact somewhat rationally. He pointed out that in the elections of 1936, the Unionists won 96 out of 175 seats, thus gaining a clear majority in the Assembly, but Sikandar formed a coalition cabinet with three Muslims, two Hindus, and one Sikh. He left the choice of non-muslim representatives to the non-Muslim members and did not attempt to impose on them persons of his or his party's choice... At the elections, the Unionist Party had opposed the Muslim League, but when, after assumption of office, the Congress refused to take true Muslim representatives into cabinets and there was great bitterness amongst Muslims all over country. Sikandar joined hands with the Quaid-i-Azam. The Punjab Premier and the Quaid-i-Azam came to a compromise and at the Lucknow session of the All India Muslim League, the former announced that he was advising all the Muslim members of the Unionist Party in the Punjab to join the League.⁷²

71. Emerson to Linlithgow, 21 October 1937, Linlithgow Collection Vol.113.

72. Ikram Ali Malik, A Book of Readings on the History of the Punjab, 1799-1947, pp.483-484.

M.A.H. Ispahani in his book Quaid-i-Azam As I knew Him, has taken a completely different view of Sikandar's action. According to him Sikandar Hyat, "with his Unionist followers, joined the Muslim League not out of deep conviction but merely as a matter of necessity.. As an astute politician, Sikandar realized the potential danger to his ministry. He knew that the Unionist Ministry by itself could not withstand the tide of Congress totalitarianism unless he secured the support of a Muslim organization functioning on an all India plan".⁷³

There seems, however, no basis for the view that in October, 1937 "the tide of Congress totalitarianism" posed a threat to the Unionist ministry in the Punjab. The elections had been fought only a year earlier, and the poor show of the Congress in the Punjab indicated the extent of threat from that direction. Indeed, by joining the Muslim League the Unionists ran a greater and more immediate risk of alienating a large block of Hindu supporters. Sikandar adroitly avoided this.⁷⁴ But Jinnah shrewdly persuaded Sikandar for the coalition with Muslim League.

73. M.A.H.Ispahani, Quaid-i-Azam As I Knew Him, quoted in Ibid, p.484.

74. Ikram Ali Malik, op.cit., p.485.

The arrangements arrived at Lucknow were in the nature of compromise, and involved advantages as well as disadvantages to both parties. It was not a one-sided affair, but judging by hindsight and dispassionately, the greater beneficiary seems to have been the Muslim League. It gained the prestige of being associated with the ruling group in an area where power was worshipped. Extensive contacts were established between the League leadership and the landed aristocracy which dominated the Punjab politics at that time and ultimately the League found powerful recruits even in the leading Unionist families, like Sardar Shaukat Hyat Khan (son of Sikandar), Nawab of Mamdot (son of Sir Shah Nawaz of Mamdot) and Mian Mumtaz Daultana (son of Nawab Ahmad Yarkhan Daultana). Ultimately, the League leaders were able to have a successful showdown with the Unionists. It is not without reason that Sikandar is not popular amongst the Unionist diehards who consider Sikandar-Jinnah pact to have been "the beginning of the ends".⁷⁵ On the other hand Jinnah got importance and power at the national level for he had gained a foothold in the one of the most important Muslim majority provinces.

75. Ibid., p.493.

The NWFP remained a Congress province; Allah Baksh would not subscribe to the communalism of the League in Sind; but the arrangements with Huq and Sikandar enabled Jinnah to assert that 'The All-India Muslim League has now come to live and play its just part in the world of Indian politics; and the sooner this is realised and reckoned with, the better it will be for all interests concerned'. Jinnah, however, remained aware that the League was not in a position to bargain on its own terms with the Congress. 'An honourable settlement can only be achieved between equals; and unless the two parties learn to respect and fear each other, there is no solid ground for any settlement. Offers of peace by the weaker party always means a confession of weakness, and an invitation to aggression...politics means power and not relying only on cries of justice or fair play or goodwill'.⁷⁶

The League session held at Lucknow in October 1937 was itself a striking proof of its growing strength. Provincial leaders who had fought elections on the tickets of their own organizations now joined it. This session was attended by Sir Muhammad Saadullah, Fazlul Huq and Sir Sikandar Hyat Khan, the Premiers of Assam, Bengal and the Punjab, who had previously refused to come to terms with Jinnah. Jinnah's prestige was further enhanced by the

76. Pirzada, Documents, p.280.

conclusion of the Sikandar-Jinnah pact under which the Muslim members of the Unionist Party in the Punjab joined the Muslim League and agreed to accept its policy in 'all-India' matters; in return Jinnah consented to refrain from interfering in the affairs of the Punjab.⁷⁷

Linlithgow informed the Secretary of State for India about the Lucknow session of Muslim League. He expressed both apprehension and comfortable hopes: "An important meeting of the League was held at Lucknow in the latter part of October 1937... The Premier of the Punjab announced his decision to advise all Muslim members of the Unionist Party in the Punjab to join the League and sign its creed. This move was as surprising as it was important, as previous approaches from Mr. Jinnah had been turned down by the Unionist Party. Bengal premier subsequently issued a similar statement of adherence to the League. The League has undoubtedly gained strength as a result of these decisions and is making rapid strides in extending its organisation. The result may be to accentuate communal bitterness, but the appearance in the political field of a new and powerful all-India party would do much to qualify the monopoly which Congress by virtue of their superior organization have hitherto enjoy".⁷⁸ In another telegram linlithgow reported that

77. G.Rizvi, Linlithgow and India, p.96

78. Linlithgow to Zetland, 26th Nov.1937, Linlithgow Collection.

'the power of the Congress has met with a serious challenge in another direction owing to the success of the Muslim League in extending its influence. The League has made rapid strides in extending its membership and has recently succeeded against Congress candidates in three Muslims bye-election in UP'.⁷⁹

There were other, more deep rooted causes and factors behind the success of the Muslim League in extending its influence. These we must now examine. The provincial elections of 1936 had marked a turning point in the political development of the United Provinces. Prior to this time politics in the United provinces had been dominated by the landlords. The landlords were accustomed to the old political conventions of the United Provinces for a period when the franchise was restricted to a small privileged groups; and politics had been conducted on the assumption that the established hierarchy and landlord system were to remain undisturbed for a long, long time to come. But the 1935 Act not only extended the franchise to a very large population but also failed to provide that preferential treatment for the Zamindars which they had hitherto been used to.⁸⁰

79. Linlithgow to Zetland, 21st Jan. 1938, Ibid.

80. P.D.Reeves, B.D.Graham and J.M.Goodman (eds), A Handbook of Elections in Uttar Pradesh, 1920-51 (Delhi, 1975), p. LXVII.

The electoral contest had therefore involved a conflict about the very nature of the political system of the province. The defeat of the National Agriculturist Party, the party of the landlords, signified the eclipse of the landlords and the end of their political power. Coupled with the Congress's onslaught against the Zamindari, the economic depression of 1929-34 also helped to undermine the authority and influence of the landlords. In those years, long-standing tenant grievances about rents, security of tenure, exactions of illegal payments and forced labour were sharpened by the difficulties caused by the slump in prices for agricultural produce; as a result tenants were drawn into political movements which promised support for their economic claims. The most important of these movements was the Congress's civil disobedience movement of the early 1930's, which in the United Provinces took the shape of a 'no rent' campaign.⁸¹ Thus the growing strength of the nationalist movement and constitutional reforms, together with a period of economic depression, ushered in a new and dangerous era of political activity which threatened the very existence of the landlords.

81. S.Gopal, The Viceroyalty of Lord Irwin (Oxford, 1957) Ch. V and VI.

One of the first acts of the Congress ministry in the United Provinces was the enactment of the United Provinces Tenancy Act which provided for greater security of tenure. Land reforms had long been a part of the Congress policy, but the landlords had been confident that the Congress would not take so drastic a step. Moreover, they mistakenly believed that even if it did, the governor would intervene. When, however, the Congress revealed its 'evil' intention to abolish zamindari, and there was no sign of any intervention by the governor, the landlords sought the protection of political parties opposed to the Congress. Thus the Hindu landlords turned to the Hindu Mahasabha, and the Muslim landlords to the League.⁸²

In the United Provinces most of the big talukdars and landlords were Muslims. The Zamindari provided the means of livelihood not only for the upper classes of Muslims but also for a large number of government servants, for whom landed property provided a subsidiary source of income.⁸³ Thus a good many a well-to-do Muslims, threatened by the abolition of

82. S.A.Husain, The Destiny of the Indian Muslims, (London, 1965), pp.105-6; J.Nehru, 'Parting of the Ways', Asia (Nov.1940), p.598. Even Hindu Princes became sympathetic towards the M.L. Jam Saheb of Nawannagar cofided to B.Shiva Rao: 'Why should not support Muslim League? Mr.Jinnah is willing to tolerate our existence, nbut Mr.Nehru wants the extinction of the Princes'; Philips and Wainwright, (eds) Partition of India, p.420.

83. F.C.R.Robinson, The Emergence of Muslim Politics in India (Cambridge, 1976); see also his 'Municipal Govt. and Muslim separatism in the United Provinces 1883 to 1916; in J.Gallagher, G.Johnson and A.Seal (eds), Locality, Province and Nation, Essay on Indian Politics 1870 to 1940 (Cambridge, 1973), pp.69-1213.

zamindari, in their consternation turned to the Muslim League.⁸⁴ Assured of the financial backing of the landlords and the support of middle-class Muslims, the League rapidly expanded its organization in many districts of the United Provinces.

Yet the United Provinces episode, though no doubt an important factor contributing to the growth of Muslim separatism, could not in itself have been sufficient to bring about the partition of the country, it is suggested here that at the root of the communal problem lay economic rivalry which over a period of time manifested itself in various forms. 'Muslim separatism in UP', writes Brass, 'was in origin, the ideology of an upper class and upper middle class elite attempting to preserve its privileged position in society through political means'.⁸⁵

Middle-class Muslims realized that their chances of success (meagre under the British and, as individuals, none too bright even in a free India) could be immensely increased if they stood together as a corporate Muslim

84. Husain, The Destiny of Indian Muslims, pp.105-6, C.H. Philips, India (London, 1948), p.125; Sayeed, Pakistan: The Formative Phase, p.88.

85. P.R.Brass, 'Muslim Politics in United Provinces: Social Contest and Political Strategy before Partition'; Economic & Political Weekly (1970) V.Nos.3-5, p.183; M.Mujeeb, The India Muslims (London, 1970) Imtiaz Ahmad, 'Secularism & Communalism, EPW, (July, 1969), IV Nos. 28-30, pp.1137-58; R.Russell, 'Strands of Muslim Identity in South Asia', South Asian Review (Oct.1967), pp.21-32.

body and fought for power.⁸⁶ To put matters in simple terms, this argument, when carried further, led to the demand for a separate state for the Muslims, where the Muslim elites would have an opportunity for investing their money; of dominating commerce, the 'professions' and government services; of raising tariffs to protect their industries, and so on.⁸⁷ The idea of a separate Muslim state, by offering 'a short cut to worldly success, attracted the interest and aroused the ambition of the Muslim middle classes, who, for historical reasons, had so far been left behind by the Hindu in the race for plums of commerce, industry and the government.⁸⁸ It is necessary to remember that although the British conquest of India had placed the two communities on an equal level of subjection as the process of conquest had proceeded from the sea coasts inwards, it affected the Muslim majority provinces of north west India last of all. This accident of history gave an early start to the Hindus in acquiring English education and thus contributed to the emergence of a Hindu middle class subsisting on government services,

86. H.Kabir, 'Even the Muslims Disagree', Asia (Aug. 1940), p.437.

87. Moon, Divide and Quit, p.22; G.D.Khosla, Stern Reckoning, (Delhi), p.21.

88. C.H.Philips, The Partition of India, 1947 (Leads, 1967) p.16.

the 'professions' and trade.⁸⁹ The growth of Muslim middle class was impeded by the Revolt of 1857, which many British tended to regard as a Muslim rebellion.⁹⁰ Moreover, Muslim theologians, by throwing their weight against English education, further handicapped the Muslims in competing for jobs.⁹¹

The communities in most parts of India were divided along distinct economic lines. In Bengal the landlords were nearly all Hindus and the tenants were mostly Muslims. In the towns the shop owners, professional men and employers were largely Hindus; the craftsmen and workers were predominantly Muslims.⁹³ But since class division so nearly coincided with the communal division, it was not surprising the essential economic conflicts were often described as communal. In the Punjab the Hindus were so much identified with the landowning and money-lending class that the Land Alienation Act, which aimed at assisting and protecting the landowners of both religions, became the basis of a bitter quarrel between the two communities. The introduction of representative

89. Anil Seal, The Emergence of Indian Nationalism, Competition and Collaboration in Later Nineteenth Century, (Cambridge, reprint 1971) Chs. ii,iii.

90.- Richard Symonds, The Making of Pakistan (Karachi, 1966), p.28.

91. W.W.Hunter, The Indian Musalmans (Delhi, reprint 1969), Ch.iv.

92. J.P.Narayan, Towards Struggle (Bombay, 1946), pp.111-12.

93. G.T.Garratt, 'Economic Realities', T.U.Wall Bank 'The Partition of India (Boston, 1966), p.11.

institutions and the Communal Award further confused religion and economics.⁹⁴

The fact that the partition of the country would not cure the poverty of the people was irrelevant. The argument was that the Muslims and Hindus were so different that they could not live together in one state. What this perhaps meant was that Muslim businessmen and Hindu businessmen could not co-exist in one state without undue competition.⁹⁵ Therefore, the League, by its obstructionist tactics and its very intransigence, tried to drive a hard bargain with the Congress and the British in order to obtain concessions.⁹⁶ The principal, though not the sole, motive behind the demand for a separate state for the Muslims was the urge on the part of the educated Muslims to advance themselves economically.⁹⁷ The League leaders, of course, understood all this perfectly well, but when articulating the demands of the Muslims they did not express it in those terms. Instead they argued on a much higher phase: they spoke in terms of two races, the Hindus and the Muslims, and the wide gulf that separated their history, tradition and ways of life, with their consequent liability to live together.

94. H.V.Hodson, The Great Divide (London, 1969), pp.15-16.

95. Sayeed, Pakistan: The Formative Phase, pp.95-6.

96. W.C.Smith, The Muslim League, 1942-45 (Lahore, 1945), pp.14-15.

97. E.Thompson, Enlist India for Freedom (London, 1940), pp.59-60.

Before we discuss the other superficial, but of crucial importance, factors responsible for the continuous extending mass base of Muslim League and its consolidation, we must examine the Congress attitude towards this growing strength of Muslim League.

The Congress could not altogether ignore the growing strength of the Muslim League and efforts had been made to reach an agreement, by means of so-called 'unity talks' between Gandhi and Jinnah.⁹⁸ What prompted Congress leaders to seek an understanding with the Muslim League was their desire to strengthen the nationalist front against Federation,⁹⁹ and their fear that an unreconciled Jinnah might not sympathetic with them and might even try to thwart their effort.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, communal tension had been gradually rising since the Congress assumption of office. The intensification of communal bitterness in public life also troubled them, and it is interesting that communal friction was increasing even as the correspondence between Jinnah and Gandhi and Nehru continued. Communal

98. D.G.Tendulkar, Mahatma, (Bombay, 1951-4), iv.303-5; IAR, 1938, ii, 302.

99. P.Sitarammaya, The history of the Indian National Congress Vol.2, 1935-47 (Bombay, 1947), p.74.

100. Survey of Secret information relating to Congress attitude towards Federation, Enclosure 8; Linlithgow to Zettand, 6 April, 1938; Z.C.Vol.15.

tension prevailed in many cities including Nagpur, Lahore, Benaras, , Jubbulpore and Allahabad during the last fortnight of March, and April 1938.¹⁰¹ Official sources held the League responsible for the tense communal situation¹⁰², and pointed out that it reflected the strained relations between the Congress and the League.¹⁰³

The anxiety of Congress leaders to reach an understanding with the Muslim League did not diminish, and even as Jinnah's correspondence with Nehru came to an end, he was due to meet Gandhi at the end of April 1938. Jinnah was thinking of capitalizing on the eagerness of Congress leaders for a settlement, and had admitted that the strong communal tone of his speeches to the League on 17 April had been calculated at securing some tactical advantage in his approaching conversations with Gandhi.¹⁰⁴

Jinnah, however, overestimated the chances of getting Congress leaders to agree to his main demand --- recognition of the Muslim League as the sole representative

101. Bombay Chronicle, 17, 18 March, 1938.

102. Fortnightly Reports for UP for first and second half of March; also for Bihar, C.P. March 1938; H.P. File No.18/3/38.

103. Linlithgow to Zetland, 27 March, 1938, ZC Vol.15.

104. Linlithgow to Zetland, 27 April, 1938, ZC Vol.75.

of the Muslims. His talks with Gandhi failed on this score. Subhash Chandra Bose, who had become president of the Congress in February, 1938, then continued the discussions, and turned down Jinnah's demand on the ground that Congress could not give up its national character.¹⁰⁵ Congress leaders, including Bose, Azad, Prasad, Patel and Gandhi informed Jinnah that they favoured an amicable settlement of the communal question, but there could be no infringement of Congress programmes and policies.¹⁰⁶ As it turned out, the discussions between Jinnah and Bose never progress beyond the stage of 'the examinations of credentials'.¹⁰⁷ On 5 June, Jinnah informed Bose that the Executive Council of the Muslim League had passed a resolution which reiterated that the Congress must recognize the League as the only representative body of Muslims in India. Also, the Congress could not invite representatives of other Muslim organizations to participate in any talks that might take place.¹⁰⁸

105. Bose to Jinnah, 14 May 1938, Pirzada, Correspondence, p.62.

106. Bombay Chronicle, 13 May 1938.

107. Linlithgow to Zetland, 24 May 1938, ZC, Vol.15.

108. Jinnah to Bose, 5 June 1938, Pirzada, Correspondence, pp.64-5.

Bose rejected the proposals once more, saying that it would be 'not only impossible, but improper' for the Congress to agree that the League was the sole representative of Muslims.¹⁰⁹ The correspondence between Jinnah and Bose continued in this vein until October 1938.¹¹⁰ On 16 December, the Congress working committee finally rejected the demand and also stated that it was not in a position to do anything further in the direction of starting negotiations with the League with a view to arriving at a settlement of the Hindu-Muslim question.¹¹¹ On the same day the working committee passed a resolution which defined the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League as communal organizations, and forbade any Congress member from belonging to either of them and the Congress simultaneously.¹¹²

Now, we come to the other factors, superficial but of crucial importance, for extending Muslim League's mass base and importance. If we want to trace those factors we must examine the League's attitude towards Congress Ministries for here lies those factors. Jinnah had to

109. Bose to Jinnah, 25 July 1938, Ibid, p.66.

110. Jinnah to Bose, 10 October, 1938, Ibid, pp.69-74.

111. National Herald, 17 December 1938.

112. Bombay Chronicle, 16 December 1938.

create an atmosphere which would dissuade Muslims from sympathizing with Congress. His main political weapon since 1937 had been attacks on the Congress. The Congress ministries, lacking the representatives of the Muslim League offered Jinnah the handiest pegs on which he could hang all the grievances of the Muslims, real or fancied. Allegations of the Congress tyranny over the Muslims in the Hindu majority provinces began to be heard. In March, 1938, when the Congress had been in office for only eight months, the Muslim League appointed a committee to investigate the complaints of ill-treatments being meted out to the Muslims in the various Congress provinces. The committee, which was presided over by the Raja of Pirpur, submitted its report in November 1938.¹¹³ This comparatively restrained document was followed a year later by a much more lucid account of the grievances of Muslims in Bihar¹¹⁴, and by a still more intemperate report by Fazlul Huq.¹¹⁵

Apart from publishing stories, mostly unverified, about the 'atrocities' committed by the Congress

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113. The Report of the Enquiry Committee appointed by the Council of All-India Muslim League to Enquire into Muslim Grievances in Congress Provinces (Delhi, 1938).
114. Report of the Enquiry Committee Appointed by the Working Committee of Bihar Provincial Muslim League to Enquire into some grievances of Muslims in Bihar (Patna, 1939).
115. A.K.Fazlul Huq, Muslim Sufferings under Congress Rule (Calcutta, 1939).

governments, the main charges contained in all these reports were concerned with the Congress's 'campaign of mass contact' among the Muslims, the introduction of the Wardha Scheme of Education, the use of Hindi, the singing of Bande Mataram, the hoisting of the Congress flag on public buildings, the playing of music before the mosques, and the ratio in service between the two communities.¹¹⁶

There was little justification for the charges that Congress governments discriminated against Muslims. The allegations stemmed from the failure of the Congress and the League to resolve differences on political issues. But in a situation where ideological differences often took on a religious colouring, the accusations levelled against Congress governments put Congress leaders very much on the defensive. As the majority of Indians were Hindus by religion, the Congress, a broad nationalist front which represented the majority of Indians, regardless of class or creed, knew that it often appeared representative of Hindus only. The defensive reactions of Congress leaders to these allegations shows how easily propaganda builds up into myths, which are then accepted as facts on the basis of which policies are formulated keeping in mind, of course, the political context.

116. Coupland, Indian Politics 1936-42, pp.179-94.

The Congress campaign of contacting the masses, Nehru claimed, had never been thought of in terms of Muslims alone. The Congress had worked among the Hindu masses and 'disabled the Hindu Mahasabha politically'; it had done successful work among the Indian Christians, Parsis, the Jews and the Sikhs.¹¹⁷ It is difficult to understand how it became an offence on the part of the Congress, a secular organization, to try to reach the Muslim masses also, on the basis of an economic programme conceived in the interests of peasants and labourers.¹¹⁸

The programme was started by Nehru, and many comments on it by other Congress leaders are not available, but there does not appear to be any evidence of disagreement over the aims of the programme within the Congress.¹¹⁹ There is, however, no doubt that the inception of the Programme contributed to an atmosphere of communal bitterness. It was because the success of the Programme would have spelt the defeat of the League that it roused Jinnah's ire. It was also natural that the campaign would stir some communal acrimony, as the League would turn to communal propaganda to counteract it.¹²⁰ The

117. Statesman, 2 July 1942.

118. Beni Prasad, The Hindu-Muslim Question (London, 1946) pp. 73-6.

119. But see Gandhi's defence of the programme, Gandhi to Bashir Ahmad, 30 September 1937, CWG, Vol. 66, p. 182.

120. See for example, FRs for Bihar, and Bombay for first half of April 1937, Sind and C.P. for first half of May 1937; H.P. Files No. 18/4 and 18/5/37; FR for Sind for Second Half of May, 1938, H.P. File No. 18/5/38.

programme was 'totally unorganized' and carried out in a half-hearted manner.¹²¹ Consequently, it did not make much of a headway in any province. Instead, it left behind a residue of communal acrimony the negative effect of the programme without achieving the positive objective of winning Muslim mass support for the Congress. The inception of the Muslim Mass Contact Programme had exposed that the Congress recognized that it lacked a base among Muslims and considered it politically important to win their support. Why the programme was allowed to fizzle out by the summer of 1939, then, is some thing of a mystery. Whatever the reason, there can be no doubt that, in the long run, the failure of the campaign was an important factor in limiting the chances of Congress in securing an undivided India.

The inquiry conducted by the Pirpur Committee of Muslim grievances in Congress provinces contended that with the acceptance of office by the Congress, Muslims were being discriminated against not only by Congress officials and workers, but also that 'People of a particular community were encouraged to believe that the government was not theirs.'¹²² In the report, Congress governments were in fact accused of deliberately engaging in actions,

121. AICC, file No. G-32, 1938, p.15.

122. Pirpur Report, p.15.

or of formulating policies, that offended the religious sentiments of Muslims. Among the issues raised by the Pirpur Report were the singing of Bande Matram and the hoisting of the Congress flag in public places, attacks on the religious right of Muslims to slaughter cows, and the suppression of the Urdu language by Congress governments. A resolution passed by the League was quoted which contended that Bande Mataram was 'positively anti-Islamic and idolatrous in its inspiration and ideas...'¹²³ It may be mentioned here that Jinnah himself was a member of the Congress when it used to be sung, and he had never found anything objectionable in it. Yet it now became one of the major causes of conflict. To soothe Moslem feelings, the Congress decided that only the first two stanzas of and song, which consisted of a praise of the motherland, would be sung. The possible objection to what may be called the religious aspect of the song was further removed.¹²⁴ The tricolour was described as 'purely a party flag and nothing more.. the foisting of the so-called national flag on the unwilling minorities' was an expression of the narrow communalism of the majority community. Dr.Rajender Prasad, in reply of this allegation, argued in his book

123. Ibid, p.17.

124. G.Rizvi, Linlithgow and India, p.100.

that it was not in any way a Hindu flag. Its colour had been determined to represent the various communities, saffron for Hindus, green for Muslims, and white for the other minorities.¹²⁵

The playing of music outside the mosques and the denial of the right to slaughter cows were two major items in the League's catalogue of grievances. Juridically, the Hindus had as much right to play music on the public road as Muslims the right to kill cows on their own land. But use of criminal law by the Congress Government in Bihar to prevent cow-killing was a mistake, for this was a restriction of the civil right of a community.¹²⁶

Congress governments were also accused of discrimination against urdu and of trying to impose Hindi on Muslims. Muslims, it was implied, spoke only Urdu, and the imparting of education in vernaculars would lead to their cultural degeneration and would also placed Muslim students at a disadvantage in competition with boys of other communities, 'who are fortunate enough to receive their education in their own mother tongue'.¹²⁷ The Vidya Mandir Scheme introduced in the Wardha scheme of education

125. Rajender Prasad, India Divided, p.140.

126. H.Kabir, 'Even the Muslims Disagree', Asia (Aug. 1940), p.436.

127. Pirpur Report, p.29.

was criticized on the ground that the word Mandir, connoting idol worship, went against the grain of Islamic tenets and was repulsive to a Muslim.¹²⁸ Muslims were also said to be placed at a disadvantage because Urdu, while allowed in courts officially, was discouraged unofficially by officers.

The Pirpur Report tried to 'expose' the highhandedness and hostility of Hindus as a community towards Muslims. Thus the Pirpur Report sought to embarrass Congress governments and also to instil in Muslims the fear that under 'Hindu' Raj they would always be a weak, powerless, and oppressed community.

The underlying cause behind the allegations made by the Muslim League against Congress governments was, as official British opinion quickly perceived, that it did not have effective political power. Administratively, it was felt that the League had little to complain of 'except that they do not have the general political influence, and the pull in petty local matters, that the supporters of the Ministry have. In essence the grievance is not a religious one, though it assumes an intensely communal form. It is political, and is due to the fact that the community is in opposition. It would largely cease to exist if the Muslim League had a share in the Government'.¹²⁹

128. Ibid., p.54.

129. Haig to Linlithgow, 10 May 1939, and 3 June 1939, H.C.Vol.6.

Official British opinion discounted the charges of atrocities and prejudice of Congress governments against Muslims. Linlithgow felt that 'proof of specific instances is not easily forthcoming...'¹³⁰ Sir Maurice Hallett, Governor of Bihar, said that he did not know of any case in which government or local officials had failed to take action against aggressors in communal riots. Muslims whom Hallett had met had 'admitted their inability to bring any charges of anti-Muslim prejudice against Government'.¹³¹ It is worth remembering that in 1937, 58.69 percent of ICS officers were British. In January 1940, the British held 64.8 percent of the posts in the Indian Police Service.¹³² It is difficult to believe that deliberate ill-treatment of Muslims would have gone on unnoticed and unrecorded by British officials in their confidential correspondence.

British officials in fact supported the Congress view that the League was fomenting communal trouble in Congress-governed provinces.¹³³ "Finding themselves unable to effect much by parliamentary methods, they are

130. Linlithgow to Zetland, 28 March, 1939, Z.C. Vol.17.

131. Hallett to Linlithgow, 8 May 1939, LC Vol.46.

132. Home Establishment File No.50/37, Home Establishment File No. 42/40.

133. FRs for UP for July and Sept., 1938, H.P. File Nos. 18/7 and 18/9/38. FRs for Bihar and August and Sept. 1938, HP Files Nos. 18/8 and 18/9/38.

inevitably tempted to create unrest and disturbances outside the legislature, and there is no doubt that the Muslim League have set themselves quite deliberately to this policy".¹³⁴ But Congress governments often hesitated to take action against the League for instigating communal violence because every effort on the part of governments to curb communalism 'is immediately represented as a breach of the elementary right of free speech and our Governments are fighting shy of strong measures'.¹³⁵ It was a forebearing Pant who informed Nehru in February, 1938 that 'it will not be possible... to ignore their (the Muslims League's) activities of this type any longer'.¹³⁶

The absence of prejudice against Muslims by Congress government did not mean that communal elements were altogether absent from the organization. A Congress worker reported that an Arya Samaj preacher had become president of the Tehsil Congress Committee at Balrampur, and was advocating 'shuddhi' and Hindu-Muslim unity simultaneously. Some members of Congress were also the members of Hindu Mahasabha as well. Obviously it was felt that there would be 'great conflict, collision and mis-

134. Haig to Linlithgow, 23 October, 1938, HC Vol.2A.

135. AICC File No. G-32, 1938, p.34.

136. Pant to Nehru, 11 Feb., 1938, NC Vol.79.

representation', if both things continued side by side.¹³⁷ It was only in December 1938 that the Congress Working Committee passed a resolution defining the Muslim League and Hindu Mahasabha as communal organizations.¹³⁸ 'In our belief, Congress organisation will suffer very much in prestige and hold over the masses, if Congress Members be allowed to be members of the Hindu Mahasabha Organisations'.¹³⁹

The Congress attitude to tenancy legislation in Bengal and Bihar, somewhat conservative in contrast to its policy in the UP, also provided Muslim Leaguers with an opportunity to accuse the Congress of insincerity and communal prejudice. A supporter of the League wrote that Congressmen had opposed the Tenancy Bill in Bengal because 'most of the landlords there are Hindus and the peasants Muslims. But in the UP they insist on all ill-conceived and crooked tenancy law to persecute the landlords, no matter whether it would do real good to peasants or not, for the Muslims have some share in the land ownership... But in Bihar, where Hindu landlords are strong, the Congress readily entered in a compromise with them over

137. Letter from Ambika Charan, 4 April 1937, AICC file No.P-20, p.657.

138. Bombay Chronicle, 16 December 1939.

139. Letter from Ashrafuddin Ahmed, Secretary, BPCG, to General Secretary, AICC, 16 August 1938, AICC FILE No. P-5, 198, pp.13-3.

the tenancy question'.¹⁴⁰

In October 1939, Rajender Prasad, the Congress President, wrote to Jinnah offering to have the complaints investigated by the Chief Justice of the Federal Court of India. Jinnah, however, refused to accept this suggestion because, as he claimed, the matter was under the Viceroy's consideration and that 'he is the proper authority' to deal with such questions.¹⁴¹ Jinnah was apparently trying to avoid any inquiry because he knew that many of the charges would not stand up to judicial probing. His reluctance is understandable. The League was trying to convince neither the British nor the Congress: its propaganda was meant for 'home consumption' i.e., for the Muslims. In this it achieved remarkable success. The important point to bear in mind is not whether the Muslim grievances were true or exaggerated but whether many Muslims believed in them. 'Had not the Quran reminded them time

140. Jamil-ud-din Ahmad, 'Is India one Nation?' (1941) quoted in K.N.Chaudhary, 'Economic Problems and Indian Independence' in Philips and Wainwright (eds), Partition of India, pp. 308-9.

141. Prasad, India Divided, p. 147.

and again that the infidel could never be expected to bear any goodwill towards Muslims'?¹⁴² Anything which widened the rift between the Hindus and the Muslims and indicated that the difference between the two communities was unbridgeable proved Jinnah's thesis that a democratic structure was unsuited for India.

During the period, 1937-1939, the Muslims were united under the Flag of Muslim League due to shrewd propaganda of Jinnah and Muslim League. Jinnah's propaganda created a atmosphere of fear and hatred. The Marquess of Lothian shared this view, 'the advent of Congress to power in most of British India made them feel for the first time what it was to be a minority in Provinces in which political responsibility had passed out of the hands of Great Britain into that of the Hindu majority. They had become acutely aware of the rising tide of Hindu rule, and that produced a consolidation of political opinion and the political organisation in India. There used to be two main Muslim parties. They are now united in the Muslim League under the leadership of Mr. Jinnah'.¹⁴³

142. Cited in Sayeed, Political System of Pakistan, p.38.

143. The Marquess of Lothian, 'The Working of the New Constitution in India? The Asiatic Review, London, April, 1938, pp.260-276 cited in K.K.Aziz, Muslims under Congress Rule, 1937-1939, Vol.II, p.37.

Along with all this propaganda, Muslim League changed its creed from 'full responsible government', to 'full independence', and decided to take immediate steps 'to frame and put into effect an economic, social and educational programme' for consolidating its following.¹⁴⁴ A socio-economic programme was evolved to bring the organisation in touch with the masses. This included the encouragement of cottage industries, organisation of volunteers for social service, ameliorating the condition of factory workers, reduction of agricultural indebtedness and the introduction of compulsory primary education.¹⁴⁵ The organisation of the League was overhauled. Provincial and district branches were reshaped; the membership fee was reduced to two annas; the council was to consist of 465 members elected by provincial branches and no one was to be so elected without being a member of the primary League. Jinnah's efforts to strengthen the Muslim League seem to have borne fruit: in April 1938 he was able to claim that Muslims in hundred of thousands had joined.¹⁴⁶ Towards the end of the year the Madras League claimed a membership of 43,920; in 1940 it rose to 88,833.¹⁴⁷ It is

144. Statesman, 21 October, 1937.

145. Pioneer, 19 October, 1937.

146. IAR, 1938, i, 382.

147. Dawn, 9 November, 1941.

quite certain that between 1937 and 1940 the Muslim League attracted a large number of Muslims. Its organisation had started penetrating the countryside and numerous branches had been opened all over the country.¹⁴⁸

The Viceroy announced India's entry into the war without consulting political parties, legislatures or provincial ministries.¹⁴⁹ On 3 September, 1939 which opened a new chapter in Indian politics. Linlithgow's objective was to turn India into a war base, and to provide men and money;¹⁵⁰ and he regarded the problem of winning the cooperation of Indian parties for the war effort to be one of 'particular urgency'.¹⁵¹ The Viceroy admitted that those in the Central legislature as it stood did 'not necessarily' contain the men who were most representative of public opinion. His Executive Council would also have to be strengthened with more non-officials.¹⁵² He attached the greatest importance to winning the support of Gandhi and Nehru, because of their popular appeal¹⁵³, for the war effort. The other, more

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148. R.Coupland, Indian Politics 1936-42 (London, 1943) p.183; A.Aziz, Discovery of Pakistan (Lahore, 1957), pp.297-8; Sayeed, Pakistan, the Formative Phase, p.178.
149. Reginald Coupland, The Indian Problem (Oxford, 1944), p.212.
150. Linlithgow's report of his conversation with W.Phillips, President Roosevelt: personal representative, 19, Feb 1943, Transfer of Power, Vol.3, p.689.
151. Linlithgow to Zetland, 31 August, 1939, Z.C.Vol.16.
152. Linlithgow to Zetland, 5 September, 1939, Ibid.
153. Linlithgow to Zetland, 5 September, and 4 Oct. 1939, Ibid.

pressing, reason for seeking the cooperation of political parties for the war effort was to expand the numbers and to preserve the loyalty of the army, the ultimate bulwark of the Empire. Hence the Viceroy began talks with Indian leaders to probe their terms for supporting the British. Linlithgow knew that Indian parties would require political concessions in return for their support of the war effort.¹⁵⁴ Jinnah hoped to extract from the Viceroy a promise that the British would jettison the idea of Federation. Linlithgow however, saw no reason to give up the idea of Federation and majority rule altogether. Jinnah's hold over the provincial Muslim Leagues was insecure; and his demand was probably a tactic to keep the Muslim League in tow, especially as Sikandar Hyat Khan and Fazlul Huq had already promised the British unconditional support for the war effort against his wish, and his disposition to bargain.¹⁵⁵ Jinnah's leadership was under fire from radicals in the League, Ispahani for example, voiced 'their utmost regret and disappointment that you are gradually drifting more and more into the arms of the reactionaries and "jee hoozoors" (Yes man)'. Sikandar had challenged the 'potency of the Muslim League.. you as President... had chosen to keep silent...

154. Linlithgow to Zetland, 24 August 1939, Ibid.

155. Linlithgow to Zetland, 5 September 1939, Ibid.

is it not time that you take stock of the whole situation and put your foot down with firmness'?¹⁵⁶

As a 'public man who had to think of his followers',¹⁵⁷ Jinnah had to tread a path which would preserve unity as well as his own authority within the League. He now placed his cards on the table 'If Britain wants to prosecute this war successfully it must take Muslim India into its confidence through its accredited organisation—the All-India Muslim League... Muslims want justice and fair play'.¹⁵⁸

On the other hand in the Congress Working Committee, Gandhi was alone in suggesting unconditional support for the British on a non-violent basis.¹⁵⁹ The Congress resolved on 14 September 1939, that the issue of war and peace 'must be decided by the Indian people, and no outside authority can impose this decision upon them, nor can the Indian people permit their resources to be exploited for imperialist ends'. The British government was invited 'to declare in unequivocal terms what their

156. Ispahani to Jinnah, 12 December, 1939, Zaidi, Jinnah-Ispahani Correspondence p.133. See also Raghunadan Saran to Nehru, 24 Oct. 1939, NC Vol.84.

157. Linlithgow to Zetland, 5 September 1934, ZC Vol.18.

158. Times of India, 9 September 1939.

159. Harijan, 23 September 1939, See also Sitaramayya, History of the Indian National Congress, Vol.2, pp.130-5.

war aims are in regard to democracy and imperialism and the new world order that is envisaged; in particular, how these aims are going to apply to India and... be given effect to in the present'.¹⁶⁰

Meanwhile, Linlithgow was frustrated both with the political deadlock and with the British 'government's failure to define their political objectives. He knew that the statement which he had been authorised to issue would not satisfy the Congress.¹⁶¹ The Viceroy stated that, for the time being, the British would not define their war aims, but they would be willing to consult with representatives of different communities, parties and interests in India and with the Indian princes to discuss constitutional reforms for India after the war. The Viceroy added that representatives of minorities had urged most strongly on him the necessity of a clear assurance that full weight would be given to their views and interests in any modifications that might be contemplated. This assurance the Viceroy readily gave.¹⁶²

The statement fell far short of Congress demands, and there was little hope for winning the party's cooperation in the war effort. As a result, on 30 October

160. 'Congress Resolution on India and the War', J.Nehru, The Unity of India (New York, 1942), pp.410-14.

161. Linlithgow to Prasad, 16 October, 1939, RPC, File No. 2-P/39-See also Linlithgow to Zetland, 16 October, 1939, LC Vol.8.

162. National Herald, 18 October, 1939.

1939, the CWC ordered the Congress ministries to resign. The resolution passed stated that 'The Working Committee is of opinion that the Viceroy's statement in answer to the Congress invitation for a clear declaration of the British war aims, particularly in their application to India, is wholly unsatisfactory and calculated to rouse resentment among all those who were anxious to gain, and are intent upon gaining India's independence... The Viceregal statement is an unequivocal reiteration of the old imperialistic policy. In the, circumstances, the Committee cannot possibly give any support to great Britain, for it would amount to an endorsement of the imperialist policy which the Congress has always sought to end. As a first step in this direction the committee call upon the Congress ministries to tender their resignations'.¹⁶³

The Congress demand for a definition of war aims pending its cooperation was severely criticised by every shade of public opinion in Britain except, of course, the Left. The Observer chided the Congress for "playing politics" and sabotaging self-government for ulterior ends.¹⁶⁴ The Spectator called it unfortunate.¹⁶⁵ Even the Manchester Guardian, generally a staunch Congress

163. K.K.Aziz, Muslims Under Congress Rule 1937-39, Vol.II, p.286.

164. Observer, 19 November 1939, cited in Ibid., p.287.

165. Spectator, 22 Sept. 1939, cited in Ibid., p.287.

supporter in Britain acknowledging that all other Indian parties had dissociated themselves from the Congress stand, asked the Congress to accept the Viceroy's declaration, lest by insistence on its full demands it "lost India's national unity".¹⁶⁶

The decision to withdraw Congress Governments in the provinces was widely condemned in the Parliament. Lord Samuel, a liberal front rank politician and intellectual, called it a negation of democracy.¹⁶⁷ Outside the Parliament, Sir William Barton called it undemocratic and "foolish".¹⁶⁸ The Muslims of India were of course delighted at the resignation of Congress governments. But the Congress decision to withdraw from office deprived Jinnah and the League of their chief weapon of attack against it - the Muslim grievances against Congress ministries. On the other hand, Linlithgow was now all the more dependent on the League as a counterpoise to the Congress. How British policies were conducive in consolidation of Muslim League during war will be

166. Manchester Guardian, (Leader), 18 October, 1939, Cited in Ibid, p.287.

167. Lord Samuel Quoted in Aziz, p.287.

168. W.Barton, "Political Deadlock in India", Empire Review, July 1941, cited in K.K.Aziz, Muslims Under Congress Rule, p.287.

discussed in next chapter in detail. Here we are more concerned about the attitude and strategy of Muslim League and its leader.

Jinnah adopted a strategy of keeping anti-Congress feeling high. He called on Muslims on 2 December 1939 to observe 22 December 1939 as 'the day of deliverance and thanks giving as a mark of relief that the Congress Governments have at last ceased to function'.¹⁶⁹ The call surprised many of his own party, for Muslims in the NWFP and Bengal thought that he had fallen back on a low form of politicking.¹⁷⁰ Jawahar Lal Nehru's remarks on Jinnah's call were angry, bitter and tendentious. He wrote to Mahadev Desai, "you must have see Jinnah's new statement. There is a limit even to political falsehood and indecency but all limits have been passed".¹⁷¹

A typical British comment was more objective than the so called Hindu outburst. "One need not approve the wisdom of Mr. Jinnah's call to Muslims of India to observe a day of deliverance and thanks giving that Congress governments have ceased to function. This is a dangerous and ill-considered challenge to further communal

169. M.A.Jinnah's statement appealing for the observance of a Deliverance Day to mark the End of Congress Rule: Bombay 2, December 1939. Cited in Aziz, Muslims Under Congress Rule Vol.1, p.294.

170. Ispahani to Jinnah, 12 December 1939, Zaidi, Jinnah-Ispahani Correspondence, p.132.

171. Nehru to Mahadev Desai, 9 December 1939, N.C.Vol.17.

dissension. Yet it is retort invited by the action of Congress itself".¹⁷²

The official opinion of the British Government was contained in a reference made to Jinnah's call by the Marquess of Zetland, the Secretary of State for India, on 14 December, when, speaking in the House of Lords, he appealed to the Muslim leader to consider carefully the effect of such action upon the communal situation in the country.¹⁷³

The Round Table, a reputable British quarterly devoted to empire and commonwealth affairs, recorded Jinnah's call and commented that it showed most clearly the depths of communal feeling.¹⁷⁴ Deliverance Day itself passed off quietly in most places, and 'fell very flat' in the Muslim majority provinces of Sind and the NWFP',¹⁷⁵ but naturally it infuriated Congress leaders.

The period 1937-39, when the Congress Ministries were in office in provinces, became the adolescent age in the life of Muslim League for during these two years Muslim League extend its mass base among Muslims to a considerable extent. Jinnah used every kind of method for

172. Sir Alfred Watson, in Asiatic Review, January 1940, p.65 cited in Aziz, p.290.

173. K.K.Aziz, Muslims Under Congress Rule, p.291.

174. The Round Table, March 1940, p.398 cited in Ibid, p.291.

175. FRs for Punjab, UP, CP, Sind and NWFP for Second half of December 1939, H.P.File No.18/12/39. See also NWFP Governors Report date: 23 December 1939, LC Vol.74.

consolidation for Muslim League. In the above analysis of events - coalition talks and their subsequent failure, effects of election results on Muslim League and lessons learnt from them, Congress's intoxication with victory and power, Muslims attitude towards Congress ministries and their fancied allegations, outbreak of war and its effects on Indian political spheres, resignation from the office of Congress Ministries and observance of deliverance day - we come to the conclusion that the League became powerful enough to attract the attention of British Government and Congress both, Lord Linlithgow began to use Muslim League as powerful tool for sabotaging the national movement in circumstances of war. He found in Jinnah a powerful ally.

Although Jinnah consolidated his position and Muslim League during these two years considerably but it was also evident that Jinnah had still to find a political vantage point. His parleys with the Congress in 1938, combined with attacks on Congress ministries kept him on the political horizon, but they also revealed the weakness of his position, the fact that his only weapon against the Congress was negative and somewhat unconstructive.

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